

The Challenge and Importance of Biblical Narratives  
*Reading Biblical Narratives*  
September 5, 2018

*“For whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction, so that we may have hope through endurance and through the encouragement from the Scriptures,” (Romans 15:4).*

**Our goal in reading biblical narratives:**

- What does this story teach me about God? And
- How should I adjust my life to this truth?

*The Challenge of Biblical Narrative*

Then they told David, saying, “Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are plundering the threshing floors.” So David inquired of the Lord, saying, “Shall I go and attack these Philistines?” And the Lord said to David, “Go and attack the Philistines and deliver Keilah.” But David’s men said to him, “Behold, we are afraid here in Judah. How much more then if we go to Keilah against the ranks of the Philistines?” Then David inquired of the Lord once more. And the Lord answered him and said, “Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will give the Philistines into your hand.” So David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines; and he led away their livestock and struck them with a great slaughter. Thus David delivered the inhabitants of Keilah.

Now it came about, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, that he came down with an ephod in his hand. When it was told Saul that David had come to Keilah, Saul said, “God has delivered him into my hand, for he shut himself in by entering a city with double gates and bars.” So Saul summoned all the people for war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men. Now David knew that Saul was plotting evil against him; so he said to Abiathar the priest, “Bring the ephod here.” Then David said, “O Lord God of Israel, Your servant has heard for certain that Saul is seeking to come to Keilah to destroy the city on my account. “Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down just as Your servant has heard? O Lord God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant.” And the Lord said, “He will come down.” Then David said, “Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?” And the Lord said, “They will surrender you.” Then David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the pursuit. David stayed in the wilderness in the strongholds, and remained in the hill country in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand. (1 Samuel 23:1–14, NASB

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**The challenge of Biblical Narrative:**

1. The settings—time, place, and culture—are so different from our own.
2. Our familiarity with the stories makes us prone to overlooking important details in them.
3. We tend to “flatten” the stories.
4. Bible stories are not isolated “episodes,” but themselves part of a bigger picture.

**The Importance of Biblical Narrative**

1. Narrative makes up the vast majority of Scripture — 55-65%!
2. Narratives show us the faithful way to live.
3. Narratives teach us about God’s relationship to the world.

This week:

Read Jonah, making special note of:

- Setting (Place and Culture)
- Characters
- The narrator’s comment
- The speech of God
- The plot of the book