

**The Value
of
Biblical Drama**

*A Biblical Philosophy
for the
Communicative Arts*

Dr. Nicky Chavers

The Value of Biblical Drama

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Foreword

Because of the biased concept that many Christians have concerning drama, and because the devil and the world have corrupted it, fundamental Christians have missed the emphasis on drama in the Bible and have been way behind in using its power for communicating the truth of the Word of God.

No one is more talented or better qualified than Dr. Nicky Chavers for “making the Bible come alive,” and he and his wife, Sheri, through The Academy of Arts, have been doing just that since 1971.

By writing and producing drama that is faithful to the Word of God and then inculcating the biblical philosophy that underlies their dramas into those who have served with them, the Chavers have provided Bible-believing churches and Christian schools with tools that instill biblical principles in hearts, win souls to Christ, and change lives for the glory of God.

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Contents

Introduction.....	9
Chapter One <i>Preaching is Proclaiming</i>	11
Chapter Two <i>Drama Preaches</i>	15
Chapter Three <i>The Validity of the Methodology</i>	17
Chapter Four <i>Drama in Genesis</i>	19
Chapter Five <i>Drama in David's Life</i>	23
Chapter Six <i>Drama in the New Testament</i>	31
Chapter Seven <i>The Greatest Teacher</i>	33

Contents Continued

Chapter Eight	
<i>The Methods of Jesus</i>	40
Chapter Nine	
<i>The Character of the Dramatist</i>	48
Chapter Ten	
<i>The Scene of the Drama</i>	52
Chapter Eleven	
<i>The Motivation for the Drama</i>	54
Chapter Twelve	
<i>The Nature of the Drama</i>	58
Chapter Thirteen	
<i>The Significance of the Drama</i>	64
Chapter Fourteen	
<i>A Conclusion Concerning the Methodology</i> ..	69
Chapter Fifteen	
<i>A Conclusion Concerning the Art</i>	71
Chapter Sixteen	
<i>A Conclusion Concerning the Message</i>	77
“Speak Lord”	85

Introduction

People who know me and know of the ministry of The Academy of Arts have tried to put me in a “drama cubby hole,” but my approach to ministry is broader than one “cubby hole.”

It is human nature to want to categorize people. Humans feel secure whenever they have a person “pegged.” For example, they want to classify people in ministry as being pastors, evangelists, or teachers.

Paul says, “When he (Jesus) ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” (Ephesians 4:8) He is drawing from a practice with which the Ephesians were quite familiar. When a Roman conqueror returned to Rome after having defeated a foreign enemy, he was given a hero’s welcome as he and his army marched through the streets of Rome, receiving the accolades of the people.

He would bring the treasures of the conquered land and display them to the people. He would also lead behind him captives—the conquered king, the king’s chief men, and part of the conquered army—all in chains. All these people were to become slaves in Rome.

From among the spoils of battle, the conqueror would send gifts to his friends—men in high places in Rome.

Paul was saying that the Lord Jesus, as a conqueror, had come to the earth, had conquered sin, death and hell, and had led these enemies as “captives.” He had then “ascended up on high” and had re-entered the gates of heaven as a conqueror, the Lord of all. Christ had been received with the accolades of angels, archangels, seraphim, cherubim, and the host of the redeemed of the Old Testament Era.

As a victorious conqueror, He too “gave gifts unto men,” but the gifts Jesus gave were not gold or silver. They were

ministry gifts. These gifts that Jesus gave are listed by Paul in order of rank and importance. “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” (Ephesians 4:11)

Since the gift of Apostles was given for the first century only, in a very real sense everything we do in ministry falls into one of three broad categories—prophesy (forth-telling God’s Word), evangelism, or fulfilling the office of pastor/teacher; however, when someone like me carves out a ministry that is not a church, a school, a college, or a camp, people don’t know exactly how to classify him.

I believe God has directed me to use preaching, drama and music to reach people with God’s message. To me, these three methods are all one, and I use whichever one of them is most effective in a given situation. Sometimes I will use all three as I am preaching. I may sing a verse of a hymn to make a point in the message. I may launch into a sacred poem that sums up a point in the message. But all of it is part of the proclamation of the Gospel.

Chapter One ***Preaching is Proclaiming***

The Word of God

by Nicky Chavers

The Word of God will live for aye,
T'will never lose its power;
Then live it out from day to day,
Whether dark or bright the hour.

For every act and word and thought
That springs from sacred page
Will rise again when death hath wrought,
And live from age to age.

Written for my wife with unfailing love!
August 9, 1980

People read the verse that says “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe,” and they take it to mean that there is only one method that God has given to reach men with the Gospel, “the foolishness of preaching.” (I Corinthians 1:21) And speaking of the “foolishness of preaching” I have heard some preaching that was little more than foolishness—preaching that was unscriptural and illogical—and yet I have seen people nodding their heads and saying “amen.” And why? Because they thought that the one behind the pulpit was “preaching,” because of the *way* he was speaking or because he was behind a pulpit. Preaching is not a *way* of speaking, and it is not a *place* from which one speaks, but rather, preaching is *what is being spoken*.

Preaching is “proclaiming” God’s truth, and if one is proclaiming his own ideas, opinions and feelings, then he is *not* preaching, even though he may be standing behind a

pulpit. Please do not misunderstand. I am *for preaching*—that is, proclaiming God’s Word in a sermon. Would to God the pulpits of America would again catch fire with Spirit-filled preaching, instead of the Sunday School lessons we are getting today.

Many pastors have adopted a smorgasbord approach in their ministries. They just lay it out there in expositional form, and you just take whatever you want and reject what you do not like. Any time an individual or even a congregation is allowed to take what they want and reject what they don’t want, they will never choose the thing that will put them under conviction. Rather, they will always choose whatever makes them feel good about themselves.

This is what Paul meant when he said that in the “last days” people would “heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.” (II Timothy 3) And the more teachers they can “heap to themselves” the better, because the proliferation of ear-tickling teachers confirms them in their error.

This kind of preaching is not *confrontational*. It is not *topical*. It is not *personal*. It is not Spirit-led, and the teacher is not Spirit-filled. This kind of teaching does not bring the hearers to a point of decision. In many cases, the teacher himself does not even know what the point of the message is. He aims at *nothing* and usually *hits it!*

I like expositional preaching, but I think it is overused, and people are falling asleep in the pews. Dr. Bob Jones Sr., founder of Bob Jones University, used to say, “Every great man I ever knew came at one time in his life under the dominating power of a great truth.” Most preachers today have not come under the dominating power of a great truth—one great idea that *burns* in their soul—one great idea that could take a *lifetime* to fully understand or explain—a truth that is so powerful that it shakes the earth and makes the demons of hell tremble.

One strong argument for topical preaching is the example

of Jesus Himself. In the New Testament, you almost never see him reading or quoting twelve to fifteen verses and then explaining it verse by verse. He speaks topically about prayer, the Holy Spirit, the dependability of the Word of God, repentance, forgiveness, the law, anxiety, heaven, hell, Satan, peace, power, the unpardonable sin, authority, faith, self-reformation, sowing good seed, the leaven of the Pharisees, the pearl of great price, and many other topics.

Please do not misunderstand me. I am not *against* expositional preaching, and I am certainly *for* expositional *study*. I am just saying that somewhere, during the exposition, a *truth* should come to the surface—a truth *so powerful* that it strikes the preacher like a lightning bolt, and he cannot get past it. The Holy Spirit will not let him go on with his “planned” outline. This great truth *leaps* off the page, *demanding* to be proclaimed, to be sounded forth with great zeal, to be thrown like a Spartan spear straight into the hearts of the hearers.

I was saved at the age of 15 in a Hyman Appleman crusade. Hyman Appleman was a Jew, and when he was converted at 22 years old, his family disowned him. They took his diplomas off the wall, they took his portrait down and they removed his pictures out of the family album. They even had a funeral for him and told everyone that their son was dead. I never heard or saw a man preach with more compassion than Hyman Appleman, a converted Jew.

He would preach about hell with tears coursing down his cheeks, and you could almost smell the sulfur and hear the cries of the damned. He would preach about the crucifixion, and his word pictures were so vivid, you felt like you were standing at the base of the cross looking up into the blood-covered face of Jesus.

Shortly after my conversion, I started preaching. In fact, I preached my first week-long revival when I was only sixteen. I have been preaching ever since. I love preaching—good preaching, scriptural preaching that is well-prepared,

prayed over, and anointed by the Spirit of God!

But there is more than one way to “preach,” and *any method* used to “proclaim” God’s truth is better than the ravings of a pulpiteer, who takes a text and then departs from it, or the teaching of a dry-as-dust lecturer, who is not even *affected* by the powerful truths he is laying before the congregation.

We should preach or proclaim what the Bible *says*—not impose our own ideas on it and try to make it say what *we* want it to say. And we should ask God to *stir us first* with the Bible’s message, so that our proclamation of it can *stir others*.

It is this kind of preaching that has kept the Drama Team ministry straight since 1971. And it is the *lack* of this kind of preaching that has caused *other* drama ministries to “fold.” It is also the lack of this kind of preaching that has permitted churches to turn stone cold.

Without this kind of confrontational, soul-searching, preaching, The Academy of Arts would not last as a ministry. I am first and foremost a preacher, and every play I have written is a *living sermon*. I constantly preach to myself and to the staff, so that we never lose sight of our purpose—the proclamation of God’s truth.