

## Keeping the main thing the main thing!

Dr. Ken Hanna, October 28, 31

### **Literary tools authors use to dramatize or emphasize what is important.**

**Cruciality or hinge:** *the utilization of a pivot, a hinge, to change or heighten focus.* The drama or the author's argument often turns on a crucial event. **For example**, the entire book of 2 Samuel pivots on David's sin with Bathsheba (11-12) as David's triumphs (1-10) turn to trouble (13-24). In the Gospels, when the religious establishment rejects Jesus as their Messiah the focus shifts toward the cross (Matthew 12; Mark 3; Luke 11; John 6). The book of Esther has several "plot twists," the queen is deposed, Esther is chosen, Mordecai overhears a plot to assassinate the king, and Haman builds his own gallows and is hanged on it, but the pivot occurs between Esther's two banquets in chapter 6. Also Luke's Gospel and Acts hinge on the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. In The Gospel of Luke the journey is toward Jerusalem, but following Jesus' resurrection and Pentecost the narrative of Acts flows out from Jerusalem.

**Repetition:** *the reiteration of the same terms, phrases, clauses, etc.* A word, phrase or idea may appear and reappear throughout the passage. This gives unity and cohesion to the narrative. It is also a signal that it is important and that we should follow its development closely. **For example**, Paul repeats, "Now concerning" each time he addresses a new issue in 1 Corinthians (7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1). In Ephesians 1:1-14 Paul repeats the phrase, "to the praise of His glory" three times. Jesus strategically repeats, "hypocrites" also, "they have received their reward" in Matthew 6:1-18.

**Making a case:** *setting forth the case and summarizing the case.* The Gospel of John provides the classic example of the author using means to achieve an end and then also stating the end. John selects just seven of more than thirty recorded miracles of Jesus as a means of demonstrating that Jesus is the Son of God to the end that his readers might believe and have life in His name (20:30-31). Authors want to make sure we "get the point." Thus they give a summary statement or state a conclusion. Summaries may also involve review. Conclusions frequently use the logical connector, *therefore*, as a bridge from the body of material to its application. **For example**, Joshua 12 summarizes the conquest of the land described in chapters 1-11 and chapter 23 the distribution of the land described in 13-22. *Therefore* in Romans 12:1 concludes chapters 1-11 and introduces Paul's appeal for action, chapters 12-16.

**Proportion:** *the emphasis of an idea by the amount of material included or de-emphasis by the amount of material excluded.* Like us, authors emphasize what matters most to them by how much time and attention they devote to those subjects. **For example**, the first thirty years of Jesus' life are hardly mentioned, highlights of his three years of public ministry are recorded rather briefly, but it is his crucifixion and resurrection that occupy most of the Gospel narratives. Almost half of John (12-21) is devoted to the last week of Jesus' life on earth. In Matthew 6 Jesus' message about the danger of having too little wealth takes up ten verses (25-34) but his warning about having too much only three (19-21). Genesis devotes the first 11 chapters to four events and a multitude of generations but the remaining 39 chapters to just four generations thus stressing the importance of God's covenant relationship with Abraham and the nation of Israel.

Let's practice on Luke 15

1. How do the first two verses set the stage for what follows?
2. How does the proportion vary between them?
3. What words or elements are repeated in the stories?
5. What is this chapter all about? (What is the "main thing," the central idea).

### **Luke 15:1-32 (NASB)**

Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. <sup>2</sup> Both the Pharisees and the scribes *began* to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." <sup>3</sup> So He told them this parable, saying, <sup>4</sup> "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? <sup>5</sup> "When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. <sup>6</sup> "And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' <sup>7</sup> "I tell you that in the same way, there will be *more* joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. <sup>8</sup> "Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? <sup>9</sup> "When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!' <sup>10</sup> "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." <sup>11</sup> And He said, "A man had two sons. <sup>12</sup> "The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. <sup>13</sup> "And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. <sup>14</sup> "Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. <sup>15</sup> "So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. <sup>16</sup> "And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving *anything* to him. <sup>17</sup> "But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! <sup>18</sup> 'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'" <sup>20</sup> "So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion *for him*, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' <sup>22</sup> "But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; <sup>23</sup> and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; <sup>24</sup> for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate. <sup>25</sup> "Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> "And he summoned one of the servants and *began* inquiring what these things could be. <sup>27</sup> "And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.' <sup>28</sup> "But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and *began* pleading with him. <sup>29</sup> "But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and *yet* you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; <sup>30</sup> but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.' <sup>31</sup> "And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup> 'But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and *has begun* to live, and *was* lost and has been found.'"

Next week: Mastering the Message of an Entire Bible Book