

## *Slides 2 & 3 (Assignments)*

Assignment questions.

## *Slide 4 (Literary Criticism)*

We're going to look now at way of studying the bible called the literary approach: 'literary criticism' or 'literary analysis'. This way of studying biblical texts is not concerned with who wrote the text, where or when or what parallels there are with other stories, they are both concerned with how the story is told, how does it convey its meaning?

So we're going to have a quick look now at some of the tools of literary criticism and particularly those of narrative analysis (which is a sub-category of literary analysis) can help you to investigate passages in detail if you wish. It's particularly helpful for bible study sessions and all-age talks, but it's always a useful tool to use.

Exercise: in pairs, think for a moment about a book you have read that has really struck you and left an impression – how did it do that?

## *Slide 5 (Elements of Literary Criticism)*

- ! Narrator: Is there a narrator in the story? What does the narrator do - what do they tell us that the characters don't know? What effect does that have on us as we read the story?
- ! Plot: What is the outline of the plot? What is the tension and how is it resolved? What details add to the plot?
- ! Characters: Who are the characters in the story? How is God portrayed? How are the characters portrayed?
- ! Setting: Where is the story set, what sort of world is it?
- ! Style: how is the story written? What words or phrases are repeated? How does the author build the tension and resolve it? What sort of language is being used to help create the atmosphere? Are there any special words/images/phrases used (in Birth of Moses for example, the word for 'basket' is the same word for 'ark').

Apparently small details contribute to the meaning(s) of the narrative, for example the fact that Elijah multiplies the widow's oil in 1 Kings 17 is important because the

story is about who gives life, Yahweh or B'aal. The followers of B'aal believed that it was their god who controls life and the earth. In the B'aal cycle of myths from Ugarit, when Baal is swallowed up by death the earth dries up and when he comes back to life it is said that 'the heavens rain down oil, the wadis run with honey'. Hence the mention of oil being increased in the story of the widow's son is more important than it looks on the surface).

- ! Interpretation: what does the story say to us? What do you think is the main purpose of the author in telling the story?
- ! The Reader: how might the story have affected the readers when it was originally written? How does it affect us today?

### *Slide 6 (Exercise on Genesis 28:1-19)*

Finish with exercise on the story of Jacob's ladder in breakout rooms.