

“An Initial Literary Reading of a Biblical Text”

Excerpt from *The Practice of Preaching* (Abingdon, 1995)

Paul Scott Wilson

Focus and Questions

- 1) **Character**—Who are the main characters? What are they like? How can they be described?
- 2) **Plot**—What happens in this text? Why does it happen? What is the sequence of events?
- 3) **Context**—What happened before this section? After? How does context affect the meaning here?
- 4) **Conflict**—What is the main conflict here? What caused it?
- 5) **Resolution**—What is needed for resolution? Who must do it?
- 6) **Author**—What can be said about the human author or writer? Why was it written?
- 7) **Reader Identification**—With whom (or what) in the text do I identify? Why have I made that choice?
- 8) **Function**—What is the function of this passage in terms of the entire work?
- 9) **Puzzles**—What is surprising or does not fit? What questions do I take to the commentaries?
- 10) **Emotions**—Do I like this text? Dislike it? Why? With what feelings am I left?

Discussion:

1. What excites you about the weekly preaching process these days? What is burdensome about the process?
2. Try to recall a recent sermon introduction and how the intro gave shape to the larger sermon.
3. Name one thing that has helped your ministry of proclamation in the last year more than anything else.