



* drama & set up pieces

the MINISTRY PAPERS

lights, camera....

Can you imagine it...your friend has finally said yes to coming along to church. This has taken months, maybe years to happen. All those conversations, all those invitations and now they're finally in the door.

The service starts, so far so good, they're still sitting next to you. SUDDENLY the lights go off, the stage lights up, some figures move onto the stage. One staggers off into the darkness giggling, the others stand looking like stunned mullets. They mutter a couple of lines to each other "shmee shmee". You're not too sure who it is because the scripts cover their faces. Another figure disappears off stage unable to hold their hysteria, you can't really tell what's so funny cause you haven't actually heard what anyone has said. This is worse than the summer reruns of 'A Country Practice'.

Finally one of the figures blurts out "God is cool", the lights flicker back on. It feels like you've been watching this longer than all the episodes of Star Wars put together. You don't want to glance in the direction of your friend because you're not too sure whether you still want them to be there or not.

Sadly many Christian dramas seem to end up like this. You're never too sure whether the script or the acting is worse. Or at the other extreme - there's more actors than the phantom of the opera but the script seemed like something from 'Home and Away'. You're left wondering if God even made the credits.

Is there still a place for drama in the church? Or is it a boom from the 70's we want to forget? We're going to explore these questions. We won't find out what the Bible has to say about drama. But we'll see how drama can help the word of God dwell richly.

LEADERS:...before taking someone through this paper, review the two key introductory MINISTRY PAPERS: 'the ministry training church' and 'meeting one to one'.

Our church has two main 'arms': small groups & ministry teams. This 'drama ministry' paper relates to the **ministry teams** arm. It's designed to help your drama ministry leader introduce you to what it means to be part of our drama ministry team. The focus is 'set-up pieces'. These are dramas designed to introduce the big idea coming in the bible talk later in the service.



investigate

read Colossians 3:12-17

1. As followers of Jesus, who are we? What is our status before God (verse 12)?

2. What should characterise God's chosen people (verses 12-14)?

3. What is it that we are to do with the word of Christ (verse 16)?

4. What should be our motivation in what we say and do (verse 17)?



think &
apply

5. How should the word of Christ dwell richly in our set-up pieces?

6. What will it mean for our set-up pieces to glorify God?

7. What will it mean for you to glorify God?

the set-up piece

the MISSION of the set-up piece...

...to PREPARE people to hear God in his WORD



setting it up

You've got the big idea, or have you really got it? Before you begin to write your script to match one of Shakespeare's, have you spoken to the preacher, have you really understood the big idea? Maybe your creative genius can be saved for another time. The preacher may have already come up with an idea to clearly communicate the big idea to people. If they haven't.... dang, that's a blow. Now you need to hit the drawing board. So as you sit with your creative juices flowing, remember that the set-up piece aims to introduce the big idea of the Bible talk.

Now you're ready to set it up. Yeah, so now what? Well what's the first question that comes to mind from the big idea? What's a theme, question or idea to get your average church punter into the ball park? Here's the skeleton of the set-up piece. But don't hurry this stage. You don't want it to fall into a heap. Check to see whether what you've come up with is sturdy: run your idea past someone because the question is, will it connect? Will it help to communicate the big idea?

What's next? You have broken your big idea down into a key theme or question. But how are you going to get this out into the arena? Try to come up with a drama or form of media in which you can illustrate this big idea. It doesn't have to be the next Tolkien saga, just something short and snappy that gets the big idea into people's heads. Remember your mission is to PREPARE people to hear God in his WORD.

adding some creativity

God is the masterful creator, so it goes without saying that he is the master of creativity. God's Word itself is a diverse story of narrative, poetry and imagery. If God has revealed himself to us in such a creative way then we would do well to avoid making his Word boring and bland. Keep this in mind as you prepare your set-up piece. People can get over-familiar and consequently, bored with the same old story about Jenny and Shane each week. Something fresh and interesting will have the benefit of capturing attention and leaving a vivid image that will be remembered for some time.

But how do you add creativity? It goes without saying that some people just find it easier to be creative. However, like most things, creativity is a skill that can be nurtured. The first thing to realise is that creativity takes hard work! Be prepared to put in some good thinking time; sit there and brainstorm, jot down any thoughts you have. Try to think laterally; use the spare time you have on public transport or driving to let your mind wander. Think through your church's recent diet of set-up pieces. Have you had lots of dramas lately? Could you use a film-clip, a song or even a puppet? Humour is good, but not every set-up piece needs to be funny.

Become well acquainted with the Bible passage; explore the key images and ideas. You might even want to read other relevant parts of scripture to see how God's word explores certain themes and ideas in different ways. Explore some of these images. For example, for a recent set-up piece on Paul's conversion in Acts, the big idea was, "God can change anyone." Taking that key idea of "change", your mind can then wander into different creative pastures. For example, many songs quickly come to mind, some about a person's inability to change, some more optimistic in their outlook. What do people think about change? What sorts of things/creatures change in this world? (chameleons, butterflies, frogs etc). What if an insect was stuck in a stage of metamorphosis? It is quickly apparent that there are many avenues to explore. With this example, it was decided a drama involving people dressed as insects would be a fresh and vivid (and admittedly slightly offbeat) way of exploring the idea of change. Once you've settled on an idea make sure that your great idea is not let down by poor execution. Spend a little more time getting props together or adding interesting little touches. A few minutes extra can make all the difference.

what's the big idea?

There's a well argued case that most people are only really capable of walking away from a sermon carrying one central theme. If the preacher doesn't give one, then the listener will make one up for themselves. No matter how hard the preacher might try to get five separate points across in a talk, generally when asked what the talk was about, a member of the congregation will convey the single concept they took out of it.

At church we try to cater for the listener by preparing messages that convey one big biblical concept or one Big Idea, that will be clear and challenging to all who listen. To take it even further still, not just the sermon but the entire church service should be shaped around expressing that biblical concept. It all needs to work together so God's word is firmly implanted in the heart of the listener. This is especially critical for the role of the set-up piece.



drama to dwell

Once you're clear on the role of the set-up piece (clear that the set-up piece is there to help God's word dwell richly in his people), a memorable drama can be a helpful way for people to recall the big idea of the Bible talk. So drama can be a great way to help God's word dwell richly in the lives of his people.

what great form...

A well-scripted, well-performed drama can communicate as effectively as any type of media. But on the flipside, a poorly written, poorly executed one may leave the audience cringing. Church drama is a powerful tool... think about it... its aim is to reinforce what'll be said in the talk and it happens ALL in a visual way. Because we're a society driven by media, it offers a level of "edutainment", educated and entertained at the same time... it's definitely a powerful tool for all of us today... But for a drama or set-up piece to be the ultimate way of reinforcing the truth we need to make sure it's the Word of Christ that dwells richly all the time.

close the door... now open it... ...and smell the fresh air

You have closed the door and immersed yourself in the word, your mind has been stretched, you've sweated over the ideas from God's word. You think you've understood how the word of God can dwell richly. Now for some fresh air! Give your thoughts some freedom, open the door so your imagination can go wild.



This is the most important, most time consuming but most rewarding stage of writing a set-up piece. Hopefully the big idea has challenged you, now, how to communicate this idea from God's word to the audience. You need some time to think how we can creatively get this theme across. Don't rush it! Once you get this right, everything else you're looking for will fall into place. What you're looking for is the vibe of the drama...



it's the vibe...

The vibe is the idea driving the drama. It's where you want the drama to finish. This is the line you would give your actors as you brief them about the drama. It's the thing the whole drama hangs from. This is the thing which will help you write the script, pick your costumes and fill the stage with props. It will help you start and finish your script. Cause when you've got the vibe you know where you're heading.

you want to make it ...

So you want to be a movie star?? Another Brad or Angelina perhaps?? Not really... Well before you jump up on stage have you thought of jumping into help in different ways... Picking up a toilet brush, being on the roster for cleaning... or for supper, mowing the lawn, setting up church?? That's a great set-up piece!

Because of our pride and our sinfulness when we do things up front we often become centred on ourselves instead of our loving God... Remember there are many different ways we can serve the one who gave up His Son for us.

scripting:

It is recommended that you write a full script for your drama. The advantages of scripting are:

- * it ensures that you put careful work into your drama.
- * it keeps you from rambling during the drama.
- * having a full script means you have a handy resource to share or use in the future.
- * if a great new line emerges through practicing—it can be worked into the script—and won't be forgotten.

You will need to work hard at memorising so that your drama flows smoothly during delivery. Some tips on script writing:

- * think about your starting and concluding lines before going too far into your script.
- * don't make your sentences too long or wordy – try using everyday language. Script it the way you speak rather than the way you write.

don't leave 'em hanging

Don't leave the audience wondering what the set-up piece was about. At the end of the set-up piece the service leader needs to make a strong, snappy connection between it and the big idea of the Bible talk. If we fail here, then the set-up piece was a waste of time. Guide the listeners to what they will hear in the Bible talk. Sometimes putting the big idea into question form is the most effective way of doing this.



the icing on the cake

you've already put the time into your preparation. But now for the icing on the cake. These are simple ideas but can really help to make the drama memorable and the word of God dwell richly.



- ✦ think of some costumes that will help bring characters to life
- ✦ some props can really help bring it alive
- ✦ music or sound effects get all the senses working
- ✦ lighting can help to create the focal point and signal the beginning and close of a drama
- ✦ make sure you've thought through all the 'stage management' issues—has any technology had a practice run? who's turning lights on & off? does the sound guy know what's required? are people needed to take props on & off? does the service leader (& lights person) know the finishing line?...

the do's and don'ts of drama

to be an effective drama team in our mission for Christ there are some important practical pointers we need to remember so that people will remember the reason for the set-up piece.

- ✦ **DO** speak slowly and clearly
- ✦ **DO** slow the pace and elevate the pitch of your voice to engage the audience
- ✦ **DO** face the audience, don't turn your back on them.
- ✦ **DO** be "over the top": it engages people
- ✦ **DO** use gestures and facial expression to help convey the character's emotions
- ✦ **DON'T** slip out of character, stay focussed

lights, camera, ACTION

Let's try putting some of these ideas into practice by having a go ourselves. Try creating a set-up piece from one of the three big ideas below.

- ✦ **2 Timothy 3:14 – 4:5** Holy Scripture is divinely inspired and infallible, as originally given, and it is the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct
- ✦ **Exodus 12:21-30** God carries out his promise to save his people – the Israelites had to learn it through the Passover – and remember it – how much more is that true for us and the greater salvation of the cross of Jesus
- ✦ **Ephesians 1:1-15** God has given every spiritual blessing through the death of Christ



kill that butterfly

"His palms are sweaty, there's vomit on his sweater already...oops there goes gravity" - eminem '03. For a lot of people eminem's words seem all too familiar. One of the greatest fears people have today is public speaking, and getting up in front of people to play the "fool" in a set-up piece isn't any easier. Here are some tips for people involved in a set-up piece to help kill those butterflies.

✦pray

(It goes without saying that prayer's important). Pray that you wouldn't be showing off your talent, cause remember the whole point of a set-up piece is so that the word of Christ would dwell richly in the hearts of those who hear.

✦prepare

memorise your lines, permeate them into your brain. This will help you feel a bit more comfortable with your part in the set-up piece.

✦practise

arrive on time (30 minutes before the service is an ideal time). Run through your lines with others involved, ask any questions you have about the script.

✦pray

(It goes without saying that prayer's important). Pray before the service with those involved in the set-up piece, this'll help keep you focussed on the mission to let God's Word dwell richly.

Being nervous is a common feeling when getting up in front of people. Hopefully these tips will help kill that butterfly.