



The world is your stage

David Jenkins offers some ways of using drama



In vision

We live in an extremely visual age. Television and movies constantly vie for the attention of our young people. The average teenager spends almost three hours a day in front of the television. How can we communicate visually? How can we control the message and viewpoint that is communicated?

We can use drama, specifically sketches of between six and ten minutes to capture people's attention. Drama can work to invoke the emotions and help to make services more relevant and visual. It is such a vital tool in speaking to our young people – through the dramas themselves, and through the process of rehearsal.

Drama, like other ministries, should be excellent. It is better not to do drama at all, than to put on a bad drama. It is not glorifying to the Lord, wastes the time of those watching and can demoralise those who are performing. So, how do we go about producing drama and utilising it in our churches and youth groups?



Use story

The greatest use of stories was by Jesus himself. Drama is brilliant at setting up a message, provoking thought and questions. And isn't that exactly what Jesus did? He often began his message with a parable, a story to illustrate his point. It's important to remember, though, that his parables were not the point. They were used to illustrate his point, and that is our job as dramatists. Two thousand years later our job is still to illustrate his point!

Drama is terrible at preaching. Let the preacher do the preaching! Use drama to set the scene.



Be contrary

One way in is to show the *opposite* of what the Bible says so that people can identify themselves in the characters, or laugh at a familiar situation. Take some short Bible passages and give each one to a group of young people. For example: Proverbs 12.15, Proverbs 13.3 and Proverbs 21.13. Give a simple, modern day dramatic interpretation of the passages. The young people then take the outline and make up the dialogue. This helps them to 'own' the pieces they are working on. Leaders could work with them or leave them to it.



Sing it up

Another successful method is to give groups the titles of two songs. They have to start their scene with the one title and end it with the other (for example *Help!* and *We Are The Champions*.) You can also use Bible verses or thought-out sentences in this way.



Tell the story

Another type of drama that can work well is the acted narration. One person reads out a narration or passage of Scripture and the rest of the group moves accordingly on stage. The young people might also want to add their own dialogue at times and that can be built in. This method is quick to prepare and fairly easy to execute.



Take it up a gear

For scripted drama we go for the four A4 rule for church services (a drama shall not be any longer than four sides of A4 paper), and the three A4 rule for youth events. You don't have to be a writer to start a drama team – get hold of some scripts! There are plenty of books or websites offering suggestions. A good drama does need a director. This is someone who sits offstage and directs the actors around the stage and helps them to interpret the script so that it seems alive.



On the streets

Street drama can be difficult, lines are seldom heard and there is a fine line between successful and embarrassing. Having said that, you can be creative. We provided some dramas for an outside event put on by local churches. The stage was just outside a department store, so we created scenes involving a family that had just been Christmas shopping in the store! Believe me, you grab attention when people think there is a big family argument going on!

So drama can be made up within guidelines, read aloud and interpreted, or it can be learnt from a prewritten script. The best way to get good at drama is to do it.

Resources

Possible sketch ideas: www.fools4christ.co.uk

P. Herbert, *Sketches with scalpels*, Kevin Mayhew Ltd, 2000, ISBN 1840035226.

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