

Exploring Worship and Mission

Telling the Good News: Drama and Worship



A series of workshops designed to help local congregations explore different aspects of worship and their relation to mission



Aim: to discuss and experience the role of drama in worship.

This not just a drama workshop! Discussion about how drama can help us explore our mission in and through worship is just as, if not more, important than the practical exercises.

Mission Thinking



In the Middle Ages mystery plays were performed in the market place. They brought the good news to life. They made the story of salvation accessible to all people (practically at a time when the Bible was not in English)

Using modern language and dress they related the gospel to contemporary life and issues.

In our mission today we want to bring the Good News to life, to tell the story to all people, in a way they understand and relate the gospel to contemporary life and issues.

Our worship encourages, inspires and is part of the way that we proclaim the Good News, teach and nurture believers, tend to those in need and seek to transform unjust structures of society.

As in the Middle Ages, drama is still a tool of mission and worship, both inside and outside the church building. Using action, humour and tragedy we can draw people in, help them see things from another perspective and make the Good News live in their hearts today.

Objectives:



- 1) To reflect on the special dimension that drama can bring to worship and mission.
- 2) To list a broad range of dramatic methods that can be drawn upon.

Practical Matters

Timing:

The workshop is designed to last about 3/4 hours.

Workshop space:

One large, comfortable room with movable chairs.

You may want to create a 'stage' area at one end for performances.

You will need:

- Flipchart/whiteboard, pens and paper for the group.
- A display of resources is for the people to browse at the end of the session.

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1. Welcome

(Duration 5 minutes)

1.1 Include practical matters if people have come from places (toilets, fire exits etc.)

1.2 Give words of explanation about the purpose and structure of the session.

1.3 Open the meeting with a prayer

2. Warm up

(Duration 5 minutes)

2.1 Ask each person in turn to say their name and their favourite character from a play, a soap opera or a TV series.

2.2 Do some gentle warm up, shaking out of feet, legs, fingers, hands, arms, gently rolling neck round on head etc. To relax the body as well as the mind. (These are best done standing up but can be done sitting down if someone is unsteady on their feet).

3. Act One – Seen One

(Duration 15 minutes)

3.1 Ask people to pair up and describe to each other the best drama they have ever seen or heard. It could be sacred or secular, from the theatre, TV, radio, anywhere!

Concentrate on:

- The feelings that the drama provoked,
- What stayed with you afterwards that made it memorable.

3.2 Share thoughts in the large group to draw out what drama can do. (It can change the way we think about things, shake our emotions, teach us something without us realising it etc.)

NB The name of the play and its contents need NOT be shared in the big group as this is far too time consuming. (This may need careful handling!).

Write key points on a flip chart and display the sheet somewhere everyone can see it.

3.3 What does this tell us about how drama can enhance our mission? (e.g. It can change the way we think about things; touch our emotions in a way other forms of spoken word can't which can help get the message across etc.)

You may wish to feed in some of the 'mission thinking' about mystery plays here.

Write key points on the flip chart and display the sheet where everyone can see it.

4. Oh no – not the Prodigal Son!

(Duration 35 minutes)

Using a well known Bible passage we shall draw out the variety of methods of drama we can use.

4.1 Ask the group to come up with types of drama we can use to tell the story of the Prodigal Son. **(allow up to 10 minutes)**

(e.g. Monologue; dialogue; group speaking; mime; acting it in period style; giving it a modern twist; using a few well chosen props; making the words rhyme; rap version; one person talking and the rest miming; a news report on what has happened with interviews; making it funny; bringing out the sadness in the story; each character telling part of the story in turn from their perspective; a 'pantomime' version with audience participation...)

4.2 Divide the group into smaller groups and assign to each group a scene from the story of the Prodigal Son and an acting method to use.

(Possible scenes – the younger son asks for money and leaves; the wild years leading to money running out; famine and life among the pigs leading to a change of heart; reconciliation with his father and preparing for the party; the older brother may be best dialogue.

Re-assure the group that no-one is obliged to perform their piece to the whole group. This will be optional.

*Allow 10 -15 minutes rehearsal time and 5 – 10 minutes for performances, if appropriate – **no more than 20 minutes in all.** Remember , this is not just a drama workshop! The discussion that goes on about how drama can help us explore our mission in and out though worship is just as, if not more important than the practical exercises.*

4.3 Discuss the value of using drama to retell Bible stories. (Duration 5 minutes)

How does this help us in our mission?

Luke 15: 11 -32

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5. Telling tales

(Duration 25 minutes)

Drama can help us express the problems of life today as well – think of Alan Bennett's Talking Heads or Eastenders.

1) Divide into small groups. Give each group a life situation to dramatise. Give them each an accompanying Bible passage on which to reflect.

These passages do not necessarily need to be a feature of the drama. The dramas do not need to be completed and acted out at the end of the (short) time allowed. We shall just see what kind of ideas have emerged.

Remind people of the list of types of drama put together earlier. Have they thought of anymore? Allow up to 10 minutes to work on the drama and 10 minutes to feed back ideas.

2) Discuss what value this type of drama has for our worship and mission *(Duration 5 minutes)*

6. The Reviews

(Duration 10 minutes)

1) Ask people to reflect on what they learnt during the session.

2) Consider what is needed to make drama work as part of our worship.

Mention practical aspects e.g. adequate practice; making sure everyone can be heard; as well as being clear what the role of the drama is in each e.g. as a discussion starter; to tell a Bible story; to underline what has already been said.

7. Grand Finale – Worship

(Duration 10 minutes)

1) Prepare in advance some form of dramatic reading in which everyone can be involved.

- Psalms – these can be read in all sorts of ways. Try writing it out so that it starts with a few voices and builds up in the most profound moments.

- Use a reading with sound effects that everyone can do (see Telling Tales published by CPAS for ideas).

- Use something scripted e.g. from the Dramatised Bible.

2) Contemplative prayer (actors often use relaxation techniques to wind down)

You could try something like this...

Get comfortable, sit with feet on the floor, close eyes, focus on what you can hear around you; then focus on your own breathing until it is regular and you feel relaxed.

Jesus says 'when you pray go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father'. Think of your favourite quiet room – in your house, or somewhere you have visited – in your mind... enter the room and shut the door. Jesus is coming to visit you here very soon. What are you thought and feelings? What do you want to say to Jesus? Imagine you can hear Jesus coming towards the room – the door is opening and he enters... Spend some special time together with Him. The time for meeting Jesus has come to an end and Jesus leaves the room. It is time for us to be aware of your breathing, becomes aware of the noises around you. When you are ready, open your eyes.