# Parable Players:

# Drama Ministry for Youth Ministry

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# “Parable Players: Drama Ministry for Youth Ministry”

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# *Introduction - Why Drama?*

I’m sure that just about anyone who has ever had the pleasure of working in youth ministry will agree that teens and drama go well together. Young people are natural actors and love to express themselves through song, skit, and dance. Drama gives your youth group clown a focused outlet for his nervous energy. It helps the shy and sensitive teen express her hidden heart. It brings out the poets among your group and provides a way to show the world just what these beautiful young people are made of. Drama touches lives and heals brokenness. It praises God and shouts at the devil. It reveals the depth of who we are as children of our heavenly Father.

A number of years ago, when I started working with teens in a private Catholic school, I found out very quickly that drama could accomplish things that teaching could not. Not only did it help me to see the beauty of the young people, but it showed me their pain as well. And as these teens performed and shared themselves, I saw the tremendous potential for healing through drama. It was real healing, real transformation. I saw lives being touched by understanding – the words they were sharing from their hearts reaching into the hurting hearts of other teens and revealing the heart of Christ. The more they joined in the drama, the more everyone connected and the closer they were drawn to their Savior. It was the Body of Christ in action, and the young people became living parables of healing for themselves and their fellow teens.

Ever since that wonderful time, I’ve been head over heels in love with drama. I’ve used it in church settings, at workshops and seminars, on retreats, and wherever I’ve worked with teens. It has blended well with leadership training and retreat ministry. And wherever I have used drama the results have been the same – lives are changed forever by the power of Jesus Christ and His message of love. That is the strength of drama; that is the power of taking the Gospel and sharing it through skit and play and mime and dance.

Many churches and schools use drama and many have specific drama ministries. What I hope to do with this book is to share some of my ideas and experience and give you some basic tools to help you start your own drama ministry. The materials in this book have been tested in real settings with ordinary teens doing extraordinary ministry. There is no magic formula for achieving success. Everything is presented in simple terms through simple methods. However, this form of drama ministry incorporates time-tested tools for youth ministry planning, small group dynamics, and leadership training into the drama ministry. In this way, those who do the dramas are equipped to follow up with those who view them and can incorporate the drama ministry into their overall youth program. This helps the group to realize the ultimate goal of all ministry: to lead others closer to Jesus Christ and walk with them as they find healing and grow in their faith.

It is important to remember that the main focus of each drama is on the words and movement, rather than on the technique. I’ve found that it isn’t really necessary to have perfection when you have commitment to the ministry and allow the Holy Spirit to guide what you do. In over twenty years of working with teens I’ve discovered that in the end, their beautiful hearts and amazing gifts come shining through because they become convicted in what they’re doing and truly want to share themselves with their peers. What you’ll find in these pages is straight talk and great drama – the rest is up to you.

I’ve also added a selection of drama materials in the resource book which include short skits, fillers, mime, and large projects; and I’ve provided some insights in the sections of this manual as to how to work with teens to get the most from their efforts in a short amount of time. Let’s face it – with all the demands for teens’ time from the world, there aren’t as many hours left for preparing for drama ministry. Many of the skits and plays use only two to four people and many require little or no memorization. I don’t spend a lot of time on props or sets either. With the many different types of settings I’ve worked in, I’ve found that simpler is better. As I said, the material and the presentation will do most of the work for you. As your drama group grows, you’ll be able to do larger projects with more elaborate sets, but what is here will allow you to get started right away. And you’ll be pleased with the results.

Included in this manual is a three-day drama training retreat that can be adapted into individual sessions. If at all possible, however, I would urge you to find the time to take your actors away to help them grow in relationship with one another in a place free of distractions. Spend time together where the young people can really look inside to see how God has gifted them. Not only is the retreat about honing acting techniques, but it’s also about discovering who we are as believers and how we are to live out our call to reach out to the lost and hurting for Jesus Christ.

I pray that God will bless you and work powerfully in your group as you create your ministry and grow together as **God’s Parable Players**.

# Part One: Drama Ministry for Evangelization

# ****Section One – Using Drama to Evangelize****

## The Power of Story

Jesus loved to tell stories. You can’t get very far in the Gospels without seeing that they’re everywhere. And you can’t read one of our Lord’s stories without being touched in a powerful way by its simple message. A strong-willed son who is humbled by life and returns home to his loving father teaches us about reconciliation and the mercy of God. A man considered to be a half-breed traitor stopping to rescue a traveler who has been attacked by bandits on a lonely road teaches us compassion and the brotherhood of all men. The seeds a farmer sows have lessons to share. Even an oil lamp and a pinch of salt can show us who we are in Christ. And the only props and sets Jesus used were the sights and sounds, the objects and the people around Him. Christ’s parables were powerful, meaningful dramas. The power was in the words and the meaning was in the man.

The Gospels tell us that Jesus never spoke without using a parable *(Matthew 13:34-35)*. Through such stories Jesus revealed *“what has been hidden since the foundation of the world” (vs. 35)*. He saw the hurt and the hunger in the people around him and He reached out to them by sharing the secrets of the Kingdom through His parables. God has given us all a hunger for the Truth and the desire to search out those pearls of wisdom within His Word. As we hear, we take those words and make them a part of us. That is the power of a good story – it speaks to that longing for meaning that we all have within us. That is the hunger that drama taps into – our desire to be loved and accepted, and to know that there is more to our lives than just living day to day.

What made Jesus so effective in His storytelling? I’d like to suggest three things that were a part of every story He told that hold the secrets to success for making drama a vehicle for change in our lives.

First of all, ***Jesus’ stories were real***. They involved elements from real life. They were full of things that were familiar to His audience and easy to relate to in a practical way. They were believable and down to earth, full of the imagery and dialogue that were common to the men and women of His day. He talked about farmers and fishermen, shepherds and servants. These were the poor and the outcast – ordinary people who felt their emotions deeply and learned just as humbly. His lessons were drawn from men sowing seeds and casting nets into the sea, finding lost sheep and preparing for a master’s return. There was nothing in Jesus’ stories that was beyond the understanding and experience of His hearers.

Next, ***Jesus’ stories were transferable***. As Jesus spoke, He knew that each and everyone in the audience had the potential to let the reality of His parables reach deeply into their lives in a new and powerful way. In other words, His stories always took the hearer from the practical everyday world into the realm of God’s eternal Kingdom. Through grace, the Holy Spirit gave those with open hearts the ability to grasp the greater reality of Jesus’ parables with the eyes of faith.

Finally, ***Jesus’ stories were living and active***. They didn’t remain words to be heard; they were filled with the Spirit’s power and led to acts of love and service as they were lived out in each transformed heart. Those who heard these stories were presented with a challenge and left with only two options – to accept or to reject the words and their deeper meaning. Those who accepted His words had their hearts opened and were set on the straight and narrow path of salvation; those who rejected them were left with calloused and closed hearts and remained on the wide and winding path of the world.

These same three elements of story need to be part of every drama the youth group presents. The stories must be taken from the lives of the hearers and filled with simple images that they can easily understand. The drama must take the audience from the everyday into the eternal. At the conclusion of each drama, the audience should be left with two choices – to choose life or death, Jesus or the world.

### The Spirit in Our Witness

The ultimate purpose of your drama ministry is to witness to others the Gospel of Jesus Christ, with the purpose of leading the lost into a deeper relationship with Him and strengthening and equipping those who are transformed for acts of service to the world. The message of Jesus’ love is simple and direct, though it is not something others can grasp unless the Holy Spirit is acting upon them. Paul talks about this in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16:

*Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written,*

*“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,*

*nor the heart of man conceived,*

*what God has prepared for those who love him,”*

*God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what person knows a man’s thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit.*

*The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. “For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.*

*(1 Corinthians 2:6-16, RSV2CE)*

This passage contains some very important truths for drama ministry. Paul is telling us that only those who have are touched by the Holy Spirit can grasp God’s eternal plan for their lives. Those with the Spirit are able to judge what you present in the light of God’s eternal Word as revealed through the Body of Christ – the Church. Without that Spirit, your ministry will fall on deaf ears. Understanding this great Truth – that the Holy Spirit is the One who will move in the hearts of those who will witness your drama – is what will make the difference between a show and an effective drama ministry. With this in mind, let me suggest five simple practices when preparing and carrying out your ministry:

1. ***Let Prayer Permeate All You Do.*** Ask God to guide you as prepare your skits, practice them, and then ready yourselves to share them with your audience. Offer the honor and the glory of your witness to God, the true author of your story. Let a prayerful attitude carry you as you act out your drama and pray deeply for each and every member of the audience as you finish and take the next steps of evangelizing and teaching through your ministry.
2. ***Make It a Personal Thing.*** Look at your own spiritual journey and see how the drama you will perform fits into your story. Draw from your own experience when searching for the right feelings for your character. Spend time with your role until it becomes a part of you, and give all you have to give in your performance, letting your own faith journey spill out into the lives of your audience.
3. ***Be a Part of the Whole.*** Remember that your role is one small part of a greater work that God will do. Be in unity with the other actors as together you live out the Gospel message. See yourself as an instrument in the hands of God and trust Him to finish the work you begin in His Spirit.
4. ***As Much as Possible, Know Your Audience.*** Choose skits that will work best with your audience. As you perform and then follow up after the drama, realize that you’ll have to use words that are appropriate for those who will witness your drama, being careful not to use too much “religious” language with those who might be uncomfortable with it. However, don’t be afraid to be bold when you feel the Holy Spirit prompting you to reach out to and challenge your audience to go beyond their comfort zones.
5. ***Make Your Drama a Proclamation, not a Production.*** Never let the performance and your own ego take over the message and overall purpose for the ministry. Be confident and humble, real and concrete. In the end, realize that God does the real work and you are only servants doing your duty before God *(See Luke 17:10)*.

## Leading Others Along the Salvation Road

The message of salvation is simple and beautiful – yet, it is something that takes a lifetime to fully complete. During the drama, there will indeed be those “aha” moments where individuals in the audience come to a deeper understanding of what you’re trying to do and draw nearer to Jesus. There may even come a real moment of personal transformation or a commitment to a deeper relationship with Christ. Remember that God has chosen us in eternity *(See Romans 8:29-30 and Ephesians 1:5 and 1:11)* and calls us in our deepest and darkest moments, drawing us ever nearer to Himself *(See Psalm 42)*. What may take place in the hearts of those who experience your ministry can be both exciting and confusing, powerful, and frightening. You must be prepared to follow up with your audience after your drama so you can come alongside each person to continue the journey along the path God is calling them to walk. Our personal salvation stories are both a road and a destination – something we are moving toward and something that shapes us with each step we take. The steps you take following a drama presentation will help each person to find his or her way along that path.

Most Christians will agree that the following are important truths about the journey of salvation:

* *God loves you so very much and wants you to know and love Him. (John 3:16, John 17:3)*
* *We need Jesus in our lives in order to find our way to heaven. (Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23)*
* *Jesus is the only way of salvation. He paid the price for our sins. (John 14:6, Romans 5:8, 1 Corinthians 15:3-6)*
* *Jesus offers us the gift of Himself and calls us home to heaven. (John 1:12, John 3:3, Romans 10:13, Ephesians 2:8-9)*

In your ministry, when you find there are people ready to make a deeper commitment to Jesus Christ, those powerful truths will serve as the foundation for the journey they will take, and the relationship they will build with Jesus. You, for your part, have the awesome privilege and the solemn responsibility to draw these fellow journeyers into the Body of Christ and help them to connect more deeply to the Church, the sacraments, and a more intimate prayer life. This is why there is so much leadership training into the ministry. The two cannot be separated.

## The Ministry of Healing

For those who have been transformed by Jesus Christ, life can sometimes feel anything by victorious. Many young people face incredible pressures as they move through adolescence; and for believers, these pressures can often seem to drown out the voice of the Holy Spirit in their lives. In a sense, this group needs to hear the message of the Gospel all over again. A large part of your drama ministry will focus on bringing Christ’s healing to those who need to renew their walk with the Lord. As believers are able to find healing through the ministry, they too will become more effective in their spiritual journeys and ultimately, in their ministry to others. All that you do will help to offer more “solid food” to those who need renewal as they refocus their lives on Jesus.

Healing ministry essentially involves two things: love and obedience. As young people are given an authentic experience of Christ’s love for them, and as they believe and accept that love, they can become open to growth. As they trust in that love, they can respond to God’s call in obedience. There are dramas in this book that focus specifically on healing – on those who come to a greater awareness of God’s love for them in Jesus and find the strength to make a choice for renewal and restoration. That trust and that choice for obedience is something that is learned. Consider the following:

*O LORD, my heart is not lifted up,*

*my eyes are not raised too high;*

*I do not occupy myself with things*

*too great and too marvelous for me.*

*But I have calmed and quieted my soul,*

*like a child quieted at its mother’s breast;*

*like a child that is quieted is my soul.*

*O Israel, hope in the LORD*

*from this time forth and for evermore*

*(Psalm 131, RSV2CE)*

It is not the newborn baby that is quiet and still in trust before her mother, but the weaned child, the child that has learned through her relationship with her mother that she has nothing to fear. This is what the dramas are meant to offer these young believers. They reveal the God who has saved them, loves them perfectly, and calls them to something greater.

## Simple Techniques for Drama

Drama does not have to be complicated or elaborate. The young people don’t need to be seasoned actors to be effective. The basic principles and methods for acting out a skit or a mime are simple and easily learned. Each section will go into more specific detail about how to carry out each particular type of drama, but below are some general ideas to consider:

* ***Put Yourself into the Part.*** This has often been described as “method” acting. You immerse yourself into your part so much that you essentially “become” the character you are playing. You look inside to draw from experiences and emotions from your past in order to live out the role you are playing now. However, Christian drama involves even more than that. In preparing for the part, begin with prayer, Bible study, and spiritual reading, praying over the biblical principles brought out by the skit. Thus, the message, more than the method, becomes the focus for the acting. Seek out the Holy Spirit to guide your words and actions as you share the Gospel through your whole-hearted participation in the drama. The goal is to become a living message, an incarnate prayer from God to the audience.
* ***Watch, Speak, Move and Discuss.*** Watching how others (a coach or more experienced actors) perform a drama will give you a good sense of what is expected. If possible, try to learn from those who have done it before. It is also important to hear yourself speak the lines and to see yourself going through the motions of each scene, so that you can become familiar with the drama and make it your own. You’ll retain your lines and your movements much more quickly as you actually perform them. Then, as you practice before the other actors, they can offer suggestions on how to improve your performance.
* ***Remember – Simpler is Better.*** Don’t feel you have to give a prize-winning performance or you’ll make that, rather than the Gospel, your goal. Use movements that are fluid but subtle. The only time you’ll “exaggerate” your movements will be when performing physical comedy or dramatic mime. Consider whether it might be appropriate to have remote microphones on your actors so they won’t have to project as much. Many actors turn projection into exaggerated speech.
* ***Don’t Take On Too Much.*** As your ministry group prepares a project, try to keep to two or three dramas. The less you take on, the more spiritual energy you can devote to each performance. Balance your participation in speaking roles, mime and follow up, and go where your gifts can be used best. The Drama Retreat has more to say on specific planning for drama projects.
* ***Debrief, Evaluate, Affirm, and Give Glory.*** After every performance, take time to sit together to pray and discuss how the performance went and how you felt about your participation, as well as what you can do to make it better. Take time to affirm each actor and the group as a whole. Then take it all and hand it back to God, giving Him the glory and honor for your ministry on His behalf.

## Ministering to the Crowds

As a follow-up to your dramas, your ministry team will select people to lead a discussion or activity in keeping with the theme of the drama you have just performed. These leaders can be the main characters in the drama, the youth leaders or the narrators of the drama. Often someone besides the actors needs to take on that role because the actors are preparing for another drama. Below are several types of follow-up activities that you can facilitate, depending on the theme of the project, your goals, your audience, and the setting.

1. ***The Witness Talk –***

Usually after a more serious dramatic presentation such as a two-person skit where a character makes a life-changing decision, the actor who played the part of that character will stand before the group to share his or her real life transformation story. The five general principles listed at the beginning of this section can be applied specifically here to help the person prepare for his or her talk. Below is a basic outline for sharing one’s personal testimony:

* + ***Getting Started –*** Start by summing up the basic theme of the drama and how it ties in with the message of the drama project. Then let the audience know that you will be sharing your own personal testimony and how Jesus has shaped your life.
  + ***Sharing Your Testimony –*** Present your talk as a three-fold journey (your life before your change, your transformation, and your walk since), considering these stages of coming to a deeper walk with Jesus:
* ***Call/Search –*** You begin in a place where you saw that what you had was not enough and something cried out for more. In your confusion and pain, you searched for meaning and failed, leaving you to a crossroads where God could move in your life in a new way.
* ***Discovery –*** By God’s grace, the Lord came and touched your heart and led you to a new place of discovery, renewal and restoration, where you saw that He was with you the whole time, supporting you and carrying you to where you are now.
* ***Rebirth –*** This is how you live now in Christ, hopeful and growing in your walk, living out all the possibilities of a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ, and ready to share the journey with others and walk along with them as well.

More on sharing your testimony is presented in the training materials.

1. ***Large and Small Group Hands-on Activities -***

You may want to prepare the audience for the activity by giving out materials beforehand, but most of the time, you share briefly what you hope to accomplish in the next several minutes, perform the skit and then do the activity afterwards. Be open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit as you go through the activity. You may find that some things might not be working and need to be put aside in favor of something else God is doing among the group. Some examples of activities are:

* + …completing a worksheet with discussion questions that you share together afterward.
  + …building something using clay or craft materials.
  + …putting together a pre-packaged puzzle or object.
  + …using discussion cards with topics relating to the theme of your presentation.
  + …involving audience participation in impromptu skits.

1. ***Small Group facilitation -***

In this activity, each person on the drama ministry team becomes a leader of a small group for a time of deep discussion or prayer. If possible, pair an adult with a youth leader or put two experienced youth leaders in each group. You may want to use a combination of discussion, personal sharing, and prayer. This can be a more open time, where the young people discuss with the leaders their impressions about the drama and its implications for their lives. The leaders can use a handout similar to those used on the training retreat. You can follow up the discussion with a time of prayer for the specific needs of those who are participating.

1. ***Praying the Healing Prayer –***

At the end of every performance, there will be an opportunity to invite the audience to participate in a prayer service for healing and conversion. Although this can be a simple spontaneous prayer that is led by the youth leaders, there are several basic prayer services in the “*Dramas and More*” section that you can adapt to your needs.

# *Section Two – Small Skits for Evangelism and Teaching*

### *The Power of Small Skits*

For many groups, small skits will be the meat and potatoes of your ministry. They are the most concrete, succinct, and practical of the dramas. They are essentially visible parables that focus on specific themes and drive home a point in a way that the young people can relate to very well. Many teens are more comfortable with skits to start, although the mimes are easier to prepare and carry out.

Skits can be used in almost any setting, from retreats to meetings to worship. Most of the skits in the “Dramas and More” section use two to four actors, take from five to ten minutes, and are set up for the stage – that is, they are meant to be acted out on a stage apart from the audience. Many of the skits are humorous; some will use familiar characters from television and stories, while others will present Bible characters in a unique way. There are also skits that are very serious, dealing with topics ranging from spiritual apathy to family crises, running away to suicide. Usually a drama project will incorporate both the humorous and the serious – using the funny skits to loosen the group up and then using the serious skits to strike deep spiritual cords just before a response activity. It is really a matter of balance, of knowing how to choose the skits to fit your audience’s needs.

A typical skit will do two things. First, it will **grab the attention of the audience** right from the start. It will introduce the characters and the characters’ characters – who they are and what they have to offer to the skit. In each skit the audience will learn very quickly who is a snotty kid, a troubled teen, a wisecracking bungler, or a wise and caring counselor. The skit will also reveal the theme and set the tone in the first few seconds. The audience will immediately see the conflict presented in the skit and get a sense of where the drama is headed. Of course, there are exceptions to this rule, as when your skit is meant to pull the audience along with a bit of mystery toward a powerful concluding point.

The second thing the skit will do is to **immerse the audience in the message**. Whether it is a humorous or serious skit will make no difference. By the end of it, the young people will be caught up in the action and characters, and moved by the meaning of the Gospel truths presented. In other words, a good Christian skit will do more than entertain – it will also stir something deep inside those who witness it.

## *Specific Uses for Small Skits*

Deciding when to use a small skit is easy. Anytime you need to make a point is a good time to use a skit. The tricky part is deciding how to use the skits in different settings. Below are a few suggestions to consider.

1. **Youth Group Meetings and Retreats –**

Fellowship meetings and retreats come in all shapes and sizes but generally have within them the elements of **community building**, **prayer**, **teaching**, **response activities**, **witnessing**, and **fellowship** (See also Section Six). Here are some guidelines for using skits within these elements:

* + **Community Building.** As an icebreaker, a skit can be a good way to start off a gathering, providing the group comes in and is in order right from the beginning. Since this is usually short of impossible, it may be good to use a drama-style improvisation activity instead. This will allow for lively participation in a controlled way. The “Dramas and More” section has some great improvisational activities for group settings. As an opening activity following community building, prepared small skits can do a great deal as well.
  + **Prayer.** The key here is to remember that prayer does not always have to be a “serious” kind of thing. While many times a mime is more appropriate for prayer, a short serious biblical skit can also set a prayerful tone. But more importantly, a humorous skit, tastefully done can help present God as a joyful Father and show the joy of praising God. Usually a prayer service will begin with a short introduction (a “Call to Worship”) and then bring out the skit, or you may have a time of worship and then present a skit to help facilitate a time of meditation. There are several skits in the “Dramas and More” section that can be used in prayerful settings.
  + **Teaching.** Good short skits can all but replace a homily or teaching time because the actors can ask and answer all the right questions and present the teaching in a concrete form. Usually a leader will follow-up a skit with a talk or, at the very least, summary statements. One thing skits don’t often do is present specific Bible verses to back up ideas, so following up a skit by referencing the appropriate Scripture passages is important as well.
  + **Response Activities**. Here is an area where improvisational skits that call for audience participation offer the most for the youth. It is important to note that using a skit after a talk or time of prayer that doesn’t involve the audience can be overkill, unless the youth have been actively involved in either beforehand. In this case, the response you are looking for is one of reflection and thoughtfulness. One suggestion is to use a biblical skit and stop from time to time during your presentation to get the reaction of the youth to the message.
  + **Witnessing**. Here, a presenter could use a skit to share his or her story of transformation. Of course, this would have to be written by the youth leaders based on the testimony of the young person presenting. You need to be careful here, because there is the danger of turning a young person’s story into a show. In most cases, the traditional sharing is best because it allows the Holy Spirit to speak through the person as he or she shares his or her testimony live. One idea you could use is to have the person read his or her testimony and the actors present a mime afterwards, during the playing of an appropriate song for closure and reflection.
  + **Fellowship.** Fellowship time is often a more “free choice time,” and is something that happens as a result of the other elements of a youth group meeting. This is not generally an area that lends itself to skits, though using an improvisation with audience participation can be a learning tool and great fun.

1. **Church Worship –**

Small skits can be used at certain times within a Mass or other worship service, if done respectfully and appropriately. The most important thing to do is to work with the worship team to incorporate the skit into the service. It is essential that the worship team and the congregation understand that the use of a skit is not simply a “filler” but a vital part of the celebration. Skits can be used in any of the following ways:

* + **Call to Worship.** A skit can call the congregation to order and give them a focus for the entire worship service. It can set the tone as reflective or joyful and connect each person to the Body as a whole.
  + **Reading of the Word.** A biblical skit, especially when the text is read and acted out by silent actors, can enhance the Scripture reading. Just keep in mind that some may not be comfortable with what they may consider “substituting” a skit for the Word of God. It may require some education by the pastor about the living and active nature of God’s Word before something like this is used in worship. Showing respect for the Word is crucial when using a biblical skit.
  + **Homily Illustrations.** Often, skits are used to set up a teaching point at the beginning of a homily. Most pastors use specific illustrations to get the truth of their teaching across to the congregation; so it makes sense to consider using a “living” illustration. Obviously, it is important for the pastor to see or at least read the skit before preparing the homily and for the young people to know what will be preached so they will have a greater understanding of how their performance will fit within the context of the homily. However, never underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit to weave together in unity the skit and homily when there is less contact beforehand. Short skits usually work best, perhaps no longer than a few minutes, but there are exceptions to this rule.
  + **Communion.** Mimes or short “parables” are best suited for reflection before or after Communion. It can lead the congregation into a more prayerful experience of the Eucharist if it is introduced properly and respectfully. It is important that the skit does not overshadow the sacrifice and the celebration, but rather invites the family to the Communion table with joy or leads them into reflection and joyful praise after all have received.

1. **Street Evangelism –**

Taking your skits “on the road” is a step for a more mature drama group because it requires greater spontaneity and adaptability on the part of the youth, and also because it opens them up to criticism from the world. Many leaders move into this type of ministry by first having the drama group be part of a church outing or “On the Green” meeting, so that the young people will gain some experience in working in this type of setting. Usually, street evangelism includes a lot more mime with the skits.

1. **Church Events –**

Using skits at church events as a form of “evangelizing entertainment” is a way to expand the ministry of the group beyond the young people. Youth skits can be presented at church pot luck dinners, festivals and bazaars, social gatherings for new members, coffee houses, and just about any other event that gathers the membership of the church, along with family and friends who might be alienated from the Church. It is one of those things that serve to keep your youth group “visible” before the church and helps others to see the group as more than just fun and games. As with any drama project, choosing the skit will depend on the circumstances and needs of your audience.

Remember that the most important thing to consider in using skits is that they are living parables, stories of the heart brought to life and laid out for your audience to experience in a sacred moment of sharing in the Spirit.

**Drama Techniques for Small Skits**

Because skits involve taking on the role of a character, there are a few specific things to focus on when preparing for this type of dramatic presentation. Certainly the five principles for witnessing in acting listed in Section One would apply here. But below are some additional considerations to help you get into character:

1. **Let the music, setting, and fellow actors have an emotional effect on you.** Actors can usually draw from each other and “soak in” the atmosphere around them to help tap into their own deep emotions. All of us are frequently moved by the tears or joy of an actor. It should be a much deeper experience as you work within a scene with fellow actors. Draw from their depth and strength and let the moment sweep you up in its power.
2. **Get in touch with your past emotions and bring them into the present.** All of us filter our emotional responses through our past experiences. However, don’t become so caught up in those past experiences that you lose the “realness” of the present moment. For the purpose of the drama, accept that what you are going through is an actual first time experience, for in a real sense, it is!
3. **See through the eyes of the character you play.** Remember that you are playing a character, whether a silly street-corner preacher, a troubled teen, a stuffy adult, or a television personality. One of the reasons actors often seem stiff on stage is that they focus too much on how they are playing the character. For the most part we don’t usually think about how well we are playing ourselves (though admittedly, we all sometimes “act” out who me are to a certain extent when we are self-conscious). The idea is to lose yourself in the character you play, stepping outside your own personality so that you may convey what the character represents.
4. **Tune out the audience – Tune in to the audience.** In one sense, you need to forget that the audience is there and go with the moment. In another sense, you need to keep the audience in mind, often playing to them, especially when using humor. The key is to have a servant’s heart that is strong enough to shut out the distractions and weak enough to invite the audience into your world in order to connect with them and bring them the healing and truth of Christ.
5. **Make your performance “serious play.”** Have you ever watched a cat at play? Every movement a cat makes is so deadly serious. Sometimes when cats play, they become so caught up in their frenzy that they seem to be totally out of control. They often tear around the room with an intensity that is wickedly funny, yet deadly serious. That is the kind of “serious play” you need to bring to your performance. It should be a seriously joyful expression of your commitment to living as a child of God – a playful reverie and a jubilant labor of love done the in the sober service of your audience.

In short, let the Holy Spirit pick you up, mold you into a great player in God’s kingdom, and carry you through your performance with a playful and sweet surrender that spends all your energy for the sake of God’s eternal plan. Let the Divine Artist turn you into a great work of art for His sake. Be open to your giftedness and God’s sweet grace. Let your own creativity, your strength, and your weakness be at the disposal of the Gospel and the needs of your audience. Your performance is meant to make their burdens light by yoking them with Jesus Christ. It is more than just entertainment or diversion; it is a serious call to all who are witnesses of the story to come and join in the play.

The training section in this manual will have more specific ideas for choosing and preparing for small skit ministry. One additional suggestion is to go through the resource section and read through all of the short skits, reflecting on how they affect you emotionally and sizing them up for the group. Think about which of the young people would fit with the roles in the skits and where you might be able to use each skit in your ministry. Often, it is in those quiet moments when you least expect it that the Holy Spirit will put a burden on your heart that you feel can be addressed through a skit. If you are open to His leading, you may also be surprised at who God puts forth to act out a certain skit – maybe someone you would never have thought could handle the role. Having a general familiarity with the skits (and all the dramas) will prepare you for those moments and lead to some wonderful results.

# *Section Three - Commercials: The Lighter Side of Reaching Teens*

This is a short section, not because it has little importance to your ministry, but because what needs to be said about using “commercials” or filler segments for the ministry is rather simple.

Commercials accomplish three things:

1. **They help to “punctuate” your theme.** Just as an exclamation point gives more “oomph” to a sentence than does a period, so too does a well-placed commercial help to drive home the whole theme of the drama project. Now, as you go through the commercials and fillers in the “Dramas and More” section, you may start to wonder how this can be true. These dramas may seem rather silly and almost purposeless, but if you look deeper, you’ll find that there is a message in each one. Perhaps you’ve seen some of the very good thematic video curricula out there and noticed how effectively they use fillers in between segments to compliment the overall theme. The idea is very similar to what takes place here.
2. **They serve to transition a group from one activity to another.** One of the toughest parts of doing drama is moving from act to act without losing your audience. If things get too serious they might withdraw or become uncomfortable. If things get too silly – well, you know what can happen then. Commercials help reinforce a point in a skit while allowing the audience to move on from it. Having a filler piece in between longer dramas helps maintain a flow to the presentation and keeps the dreaded “lag time” from turning a quiet attentive group into a mob of screaming teens.

As part of the transition, commercials can bring a sense of comic relief to a very serious moment. It has been my experience that if teens are left too long in a somber mood, they will quickly become restless and awkward. A good rule of thumb is, with a few exceptions, to use humorous commercials in drama projects. With all that is out there competing for our teens’ attention and ascribing God-like significance to material things, the fillers that will impact your audience the most are those that allow us to laugh at ourselves. In a very real sense, humorous material cuts to the heart of the matter and gets the point across in a way that is inescapable and real. Commercials help to maintain that kind of balance to your drama project.

1. **They give the actors and others breathing time to set up for the next presentation.** As we said, lag time can lead to chaos and actors need time to prepare for each skit. Fillers allow for costume changes or to set up props for the next drama.

The resource section contains a collection of commercials and fillers for you to use. These commercials usually require two or three actors, though there are some that are done solo as well. If you’d like to make up your own filler you can do what’s called a “list.” Lists allow for single performers. The person steps on stage and announces her list (“The Top Ten Things That Distract Me in Church”) and then proceeds to read the list in a silly fashion as other actors act things out in the background for an added visual affect. Often the teens can make up their own list or borrow something from something online that will work just as well.

In performing a commercial or filler, timing is everything. You’ll need to gage your audience to know when it is appropriate to “ham it up” or “wrap it up.” Most of the time, you’ll perform the commercial like a radio or television announcer, delivering your speech as if no one was present, but, of course, pausing for laughter, so your audience will hear your presentation. This is a job for your biggest class clowns, the ones who can think on their feet and get the laugh while staying in character. The training retreat contains some good exercises that will certainly help you to spot your funny men and women.

# *Section Four – The Dance: Using Mime and Movement in Praise and Worship*

**Drama at Its Best**

Mime, when done correctly, can be one of the most effective forms of drama with teens. It can bring out real depth from the actors and reach into people’s hearts in a powerful and profound way. Good mime combines movement with music and/or narration to tell a story without being showy or pretentious. It is a high art form because it draws so much from your young actors. It does, in a real sense, what Jesus did – it puts flesh on the Word of God.

Now you may think of mime as something an annoying street performer does (We have all seen the “trapped in a box” thing and groaned!) and not something fit for worship. You may have even seen your share of poor “liturgical dance” and found it a bit much to take. In my years of working with teens, I saw quite a bit of bad mime and lived to tell about it. In fact, after working in a number of settings where mime was either wholly embraced (that means it took over worship) or shunned completely (it was seen as something only those “flaky” youth ministers did), I decided enough was enough. After a lot of trial and error, I was able to come up with something much subtler, more graceful and simpler for work with young people. This form of mime is truly a “dance” unto the Lord – sacred movement in praise and submission to the God who formed us and loves us beyond measure.

As I looked into using movement in worship, I noticed that there were many places in Scripture that talked about dancing. Just consider these few references. When the Israelites had marched through the Red Sea, Miriam led the women with dancing *(Exodus 15:20)*. The book of Ecclesiastes tells us that there is a time for dancing *(Ecclesiastes 3:4)*. David, after slaying Goliath, returned home to dancing and song *(1 Samuel 18:6)*. In fact, when the ark was being brought back to Jerusalem, David leaped and danced with all his might *(2 Samuel 6:14)*. God has turned our mourning into dancing *(Psalm 30:11)* and we are called to praise His name with singing and dancing *(Psalm 149:3, Psalm 150:4)*. Even Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, spoke of God’s people dancing with joy *(Jeremiah 31:4)*. All of these passages refer to using dance – joyful movement – to give praise to our God.

Dancing comes naturally to many; just play a song for a child and watch her dance with no inhibitions. But as we get older, many of us tend to become a bit more reserved about it. Others, like me, have not been blessed with rhythm and coordination and need to work a bit harder at it; but the desire to move to honor God is the same. If we look at the above Scriptures, we can see many different types of dance. There is the dance of awestruck wonder and elation of the Israelites, David’s high-spirited dance of unrestrained joy, the subtle dance of mourners who move out of their time of sorrow into a time of restoration, and the dance of God’s people in unified praise to the One who is above all things. There are subtleties to each, but I would like to suggest several elements of sacred movement that should characterize your drama ministry:

1. ***Dance ascribes to God the glory due Him.*** Dance is never done for our own purposes. The kind of dancing that young people often engage in is not really the kind of dance that Scripture talks about. We are not to use our bodies to attract others like animals or to spend our energies in wild abandon, but to give focused praise to God. However, God never said we couldn’t get “rowdy” for Him. In fact, many of the psalms call us to make a joyful noise to God (*Psalm 95*, for example). But the ultimate purpose for our dancing must be to give glory and honor to God. It is what is in the heart that matters, and while some may misinterpret what we are doing (remember Michal in *2 Samuel 6:16*), our joy must flow for God’s glory and not our own self-interest.
2. ***Dance is something the Spirit of God prompts us to do.*** Remember, it is *God* who turns our sorrow into dancing. Miriam and David broke into dancing in response to what God had done in the lives of His people. It is God’s promise again and again that He will bless us in such a way that our wailing tears will give way to leaping for joy.
3. ***Dance is how God’s people celebrate the saving events in their lives.*** All of us who know Jesus know that we have been saved from the enemy’s hand. In Christ, we have experienced the return of God’s Spirit to the temple of our hearts. There are many special events in the life of a Christian that call for celebrating with dance. After the birth of each of my children, I recall many times cradling them in my arms and dancing for joy. I’ve been to many events where young people came to a new understanding of Jesus and renewed their relationship with Him, and I couldn’t help but be moved to dance with joy to the music of the singers who were leading our time of praise. Whatever the event, when we come to recognize God’s hand in it, it is cause for dancing and singing for joy.
4. ***Dance is how God’s people come forth from times of sorrow.*** Whenever there is struggle, despair, and profound sorrow, it is only through offering God our surrender in thanksgiving that the burden is lifted. The lowly posture of mourning must give way to the gentle gesture of submission and then to uplifted movement of joyful gratitude. Remembering the great deeds of the Lord and all He gives to us leads us to work through our sorrow and come out on the other side dancing in delight, celebrating our salvation in Christ.
5. ***Dance is ultimately a communal affair.*** It’s very hard to keep a dance to yourself. One time at a retirement party for my father-in-law, I found myself out on the dance floor with my baby daughter, swaying back and forth to the music. Off to one side I saw my mother-in-law, teary-eyed and taking it all in. It wasn’t simply that she found her son-in-law and his daughter precious; it was that her own daughter’s daughter was being cradled in the arms of her daddy. It connected all of us in a moment of love that we understood without words. That’s what happens when we dance for the Lord. Others in the Body cannot help but be moved by it. Just think how much easier it is to get your young people dancing when you take them to a youth event where hundreds or thousands of teens are all dancing at the same time! Dancing is something that is meant to be shared together – a common expression of all that God has done and is doing in our hearts right then and there.

## Choreography for the Uncoordinated

For many teens, especially males, mime and dance can be a scary thing. After all, who wants to be perceived as anything less than cool? I remember a gym teacher from my elementary school days who decided that he wanted to teach us dance instead of basketball. All of the guys were mortified as he commanded us to slide to the right and skip to the left. The embarrassment was bad enough, but I had the added humiliation of not being very good at it. Most of it I have long since blocked out, but there are some lingering memories. To this day, I feel self-conscious to dance in public. I’m sure this is the experience of many other young people as well. It is difficult for teens who are already self-conscious about so much in their lives to get up in front of an audience and express the deepest parts of themselves through dance. So what is the solution?

Over the years of working with teens, I have put together some basic choreography for those among us who find it hard to dance. There are no pirouettes or back flips, and almost no rhythm is required (though that always helps). These are simple, gentle-yet-powerful movements that almost anyone can do without special skills or fear of ridicule. Before we discuss them, here are a few simple suggestions to keep in mind when performing before your audience:

1. ***Remember – focus is everything.*** Mime is a serious thing, even when the emotion you are sharing is joy (Remember the cat illustration?). Let yourself be caught up in the Spirit so that He can guide you. It may help to think of yourself as a robot being guided by remote control, or a person guided by a beautiful invisible wind.
2. ***The face can tell the whole story.*** Your facial expression will be the most powerful element in the dance. It will communicate so much of what you are trying to say through the mime. Your audience will take notice of your face, so be aware of what you’re saying with it.
3. ***Go for fluid, not fancy; grace, not glory.*** In over 20 years of doing movement with young people, I have never heard anyone commenting on the great (or poor) dancing skills of the participants. What matters to your audience is the love and commitment you put into the mime. People expect a prayerful dance, not a classical ballet performance. Let the moment and the Holy Spirit guide you along and let your movements be smooth and natural. Always keep in mind that you are sharing the Gospel in what you’re doing.
4. ***Get real and lose yourself in prayer.*** Have you ever seen a person who “performs” when he is praying (*read* *Luke 18:9-14*)? You wonder if he really prays that way when he is alone with God. Think about your own prayer life. Just as your prayer flows freely when you cut the theatrics and get into a real conversation with God, your dance will become more authentic when you forget about pleasing people and get real with God. The wonder of dance as prayer is that it is both your communication with God and an expression of what God is doing in you. Simply surrender to what is happening, relax and let the love of God spill out into your life.

## Specific Movements for Sacred Dance and Mime

Below are a dozen basic moves that can be expanded and adapted for each mime. They are only a starting point for your group. As you progress, you will find yourself creating new movements based on these. Also, as you discover the talents of your teens, you will try new steps (even “real” dance moves) as you grow in new directions; but the truth of the matter is, the basics will be what carry your group. As I’ve described these movements, I’ve added some basic suggestions for what they can represent.

1. ***The Sweep.*** Here the actor extends his arm across his body and “sweeps” it in the air to the other side. The positioning of the hand and the fluidity of the motion can be adjusted to convey different feelings. The sweep can also be done with both arms moving in the same direction for a more dramatic effect. This movement is done with great deliberateness to convey power and strength and is usually done to show creative action or change. When the head is turned away in the direction of the sweep, it can be used to convey a sense of wiping guilt away or turning away from sin.
2. ***The Direct.*** This is similar to the Sweep motion, though it is used to direct a person or to point something out. The hand, fully extended or with the index finger pointing, depending on emphasis, is slowly or forcefully directed toward something. It may be a destination (a place an actor is to go) or an object (something the actor must behold). The head is usually turned in the direction of the direct. In some instances, both hands can be used to display all that is around the person.
3. ***The Uplift.*** The actor raises up one or two hands as if lifting or pushing something upward. The palms can have the thumbs out to suggest openness or release, or in to suggest offering or focus. This move can be started with the arms at the sides or done in a sweeping motion with the arms beginning down and behind the person and then moving up and above the head. It is meant to show prayer, offering, or lifting up a person or object to God. It is often used to lead a procession in joy as well.
4. ***The Reach.*** This is like an uplift with attitude, though the hands may move either up, down or out. The hands are kept close to the body and are moved out in either a straight or “wax on, wax off” sort of motion. The fingers are extended but curved (or cupped) as if grasping or holding onto something. The whole body moves as if being pulled behind by the reaching hands. The actor has a look of intense longing on his face. This movement conveys intense emotion, longing or deep desire.
5. ***The Fold.*** In this move, the arms are pulled down and inward around the face as the body “retreats” to a humble posture. The person may also drop to her knees or to a genuflecting position as this happens. Think of the person as closing herself up like a flower at night, hiding in fear or shame, or gathering things to herself. These images convey great emotion or total surrender to the audience. Many mimes will end a performance with a fold movement
6. ***The Submission.*** This is similar to the fold but the person swings the extended arms, palms facing up, behind the body as she comes down in a kneeling or genuflecting position. This usually is done before another performer, though it is also done alone when it is understood that the person is submitting to God.
7. ***The Cross (or The Angel Wings).*** Here the arms are extended outward and upward, in a crucifixion posture or a gesture of flight. It is used to express the freedom found in Christ, to show the agony of the Lord’s death, or to convey a sign of joyful submission. Often, when using the “wing” posture, the person moves back and forth or in a circular motion, to convey a sense of flight or giving oneself to the Lord.
8. ***The Crescent Walk (with Spin).*** When moving from one place to another on stage, actors can use this style of walking, moving the foot subtly in a slight swinging motion in the shape of a crescent moon. The foot can sweep with the curve to the outside or inside of the moving foot. Many times, the actor puts his hands behind his back, folds them across his chest, or holds them in a prayerful gesture, depending on the mood to be conveyed. A spinning move can accompany the walk to convey a sense of moving over great distances (remember your stage is only so big). It is done with the whole body in one quick fluid motion and punctuates the walk very nicely when done right.
9. ***The Oppression (or The Fall).*** Falling is always done slowly, with a drop to the knees (or a slight bending of the knees to the side) and a graceful drop to the side. This needs to be done without making any noise and takes a little practice. Sometimes a folding movement is incorporated into the falling. This movement is used to show death, oppression, pain or despair.
10. ***The Resurrection.*** Equally as important as falling is rising. Here, the person gets to a position of sitting on her knees, and then pushes forward and up, using the ankles to rise in one smooth steady motion. Different arm movements (angel wings, fold, reach, etc.) are used with this to express different levels of activity such as praise, joy, resurrection, etc.
11. ***The Blessing.*** This is a motion of sharing and touch. The hands tell the story as they reach out and extend over another person, cradle the face, embrace, bless, or transfer power. It can be made with one hand or two. Usually the gesture is made from the top down; that is, the hand is extended and moves down to the other person.
12. ***The Rejection.*** This is simply a gesture of turning away made with the whole body. It can be used to show the person turning away from God, the path of salvation, or even something evil. I can also be used to show the person’s reaction to being rejected by God or another. It is often done with the arms moving together in a swinging motion for greater emphasis.

There are, of course any number of other movements that you can use during mime. For example, one actor could hand an object to another, embrace him or lift him up from the ground. In each case, the motion is natural, but the techniques of these twelve basic movements can still apply (In the examples, above, the reach, fold, or lift would be used.). The retreat has time built in for practicing the movements. What is most important is for the actor to put all of his or her passion, focus and energy into the performance and follow the suggestions mentioned earlier in this section.

***Using Mime and Dance in Worship Ministry***

Mime and Dance are used mainly for worship, though the timing for using them is something you need to consider carefully. Nothing can kill a good worship service more quickly than a poorly-timed dance or a poorly executed mime. You need to ask yourself three things before adding one to your worship:

* Is it prompted by the Holy Spirit or your own desire to “enhance” the service?
* What mood or “tone” is the movement meant to tap into, sit with, or celebrate?
* How will the dance or mime fit into the overall worship experience?

Below are a few suggestions for using mime in worship:

* ***Begin with prayer.*** Spend time in the Word, meditating on the Scripture being used for worship. Ask yourself how it affects you where you are today. Be sure to put your own ego, your need for recognition, and your fears or insecurities aside in submission to the greater good.
* ***Look at the worshippers.*** Consider where they are spiritually. Are there unchurched among the group? Have they come here reluctantly or with uncertainty? Or, are they ready to take their relationship with God to a new level? What are their personal circumstances? What are their needs? Granted, you may not always know the answers to these questions; but anything you *do* know can help in determining which mime to present.
* ***Consider your circumstances and your surroundings.*** Think about the context of the worship. Is it on a day when the worshippers have had adequate rest? Has there been preparation for the worship through other activities – for example, in a retreat setting? Has anything recently happened that has brought sorrow or joy to the worshippers? What is the weather like – sunny, cloudy, rainy, cold or hot? Are you outside in a beautiful setting or in an antiseptic and drab building? You may be able to use your circumstances and surroundings to draw more from the worship such as holding a Baptismal service on the shore of a lake or a candlelit Mass in a dark, old building. Set up your movement to reflect or respond to all that has been and is happening, all that is around you, and all you hope to accomplish with your worshippers.
* ***Come to unity as a worship team.*** Find out from the pastor or speaker, what his or her homily or teaching will be all about. Talk with all the members of the worship team about the songs, prayers, and other elements of the service. Work together until there is a sense of unity as to what kind of movement will work best, when within the service it will best fit, how it will shape the worship, and how it will be shaped *by* the worship.

While much of this may seem like common sense, it is important to realize that worship is not simply a matter of common sense, but a matter of tuning in to God’s will, coming before Him in humble submission, and lifting up words, hands, and hearts in praise to His holy name. Worship needs to be both carefully planned and open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The dance you use to express your worship must reflect careful, thoughtful, and humble preparation for God’s glory and honor.

# *Section Five – The Dynamics of Healing and Helping*

In Section One we looked briefly at the ministry of healing and a few specific activities your drama group can use to reach out to your audience following a drama. In this section, we’ll dig a little deeper into the basics of developing your drama team into more effective helpers. While using drama gets your audience’s attention, the true transformative phase of the ministry comes in the follow-up. Knowing how to respond to the joys and sorrows, the dreams and struggles of those who are touched by the drama is perhaps the most important aspect of the whole ministry. Below are some basics for those who will take a leadership role in the healing process.

Group Dynamics and Leadership Roles

Whether you are called to speak to an entire room of people or to sit with a small group, it’s important to have an understanding of your role as leader and how the dynamics of the group can shape the way you facilitate a discussion or time of sharing. Here are three roles you, as a leader, will take on.

# Unifier – As a leader, it is your job to help each person feel he or she is a welcome and valuable member of the group. This involves encouraging everyone to contribute positively to the dynamic of the discussion, exploring the unique gifts that each person brings, and using a give-and-take approach to reach your goals in unity, as you allow the Holy Spirit to breathe life into the experience of sharing together in Christ.

* ***Enabler*** – Related to unifying the group, a leader needs to maintain a safe environment where each person can open up and share his or her ideas freely without fear of judgment or ridicule. You need to use active listening to gain a sense of each person’s unique needs and potential, while creating a calm and caring atmosphere to promote open sharing. The goal is to begin to build real and solid relationships among the group members so that growth can take place through the sharing you do.
* ***Facilitator*** – It’s important to guide the experience along, keeping everyone on track by clearly defining the goals of the group and the experience, exploring ideas in a respectful and thoughtful way, leading everyone to that place the Holy Spirit is carrying you, and bringing closure and a sense of “more to come” to the experience.

#### Using What You’ve Got

It’s important, especially for artistic types who tend to get caught up in the moment, not to forget that attention to logistics can actually be considered an art form. Jesus used the natural acoustics of his landscape to make Himself heard (the reason He spoke so often near water), took time from His teaching to take care of the physical needs of his listeners and used things like setting and weather and culture to help convey His message. He stood or sat, walked on water or shone like the sun, when the time was right. He knew how to put His whole being into His speaking, and His open heart and transparent spirit drew others around Him. Below are some practical ideas for using what you have around you in a more “Jesus-like” way.

* ***The Setting***– Think about what you want to accomplish. Do you need tables and chairs and lots of light, or will the carpeted floor and a few candles do? Will outdoors work better than indoors? Think about ways you can change your setting to enhance your experience. As a general rule, adapt the space to fit your situation, not the other way around.
* ***Leader Skills***– Keep an “interested” posture, giving each speaker your full attention. Use silence to gently “nudge” group members to share. Keep your inner dialogue going to keep your personal needs in check and listen actively to others, especially to non-verbal clues. Be a serious, caring guide, not a pushy group dictator.
* ***Group Defenses*** – Some members may find ways to disrupt the group by making sarcastic or funny comments; projecting their feelings onto others and tossing around blame; using generalizations about people, situations, or life instead of owning up to their feelings; or changing the subject when things become uncomfortable for them. Deal with each person directly in a firm, Christ-like manner.

## Dealing with Difficult Group Members

Without spending too much time on the idea of disruption, it is necessary that your drama team be prepared for those who might not be entirely cooperative. Drama is not everyone’s cup of tea and the way it can touch people on a number of levels can, at times, bring some awkward feelings to the surface. Teens often respond to those kinds of uncomfortable feelings with disruption. Below are three basic types of difficult group members and some suggestions to consider when dealing with them.

* ***Too Much To Say Person*** *–* This person will focus on his or her problems, offer lots of “helpful advice” to everyone else or generally ramble on a lot. Simply jump in, thank the person, summarize his or her main points and move on.
* ***Angry Person*** *–* This person will use aggressive (or passive-aggressive) tactics to intimidate or embarrass the leader or other group members. She may argue for the sake of arguing, act immature, or talk only about things she is interested in. Sometimes this person needs to be ignored, but most of the time, she needs to be confronted in a firm but caring way. You need to say which behaviors are not acceptable and why, while stressing which behaviors are helpful to the group. Help from the other participants should be used sparingly.
* ***Not Tuned In Person*** *–* This person may be confused about his feelings, timid about sharing, or simply bored. Gently calling this person by name and using direct questions will help him to open up. Drawing out what he cares most about and working it into the sharing will go a long way as well.

*The Art of Helping*

“Christian helping” involves an open, honest relationship between two people. The “helper” walks along with the “helpee,” sharing his or her experience with the Lord. The helper offers the Holy Spirit’s strength to the helpee through prayer, loving support, and gentle guidance in order to help him or her come to a place of transformation and growth in Christ.

Helping is closely tied to drama ministry because drama exposes both the artist and the observer to the deeper parts of themselves and creates a teachable moment, an experience where change and growth can occur in an atmosphere of love and vulnerability. That’s why it’s so important to know how to respond to the open and honest sharing that will take place in discussions following a drama. Below are some basics of helping.

***Qualities of a Good Helper - A Good Helper…***

* ***Loves Unconditionally –*** accepting the helpee as a unique individual created and loved by God *(See John 15:9-17, Psalm 139:13-14a, Romans 15:2).*
* ***Is Relational –*** seeing the process of helping as a shared journey and leading the helpee into a deeper relationship with the Lord through personal witness *(See Matthew 5:16, Proverbs 9:8-9, Hebrews 10:24-25).*
* ***Relies on the Word –*** to guide him in responding to the helpee, knowing that God’s Word is eternal and true, and sharp enough to cut to the heart of the matter. He uses God’s Word to confirm where God is working in the helpee’s life *(See Hebrews 4:12, 2 Timothy 3:16, Joshua 1:8, Psalm 119: 105).*
* ***Is Empathetic –*** or able to “feel with” the helpee, experiencing her emotions without being overwhelmed by them *(See Romans 12:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, Romans 12:15).*
* ***Is Focused –*** during the helping process so that all her attention and energy is focused on understanding and responding to the helpee in the Spirit *(See James 1:19, Ephesians 4:2, 2 Timothy 2:24-25, James 3:1-12).*
* ***Maintains an Inner Dialogue –*** to be aware of the meaning in the helpee’s words and actions, and his own personal feelings about the helpee and the helping relationship. *(See James 4:7, Ephesians 4:15, Hebrews 11:6).*
* ***Prays through the process –*** asking God to come into the helpee’s life, to protect them both from Satan’s lies and temptations, and to see them both through to the end *(See Romans 8:26-27, John 15:7, Colossians 4:5-6).*

***The Process of Helping – Some Practical Suggestions…***

* ***Posture –*** Sit close to the helpee, leaning forward, giving the helpee your full attention and concern.
* ***Eye Contact –*** Look into the helpee’s eyes with acceptance, affirmation and reassurance.
* ***Facial/Body Movements and Tone of Voice –*** Be calm and caring, but reflect the helpee’s feelings and tone. This will help him to feel comfortable enough to explore his issues more deeply.
* ***Active Listening –*** Focus on the content of what is said and the feelings behind the content. Accept the helpee’s story as you are hearing it now, without planning your answers, passing judgment on the helpee or trying to offer advice or solutions – in other words, telling the helpee what to do.
* ***Responding –*** Use continuing responses (“Uh huh.”, “Go on, I’m listening.”, etc.). Restate the content of what is said in your own words, reflect the feelings you are sensing from the helpee and share your understanding of the meaning behind the content and feelings. Let your emotions reflect like a mirror what the helpee is feeling, letting her know that you are in touch with what she is going through.
* ***Questioning –*** Use questions to allow the helpee to explore her feelings more deeply, rather than to gather information too quickly. Questions should be open (“How did that make you feel?” / “What will you do now?”) rather than closed (“Did that make you feel angry?” / “Will you try to talk to that person?”).
* ***Confrontation –*** Avoid confronting the helpee until he shows a willingness to change and grow. Confrontation is meant to challenge the helpee to face feelings he is uneasy about or unaware of.
* ***Personal Sharing –*** This should be done only when it helps to further the “moment” by adding the clarity of your own experience to the discussion. It should not be in the service of your own needs. The person being helped is usually the one doing most of the personal sharing.
* ***Touch –*** Touch should be used to offer support, encouragement, and strength to the helpee and not to satisfy your own personal need for contact. You need to be careful the helpee does not misinterpret your touch as a sexual gesture. Knowing when it is appropriate to use touch comes with experience.

***A Caution to Consider***

It is important to note that Christian helping is not providing “practical” solutions, “sound” advice, or making decisions for the helpee. It is not offering false reassurance or making light of the helpee’s problem, passing judgment on the helpee for what he or she says or has done, or using “techniques” to look for “causes” or to avoid things you find uncomfortable. Christian helping involves the helper and the helpee walking the journey together, growing from the experience and keeping your eyes fixed on the goal of mature life in Jesus Christ.

***Section Six – Drama Ministry Planning and Follow Up***

Once your group has established itself and your team members have been trained in basic drama skills, your next task will be to set up a specific ministry for your group. The materials outlined in this section are similar to general principles I’ve used in leadership training for years. I have adapted and included them here because they fit so well into the drama ministry. Ultimately your drama ministry will tie itself into the life of the youth ministry and the ministry of the church in general. The principles here can help the drama ministry integrate into the larger life of the Body.

***Discernment: A Team Effort***

Many people equate discernment with a little voice from God that dictates one’s every step. But discernment is really about acknowledging our dependence on God and striving to know and live out His will in our lives. It is connected to our individual gifts and calling from God, and so it is essential that your drama team looks to God as the author of all it does. Below are some suggestions for developing a more discerning heart as a team:

* ***Begin with God.*** He is the Sovereign Lord, the Author of all our lives and works. Spend time together in prayer, inviting Him into your process so that you will grow in your relationship with Him. Then you will know where He is leading you.
* ***Listen and confirm.*** Take time to hear how God is speaking in the lives of each drama team member. Look for confirmation of what you hear by looking to God’s Word, the life of the Church, your prayer life, and your present circumstances and past patterns where you have seen God working.
* ***Start small, but think big.*** When you sense where He is leading, get going. Respond immediately in faith and take it one step at a time. Work in the now, but look beyond what you can do and trust God to do what He says He will do – much more than we can hope for or imagine (*Ephesians 3:20*).

This is nothing more than accepting that there are two things in the mix here: God’s eternal and perfect sovereignty and our human responsibility in light of our salvation in Christ.

***The Essentials of a Planning Meeting***

Here we are talking about the more “practical” or logistical side of planning the ministry. While the above suggestions are principles to guide the group, the following are steps in a specific process for accomplishing God’s purposes through the drama team.

* ***Pray.*** Prayer develops our relationship with God. It keeps us humble and hopeful. It reveals God’s will and gives us the courage to live it out. Use prayer time to work through personal struggles to become more open to God’s working in your lives.
* ***Explore.*** Consider where God is leading you as you confirm it in His Word. Talk about the overall goals of the ministry (evangelization, growth, etc.) and tie your plan into them. Select your goals with openness, always reflecting on where they may take you.
* ***Refine.*** Once you see where you want to go, think about what you will need to accomplish your goals in practical terms. However, don’t limit yourself to what you have, but rely on God to supply what is lacking.
* ***Plan.*** Divide your work among those gifted for specific tasks. Come up with concrete and practical steps for accomplishing each task and the goal itself. Set up a system to make sure each task is completed. Prepare thoroughly for success in God’s name.
* ***Begin.*** Get to work right away on the most immediate steps and set short-term goals, so that you can evaluate your progress at the next planning meeting. Support one another, hold each other accountable, but be open to the growth that God brings out of failure.

***A Few Practical Concerns***

Finally, in light of all this, there are some basic things to consider when planning specific projects. It is important to remember once again that in reflecting on these concerns, you need to look to the ultimate source for all your needs. Otherwise, you can become too “earthly” in your planning and forget that whatever God will ordain for your ministry, He will also provide for, both in the character and potential of your leaders and in the materials and circumstances needed to make everything come out right. Not everything will work out perfectly. In fact, much of the time, at least at the beginning, you may end up wondering just how you made it through a drama project or experience without totally messing it up. But thanks be to God, we are not the ones who ultimately are in charge of the ministry.

Below are just a few practical concerns to consider:

* ***Leadership.*** Who will take charge of different aspects of the ministry? Are they gifted for their tasks? Will you need to recruit leaders (or even cultivate them) before planning an event?
* ***Costs.*** What will it cost in money, time, energy, and other resources? How much will you let God supply?
* ***Dates.*** When will your plan, project, or event begin and end? What is your timeline? What seasons of the year and liturgical seasons need to be taken into consideration as you plan?
* ***Planning Steps.*** When will you meet to plan – during the week or weekends? What needs to come first? When are the best times of the day for meeting and planning?
* ***Contacts.*** Who needs to be called? What arrangements need to be made? How will you get the word out? What part of your budget and energy will be devoted to making those connections?
* ***Evaluation.*** How will you determine whether your plan, project, or event was a success? What is the way you will measure the lives touched by your ministry?

Just by way of encouragement, one thing I’ve found that has helped to serve as the foundation of the ministry is the idea that we need to be concrete yet spiritual, immediate yet far-reaching, humble yet humorous, challenging yet loving.

Fellowship Meeting Planning

One of the best ways to share the Gospel through drama is at a fellowship meeting. A fellowship meeting brings people together in friendship and fun in an atmosphere that is centered on Christ. During my many years of working with youth, I discovered a basic fellowship meeting structure that allowed the young people to live out more fully what fellowship is all about. Once I made sure to include the elements of this structure in every gathering, I found the group gained the most from our time together. Below are those basic elements:

***Welcoming*** – All young people need to feel wanted and needed. Providing good, biblical hospitality is essential to drawing in the young people, especially the unchurched. A consistent, welcoming atmosphere is crucial for keeping them there and drawing them back another time (See *Genesis 18:1-8*, *Matthew 18:*5, *James 2:15-16*).

***Community Building*** – Creating opportunities for youth to build relationships with one another in a distinct Christian group is important for spiritual growth. Building community involves not only fun activities, but a general spirit of cooperation, mutual respect, and self-giving (See *Matthew 20:26-27*, *Romans 15:2*, *1 Corinthians 12:12-13*).

***Prayer*** – At every gathering, the young people need to experience God. This takes place during formal times for prayer as well as in more informal times of reflection and sharing. The young people need to see that children of God are prayerful people (See *Matthew 6:5-8*, *Luke 11:5-1*0, *John 15:7*, *Philippians 4:6-7*,*1 Thessalonians 5:17*).

***Teaching the Word*** – Fellowship meetings provide many opportunities for sharing God’s Word. The fundamental Gospel message should be the central focus of every gathering, no matter what the topic or theme of the day. Always ground your meeting in God’s living Word (See *Joshua 1:8*, *2 Timothy 3:16*, *Psalm 119:11*, *Hebrews 4:12*).

***Responding*** – Learning is never complete until we invite those we teach to respond to what they have learned. The Gospel must be experienced and lived out, as well as understood and memorized. Each gathering should naturally lead to Christian action outside the meeting (See *Galatians 5:22*, *Ephesians 5:1-2*, *James 1:22*, *James 2:14-18*)

***Witnessing for Christ*** – Each young person must be encouraged to share his or her story and connect with the stories of others, believers and unbelievers alike. This is the Great Commission of Jesus – to make disciples of all nations. Sharing the Gospel means sharing how it has touched our lives (See *Matthew 4:19*, *1 Thessalonians 2:13*, *Ephesians 4:15*).

***Fellowship*** – When all the elements are lived out sincerely in the leaders, the youth will grow in their awareness that they are a community of believers, bound together by the Holy Spirit and grounded within the teachings of the Church. Their relationships with each other will find common ground in their relationships with Jesus (See *Romans 1:16*, *Hebrews 10:24-25*, *1 John 1:3*).

A basic format for meetings might go something like this: Welcoming the participants, doing community building exercises (ice breakers), stating the theme or overall message of the gathering, then having prayer, the presentation, response activities (usually involving the participants sharing from their lives or working together to accomplish a goal or complete a project), and closing prayer, usually followed up by extra time for those who could remain behind. Of course, this format will vary, sometimes even greatly, when circumstances call for it. Just remember to include the above elements, making them essential to your time together. In other words, make them a natural and vital part of the ministry.

***Fellowship Meeting Styles***

When planning a fellowship meeting and considering what the structure will be, it’s important to consider the following ideas:

1. ***Surrender your plans to God’s will –*** Let the Holy Spirit speak to you as you sit with the Scriptures and wait on the Lord for a Word to share with the young people. Surrender your will to His. Be ready to take risks, and adapt your plans to fit the Lord’s working in the young people’s lives.
2. ***Consider the young people’s needs, but challenge them –*** Make the Gospel relevant to their lives, using illustrations they can relate to. Be open to new promptings that flow naturally from the Spirit’s leading. Never water down the message; instead, challenge the young people to see God’s work among them and to follow in obedience with courage and conviction.
3. ***Plan for adventure and mystery –*** Help the young people to get involved in working out the message in concrete ways. Try new things but don’t get too gimmicky. Look beyond the meeting to how God’s Kingdom adventure is working itself out in the lives of the young people and in the Body.
4. ***Ground every aspect of the meeting in God’s Word and God’s Church –*** Stick to what you know is living and true. Don’t let extra-biblical materials or a theme overshadow what God has to say in the Bible. Remember the message of salvation as lived out within Christ’s Church and always bring the young people back to it, time and time again.
5. ***Be real, available and loving ministers –*** Be a true witness of Christ to the youth. Accept them and yourself with all your limitations, giving it all over to Christ for His purposes. Don’t be afraid to fail; and when you do, be honest about it, pick yourself up, look for what Jesus has taught you, and begin again by responding in faith.

Some Suggestions for Styles, Preparation and Follow Up

Before you can decide which dramas you’ll chose for your time together, you’ll need to have a framework into which you can place those dramas. Here are some suggestions for a few styles:

* ***Topics and Issues Meeting –*** At this meeting the young people receive practical information and solid biblical teaching on an important topic or issue. They can take time to dialogue during the meeting and plan action in response to what they learn.
* ***Journey and Adventure Meeting –*** Here, the leaders use mystery to draw in the young people and take them on an imaginary or real journey, where they will solve clues to discover a particular Gospel message. Lock-ins and other retreat and overnight events lend themselves very well to this variation in the meeting style.
* ***Skills and Service Meeting –*** The leaders can offer specific training for the young people or use the meeting to prepare for a service or missionary activity. This will provide the young people with an opportunity to live out the Gospel message in ways that show them immediate and concrete results.

As far as prep work and follow up, these few suggestions may help as well:

* ***Get the message out and use creative ways to pique interest.*** Find new ways to get the young people to the meetings. Plan a good phone, social media, mail, and word-of-mouth campaign. Offer coupons, prizes, and discounts on events.
* ***Divide up the tasks and keep in touch with everyone.*** This will keep work down to a minimum and involve the most workers. Have back up plans and prepare for different contingencies.
* ***Follow up the meeting by staying in touch with the young people.*** Send thank you cards or call, text, or email those who come, especially new members. Keep them informed and remember to recognize important events in their lives.
* ***Continue to monitor yourself and your ministry.*** Use word of mouth and online surveys to help you evaluate what is going on. Keep focused on the Gospel and keep the leadership team coming together for fellowship and prayer.

Understanding this information in this context will give you a good foundation for any general ministry with young people. It is essentially the idea that good drama starts with good ministry.

***Prayer Planning with Young People***

When the drama is over and the message has made its way into the minds and hearts of the teens, it will be essential to plan good, solid prayer. Even a spontaneous prayer is the result of minds and hearts that have tuned in to what God wants and how God works.

There are many ways of praying. In my work with youth, I found these ways of expressing oneself through prayer to be the most effective.

1. ***Traditional Prayer –*** is the prayer that comes from Scripture and is a part of the life of your community. It includes Adoration (Praise), Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication (Intercession and Petition), best remembered by the acronym, ACTS.
2. ***Spontaneous Prayer –*** is open prayer from the heart. It allows the Holy Spirit to speak through your words and His Word and helps you to share your relationship with Jesus with others. It is the prayer of those who are grounded in the Word and the Church, who feel led to pray in the Spirit.
3. ***Prayerful Reading –*** involves sitting with the Scriptures in order to immerse yourself within God’s Word. Reflecting on how you are affected by the Bible leads you to discover much about your relationship to Jesus and others.
4. ***Artistic Prayer –*** allows you to share what is in your heart through some form of artistic expression such as drawing, music, movement, or writing. It is a concrete expression of what God is doing in your life.
5. ***Listening Prayer –*** is really a part of all prayer, but taking specific time to sit and reflect on the attributes of God and His will as you wait for God to speak to you will help you to become more in touch with who you are in Christ and how much God is present to you.
6. ***Journaling –*** helps you to collect your thoughts and see how you are growing in your walk with Christ. It is a time to share how a particular reading, event, experience is touching you right now.
7. ***Guided Meditative Prayer –*** is a journey taken with another who leads you on an inner walk. Like prayerful reading of Scripture, the leader invites the group to imagine the setting and events unfolded in the Scriptures or in an imaginary place of healing and growth. The leader may help the participants to slow down their thoughts and relax, use soft lights, smells, and instrumental music. This helps you to shut out other distractions in order to truly listen to God speaking to you. Afterwards, the group can respond with spontaneous prayer or prayerful comments about what they experienced.

***Some Final Practical Concerns***

The training retreat will touch on prayer planning more specifically, but the most important thing that will happen during the training is that the participants will be able to see good prayer planning reflected in their prayers throughout the retreat. Here are some basic elements to a well-prepared time of worship:

* ***Music and Externals –*** Select music that reflects the tone for what you are trying to share. Consider the time of day and your reasons for worship and use music that draws others into the experience. Begin worship with praise music, use instrumental music for an opening reflection, or have a short drama to help the group focus on Christ. Select songs based on your readings. Use music in places that naturally call for praise or reflection. Consider how candles, incense, slides, and video can also help to set the mood of the prayer. Even the setting and the way the group is positioned will help to make prayer more meaningful.
* ***The Opening or “Call to Prayer” –*** This can be a spontaneous or written prayer, or even a poem, song, or story which invites the group into the experience. Here, you may ask God to be present to you, confess your sins and your need for God, or sum up what is happening to the group (as on a retreat, for example).
* ***Scripture Readings –*** Choose your Scripture message carefully and prayerfully. If you are in a retreat setting, use the readings on which your experience is centered, so that it will repeat key phrases heard earlier. You may choose to act out the reading or concretize it in some other way.
* ***Response/Reflection –*** After the reading, you may want the group to sit in quiet reflection, share feelings, pray spontaneously, sing, or perform some other type of activity, which will help each person internalize the message. If someone is offering reflections or preaching on the Word, be sure to prepare by praying for the Holy Spirit’s guidance, studying the readings thoroughly, and listening and waiting upon God’s will. If appropriate, involve the group in the response.
* ***Blessing/Sign of Faith –*** It is important to close the worship experience with some sign of the group’s unity, such as a traditional prayer, a song, a sign of peace, a formal blessing, or some other expression of the group’s relationship with Jesus.

Remember: good prayer and good drama go hand in hand. The more you grow in your drama ministry, the more the other aspects of your overall youth ministry will be enhanced.

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As we move now into second part of the book, all of the ideas presented in this section will be fleshed out in the exercises and experiences of the training retreat. Keep in mind that, like a drama, the sessions will serve to play out the artistic spirit of your team members and allow them to convey the wonderful work that God is doing in them.

# *Part Two: The Drama Training Retreat*

# *Drama Retreat Overview*

# *Why a Drama Training Retreat? More than Drama Training…*

This three-day training retreat lets the leaders and youth take time away to prepare for drama ministry. You’ll spend time practicing your dramatic method, praying about and planning for your drama ministry, and preparing specific drama projects for your group. But most importantly, you’ll be building relationships among your team and helping them to develop their character and their gifts. In this section I’ve included a retreat outline, session outlines to help the leaders prepare, and handouts for the participants. The specific practice skits used in the retreat are included in the “Dramas and More” section.

Because drama is an art form, it’s important to realize that all ministry is truly art lived out in the power of the Holy Spirit. The lessons learned here will not only form your team into an effective group of dramatists, but will also help them to be solid, youth ministry leaders. Whatever direction the ministry takes, it will be grounded on a sturdy foundation in Christ. In this way, all future youth ministry planning – whether it incorporates drama, general presentations, teaching, or other art forms – will have the greatest potential for success. My hope is that once you have completed the drama ministry training, you will continue to use these materials as part of your overall leadership training. I have included a Peer Ministry Leadership Retreat outline with presentation outlines and other materials in the appendix. It will allow you to expand on this ministry, reuse many of the training materials and adapt them to your overall leadership training.

Though you could break up the retreat into a series of training sessions by taking them one at a time over a series of day-long, or weekly sessions, I would strongly recommend that you get away from other distractions so that you can truly focus on your team, your mission, and the Holy Spirit’s specific call in your lives. I’ve found that taking an extended time apart to work, play, pray, and eat together helps the participants to let go and open up to what God is doing in their lives. It also develops deeper and lasting friendships among the group members, and fosters a greater sense of unity of purpose for your ministry.

### Gathering the Leaders

This step in the process can be difficult, particularly as your focus is in building good leaders along with a good drama team. However, what you’ll have going for you is that teens have a general desire to express themselves through drama and teens who learn to express themselves artistically can make the best leaders. If you’ve spent any serious time with the young people, there will be those who stand out as natural leaders – and natural hams as well! Pray about these people. Pray *for* these people. Use discernment in selecting those who will help. Don’t simply “put the word out” and take whoever shows up. It almost never works out. Be willing to wait for God to move things along in His time and be willing to pursue your team in a personal way, cultivating these relationships as you recruit your leaders.

Select adults to compliment your ministry who will not only be good dramatists, but who will also be good mentors for the youth. It’s a reality that some adults can get too caught up in the whole “performance” of drama and yet lack the desire or the giftedness to work with youth. Your adult leaders should be grounded in Church teachings, familiar with the Word, and deeply committed to Christ in the way they pray and live out their lives. They must also be willing to be adults to teens, forming friendships that recognize the role they play as older, more seasoned Christians. Finally, they must be ever ready to keep the teens grounded and safe as they walk with them on this very important faith journey.

Once you have selected your leaders, set up several meetings to go over the retreat materials, assign tasks, practice skits and work through the logistics of the retreat. Through the process, prayerfully consider the gifts and needs of those who will be part of the drama ministry and how you will group them on the retreat. Be sure to mix adults and youth, and try to assign both youth and adult leaders to each small group. A good size for a small group is five to seven members (including the leaders). This size allows for intimate sharing and helps to encourage all the members to participate.

## A Few Logistics

Make copies of the outline and handouts and put them in a pocket folder with paper and pen for each participant. Also put in some note cards, envelopes and stickers so that the participants may write to each other during the retreat. Make a general mailbox for letters and give one leader the job to distribute the mail during the retreat. Be sure that the leaders make time each day to write to all those in their small groups to encourage and support them. I can’t emphasize enough the importance of this particular retreat component. I have seen lives truly uplifted and changed simply because someone took a step of faith and wrote from the heart to encourage others in the Lord.

You’ll want to send the support letter (to parents/prayer supporters) separately from the retreat materials you send to the teens so they won’t know letters of support will be coming. Having notes of encouragement from parents, friends, and members of your church is not only affirming, but also connects the ministry with the Body of Christ right from the start.

Be sure to take the “Share Bears” activity very seriously and strongly encourage the participants to do so as well. They will be taking a special childhood stuffed animal, doll, or toy from another young person and caring for it for most of the retreat. This may seem to be a simple symbolic gesture, but its implications cannot be overstated. There are many childhood memories, joys, hopes, and even fears tucked into in those precious objects and it will be a serious matter for the participants to place them in the care of others.

If you are preparing your own meals, or if you have responsibility to clean up, be sure to have all the participants share in the tasks, emphasizing how the Body of Christ is made up of all the members working together in obedience to Jesus, the Head. Such times will be a great bonding experience for everyone. A good way to handle that is to assign these tasks to small groups and rotate the tasks. This builds a special unity among the small group members.

Be sure to keep in touch with the participants prior to the retreat. Send notes, emails, and texts and make personal contact at worship on Sunday or over the phone. Let them know how glad you are to have them coming on the retreat. Ask them what you can do to help them get ready. Check with them to make sure they are fully prepared to come. Be sensitive to the fact that coming to this retreat will be a sacrifice for some. Keep the parents of the young people informed as well and be sure to answer any questions and concerns they may have.

## The Presentations

Those who will lead the sessions will have outlines to help them with their talks. The outlines are a guide, but each person should add his or her own personal touch to what is presented. The leaders should read through the book and spend time in prayer over their presentations, practicing them with the other leaders and getting feedback if necessary. If possible, have teams of two give the presentations, sharing back and forth. The benefit of having two people is that they will be less likely to leave out important details. Also, having a partner in the presentation, helps to alleviate some of the pressure of speaking before a group.

Some might find it more comfortable to give more of a lecture-style type of presentation, but I would encourage you to use a more facilitative approach. Provide the information, but ask the participants to share their experiences, comments, and ideas as well. This is a hands-on retreat, so the more you ask of the participants, the further you will be able to take the group on their spiritual journeys.

Don’t be too concerned if things don’t always run smoothly. I’ve never had what I would consider a “text book” retreat. In reality, such a retreat would likely be somewhat boring and would shut out the Holy Spirit anyway. When things get a little messy, let love override the clutter and confusion, and use what the sovereign God brings your way. You’ll be surprised by the results.

The materials for the training retreat follow. Don’t be afraid to add to or modify the materials to meet your particular needs. There are many wonderful retreat books that can help with anything not covered here. Make use of the experience and spirit of each leader who will be a part of your retreat. God bless!

Three-Day Drama Retreat Outline

### Day One

5:00 p.m. - Staff Arrival and Set Up

5:45 p.m. - Participants Arrive - Welcoming/Retreat Rules/Icebreakers

7:30 p.m. - ***Session One –***

*The Power of Story*

* Presentation – Story and Witness (Handouts)
* Small Group Activity - “Drama Retreat Journal Sheet” filled out and discussed
* Journal Exercise – Working on our Personal stories

9:00 p.m. - Snack Break

9:30 p.m. - Large Group Experience

* Sharing – “The Masks We Wear”
* Skit/Activity – “See the Real Me”

10:30 p.m. - Youth-led Prayer (With “Share Bears” activity) and Free Time

12:00 a.m. - Lights Out

### Day Two

7:30 a.m. - Rising, Showers, Breakfast

8:45 a.m. - Icebreakers and Youth-led Prayer

9:30 a.m. - ***Session Two –***

*Introduction to Drama: Part One*

* Presentation – Drama Uses and Small Skits (Handouts)
* Activity – Drama Workshop Exercises One and Two

11:30 a.m. - Free Time and Lunch

1:00 p.m. - ***Session Three –***

*Introduction to Drama: Part Two*

* Presentation – Movement and Drama (Handouts)
* Movement Exercises One and Two
* Mime – “Saying Goodbye to Jesus”

2:30 p.m. - Snack Break

3:00 p.m. - Drama Practice – Small Groups work on assigned Drama Projects

4:30 p.m. - Journaling/Mentoring/Free Time

5:30 p.m. - Dinner and Group Games

7:00 p.m. - ***Session Four –***

*Leadership and Helping Skills*

* Small Group Activity – Inventory (Handout)
* Presentation/Skit – Dealing with Groups (Handout)/”Conflicts”
* Presentation/Skit – “Christian Helping Skills” (Handout) /”Pastor I need Help”
* Small Group Activity – Practicing Helping Skills (Scenarios or personal sharing)

8:30 p.m. - “Bonfire” Activity/Prayer

12:00 a.m. - Lights Out

## Day Three

7:30 a.m. - Rising, Showers, Breakfast

8:45 a.m. - Icebreakers and Youth-led Prayer

9:30 a.m. - ***Session Five –***

*Drama Ministry Planning*

* Presentations – Fellowship Meeting and Prayer Planning
* Activity – Brainstorming some Drama Ministry Ideas
* Large Group Sharing of ideas and Consensus on Next Steps

11:00 a.m. - Clean up, Free Time and Lunch

1:00 p.m. - Closing Exercises and Worship

* Small Group Drama Presentations (from assignments)
* Witness Talk from Youth Leader
* Worship, Sharing, Journal Signing, Return of “Share Bears”

3:00 p.m. - Departure

# Explanation of Retreat Components

The group is given a journal that contains the materials they will use on the retreat. These include the outline, handouts, prayers, journal sheets, and letter-writing paper. There will be a “mail box” and individual mailboxes so that youth may exchange letters during the retreat. Each youth is asked to bring a cherished object from his or her childhood, to be “shared” on the retreat (see below). The individual retreat components are explained below.

***Day One –***

***Opening Activities –***The Staff welcome the participants and help them settle in. After the group comes together, a youth leader gives the introductory talk to share the goals of the retreat and set down how the “Retreat Rules” for the participants. Next, staff members lead the youth in some large group icebreakers, and then in some activities to move the youth into their small groups.

***Session One – The Power of Story –***A leader goes over the handouts, “The Power of Story” and “Witnessing: Sharing Your Story, Your Journey with Others” giving emphasis to the idea that, in order to share the Gospel story with others, the youth need to get in touch with their own stories. After the brief presentation (with interaction), the participants are given a few minutes to fill out the “Drama Retreat Journal Sheet” and then the leader invites them to share within their small groups. Finally, the youth find a quiet space to do some journaling on their faith stories (soft inspirational music can be played during this time).

***Large Group Experience –***A leader does a brief sharing talk, “The Masks We Wear” (using props and giving examples). The focus here is on removing the masks we wear to hide our real selves. Then the participants watch the skit “See Me as I Am.” This is a short mime, involving a person who has a conversation with their reflection in the mirror. The mirror image represents the person God has remade in Christ who has been hidden by fear and rejection. After the skit, the participants are asked to fill out the sheet “See the Real Me” and share their responses in their small groups.

***Evening Prayer –***This prayer flows out of the large group experience. The prayer time involves music, Scripture, a mirror pass meditation and exchange of the special items (“Share Bears”). Those who receive the items are asked to take care of them for the remainder of the retreat. The idea is that each item represents a special part of the person. After prayer time, the group members share free time until lights out.

***Day Two*** *–*

***Icebreakers –***These large and small group activities are designed to help the participants “get loose” and prepare for a day of acting and sharing.

**Morning Prayer** – The emphasis on this prayer is on letting go and becoming what God has called each person to be. It uses “eagle readings” from Scripture, music and sharing time.

**Session Two – Introduction to Drama: Part One –** The leaders go over several drama basics handouts and conduct two levels of drama exercises to warm of the participants for the more serious dramas later on. The first set of exercises involves simple and fun small group activities, while the second set calls for individuals to take the stage and do some impromptu acting.

**Session Three – Introduction to Drama: Part Two** – The leaders go over the basics of mime and movement and then lead the participants in a series of exercises that help them to become more comfortable with mime and movement. The first set involves practicing some silly scenarios and the twelve basic movements while the second set involves individuals telling stories using only movement and mime. The session concludes with a group of participants taking part in the mime, “Saying Goodbye to Jesus.” In this mime, participants take a few minutes to reflect on a biblical character and then approach a leader who plays the role of Jesus to say one last farewell before Jesus goes to His death.

**Drama Practice –** Before leaving for snack, each group is given a mime to practice and perform the following day. The participants will take time to prepare in their small groups.

**Journaling/Mentoring/Free Time** – This is simply time given to the participants to play, to have some down time, or to meet with adult leaders for mentoring.

**Dinner and Group Games –** Following dinner, the small groups take part in structured team-building games, led by staff. While the games are going on, “Share Bears” can sit in “bleachers” (a box).

**Session Four – Leadership and Helping Ministry –** This time begins with the participants filling out and discussing the “Knowledge, Gifts and Leadership Inventory” handout. Then the leader goes over the “Group Dynamics and Leadership Roles” handout, focusing on how to lead a small group and deal with difficult members. The “Conflicts” skit helps to drive the point home. Following the skit, the leader goes over the “Christian Helping Skills” handout and two leaders perform the “Pastor, I Need Help!” skit. Afterwards the participants meet in their small groups to practice their helping skills. They may either use pre-made scenarios to role play or they may leave things open and allow individuals to share their struggles as they respond and minister to those who share.

**Bonfire/Prayer –** This is a time of fellowship, singing, laughing and celebrating what God has done and is doing for the group. The prayer focuses on the unity of the Spirit and the Spirit’s presence within the group.

**Day Three** –

**Icebreakers –** These activities focus on affirmation of individuals, small groups and the drama team as well.

**Session Five – Drama Ministry Planning –** A leader goes over the “Creative Fellowship Meeting” and “Fellowship Meeting Styles” handouts with the large group. Then the leader discusses the “Discernment and Confirming God’s Will in Your Planning – A Team Effort” handout before the participants break into small groups. Each small group is given a specific area to brainstorm for future drama projects in the context of a larger youth ministry. The groups come up with some action steps and then present their ideas to the large group. The group as a whole comes to consensus on next steps for the ministry.

**Small Group Drama Presentations –** After lunch, the participants gather together and each small group presents its drama presentation to the large group. This is a time to affirm all that has taken place in the hearts of the participants on the retreat.

**Witness Talk –** As an illustration, one of the leaders (or even one of the participants if the Spirit so moves circumstances) gives a witness talk. This helps to drive home the point that the ultimate goal of the drama ministry is to witness to the power of Jesus Christ to transform lives.

**Closing Worship and Activities –** The participants take some time to give praise to God, to share what they have learned over the course of the retreat (and the course of their lives) and to affirm one another and what their time together has brought about and will bring about in the lives of those notes of affirmation to each person to share what it has meant to carry that special part of his or her life. Also included in this time is the signing of journals – a yearbook-style passing around of books so that people can affirm everyone in a special way. If possible, the pastor or an assistant pastor can come from the church to the retreat and celebrate the Eucharist with the participants.

# Suggestions for Icebreakers for Each Day

There are many good books with excellent icebreaker activities that your group can use on the retreat. Below are just a few that have worked well in the past. Essentially, the Day One is about breaking down inhibitions and forming those small group relationships. Day Two is about letting go and expressing oneself through the drama work. Day Three celebrates the unity of fellowship and purpose that has come out of the experience of the retreat and the commitment to the ministry.

***Day One –***

###### Large Group…

**Lap Sit –** The participants sit in a circle. The leader says, “Everybody who is \_\_\_\_\_” or “Everybody who does \_\_\_\_\_”, move \_\_\_\_\_ chairs to the (left/right). Those who “qualify” move that many chairs. If someone is already sitting on the chair, the person sits on that person’s lap. The game progresses as the lap sitting grows higher and higher (If one person moves, everyone on his or her lap moves as well.). After a few rounds, the teens are reset and play starts again.

**Train Wreck –** The participants again sit in a circle with one person standing in the circle. The person says, “Everybody who is \_\_\_\_\_” or “Everybody who does \_\_\_\_\_ TRAIN WRECK!” Everyone who “qualifies” must quickly find an open chair at least two chairs away, including the person who called out the train wreck. The person left standing without a chair is asked to share something about himself or herself, and then call out the next train wreck.

**Clumps –** Leaders call out random numbers and that many youth quickly come together, lock arms and sit down. Those left standing are out. The game continues until there are only a few youth left and then starts again.

***Small Group…***

**Family Game –** Leaders place as many chairs as there are small groups so that the backs of chairs touch and hand out the “Family Cards” to the youth. The cards have the names of (fictional) families written on them. The youth then read the cards, find the members of their families and sit in the chair in this order – father, mother, brother, sister, baby, pet.

**People Knots –** Small Groups for a circle and each person joins hands with two other people not next to him or her. Then they must untie the “people knot” without breaking hold of each other’s hands.

**Food Relay –** Different food items are placed on chairs at one end of the room. Team members run up one at a time to the bag, eat one of the foods and then run back. The team that eats all their foods first is the winner.

**Spell My Feet –** Groups sit on the floor and place letters on their feet. The leader calls out words and the teens must move their feet to spell them without moving anything else.

***Day Two –***

***Large Group…***

**Shark Attack –** A small area of the floor is designated and becomes the “boat.” The rest of the floor is the “water.” All but one person crams into the “boat.” The remaining person becomes a “shark” and tries to pull someone into the water. He or she can only pull an arm or leg when it is out of the boat. The people in the boat try to push each other into the water. The winner is the remaining person. The teens need to be careful about how hard they push.

**Touch Telephone –**The group sits in a circle, preferably boy-girl, boy-girl. The leader gives the first person a shape or simple object for the person to draw. The first person draws this object on the back of the person in front of him or her and the drawing is passed around the circle until it comes back to the person behind the first person who must draw the object on newsprint and say what he or she thinks it is. Most likely, it will get messed up and if so, the leader can try to find out how it got so mixed up.

**Hula Hoops –** The participants join hands with each other. One person has a hula-hoop on each arm. On go, the hula-hoops go around the circle in opposite directions. The person who gets stuck with both hula-hoops is asked to share something about her faith with the group and starts the next round.

###### Small Group…

**Personal Scavenger Hunt –** The leader gives the small groups one minute to find certain items on themselves. The group that has the most items is the winner.

**Candy Trade –** Each person is given three different colored candies. When the leader says, “Go!” people must trade their candies until they have candies of one color. Then they must find their group members and work on all of them having the same color candy. There is no winner. The game continues until each group has one color candy. This icebreaker is used to start a discussion for the first session in the morning.

***Day Three –***

###### Large Group…

**Balloon Affirmations –** Balloons are prepared with affirmation tasks inside them beforehand. A volunteer pops a balloon, goes to another person and performs the task on the piece of paper. The person being affirmed then pops another balloon and selects another person to affirm. This happens until everyone has had a turn. For added fun, have the “popper” pick a helper and then have the two of them think of a creative way to pop the balloon. The “popper” can then affirm that person, (or others, if necessary) and that person, in turn, will pick the next person to help him or her pop the balloon, and so on.

**Honey, I Love You, But… –** The participants sit in a circle. One person goes to another person and says, “Honey, I love you! Why don’t you smile?” This can be said in any kind of voice and with faces or gestures. The person talking may not touch the person sitting. The sitting person then has to reply with a straight face, “Honey I love you, but I just can’t smile.” If the person laughs, he or she becomes the person to try to make someone else laugh. If a person is unsuccessful after three tries, another person can volunteer to be “it.”

***Small Group…***

**Turkey –** Each small group is given a bag of items and has five minutes to make one of the members into a turkey. The leaders can even vote on which participant looks the most authentic.

**Caterpillar –** Each small group has a sleeping bag. The group members are split in two and put at opposite ends of a room. One person from each small group gets in a sleeping bag and it is zipped up. The “caterpillars” then race across the floor to the other side and where another person gets in the bag and moves back to the starting place and so on until one team is done.

**Weight Guess –** Each small group is asked to guess the total combined weight of two volunteers from each group. For added fun, the small group members can have the volunteers hold their shoes or backpacks or other objects to make it harder to guess. The small group that comes closest to each group weight without going over wins.

#### Balloon Affirmations

These are cut out and rolled up, then each one is stuffed into a balloon. A volunteer pops a balloon, goes to another person and performs the task on the piece of paper. The person being affirmed then pops another balloon and selects another person to affirm. This happens until everyone has had a turn. For added fun, have the “popper” pick a helper and then have the two of them think of a creative way to pop the balloon. The “popper” can then affirm that person (or others, if necessary) and that person, in turn, will pick the next person to help him or her pop the balloon, and so on.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Go give an adult leader a big hug and say something nice about him or her! |  | Compliment someone about one special quality that you really admire! |  | Choose a young person and say something affirming about their faith! |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Tell someone something they have done to make the group better! |  | Say three nice things about an adult leader! |  | Say three nice things about a young person! |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Make up a poem in tribute to ad adult leader who has made the experience great! |  | Find three people who you feel are strong Christians and tell them why they are! |  | Go to the person with the cutest animal/doll and tell them why you think it is cute! |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Sit on someone’s lap and say what you like about him or her! |  | Go up to someone who has done something nice for you and give him or her a big thank you! |  | Choose someone and say three things you like about him or her! |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Choose an adult leader and say three things you like about him or her! |  | Choose a young person and tell the group something he or she does that means a lot to you! |  | Compliment someone in your group about how he or she has made the group better! |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Give a big hug to each member of your small group! |  | Tell one of your friends what his or her friendship has really meant to you! |  | Tell a friend two things he or she has done for you this week! |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Go to someone who has nice hair, hug them and then mess up their hair for fun! |  | Sing a silly made-up song to someone from the group who means a lot to you! |  | Grab two other people and sing any kid’s show theme song together! |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Tell someone something that you really like about him or her! |  | Tell an adult leader something you really like about him or her! |  | Tell someone about a positive change in him or her that you have seen during this experience! |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Share what is most Christ-like about one of your Christian friends! |  | Go up to the person you’d most like to trade places with and tell them why you’d do that! |  | Choose someone you don’t know that well and share one special thing you learned about him or her! |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Give a hug to every young person in the room! |  | Give a hug to every adult in the room! |  | Tell everyone three things that have meant the most to you about being part of this group! |

# Introductory Talk – Retreat Rules

1. ***Welcome.*** Welcome the participants and thank them for coming. Let them know how happy you are that they are here. Then introduce the team and explain each member’s job for the retreat.
2. ***Putting Things Away/Giving Things Over.*** Ask the participants to put away their expectations, hesitations, or concerns about the retreat. Invite them to put aside anything that will keep them from giving themselves to Jesus during this time. Tell them there will be time to give all the “stuff” they have over to God, and to talk with others about their struggles and where they are in their walk with the Lord. This will include electronic devices and phones. This is their time and God’s time, so anything else that gets in the way of that relationship should be put aside. Invite the participants to be open to the retreat and tell them that the more they put into it, the more they will grow.
3. ***Our Promise.*** Explain that the retreat team has worked very hard at putting this retreat together, that we have prayed for everyone here by name, and that there are others right now who are praying and will be praying for the participants during the retreat. Tell them that our promise is that we will give of ourselves and do all we can to make this a great experience for them. Tell them that each small group leader will be praying for his or her small group members. Then ask for their prayers in return. Let them know that any team member is available if anyone needs to talk or pray during the retreat.
4. ***Retreat Rules.*** Explain any particular retreat rules connected with the church, retreat center (Written below)
5. ***Our Challenge.*** Say that you hope this retreat will be a beginning for them. Maybe some of them have gone through bad times and maybe some of them have things holding them back from letting go and letting God. Some of them may not really believe they can be leaders to their peers or feel they can’t possibly reach out to others for Jesus. Explain how this group is here to witness to what Jesus has done in everyone’s lives and to what He can do during this time as each person opens up to Him. Ask them to take each part of the retreat seriously. When it is time to listen, listen with all their hearts. When it is time to share, share openly and without fear of rejection. When it is time to work, to work as to the Lord. When it is time to play, play hard and have a blast. When it is time to eat, eat with thanksgiving and joy! Tell them to get plenty of rest (well, get some rest anyway!), be themselves, let themselves be molded by God’s Spirit, then let go and be free!
6. ***Keeping to the Schedule.*** Remind the participants to keep to the schedule. Tell them that it is important that they be on time when they are called for a session, for activities, for prayer or for meals. Assure them that there will be plenty of time for fun and play, if they help us to keep on schedule.
7. ***Closing.*** Again, welcome them to the retreat. Tell them how much you hope and pray that this will be a time when the Lord will move powerfully in their lives and show everyone what He wants for the group. Close by introducing the leaders who will be doing the icebreakers.

#### Outline for Session One – “The Power of Story”

##### Main idea – Jesus spoke in parables or stories. His life is our story of salvation. As we carry out this drama ministry, we become living stories of God’s love and redemptive power for those who are lost and in pain.

1. Read “The Giver” in the Dramas section then go over the “Power of Story” handout, stressing the following:

* Jesus told stories to answer the longing inside us to fulfill our own stories
* Jesus’ stories were real, transferable, and living and active
* Only in Christ, can we truly make sense of His story, the Gospel (Good News)
* In sharing the Gospel through drama we need to remember, the 5 “P’s” (Prayer, Personal, Part of the Whole, Process, Proclamation)

***Tips:*** Ask the participants how the story moved them and what stuck with them the most. Ask them which characters they identified with the most and why. Draw them into the story and let them see how the story gets “real” with them.

1. Go over the “Witnessing: Sharing Your Story…” handout, stressing the following:

* As in the drama handout, the 5 “P’s” apply here as well (a slightly different application)
* Our testimony has four parts: Call, Search, Discovery, Rebirth
* Leading others to a deeper relationship with Christ is our goal, but it is a healing process that God directs in His time

***Tips:*** Share some personal examples from your testimony. Practice the ideas as you give this simple talk. Don’t try to perform, but just share who you are as you share the information. Remember, there is a witness talk at the end of the retreat, so don’t make this a witness talk. Facilitate a discussion on the ideas, asking where the participants have seen these things in their own lives and in the way they deal with others.

1. The participants fill out the sheet, “Drama Retreat Journal Sheet.” Do the following:

* Have them fill out faith questions and “Are you more like…” section and discuss ideas in their small groups.
* Go over the “Growth Questions” in small groups and then invite people to comment on them in the large group.

***Tips:*** Remember, individuals will have their own answers to the questions and may see the objects in entirely different ways. That’s fine. No answer is wrong (although you can always clarify the Christian message if someone doesn’t understand it clearly). Have the small group leaders move through the questions as the Holy Spirit leads them. It isn’t necessary to answer every question or to follow a certain order. Not everyone has to share.

1. Ask the participants to take some quiet time to work on their stories.

* The participants will use the “Witnessing” handout as a guide.
* Play some soft instrumental music during this time. Try to give the participants at least a half hour for writing.

***Tips:*** You might want to have the leaders available to talk with anyone who needs a little help getting going. Pray about this because writing a witness talk is a very personal thing and one should not “invade” another’s space too quickly.

***Closing Thoughts***: Let the session flow naturally, be sure to enjoy the time together, honor each individual and what he or she has to bring to the group, and above all, don’t be afraid to laugh, to get a little intense if necessary, but always bring it back to the main thought that it is our connection with Jesus that gives our life stories ultimate meaning.

#### Outline for Talk for Large Group Experience – “Walls, Masks and Shadows”

Scripture – Matthew 10:26-42 – “Disclosing the Truth”, Ephesians 5:8-20 – “Waking to the Light”

***Main Idea:*** We all have built walls between ourselves and others wear masks to hide our true selves, and hide in the shadows of fear and disillusionment. Jesus has turned us from darkness to light. There is nothing undisclosed that will not be brought to light in Him!

***? –*** *Why do we build walls? Why do we wear masks? Why do we hide in the shadows?*

*Fear of vulnerability? Fear of rejection? Low self-image? Fear of responsibility?*

* Taking a look at ourselves – We have three sides to ourselves:
* We have the side we show, the side that “shines” that people accept.
* We have the side we are willing to give, the talents and gifts inside us we want to share.
* We have that secret side we think no one sees, the side we would rather keep locked away.
* Showing our true selves – How much we reveal depends on how safe and secure we feel
* We will share the things people like, but it is too scary to share the deep dreams or ugliness.
* We fear people will not accept our dreams or will reject our ugliness.
* So, we erect barriers, we wear masks, we hide our shadow selves.
* Living in Darkness – the darkness of sin which we cannot remove on our own
* The biggest lie is that we can handle this darkness on our own or that there is no light for us.
* We also want to cling to the darkness because it is all we’ve ever known.
* Bringing the darkness out into the light is hard, because it also drags up all the pain again.
* In Jesus, we who were darkness, have become light – The Ephesians reading
* A call to wake up from a bad dream – the false shadow of sin and separation.
* A call to put off the dark deeds and to make the most of the light, Spirit-filled and joyful.
* The rubble from a broken wall can be used to build up a new foundation.

***Questions for discussion…***

*Have the participants begin the sharing time by sharing the story of their animal/doll with their small group.*

1. *What is one wall you have put up that you have tried to break down with someone else?*
2. *What masks do people around you wear? What is one mask that you wear?*
3. *When have you ever tried to break down a wall or get past the mask of someone else?*
4. *What regrets do you have in your life that were the result of keeping your distance from others?*
5. *What walls have you kept between yourself and Jesus even today?*
6. *What can you take from your broken walls to rebuild relationships with God and others?*
7. *What can you do on this retreat to help break down walls and remove masks?*

*Have the participants exchange their special items with another member of their small group. The participants are to carry the special item with them at all times (items will be put in “bleachers” during play time) and are asked to pray for the person whose object they have, especially for those vulnerable and special parts of the person represented by the item. During the retreat, for fun and fellowship, participants are encouraged to send a special letter from the item affirming the person or telling the person how he or she is missed and loved, and/or how grateful the item has been for all the person has given to it (“You always took me to bed and brought me with you everywhere!”)*

# Outline for Session Two – “Introduction to Drama: Part One”

1. Go over the “Simple Techniques” and “Specific Uses” handouts, stressing the following:

* Put yourself into the part, learn and grow, stay simple and balanced, and give it to God
* Ways to follow-up the dramas – These will be the basis for assignments later on in the retreat
* Uses for small skits – the life of the church inside and out
* Getting into the setting, emotions and character, being serious and yet playful

***Tips:*** As you go over the ideas, remember to think of examples of actors who put themselves into their parts. Consider a brief brainstorming about where you could use drama at your church and outside your church.

1. Begin the Art and Drama Workshop by making the following comments:

* Art and drama can be a powerful witness of how the Gospel of Jesus works in our lives.
* God has made us in His image. We are the clay He wants to mold into the image of His Son.
* We need to be open and vulnerable during these exercises and when we witness to others.

***Tips***: Stress that you are all there to honor God and serve Him by sharing the Gospel, so it is important for everyone to really “let go and let God,” for everyone to allow everyone else to experiment without fear of ridicule. Be sure to be open yourself and perhaps even ham it up a bit yourself.

1. Do the simpler and “safer” Drama exercises for about 10 minutes. Choose from the following:

* “Banquet Speakers” – Speaking on a silly topic continuously for one minute
* “String Sculptures” – Using string to draw words, objects or feelings
* “People Sculptures” – Creating a “frozen mime” of an object or a scene
* “Silent Role Play” – A quick mime of a silly scene

***Tips:*** Laughter will be the greatest tool you can use here. Here, the most “serious” thing you can do is to not take yourselves too seriously, but to seriously enjoy doing the exercises!

1. Once the group is warmed up, move into the other activities, asking for some real serious play!

* “Personalities” – Taking on a role and commenting from that perspective
* “King Solomon’s Party” – Presenting your strange character before a king
* “Roundtable” – Bible personalities – can be done more seriously if you want

***Tips:*** Compliment those who really stay in character. Although you can enjoy this time as well, ask the participants to give it their best, even if they are doing a comedic version of their character.

***Closing Thoughts:*** While these activities will come across in a more lighthearted and spirited way, the exercises will really help to prepare the participants for the more serious dramas later on. The most important thing that will happen here is that people will begin to open up to one another and to the idea that drama can be more than just a game.

# Outline for Session Three – “Introduction to Drama: Part Two”

1. Go over the “Using Mime and Dance” handout, stressing the following:

* Dance is the natural expression of God’s people, but it is not the same as the kind of dance people do in clubs.
* It’s about God’s glory, the Spirit’s leading, our celebration, sorrows end, and the community’s unity.
* Preparation and performance is about focus, face, fluidity and prayer.

***Tips:*** The stress here is on God and giving the glory to Him. The more you surrender to His purposes, the more you will “flow” with the movements.

1. Practice the Twelve specific movements with the participants, remembering the following:

* Model the movements first and describe them and what they are like as you do them.
* Try all the variations, going over them slowly and deliberately.
* Talk about specific Bible stories you could perform and which movements might work for them.
* Ask the participants for feedback as you do the movements – where and when they might use these movements.

***Tips:*** Use soft instrumental music in the background to facilitate a prayerful mood. If possible, prepare a selection of different types of music to stress things like power and surrender and praise and sorrow.

1. Do the role play, “Saying Goodbye to Jesus” with the participants, remembering the following

* Assign the characters and then ask the participants to read through the “profiles” before doing the mime.
* Go over the suggestions for playing your roles – letting the music and your emotions and your “Jesus” help.
* After the mime, go over the questions and give each other feedback and affirmation

***Tips:*** The leader who plays the role of Jesus needs to totally surrender to the role, and remain in character with the utmost seriousness. Focus on your love for the participants and let that love – which is really *His* love – shape how you respond to each person. Also, be prepared for the possibility later on of the participants wanting to talk about the experience and respond with your helping skills as necessary.

1. Assign each small group a skit or mime from the Dramas section of the manual.

* They will practice performing these and will act them out on the last day during the closing activities.
* Try to assign both mimes and skits. These will be chosen before the retreat

***Tips:*** The participants can read the skits if they need to. Also, have some appropriate music on hand to help with mimes.

***Closing Thoughts:*** The mime activity will very likely be the most moving experience of the whole retreat, though it might not come out at that time. The bonfire activity will be a good place to talk about what has been happening in the hearts of your participants. The prayer service for the bonfire time will help with this.

# Outline for Session Four – “Leadership and Helping Skills”

1. Go over the “Knowledge, Gifts, and Leadership Inventory” handout by doing the following:

* Have everyone fill out the “1-5” inventory and questions to the right and then discuss it in their small groups.
* Ask different people to read the passages from John and discuss “Which is most…” question in the large group.
* Point out the passages and suggest that the participants take time to look at them in their quiet time.
* Ask them to journal on the last four questions and consider sharing the answers with a leader at some point.

***Tips:*** There are no real “right” answers. This is meant to foster discussion. Don’t be afraid to go where the Holy Spirit leads. Point out that leadership skills are important for this ministry because follow up activities call for strong leaders.

1. Go over the “Group Dynamics” handout and perform the Skit, “Conflicts” (It can be read if needed).

* Talk about the roles of Unifier, Enabler, and Facilitator, providing examples of each from your own experience.
* Talk about using the setting and leader skills to gently move the group along.
* Talk about the three difficult member types and provide examples from your own experience of each.
* Perform the skit and then ask which skills were lacking in the first and present in the second.

***Tips:*** You may be able at this point to use examples from the group dynamics observed thus far on the retreat (the positive ones, that is). The skit should be enough to drive home the negative.

# Go over the “Christian Helping Skills” handout and then perform the “Pastor I Need Help” skit (can be read also).

* Go over the qualities of a good helper, stressing how a loving relationship is the key to good helping.
* Talk about the process of helping and the necessity of having solid skills and confidence in using them.
* Perform the skit for the group and discuss which skills were used well and which need improvement
* Stress the importance of listening, giving solid biblical answers, witnessing, calling and prayer in the process.

***Tips:*** Remember, this is not about making “mini-counselors” but about teaching youth to respond in love to the person coming for help. This is the way we should respond to all people of faith.

1. Have a time of helping, either using the supplied scenarios or allowing youth to share openly. Stress the following:

* With God, we can find the strength and wisdom to reach out to another and bring Christ’s healing power.
* However, there is no substitute for hiding God’s Word in our hearts and using that Word to heal.
* Listening (actively) to the speaker and to letting God speak to them through His Word will make things happen.
* Stay focused, be empathetic, be real, give of yourself, and be loving – just as Jesus is.
* Watch how much you respond, how many questions you ask, and how much of your story you share.
* Remember – helping is not giving advice, providing solutions, offering false reassurance, or playing counselor.

***Tips:*** Consider having a time of feedback following the time of sharing. Don’t expect people to share but don’t discourage it either. You may be surprised by what you hear. Ask the leaders to hold back from taking charge and let the participants take the necessary steps as they experience helping first hand.

***Closing Thoughts:*** The participants may wish to journal about anything they experienced during this time. Let them know that the leaders are here for anyone who needs prayer and a listening ear. If any particularly serious issues come up that require more immediate attention, be sure deal with it in consult with the leadership at your church.

# Outline for Session Five – “Drama Ministry Planning”

1. Go over the “Creative Fellowship Meeting Planning” and “Fellowship meeting Styles” handouts with the large group.

* Discuss the elements of welcoming, community building, teaching, responding, witnessing and fellowship.
* Talk about the example format and brainstorm ways to modify it for your current needs.
* Go over the ideas: surrender, consider needs, adventure, grounding, and real/available/and loving ministry.
* Talk about the suggestions for meetings and follow-up ideas, as well as how drama will fit into the ministry.

***Tips:*** Don’t stay inside a box but look at new ways to apply the ideas in how you do drama. These are general handouts that could stand outside the context of drama ministry, so this is real follow up training for your group.

1. Go over the “Prayer Planning…” handouts

* Go over the types of prayer: traditional, spontaneous, reading, artistic, listening, journaling, and guided prayers.
* Go over the logistics of prayer planning and look briefly at the prayer planning sheet.

***Tips:*** Again, this is applicable to the follow up ministry you will do. It is just good basic prayer planning.

1. Go over the “Discernment and Confirming…” handout, stressing the following:

* Discuss the ideas: begin with God, listen and confirm ideas, start small but think big.
* Talk about the planning meeting structure: Pray, Explore, Refine, Plan, Begin.
* Emphasize the need to brainstorm about Leadership, Costs, Dates, Planning Steps, Contacts, and Evaluation.

***Tips:*** At first, just go over the ideas. Here, you may offer suggestions as to where the group could go, but save the real brainstorming for the next step.

1. Discuss the “Youth Leadership Planning – A Sample Structure and a One Year Plan.” handout with the large group.

* Consider which of the ideas presented on the handout are appealing and which are practical.
* Talk about what you feel this group is being led to consider doing and come to consensus on some basic ideas.
* Using the “Techniques” and “Specific Uses” handouts choose one idea to consider for each small group.

***Tips:*** Remember that, on your own, you won’t accomplish what you can do with God’s help. Have the faith to think bigger than your abilities and trust God to supply what you need.

1. Hand out two blank planning sheets to each small group and have them work on one idea each (from step two).

* Have the group flesh out ideas using the meeting style ideas (Pray, Explore, Refine, Plan and Begin).
* Talk about the practical concerns and how much you are going to trust God to supply.
* Write up your ideas on a draft, refine them and then make a final copy.

***Tips:*** Don’t worry about being perfect and figuring out every detail. This is an exercise and the leaders or the whole group can figure out this later after prayer and further discussion.

1. Have the large group come back together to share all the ideas from the small groups and create a potential calendar.

* Take feedback on each idea and spend a little time with it until it becomes comfortable (but not final).
* Come to consensus on the overall goals for your ministry as a large group.
* Write up a sample calendar for the year, with the ministry outlined and ready for further discussion later on.

***Tips:*** Again, this is only a beginning for the group. However, take seriously what you have come up with on the retreat and make sure the leaders spend time with them in the weeks to come.

***Closing Thoughts:*** Be sure to bring all of what you’ve accomplished into the closing worship. Give God the praise for all He has done in you and through you, and all that is yet to come for the group.

# Prayer for Day One: Evening – “Standing in the Light”

**Setting** – Participants are seated on the floor in a circle around candles in the center. The leader holds a small mirror. The lights are dimmed for a quiet, reflective time. The participants have their special items with them.

##### Song – “All I Have to Be” – Amy Grant (or any appropriate song)

**Reading –** Ephesians 3:14-21 – “Power to Grasp”

**Guided Prayer –** “Standing before the Light” – The participants are asked to imagine themselves standing before Jesus, emptying their pockets of their fears, burdens and sins and surrendering completely to Him by placing their item at his feet. Then they bow down as He comes to them and lifts them to Himself. Finally he shows them a mirror into which they see the true reflection of who they are in Jesus as He shares with them exactly how much He loves them.

**Mirror Pass –** The leader passes a mirror around and asks each person to take a moment to look at himself or herself and to reflect on who he or she is before God. During the pass, a song is played.

**Song –** “His Eyes” – Steven Curtis Chapman (or any appropriate song)

**Spontaneous Sharing Prayer –** Each person is asked to share one thing they would like prayer for or one thing they will give to the group over the rest of the retreat. The youth are then invited exchange their precious items with another in their small group. The leader explains that each person is sharing a very vulnerable and precious part of themselves though that item and the other person is to guard that item at all times and pray for that person and for all that that item represents. Then all the youth come to sit together in the center of the room while the adult leaders offer prayers and affirmation for them.

**Sign of Peace –** Participants exchange a sign of peace (handshake, hug, etc.)

**Closing Song –** “You Alone” – Koo Chung (or any appropriate song)

# Prayer for Day Two: Morning – “God’s Care for His Children”

**Spontaneous Prayer –** The leader prays for openness, closeness, and growth so that each person’s eyes may be open to God’s message and they may become a shining witness to the world.

**Choral Reading on Eagles –** Taken from the reading sheets…

**Talk on Eagles and God’s Care –** The Leader talks abouttalks about God’s care for His people based on the reading. Several points to share are…

* God carries us to our high place of service in His Kingdom,
* God gives us strength to sore high, and sustains us so that we triumph, and
* God covers us with His protection and mercy.

**Closing Song –** “I Will be Here” – Steven Curtis Chapman (or any appropriate song)

# Prayer for Day Two: Evening Bonfire Prayer

**Setting** – Outside, if possible, around the fire. As a preparation to the experience, have the participants reflect on their commitment to this ministry, and those areas of their lives that they need to lay before God this evening.

###### Opening Prayer

**Leader –** *Lord, we come before you now to seek your grace, your mercy, and your healing. Father, we need your presence in our lives. Your Son Jesus took upon himself all our sins and brought us new life in the cross. We have been told by your Word to confess our sins to one another and to pray for each other that we might be healed. As we offer ourselves to you, may find healing and renewal in Jesus, for it is in His name we pray. Amen.*

***Reading –*** *Ephesians 4:8-20 “Living as Children of Light”*

***Reflections –*** *Explain that we are here to acknowledge our need for God and to renew our relationship with Him. We are called to confess our sins to one another, to build each other up in the faith and to praise and worship the God who has saved us. Say that the reason for getting “real” with God is so that we can experience once again the joy of our salvation in Christ, grow in our faith and do the good works that God has called us to do. One of those works is to reach out to others through this ministry.*

**Leader –** *We offer our prayers to you, as we come together as a community of faithful, to offer praise, to humble ourselves before you, to affirm one another and to strengthen our minds and hearts in Jesus Christ.*

***Prayers of Praise and Humility Before Our God (sheets) –*** *These can be read together or the participants can be assigned to read parts.*

***Blessing for the Youth –*** *First the leaders pray for the participants (imposing hands) – for their openness to the Spirit, that God will grant them His protection, guidance and strength as together you move forward in this special ministry. It is a spontaneous prayer, to be done silently or aloud, as each leader feels prompted. When this is finished each takes a lit candle from the fire and then returns to sit quietly in his or her small group.*

***Reflection Reading –*** *“The Harvest Prayer”*

***Meditation –*** *The participants are asked to reflect in silence on those areas they need to bring into the light with God, to think about the gifts of the small group members, and to consider where this group is going. They are to then fill out the “My Letter of Light to God” handouts.*

***Prayers in Small Groups*** *– The participants are allowed to share their letters (if they wish to) and to offer prayers with and for their small group members.*

***Song for Prayer Time –*** *“Heart’s Cry” - Steven Curtis Chapman (or other appropriate song) During this time, the participants are to take their sheets and one by one drop them in the fire to symbolize letting the fire of God cleanse them and refine them.*

***Sign of Peace***

# Closing Blessing

***Leader* –** *Let us join hands, bow our heads and pray for God’s blessing…*

*God of mercy and compassion, we praise you for your goodness in sending your Son, Jesus to take away our sins and destroy the power of the enemy. We thank you that we are saved in Jesus. As we surrender ourselves to the cleansing fire of your merciful grace, we find renewal and are strengthened to do the works you have called us to do. May we continue to grow in your Word and in this ministry, and may we come to know you more fully as we serve you in all our actions. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.*

***Note: As an alternative, the pastor and/or his assistant can visit and the young people can participate in the “Spiritual Inventory” (Examination of Conscience) and the Sacrament of Confession before placing their sheets in the fire.***

# Prayer for Day Three: Morning – “Taming the Fox”

**Opening Reading from “The Little Prince” –** The Taming of the Fox

Some ideas to share…

The Little Prince met the fox and learned that to tame someone or something means to “establish ties.” It means that we make a commitment to them; and in doing so, a number of things happen:

* We grow closer to what we tame and the walls of fear and mistrust melt away…
* We grow in intimacy and learn about what we tame, and that person or thing becomes unique and special to us…
* What we do not tame does not become unique to us and stands in a crowd of so many others like it…
* There is the shining light of joy because of this intimacy that is shared…
* There is the risk of sadness if the person or thing we have tamed is separated from us…
* The time we spend (“waste” as the Fox says) with what we tame is important.
* The essential nature of this relationship is invisible to the eye…

As we make connections to one another and to others outside the group, we experience what is truly essential, real and important. All that we have done in this training has led us to this great truth. Our relationship with God through Christ is full of this intimacy, this uniqueness, this joy and this truth.

**Song –** “Lord of the Eternity” – Fernando Ortega (or any appropriate song)

**Scripture –** John 1:1-14 – “In the Beginning Was the Word”

**Spontaneous Prayer/Signing of Journals/Sign of Peace –** The participants sit in a large circle and pass their journals around one at a time so that everyone can sign them somewhere (like a school yearbook). Then the youth share handshakes or hugs as the day concludes. People can also share what this weekend and their connection to the others have meant to them, offer affirmations to one another and prayers of thanksgiving for all God has accomplished in and through them.

# Readings for Morning Prayer on Day Two – “Eagle Readings” (RSV2CE)

*And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him out of the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the sons of Israel: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”*

***(Exodus 19:3-6)***

*Like an eagle that stirs up its nest,*

*that flutters over its young,*

*spreading out its wings, catching them,*

*bearing them on its pinions,*

*the LORD alone did lead him,*

*and there was no foreign god with him.*

***(Deuteronomy 32:11-12)***

*“Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up*

*and makes his nest on high*

*On the rock he dwells and makes his home*

*in the fastness of the rocky crag.*

*From there he spies out the prey;*

*his eyes behold it afar off.*

*His young ones suck up blood;*

*and where the slain are, there is he.”*

***(Job 39:27-30)***

*Bless the LORD, O my soul;*

*and all that is within me, bless his holy name!*

*Bless the LORD, O my soul,*

*and forget not all his benefits,*

*who forgives all your iniquity,*

*who heals all your diseases,*

*who redeems your life from the Pit,*

*who crowns you with mercy and compassion,*

*who satisfies you with good as long as you live*

*so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.*

***(Psalm 103:1-5)***

*…* *but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,*

*they shall mount up with wings like eagles…*

***(Isaiah 40:31)***

# He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High,

# who abides in the shadow of the Almighty,

# will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress;

# Eagle Coolmy God, in whom I trust.”

# For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler

# and from the deadly pestilence;

# will cover you with his pinions,

# and under his wings you will find refuge;

# his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.

# You will not fear the terror of the night,

# nor the arrow that flies by day,

# 6nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness,

# nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.

# A thousand may fall at your side,

# ten thousand at your right hand;

# but it will not come near you.

# You will only look with your eyes

# and see the recompense of the wicked.

# Because you have made the LORD your refuge,

# the Most High your habitation,

# no evil shall befall you,

# no scourge come near your tent.

# For he will give his angels charge of you

# to guard you in all your ways.

# On their hands they will bear you up,

# lest you dash your foot against a stone.

# You will tread on the lion and the adder,

# the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.

# Because he clings to me in love, I will deliver him;

# I will protect him, because he knows my name.

# When he calls to me, I will answer him;

# I will be with him in trouble,

# I will rescue him and honor him.

# With long life I will satisfy him,

# and show him my salvation.

# (Psalm 91)

***Reading for Evening Prayer on Day Two – “Prayers of Praise and Humility Before Our God”***

***Reader –*** *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world - the cravings of sinful man, the lust of the eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does - comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever…*

***Reader –*** *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will…*

***Reader –*** *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us…*

***Reader –*** *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body…*

***Reader –*** *Submit yourselves then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

***Reader –*** *I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again…*

***Reader –*** *No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.*

***Reader –*** *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possible dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinner, Christ died for us…*

***Reader –*** *Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus…*

***Reader –*** *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross…*

***Reader –*** *We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ…*

***Reader –*** *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden light…*

***Reader –*** *And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession - to the praise of his glory…*

***Reader –*** *So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. See to it no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than Christ…*

***Reader –*** *For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do…*

***Reader –*** *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Jesus Christ. Finally brothers, whatever is lovely, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things…*

***Reader –*** *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know God.*

***Reader –*** *He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant - not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life…Now the Lord is spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom…*

***Reader –*** *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

***Reader –*** *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever…*

***The Harvest Prayer***

*I stood in the wheat field on a*

*late summer’s day,*

*Remembering the words of the Harvest Master*

*spoken long ago,*

*“I say to you, open your eyes and look at the fields.*

*They are ripe for the harvest!”*

*So I looked and I listened to the wheat*

*to see what it could tell me.*

*I heard the wind move through the field,*

*and the field bowed down to the will of the wind.*

*Each grain, so fragile; yet together*

*they clothed the field in a garment of gold.*

*From seed to stalk,*

*each cared for through sun and rain.*

*Sown by hands and hearts I never knew,*

*standing ready for reaping;*

*Food to nourish and sustain.*

*And my eyes were opened to the surrender*

*of the fields,*

*My ears were opened to the whispering*

*in the wheat.*

*“The harvest is plenty; the workers are few.”*

*So many hearts so carefully planted.*

*So many souls ready for reaping.*

*I beg the Harvest Master*

*to send me into the fields,*

*to gather the souls*

*planted long ago,*

*nourished with tender light and love,*

*formed by the wind of grace.*

*This is my prayer to the harvest Master,*

*this is my heart’s desire,*

*To reap the harvest and*

*prepare for the winter ahead,*

*To rejoice with the sower of seeds,*

*To taste the food that brings eternal life.*

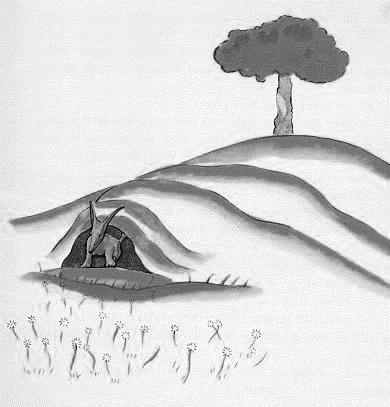
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# The Taming of the Fox – from: The Little Prince, by  [Antoine de Saint-Exupéry](http://www.goodreads.com/author/show/1020792.Antoine_de_Saint_Exup_ry)

***"Good morning," the little prince responded politely, although when he turned around he saw nothing.***

***"I am right here," the voice said, "under the apple tree."***

***"Who are you?" asked the little prince, and added, "You are very pretty to look at."***

***"I am a fox," the fox said.***

***"Come and play with me," proposed the little prince. "I am so unhappy."***

***"I cannot play with you," the fox said. "I am not tamed."***

***"Ah! Please excuse me," said the little prince.***

***But, after some thought, he added: “What does that mean--'tame'?"***

***"You do not live here," said the fox. "What is it that you are looking for?"***

***"I am looking for men," said the little prince. "What does that mean--'tame'?"***

***"Men," said the fox. "They have guns, and they hunt. It is very disturbing. They also raise chickens. These are their only interests. Are you looking for chickens?"***

***"No," said the little prince. "I am looking for friends. What does that mean--'tame'?"***

***"It is an act too often neglected," said the fox. It means to establish ties."***

***"'To establish ties'?"***

***"Just that," said the fox. "To me, you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I have no need of you. And you, on your part, have no need of me. To you, I am nothing more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me, you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world . . ."***

***"I am beginning to understand," said the little prince. "There is a flower . . . I think that she has tamed me…”***

***"It is possible," said the fox. "On the Earth one sees all sorts of things."***

***"Oh, but this is not on the Earth!" said the little prince.***

***The fox seemed perplexed, and very curious.***

***"On another planet?"***

***"Yes."***

***"Are there hunters on that planet?"***

***"No."***

***"Ah, that is interesting! Are there chickens?"***

***"No."***

***"Nothing is perfect," sighed the fox.***

***But he came back to his idea.***

***"My life is very monotonous," the fox said. "I hunt chickens; men hunt me. All the chickens are just alike, and all the men are just alike. And, in consequence, I am a little bored. But if you tame me, it will be as if the sun came to shine on my life. I shall know the sound of a step that will be different from all the others. Other steps send me hurrying back underneath the ground. Yours will call me, like music, out of my burrow. And then look: you see the grain-fields down yonder? I do not eat bread. Wheat is of no use to me. The wheat fields have nothing to say to me. And that is sad. But you have hair that is the color of gold. Think how wonderful that will be when you have tamed me! The grain, which is also golden, will bring me back the thought of you. And I shall love to listen to the wind in the wheat . . ."***

***The fox gazed at the little prince, for a long time.***

***"Please--tame me!" he said.***

***"I want to, very much," the little prince replied. "But I have not much time. I have friends to discover, and a great many things to understand."***

***"One only understands the things that one tames," said the fox. "Men have no more time to understand anything. They buy things already made at the shops. But there is no shop anywhere where one can buy friendship, and so men have no friends any more. If you want a friend, tame me . . ."***

***"What must I do, to tame you?" asked the little prince.***

***"You must be very patient," replied the fox. "First you will sit down at a little distance from me--like that--in the grass. I shall look at you out of the corner of my eye, and you will say nothing. Words are the source of misunderstandings. But you will sit a little closer to me, every day . . ."***

***The next day the little prince came back.***

***"It would have been better to come back at the same hour," said the fox. "If, for example, you come at four o'clock in the afternoon, then at three o'clock I shall begin to be happy. I shall feel happier and happier as the hour advances. At four o'clock, I shall already be worrying and jumping about. I shall show you how happy I am! But if you come at just any time, I shall never know at what hour my heart is to be ready to greet you . . . One must observe the proper rites . . ."***

***"What is a rite?" asked the little prince.***

***"Those also are actions too often neglected," said the fox. "They are what make one day different from other days, one hour from other hours. There is a rite, for example, among my hunters. Every Thursday they dance with the village girls. So Thursday is a wonderful day for me! I can take a walk as far as the vineyards. But if the hunters danced at just any time, every day would be like every other day, and I should never have any vacation at all."***

***So the little prince tamed the fox. And when the hour of his departure drew near--***

***"Ah," said the fox, "I shall cry."***

***"It is your own fault," said the little prince. "I never wished you any sort of harm; but you wanted me to tame you . . ."***

***"Yes, that is so," said the fox.***

***"But now you are going to cry!" said the little prince.***

***"Yes, that is so," said the fox.***

***"Then it has done you no good at all!"***

***"It has done me good," said the fox, "because of the color of the wheat fields." And then he added:***

***"Go and look again at the roses. You will understand now that yours is unique in all the world. Then come back to say goodbye to me, and I will make you a present of a secret."***

***The little prince went away, to look again at the roses.***

***"You are not at all like my rose," he said. "As yet you are nothing. No one has tamed you, and you have tamed no one. You are like my fox when I first knew him. He was only a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But I have made him my friend, and now he is unique in all the world."***

***And the roses were very much embarrassed.***

***"You are beautiful, but you are empty," he went on. "One could not die for you. To be sure, an ordinary passerby would think that my rose looked just like you--the rose that belongs to me. But in herself alone she is more important than all the hundreds of you other roses: because it is she that I have watered; because it is she that I have put under the glass globe; because it is she that I have sheltered behind the screen; because it is for her that I have killed the caterpillars (except the two or three that we saved to become butterflies); because it is she that I have listened to, when she grumbled, or boasted, or ever sometimes when she said nothing. Because she is my rose.***

***And he went back to meet the fox.***

***"Goodbye," he said.***

***"Goodbye," said the fox. "And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."***

***"What is essential is invisible to the eye," the little prince repeated, so that he would be sure to remember.***

***"It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important."***

***"It is the time I have wasted for my rose--" said the little prince, so that he would be sure to remember.***

***"Men have forgotten this truth," said the fox. "But you must not forget it. You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed. You are responsible for your rose . . ."***

***"I am responsible for my rose," the little prince repeated, so that he would be sure to remember.***