

## **DRAMA APPROACHES to Encountering God and the Truths of His Word**

Most worship services and Bible studies use the learning styles of: Linguistic or word smart – sermon or verbal teaching. Sometimes there is a handout, but it is typically words as well. In worship services music is included. If you tend to learn through words and music, then you are enjoying the service/lesson and learning. If you learn through other styles of learning such as kinesthetic, or body smart where learn by doing or moving, and visual, or picture smart learning through visual aids, you may be struggling. We, as worshippers are actually a blend of these learning styles with a predominant style. Being aware of how people learn in different ways may help you to vary your teaching program and materials so that they more easily engage a wider range of people. In this lecture I will present tools to connect with learners who learn using the kinesthetic and visual learning styles.

Process drama is a specific form of drama particularly suited to engaging participants deeply in whatever topic is being taught. The following tools can be used singly to make a Bible passage more meaningful or in various combinations to form a complete process exploration.

The following is a listing and explanation of several process drama tools and how they might be used in a worship/Bible study setting.

**Freeze-Frame** – Freezing action. It can be likened to pressing a pause button to halt a film clip. The action is paused (usually by the leader/teacher) for a purpose. The teacher may simply call “Freeze” during a drama to halt the action. The participants are expected to then keep perfectly still.

**Still Image** – Devise, replicate or create a still image. What and who will we put in this image? Where will we need to stand to convey meaning clearly? What am I trying to convey to my audience

Examples:

*Image Theatre* – Participants make still images that link directly to areas of importance in their own personal lives, feelings, oppressions and experiences. For example, using “human clay” to convey a thematic still image such as growing up in a family of 5 and the father drinking alcohol or ready to hit mom conveying domestic violence.

*Sequencing Images* - A series of linked still images that can describe important moments within a passage of scripture. For example: Moses’ mother hides him; Moses’ mother places him in the basket in the Nile River; little Miriam watches over her brother, Moses; the Pharaoh’s daughter finds Moses in the river.

**Mantle of the Expert** – Participants are asked to take on the role of people with specialized knowledge that is relevant to the particular situation of the story. For example in the story of the battle between the Israelites and the Philistines (1 Samuel 17) asking the Commander and soldiers what should be done.

**Hot-seating** – Participant is a character in a familiar story who is asked questions to find out more information about the person and his/her situation. It involves questioning and interviewing skills. For example, Daniel in the lion's den (Daniel 6).

**Role-on the "Wall"** – Individuals outline the figure of a person on a long sheet of paper, on the wall or on the floor. They then write on the paper feeling or thoughts they have about the person, what we know about the character, characteristics, etc. For example, Judas who betrayed Jesus.

**Conscience Alley or Decision Alley** – Participants line up in two lines facing each other. One side favors one side of an issue/opinion, the other side favors the other. A participant walks down the "alley," as each side tries to convince the person of the truth of their opinion. The person who has "walked the alley" tells the group what his/her opinion is or what s/he has decided after having this experience. For example: One side of the alley tries to convince the person walking through the alley that working at McDonalds is acceptable, the other side tries to convince the person that selling drugs is a better way to earn money.

**Thought-tracking** – The teacher freezes the action in the drama, taps the shoulder of individuals, in role, who are asked to speak aloud their private thoughts and reactions to events. For example in the story of Joseph in prison and the two men who had dreams, the audience members may ask questions of the persons playing the Joseph, the guard, the chief baker and the cupbearer, the other prisoners. They may come up to the person and ask their questions or ask from their seats.

**Collective Role Play** – Several members of the group play the same part simultaneously to provide support and present a range of ideas. One person speaks, closely followed by another, carrying the speech on with attention to consistency of role. For example: four participants play the role of Peter getting out of the boat and walking on the water. (Matthew 14:22-36)

**Improvisation** – Unrehearsed scene co-written with partner(s) or groups without pen or paper. For example, the story of Jesus visiting Mary and Martha (Luke 10).

**Forum Theatre** – Participants enact a scene. The audience can stop the drama, replace, or introduce a new character to change the scene. The scene is linked to some sort of oppression such as domestic violence or a fight and the situation within the scene should be left unresolved. Watch the scene once. Reenact the scene or play and tell the audience to stand up and shout "stop" and give advice at that point to the oppressed character about how to behave or respond differently to the oppressor.

**Narration** – A person narrates part of the story or sequence of events to help it begin, move it on, or aid reflection, to create atmosphere, to give information, to maintain control. For example, a person reading the story of Moses and the 10 plagues (Exodus 8). Some students are the Israelites, some the Egyptians, Moses, etc.

**Presenter in role** – Presenter takes on the role(s) of character(s) within a drama. For example, the presenter takes on the role of a messenger [Jonah] coming to warn the people about God's judgment. Later, s/he takes on the role of the Mayor, another towns person, or another character within the drama.

**Meetings** - The participants come together in a meeting (in role) to present information, plan action, suggest strategies, and solve problems. For example, the Egyptians are following the Israelites out of captivity. How will they escape?

**Guided Imagery-Visualization** – Narrator reads part of a story while the group closes their eyes and visualizes applicable sensory details: sight, sound, hearing, touch, smell, tastes. For example: The Prodigal son with the pigs, then returns to find his father hugs him and prepares a feast for him.

**Pantomime/Movement** – Participants act a part of the story using no voice, only facial expressions and gestures. For example, Adam and Eve disobeying God and eating the forbidden fruit.

**Soundscape** – Participants use voice to suggest the sounds of a certain setting within a story. For example: The soldiers encouraging David in his fight against Goliath.

**Interview** – Participants act as television reporters finding out information about an event. For example one person is the reporter interviewing 2-3 Christians being arrested under Nero in the 1st Century and put to death for their faith.

**Choral Speaking** – Participants repeat certain lines, repeated lines, or not, in unison or divided into various parts according to pitch of voice, character, etc. For example, the crowd yelling to crucify Jesus.

**Speaking Objects** – Objects in a scene speak about themselves in relation to a person, event, or as an eye witness with a viewpoint to share. For example, the stones in David's pouch speak or the donkey Mary rides on into Bethlehem, the mat of the lame man who is brought to Jesus through the roof and healed.

**Performance Carousel** – Participants prepare scenes representing parts of the story, then arrange themselves in chronological order and perform them without interruption. For example: Zacchaeus tries to see Jesus. He climbs a tree to see Him. Jesus calls him down from the branches. Jesus and His disciples eat at the home of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus says he will give all of his money to the poor.

**Eavesdropping** – Individuals overhear conversations and report them back to others. For example: Individuals overhear Jesus talking to the Samaritan woman at the well and they tell their friends what He said.

While the drama is “fun”, there needs to be a time of debrief to ensure learning. Some suggested questions for debriefing are:

- Which person in the drama did you identify with the most and why?
- What do you think God is saying to us in this story?
- How does what God is saying apply to my life?
- What can I do in my life to apply this learning?

### **Resources**

Baldwin, Patrice. *With Drama in Mind: Real Learning in Imagined Worlds*.