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READY, SET, PERFORM!

By Tere L. Turner

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DEDICATION

This book is lovingly dedicated to *The Ready for Christ's Time Players* drama ministry team. Their love of excellence is surpassed only by their love for the Lord. Coaching this group of dedicated young people has been one of the greatest joys of my life.

ABOUT THE BOOK

These award-winning skits will appeal to children and teens. There are four skits that children will love to perform: "You Can't Throw Fits About Church"; "Jesus, Math and Cookies"; "A Day in God's Army" and "An Interview With Noah." Five skits will get the teens excited about acting. Several titles are "The Road to the Cross" and "An Argument With God." This collection is a must for the leader who likes to involve all ages in the drama ministry.

NOTE: "*The Why's and How's of Christian Youth Drama Ministry*" is included at the end of the playbook.

PART ONE

SKITS FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN:

*YOU CAN'T THROW FITS ABOUT CHURCH

JESUS, MATH AND COOKIES

A DAY IN GOD'S ARMY

AN INTERVIEW WITH NOAH

PART TWO

SKITS FOR TEENS:

*AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

IS ANY HEART A BARGAIN?

THE TRIAL

*THE ROAD TO THE CROSS

*AN ARGUMENT WITH GOD

**Indicates that this skit was a national first place winner.*

YOU CAN'T THROW FITS ABOUT CHURCH

Teaches the important lesson that anyone can tell a friend about Jesus, even a little child.

CHARACTERS:

ALEX: A girl in a dress on her way to church.

KYLE: Her friend, dressed casually.

Props: Bench or two chairs.

(AT RISE: ALEX is standing alone in front of a bench. KYLE enters.)

ALEX: *(Waving.)* Hi, Kyle.

KYLE: Alex! You're wearing a dress! Just wait 'till I tell the guys!

ALEX: *(Folds hands in a begging posture.)* Please, don't! I just got home from church. My mom makes me wear a dress when we go.

KYLE: Why do you go if they make you wear a dress? Why don't you just throw a fit or something?

ALEX: You can't throw fits about church. You have to go. It's where you go to learn about Jesus.

KYLE: Who's Jesus?

ALEX: Who's Jesus! Kyle, have you been living in a hole or something? Jesus is God's Son. He came to earth a long time ago to die for sinners.

KYLE: *(Shakes it off.)* Oh well, I'm okay then. See, sinners are really bad people like killers and robbers and math teachers. I don't like math.

ALEX: *(Shakes HER head.)* Kyle, I've got some bad news for you. I learned at church that a sinner is anybody who has done *(Holds up one finger.)* even one bad thing.

KYLE: Oh ... well, I'm still okay. See, I never do bad stuff.

ALEX: *(Surprised.)* Oh, yeah? What about when you told the teacher that your dog ate your science project?

KYLE: *(Defensive.)* Well, he could have eaten it!

ALEX: How about when you put gum in Mary Scott's hair? Or what about the time you -

KYLE: *(Interrupting.)* Okay, okay, I get it! Boy, you sure do have a good memory!

ALEX: *(Folding HER arms.)* Thank you, I try.

KYLE: Maybe I do need to learn about Jesus.

ALEX: I think you'd better, I just remembered three more bad things you did.

KYLE: *(Mad, yelling.)* What, are you keeping score now?

ALEX: *(Yells back.)* Well, you don't make it very hard!

KYLE: *(Still mad and yelling.)* And God says all that stuff is sin?

ALEX: *(Yells back.)* Yep!

KYLE: *(Is surprised, answers quietly.)* Even the stuff that made everybody laugh?

ALEX: Yes, Kyle, even the funny stuff.

KYLE: Man, God is even stricter than the principal!

ALEX: Well, Kyle, you would know.

KYLE: Alex, will you teach me about Jesus?

ALEX: Well, I would but I just told you almost everything I know. You really have to go to church to learn about Jesus.

(KYLE flops down on the bench. ALEX sits down next to him.)

KYLE: Then I'm doomed! My mom says that Sunday is the only day she gets to sleep in. Alex, I don't think I can talk her into getting up for church, even if I throw a fit!

ALEX: Kyle, I'm worried. If you don't learn about Jesus, you'll just keep on sinning, and you won't get into Heaven when you die.

KYLE: *(Jumping up.)* Alex, I'm not going to die until I'm 100! When I'm old, like my brother, I'll get to drive. I'll just go to church then.

ALEX: *(Standing up, thinking.)* Well, that might work but ... Kyle, what if you don't live to be 100? That little boy on the news sure didn't.

KYLE: *(Scared.)* Oh yeah, I forgot about him. What am I going to do?

ALEX: Hey, wait a minute! I've got an idea. Why don't you come to church with me?

KYLE: Will you throw a fit until your parents let me go?

ALEX: No. I won't have to. You're supposed to bring people to church with you; it's a rule or something. They have to let you go. Do you think your mom will let you go to church?

KYLE: Oh, I'm sure she'll say yes. It's funny how my mom never says no when I am invited to go places.

ALEX: You don't say.

KYLE: No, really! If I didn't know better I'd think she was trying to get rid of me or something.

ALEX: *(To audience.)* No, I won't say it! *(To KYLE.)* Oh yeah, Kyle, there is one more thing.

KYLE: What's that?

ALEX: *(Makes a fist and puts it in front of KYLE'S nose.)* If you tell anybody, I mean ANYBODY that you saw me in a dress ... *(Shakes fist.)* I'll pound you!

KYLE: *(Crosses HIS arms, smiling.)* You can't pound me, Alex, 'cause ... *(Touches ALEX'S nose with HIS index finger.)* that would be a sin.

ALEX: *(Crosses HER arms.)* Boy, you sure learn quick.

The End

JESUS, MATH AND COOKIES

Jesus' example to teach us that sharing with others is important.

CHARACTERS:

AMY: A selfish girl.

TREVOR: A true friend.

Props: A pencil, paper, table and chairs, package of Oreo cookies.

(AT RISE: AMY and TREVOR are sitting at a table eating cookies and doing homework.)

AMY: *(Throws pencil down frustrated.)* I hate math! I'll never understand subtraction!

TREVOR: Here, let me show you. *(TREVOR takes four cookies out of the package and sets them in front of AMY.)* If you have four cookies ...

AMY: I like the sound of that!

TREVOR: And you give me two ...

AMY: *(Interrupting, grabbing the cookies.)* Hold it right there, math boy! Why would I give you two of my cookies?

TREVOR: Because I'm trying to show you how to subtract.

AMY: I think you're trying to steal my cookies!

TREVOR: First of all, they're not really your cookies ...

AMY: *(Interrupting.)* You just said they were mine; you're a cheat! I'm telling! Mommm!

TREVOR: Look, do you want me to teach you how to subtract or not?

AMY: Well, okay. *(Pointing HER finger.)* But don't touch the cookies. Got it?

TREVOR: *(Frustrated.)* I can't show you without touching the cookies. Boy, when did you get to be so selfish anyway?

AMY: I am not selfish ... I just like Oreos!

TREVOR: Well, you're not very nice.

AMY: *(Feelings are hurt.)* That's a mean thing to say. I am too nice!

TREVOR: Well, the last time I checked, nice people weren't greedy with their cookies.

AMY: But these aren't just any cookies, they are Oreos!

TREVOR: Amy, did you sleep through Sunday school or what?

AMY: No, I did not sleep through Sunday school! Miss Debbie told us the story about Jesus feeding five thousand people with only five loaves of bread and two fishes. What does that have to do with subtraction?

TREVOR: It doesn't have anything to do with subtraction! It has to do with sharing!

AMY: No, it doesn't! That story's about people who were hungry!

TREVOR: *(Very frustrated.)* Duh! Jesus shared the little boy's bread and fish. That's how the people got unhungry!

AMY: (*Thinking.*) Well, I'd share bread and (*Makes a face.*) fish with hungry people. But Jesus didn't say anything about sharing Oreos!

TREVOR: Sure He did!

AMY: (*Crossing HER arms over her chest.*) I don't remember any cookies in the Bible!

TREVOR: Well, there aren't any cookies but ...

AMY: (*Interrupts, pointing HER finger.*) Aha! So you admit it!

TREVOR: (*Ignoring the interruption.*) Jesus did say that we are supposed to love our neighbors as much as we love ourselves, and to share what we have with other people. Does any of this sound familiar?

AMY: Yes, I remember. Trevor, I'm sorry I was selfish. Do you want an Oreo?

TREVOR: Thanks, Amy, maybe later. First let's get this subtraction thing down, okay?

AMY: You're a good friend.

TREVOR: Thank you. Now, if you have four cookies and give me two --

AMY: (*Interrupting.*) Are you sure two's enough? Take all you want, really. I'm happy to share!

TREVOR: (*Putting HIS hands on top of his head.*) Why me?

The End

AN INTERVIEW WITH NOAH

A humorous look at the Old Testament story of Noah and the flood. Teaching the lesson that we should always listen to God, even when other people think that we're wrong.

CHARACTERS:

NOAH: Wears a biblical costume.

TV REPORTER: Wears a sports jacket.

Props: A hat with a "Press Pass" in the band, microphone.

(AT RISE: REPORTER is facing audience, as if looking into a TV camera and holding a microphone. NOAH is standing next to him/her.)

REPORTER: *(Smiling.)* Thank you, Peter. This is Deborah *(Or David)* Doubt of Mesopotamia Channel Six News. Today I am interviewing Noah. *(Points to NOAH who is waving into the camera and mouthing the words, "Hi, Mom!" REPORTER looks at Noah, shakes head and continues.)* It has been officially verified today that Noah has built the world's largest boat. What makes this story so fascinating is the fact that Noah lives several miles away from the nearest lake or river. *(Turning to NOAH.)* Noah, this is quite a boat! Exactly how large is it?

NOAH: Well, it's a good-sized boat. It measures 300 cubits by 50 cubits by 30 cubits. I made it out of gopher wood so it'll be nice and light in the water. *(Pointing behind THEM and raising hand while looking up, to show the size of the boat.)* And, as you can see, it's three stories high.

REPORTER: Yes, Noah, it's an impressive craft. Can you tell our viewers why you built such a large boat?

NOAH: Well, a lot of us have to fit inside the boat. *(Counting.)* There's Shem, Ham and Japeth. They're my boys. Of course, they all have wives. Then there's me and the misses, *(Shakes HIS head.)* she always overpacks. Then, of course, there are all the animals.

REPORTER: *(Startled.)* Excuse me, did you say animals?

NOAH: Yes. I collected two of every animal, you know, male and female. They are going to live on the boat with us.

REPORTER: That's amazing, Noah. Why did you go to all this trouble? Why do you want to live on a boat with a bunch of animals? *(Stepping forward, forcing Noah to walk backwards across the stage.)* And have you looked into the environmental concerns associated with removing the animals from their natural environment? Well, have you?

NOAH: Well, no. See, all this wasn't exactly my idea. The Lord came to me a while back and gave me this job to do. He said that He needed the animals to repopulate the world after the flood.

REPORTER: (*Frustrated.*) You lost me again, Noah. What flood?

NOAH: The flood God told me about! See, He's getting ready to open up the heavens and just let it pour for a month or two.

REPORTER: Well, Noah, considering that it's never even rained, I think a flood is very unlikely. Besides, I'm sure our professional meteorologist would know if there were going to be a flood. Did the Lord happen to tell you why He's planning to flood the earth?

NOAH: Yes, He did. The Lord told me about all of the sinning and idol worship. Well, He's sorry that He ever made the world, and figures a nice long soaking might just solve the problem.

REPORTER: Okay, let's say there is going to be a flood. Why would God spare (*Snickering.*) you and your family? What makes you so special?

NOAH: Nothing special, ma'am, (*Or sir.*) just faith. God said it, so I believe it. Besides, (*Leans in the REPORTER'S face and forces him/her to walk backwards.*) SOMEBODY had to build the boat. And SOMEBODY has to collect all the animals. And SOMEBODY has to take care of the animals while they're on the boat! (*In a calmer voice.*) I don't imagine there are too many people lined up to take the job.

REPORTER: No, I guess not. (*Pointing behind THEM to the place where Noah indicated the ark earlier.*) Well, Noah, I see that your family is waving to you so I guess it's time for you to get into the boat.

NOAH: Yes, I should go. The Lord is waiting to close the door and get started.

REPORTER: (*Snickering.*) Yes, well, good luck to you, Noah.

NOAH: (*Very sincere.*) No, ma'am! (*Or sir.*) Good luck to you!

(*NOAH waves and exits the stage as the REPORTER turns toward audience.*)

REPORTER: Ladies and gentlemen, as you can see, what started out as a perfectly lovely story about a large boat was ruined by the ravings of a right-wing religious wacko. This is Deborah (*Or David.*) Doubt reporting for Mesopotamia Channel Six News. Back to you, Peter ... (*Lowers the microphone and talks to audience.*) Are we clear? Good, will somebody get me an umbrella? it's really beginning to pour out here!

The End

A DAY IN GOD'S ARMY

A humorous lesson on making the choice to receive salvation.

CHARACTERS:

SARGE: Sergeant stripes on his costume.

RECRUIT #1: Soldier angel costumes with army hats, camouflaged wings, boots, etc.

RECRUIT #2: Another.

RECRUIT #3: Another.

Props: A table, 2 or 3 covered shoe boxes, pencil, paper, telephone, watch.

(AT RISE: THREE RECRUITS dressed in angel fatigues are talking. SARGE enters.)

SARGE: Attention! *(The RECRUITS snap to attention, line up and salute. The SARGE salutes back and begins pacing back and forth in front them.)* All right, recruits, you're here because you are heaven's best and brightest young angels. You have been selected to train for one of the most important missions in heaven. Many are called, but few are chosen! It's our job to make sure that the gift goes out to every human who asks for it ... and that means, *(Gets in the face of RECRUIT #1.)* no long lunches!

RECRUIT #1: *(Salutes.)* Yes, sir!

SARGE: *(Gets in RECRUIT #2's face.)* No coming in late!

RECRUIT #2: *(Salutes.)* Yes, sir!

SARGE: *(Gets in RECRUIT #3's face. This Recruit is playing with fingernails, not paying attention.)* And no goofing off!

RECRUIT #3: *(Jumps, very startled, then salutes.)* Yes, sir!

SARGE: Are there any questions? *(RECRUIT #1 raises hand.)* Yes, recruit?

RECRUIT #1: Sarge, what exactly is "the gift"?

SARGE: Do you mean you don't know about the gift? *(All the RECRUITS shake their heads. To audience.)* I ask for heaven's best, and this *(Pointing to the RECRUITS.)* is what HQ sends me! *(To RECRUITS.)* All right, recruits, follow me. *(THEY walk over to a box, SARGE picks it up and sets it on the table.)* This is the gift. *(SARGE opens box and RECRUITS peer in.)*

RECRUIT #2: Why, it's beautiful!

RECRUIT #3: It's spectacular!

RECRUIT #1: It's simply amazing!

SARGE: *(Proudly.)* It's salvation!

(The RECRUITS nod, smile, clap, ooh and ahhh.)

RECRUIT #2: I've never seen anything as beautiful as what is in that box!

SARGE: And you never will! *(Putting lid back on box, SARGE sets it aside.)* The General's own Son went to war and fought the greatest battle in the history of battles to get this gift for mankind. *(RECRUITS are impressed. SARGE shakes head.)* You know, sometimes I think that if only one human had wanted the gift, the General's Son still would have fought the battle.

ALL RECRUITS: Wow!

RECRUIT #3: Sarge, why is the gift so important? What does it do for man?

SARGE: It's a pass. If a person has salvation, they get to come on the base. Without it, man is an enemy. And you know what happens *(Makes a throat cutting motion across neck.)* to the General's enemies! *(RECRUITS look scared and nod.)*

RECRUIT #1: How does it work?

SARGE: Well, when a human asks for the gift, Field Marshall Holy Spirit puts in an ASAP order on this phone right over here. *(Points to phone.)* Do not, I repeat *(Gets in RECRUIT #2's face.)* DO NOT let this phone ring twice. Understand?

RECRUIT #2: *(Salutes.)* Yes, sir!

SARGE: The Field Marshall will give you the name and location of the person asking for the gift. *(Holds up paper and pencil and gets in RECRUIT #3's face.)* Please write it down!

RECRUIT #3: *(Salutes.)* Yes, sir!

SARGE: Then, you take the name to the gift room. There's a gift in there for every human, so I don't ever want to hear any of that, *(Gets in RECRUIT #1's face and says in a whiney voice.)* "I-looked-everywhere-and-it's-not-there" *(Goes back to a tough voice.)* junk! Got it?

RECRUIT #1: *(Salutes.)* Yes, sir!

SARGE: Then, we hand deliver the gift to Field Marshall Holy Spirit, all within the *(Snaps fingers.)* twinkling of an eye. Pretty impressive, huh?

ALL RECRUITS: Yes, sir!

RECRUIT #2: Sarge, what's in that room over there?

SARGE: *(Sadly.)* Unclaimed gifts.

RECRUIT #3: What?

RECRUIT #1: Why would there be unclaimed gifts?

RECRUIT #2: How could anyone not accept something so wonderful?

SARGE: Well, recruits, you might as well know right now, human beings can be very foolish creatures. Some of them don't claim their gift because they don't know about it. Others think they can get onto the base without it. *(ALL shake their heads.)* Many listen to enemy agents who tell them that the gift isn't really free at all and costs too much to accept. Then there are the really ignorant ones; they don't believe that the General even exists! *(All of the RECRUITS cower in fear.)*

RECRUIT #3: Wow!

RECRUIT #1: Humans sure are uninformed!

SARGE: Yes, but the General isn't. He knows how important the gift is, that's why He

never stops offering it. See, some humans, the smart ones, accept the gift as soon as they hear about it; others take longer to realize how much they need the gift. As you already know, the foolish ones never accept the gift.

RECRUIT #2: If I was the General, I wouldn't put up with that!

RECRUIT #3: Me either! I'd give them just one chance, then I'd say, "Forget you, Buddy!"

(RECRUITS nod in agreement.)

SARGE: *(Gets in RECRUIT #3's face.)* Well, you're NOT the General! *(Backing off.)* He knows how much humans need the gift, so He gives them lots and lots of chances to claim it.

RECRUIT #1: Sarge, what's in that room over there?

SARGE: Returns.

RECRUIT #2: No way!

SARGE: Yes, that room is full of gifts that humans said they wanted, but never really took.

RECRUIT #3: How rude!

RECRUIT #1: Sarge, I'm confused. I guess I can understand why someone might never accept the gift, but how could any one say they want it and never take it?

SARGE: *(Sadly.)* I don't know, I really don't know. *(The PHONE rings; SARGE points to RECRUIT #2.)* You! Get that phone!

RECRUIT #2: Yes, sir! *(Picks up phone and salutes.)* Yes, sir, Field Marshall, sir. Right away, sir! *(Hangs up phone.)* Little Randy Scott in Pocahontas, Arkansas, just asked for the gift!

SARGE: *(Takes paper from RECRUIT #2 and hands it to RECRUIT #3.)* You! Find that gift, now!

RECRUIT #3: I'm on it, Sarge! *(Looks around.)* Here it is! I found it! *(Hands it to SARGE who gives it to RECRUIT #1.)*

SARGE: And, GO!

RECRUIT #1: I'm outta here! *(RECRUIT #1 runs offstage into the audience and out the door with the gift as the other RECRUITS watch. SARGE is looking at his watch.)*

SARGE: *(Looking up from watch.)* Not bad, Recruits, not bad at all. *(RECRUITS look proud as SARGE wipes away a tear.)* It's a great day to be in God's army!

RECRUITS #2 and #3: *(Saluting proudly.)* Yes, sir!

The End

AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

Revisits that fateful Friday at Golgotha and retells the story from the perspectives of the witnesses who were there, at the foot of the cross.

CHARACTERS: (Appropriate biblical costumes for each.)

JESUS

MARY

JOHN

THIEF

PHARISEE

ANGEL

Props: Two broomsticks or poles to put through the sleeves of the two “crucified” men, scroll, soldier’s weapons.

Playwright's Note: When we performed this skit we made the decision not to show the face of the actor who portrayed Jesus. We placed this actor close to the audience with his back to them. We made his costume a floor length white robe with a hood. Then we painted the back of the robe with red lines (whip marks) and the head with red spots (blood from the thorns). We finished the costume by making a crown of thorns and putting it over the hood and onto the actor's head. The effect was very moving.

(AT RISE: Jesus is CS, crucified, with back to audience. SL of Jesus is the THIEF. He's farther away from the audience than Jesus and is facing them. Next to the Thief is the SOLDIER and the proud PHARISEE. MARY and JOHN are huddled together DSR of Jesus. The ANGEL is next to Mary and John, unseen by all but Jesus and the audience.)

PHARISEE: *(Proud and smug.)* Just look at Him hanging there. The Son of God, indeed! I'm a Pharisee; I study God's Word day and night. I would have known the Son of God, if I had met Him. That Man is nothing but a criminal, and the cross proves it!

MARY: *(Heartbroken.)* Just look at Him hanging there. He's my Son. My baby! My heart is breaking. I can't bear to see Him suffering like this.

THIEF: *(Angry, full of contempt.)* Just look at Him hanging here next to me. I don't understand why He doesn't cry out. *(Sneers at the SOLDIER.)* I cursed at the soldiers who drove these spikes into me! But Jesus, He didn't say anything.

JOHN: *(Confused.)* Just look at Him hanging there. I don't understand why it's ended like this! *(Getting loud.)* I've followed Him from the beginning, I saw ... *(Looks over at the PHARISEE and the SOLDIER and becomes afraid. Says quietly.)* the miracles! *(Pulling HIS robe around himself tightly.)* I sure hope nobody recognizes me. I'm really worried. Will I be killed next?

SOLDIER: (*Business as usual attitude.*) Just look at Him hanging there. I still don't understand why the Jews want Him dead. Boy, He sure is a mess! I didn't realize that we'd beaten Him so badly. Oh well, I was just following orders.

ANGEL: (*To audience.*) Just look at Him hanging there. (*Angry.*) I don't understand how The Father could allow this! The King of the universe, beaten bloody and killed by fallen, sinful men! (*Moves to the cross and talks to JESUS.*) Just say the word, Master! There are 10,000 of us! We'll bring you down from that awful cross and destroy all of them!

JESUS: (*In a kind voice.*) But if I come down, who will save them?

PHARISEE: (*Taunting JESUS.*) Hey, King of the Jews! If you really are God's Son come down off that cross! Then I'll believe in you!

THIEF: (*Talking to JESUS, hopeful.*) Yes, come down! And bring me down with you!

MARY: (*Talking to JESUS, begging.*) Oh yes, Son! Please come down now and spare your poor mother all this heartache and grief!

JOHN: (*Talking to JESUS, begging also.*) Please, Jesus, come down and prove to the world that I was right to follow you!

ANGEL: (*Talking to JESUS, pleading.*) Please, Lord, command us to bring you down! Forget about saving mankind! They've treated you so badly. They don't deserve Your love. They deserve hell!

JESUS: (*In a patient voice.*) I have to stay. I'm the only One who can save them.

SOLDIER: (*To the PHARISEE.*) So if He does come down, will I still get paid?

PHARISEE: (*Looks at the SOLDIER and starts to answer but motions the soldier away in disgust and says to audience.*) That Jesus is nothing but trouble. I wish He'd just hurry up and die! I mean, how's it going to look? He can't just hang there, dying during the Passover. It'll ruin the worship service!

MARY: (*Gets down on HER knees and begins to pray.*) Please, dear God, You can't imagine how I feel seeing my Son suffering like this. Please, take Him quickly. Don't let my heartache continue.

JOHN: (*Puts a comforting arm around MARY'S shoulder.*) He won't die. (*To audience.*) I know because He's God's Son. Yes, any minute now He'll just come right down off that cross and show them all. I can't wait to see the look on all their faces! Then they'll wish they'd listened to me.

SOLDIER: (*To audience.*) It's funny; I've been a part of a lot of crucifixions. I've heard men cuss. I've seen them beg for mercy and cry like babies. But this Jesus is different. Anybody can see that He's in torment up there, but there's something else, too. I just can't figure Him out.

THIEF: (*Screaming in pain and desperation.*) I can't stand the pain! The nails hurt! My chest burns! It hurts to breathe! (*Ready to cry.*) I'm afraid to die, but I can't stand the pain! Why doesn't He cry out?

ANGEL: (*To audience.*) Oh, NO! The Father is turning His back on Him!

JESUS: (*Loud, in torment.*) My God, My God, why? Why have You forsaken me?

ANGEL: (*Heartbroken.*) If only the humans could see what I see. They just don't understand. He's suffering every penalty for every sin they'll ever commit. (*Falls to knees.*) Oh, it's just too much! Father, God, did the punishment have to be so great?
PHARISEE: (*Taunting.*) Hey, King of the Jews! God doesn't help sinners like you! (*Pulls out a scroll and waves it at JESUS.*) You should have followed the law!

(*ALL the characters react fearfully to a sudden earthquake.*)

MARY: (*Huddling with JOHN in fear.*) Is it an earthquake? What's happening?
JOHN: Why is the sky turning black?
SOLDIER: Oh man, this can't be good!
PHARISEE: (*Trying to sound confident.*) It's just a coincidence, that's all!
SOLDIER: (*Looks at the PHARISEE.*) Are you nuts?
ANGEL: (*To audience.*) The Father is angry! He's angry enough to destroy the whole world!
JESUS: (*In a soft voice.*) Father, forgive them! For they know not what they do.
PHARISEE: (*Offended.*) Forgive me! Why of all the nerve! I don't need that sinner to pray for me! I have no sin. The law justifies me! Of course, the earthquake stopped ... but that's just a coincidence.
THIEF: (*To JESUS.*) Forgiveness? For me? (*JESUS nods.*) Thank you, Jesus! I really do believe in you. Jesus, please remember me when you get to heaven. (*To audience.*) You know, I don't hurt so much now.
JOHN: (*Walking to the cross.*) Forgiveness? For me? (*JESUS nods.*) Thank you, Jesus! You really are my best friend. I'm so sorry. I've been worrying about myself instead of having faith that You know what's best. (*Kneels at the cross.*) I'm still scared, but I'll trust You, and I'll follow Your lead, Lord.
MARY: (*Walking to the cross.*) Forgiveness? For me? (*Looks up, then remembers what SHE said earlier.*) Oh Lord, I've been so wrapped up in my own sorrow that I'd forgotten. You know exactly how I feel. That's Your Son too, dying on that cross. (*Kneeling.*) Please help me to understand why You've allowed this to happen, and I'll follow Your lead, Lord.
SOLDIER: (*In disbelief.*) Forgiveness? For me? (*JESUS nods.*) How can that be! I beat you ... I laughed at you ... I made that disgusting crown of thorns you're wearing. (*Near tears.*) I'm even the one who nailed you to that cross. I don't understand how you could forgive me, but still, I can feel your love. I know that you really have forgiven me, and changed my heart. I'm so thankful, Jesus! (*Throws down HIS weapons at the foot of the cross and then kneels.*) I'll follow.
JESUS: It is finished!
ALL: Yes, it is finished.
ANGEL: (*To audience.*) Yes. It is finished. The most incredible act of love the world has ever seen has just been completed. (*Kneeling.*) But how many will believe, Lord?

The End

IS ANY HEART A BARGAIN?

A look at the moment of salvation from the devil's perspective.

CHARACTERS:

ACCUSER: A black costume.

SINNER: Dressed casually.

Props: A Bible.

Note: It is very important that the actor who portrays the Accuser resists the temptation to play the part with a confrontational tone in his or her voice. The actor needs to understand that in the character of the Accuser they are talking to Jesus, and even Satan himself isn't brave enough to go toe-to-toe with God's Son!

(AT RISE: SINNER is kneeling CS, reading a Bible. ACCUSER is standing over Sinner. Accuser is invisible to Sinner, but not to audience. Sinner continues to read and cry as Accuser talks to Jesus.)

ACCUSER: *(Looking up to heaven.)* Jesus, wait! I know you're getting ready to move into the heart of that sinner over there but, have you ever looked into that heart? It's so black and *(Makes a face.)* ugly in there! I can't imagine why you, *(Raises hands.)* the Holy Son of the Living God, would want to live in a dump like *(Points to SINNER.)* that! Just look at all those sins! Day after day s/he has indulged those evil thoughts and actions. Oh, just look at that one! *(Smiles.)* That sure wasn't very nice! Oh, sure s/he's sorry now, but don't you think it's just a *(Holds up fingers like measuring an inch.)* little bit late? Lord, what could you possibly want with a piece of junk like that? *(Crosses arms over chest and shakes head.)* That heart is certainly no bargain. There isn't one *(Holds up a finger.)* thing in there that you can use. You'll have to start all over with that one! Just think about all the time you'll have to put into changing that life into something valuable. *(Taking on a very conversational tone of voice.)* Frankly, Jesus, I don't know why you bother with mankind at all. *(Points to audience.)* You lived there with them, you know what they're like. The worst of them are sadistic, cruel, and vicious. Much better suited to, well, my needs. *(Happy.)* I'm right at home in a heart like that. Why, most of the time I don't even have to redecorate! And, Lord, even at their best, mankind is selfish and indifferent to the needs of almost everyone around. *(Indignant.)* Why, even the people who claim to know and love you best are tragically inadequate! Oh, they try to do good, I'll give them that, but they keep sinning and backsliding. You have to spend all your time forgiving them and remodeling their hearts all over again. Face it, they're a job that's never finished! *(Very sympathetic voice.)* Why should you trouble yourself about them, when, with just a little bit of work, even they would be a good place for me to live.

ACCUSER: *(Cont.)* Jesus, just consider the trouble you're taking on by saving *(Points to SINNER.)* this one. Why s/he probably won't even be grateful! We've both seen it before. They promise to love and follow you. They say they want you in their hearts, but then never let you in at all. *(Sympathetic.)* I know how much that hurts you. *(Pleading.)* Why put yourself through it? *(Gently.)* There's a nice, old choir director just a few blocks from here. Why not go visit that heart again and leave this one, to me.

SINNER: *(Looks up to heaven, hands folded in prayer, crying.)* Dear Jesus, I know how horrible I am. All the things I've done with my life that have hurt you. I know that I'm no bargain; not at all worth the price you had to pay when you died for me. *(Picks up Bible, hopeful.)* But still, your Word says that if I'll just come to you and ask, you'll forgive me and come and live in my heart. *(Praying.)* Oh, please Jesus, come and live in my heart!

ACCUSER: *(Panicky.)* NO! Wait ... *(Defeated, whining. To audience.)* it's just not fair! Those sinful human hearts should belong to me! They don't deserve any better! *(Frustrated.)* I'll never understand why they're so valuable to Him, anyway. I just live in them for a while, trash them, and then throw them away.

The End

THE TRIAL

A dramatic look at the death of Jesus, coming to the conclusion that no one man is responsible for His suffering. Because Jesus died for our sins, we all played a part in His death.

CHARACTERS:

THE DEFENSE: Dressed in a suit.

THE PROSECUTOR: Also in a suit.

THE JUDGE: Dressed in a judge's robe.

Props: Gavel, Judge's bench, 2 tables, Bible.

(A courtroom during the middle of a trial. AT RISE: The PROSECUTOR addresses the audience as the jury.)

PROSECUTOR: *(Making grand gestures.)* Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, the State has proven its case. We have clearly shown that Governor Pontius Pilate abused his authority when he sentenced one Jesus of Nazareth to death on the cross. As an officer of the court, Pilate should have released Jesus when the local prosecutors failed to prove their case against Him. However, instead of following the law, he bowed to the pressure of a special interest group, and must be punished for that choice. *(Pointing to Pilate's defense ATTORNEY.)* Why, even Pilate's defense concedes that Jesus was an innocent man. You must find Pilate guilty. The prosecution rests.

JUDGE: Defense, are you ready to present your arguments?

DEFENSE: *(To JUDGE.)* Yes, Your Honor. *(To audience.)* Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, it is the defense's position that Governor Pilate has been unfairly singled out for punishment in this case. We contend that many people were responsible for the death of Jesus. I also intend to prove that it was never within Pilate's power to prevent His death.

PROSECUTOR: *(To JUDGE.)* I object, Your Honor! *(To audience.)* The prosecution has never argued the fact that others were involved in the death of Jesus! We agree that the Sanhedrin, Herod, and even one of Jesus best friends were in on the plot to take His life. The point is that none of these people had the authority that Pilate had. Because Pilate was the final authority in Jerusalem, he was responsible!

DEFENSE: Your Honor, my esteemed colleague has accidentally hit on the heart of my defense.

PROSECUTOR: What!

JUDGE: Counselor, I'm warning you right now, I won't have you playing games in my courtroom. Is that clear?

DEFENSE: Yes, Your Honor. If the court will allow me to proceed, I intend to prove that Pilate was not the authority at work in Jerusalem on that awful Friday when Jesus died. I will produce a witness who will testify that it was never within Governor Pilate's power to save Jesus.

JUDGE: Can you prove any of these allegations?

DEFENSE: Yes, Your Honor, we can.

JUDGE: Proceed, Counselor. But I'm warning you, you had better have the proof to back up these statements.

DEFENSE: Thank you, Your Honor. For my first witness I would like to call the jury.

PROSECUTOR: Oh, I object! This is highly irregular!

JUDGE: Counselor, you are beginning to push your luck. Can you give me one good reason why I should allow this to continue?

DEFENSE: Please, Your Honor, if the court will indulge me for just a few minutes, my line of questioning will become clear to everyone.

JUDGE: Well, I'm doing this against my better judgment, but you may proceed ... but carefully.

DEFENSE: Thank you, Your Honor. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, please remember that you are charged with seeking the truth in this matter, so please think about my questions carefully before you answer them. How many of you have ever told a lie? Come on, don't be shy, a simple show of hands will do. Have any of you ever cheated? Yes, me too, what can I say, I'm a lawyer. Has anybody ever had an ugly thought? How about you, Your Honor?

JUDGE: I don't think my character is an issue here! For that matter, Counselor, I don't understand what the jury's character has to do with the matter before this court.

DEFENSE: Your Honor, this is the heart of our case. The truth is that all of our characters are an issue here, yours, mine, theirs, and everybody's. There isn't one of us who could stand before a holy God on his or her own merits? Why, our very best looks like dirty rags to God!

JUDGE: I understand the truth of what you're saying, Counselor, but what does it have to do with the death of Jesus?

DEFENSE: Everything, Your Honor. Because we are all hopeless sinners, a sacrifice, a perfect sacrifice, was needed to reunite us with God. That sacrifice was Jesus.

PROSECUTION: Objection! Your Honor, that story has been circulated by Jesus followers ever since His murder! Surely the court isn't going allow the defense to substitute fairy tales for hard facts!

DEFENSE: *(Bangs fist on the table.)* It's not a fairy tale, it's the truth!

JUDGE: *(Bangs the gavel.)* Order in the court! Counselor, you will direct your remarks to the bench, not to the prosecution, or I will find you in contempt! Do I make myself clear?

DEFENSE: I'm sorry, Your Honor, it's just that this is a very important case and the truth must be told.

JUDGE: We all want to get to the truth, Counselor. You said earlier that you have a witness who can prove your claim. If that's true, I think you had better produce him now.

DEFENSE: Your Honor, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, my esteemed colleague, at this time the defense wishes to enter a book into evidence.

PROSECUTION: A book! What book, and who wrote it?

JUDGE: Those are very good questions. Counselor, who wrote the book to which you are referring?

DEFENSE: *(Holds up a Bible.)* The book is called, "The Holy Bible" and God Himself wrote it. *(Thumbs through the pages.)* It's all here, Your Honor, all the proof in the world that Jesus was not murdered, but that He sacrificed His life, for me, and for you, for all of us. The Bible allows us to trace our history with God back to the beginning, where we can read about man's fall in the garden. Then it teaches us God's law, not because the law can save us, but because it teaches us about sin and its terrible, eternal consequences. The Bible documents how man tried to overcome sin on his own, and failed. Finally, the Bible shows that from the beginning, God had a plan to provide the sacrifice that we needed so badly, and that plan was Jesus. Most important of all, the Bible documents the truth about everything I've just said, from Jesus' own lips! Look, it's right here in John 10: 17 - 18, *(Reads.)* "Therefore doth my father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment I have received of my father." *(Closes Bible.)* Your Honor, ladies and gentlemen, don't you see? It wasn't Judas or the soldiers or Pilate that caused the death of Jesus that day. It was the combination of God's hatred of sin and His love for us that brought Jesus to that cross. He went willingly, because He loved us. The Defense rests.

JUDGE: Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, you have heard all the evidence and the matter is now in your hands. You must decide for yourselves what you will do with Jesus. If you find that Jesus willingly gave His life for the sins of mankind, then you must also find that Pilate was not the only responsible party in His death. Indeed, you have to admit that our sins made all of us responsible for the death of Jesus. This court is adjourned. *(Bangs the gavel.)*

The End

THE ROAD TO THE CROSS

This Reader's Theatre skit paints a dramatic picture of a sinner's journey to the cross and how s/he never could have made that terrible walk without the help of Christian friends.

CHARACTERS:

READER #1
READER #2
READER #3

Props: Three matching three-ring notebooks, matching outfits (optional).

Note: To perform a Reader's Theatre skit effectively the actor's voice and facial expressions are his/her most important tools. So, go over the top, don't be afraid of over-acting! In Reader's Theatre the actors do not interact with each other; their focus is directed toward the audience at all times. In a Reader's Theatre skit costumes and props are usually not used, if you choose to use them, keep them very simple. Movements and words that are performed in unison must be in sync (for example, page turning, or turning around). The term Reader's Theatre is somewhat misleading because although the actors have script books in front of them, the script must be memorized to be effective.

(AT RISE: READERS stand in a straight line. Reader #1 opens book, Reader #2 follows, then Reader #3.)

READER #1: *(Steps forward.)* The assurance that the road to heaven is paved with blood is a fundamental truth that ...

ALL: ... all Christians ...

READER #1: ... hold in common.

READER #2: *(Steps forward.)* As Christians, we also share another road.

READER #1: It's an ugly road so we don't talk about it very often, but every Christian has walked on it.

READER #2: It's the road to the cross.

(READER #2 takes a step back as READER #3 steps forward.)

READER #3: If the road to heaven is paved with the blood of Jesus, then the road that leads to the cross is paved with the garbage of our sins.

READER #1: God, in His awful mercy, allows only one way for us to come to salvation. He makes us walk through our own filth to get there.

READER #3: He doesn't do it to be cruel. It's important that we understand, we are ...

ALL: ... not worthy ...

READER #3: ... of the awful price His Son paid for our redemption.

(READERS #1, 3 step back as READER #2 steps forward.)

READER #2: Do you remember your gut-wrenching walk to the cross? I remember mine. I still carry scars from the shattered dreams and shards of broken promises that littered the pathway. I remember the stinging thorns of disappointment and the briars of hurt feelings that reached out from either side of the road, leaving deep cuts and scratches on my heart. I still retch inside when I remember the stench of my deliberate sins, which lined the road and were piled high above my head.

READERS #1, 3: The sky was cloudy and the air was thick.

READER #2: I remember that it was raining; the rain was made of my tears. More than anything else, though, I remember the voice that was hissing in my ear, the voice that kept telling me ...

READER #3: *(Steps forward.)* ... just turn back.

READER #1: *(Steps forward.)* What makes you think that God will forgive all the garbage on your road?

READER #3: Just look at the mess you've made of things!

READER #1: Why, you're not even worthy to ask God to forgive you!

READER #2: The voice called my attention to every piece of trash, every broken promise, every sin on the road.

READER #1: Just turn back now; you've made too much garbage.

READERS #1, 3: *(Stepping back.)* Turn around.

READER #3: It's too late for you.

(READERS #1, 3 turn their backs to the audience.)

READER #2: As I looked down that road, everything the voice was saying seemed to be right. As far as my eyes could see, there was nothing but garbage. Just as I was about to give in and turn back, I remembered what they told me while I was still standing at the fork in the road.

READER #3: *(Turns to face the audience.)* Now don't forget, the voice will mix lies and truth together in any combination to scare you.

READER #1: *(Turns to face the audience.)* The voice will try every trick to keep you from walking down the road that leads to the cross.

READER #3: Everything will be all right if you just keep walking.

READERS #1, 3: Don't listen to the voice, ...

READER #3: ... no matter what it says.

READER #2: Who told me to keep walking?

READER #1: Is it possible that you've really forgotten?

READER #3: Don't you remember when we walked you to that fork in the road?

READER #1: Please, you must remember when we cried with you?
READER #3: How we encouraged you? *(Looks down.)*
READER #1: When we confided to you that we, also, walked a road of garbage to get to the cross? *(Looks down.)*
READER #2: They looked like the other Christians I'd met. Their faces were glowing ...
READERS #1, 3: *(Looks up, proud voices.)* ... and our robes were white!
READER #2: To look at them, I never would have believed that they had walked a road like the one I was about to walk. But these believers were special because unlike the others I'd met, they weren't willing to let me look at their white robes and think that they had always been shiny and clean.
READER #1: *(Steps forward.)* We loved you too much to leave you feeling isolated and alone.
READER #3: *(Steps forward.)* We remember how lonely the road to the cross can be, with only the voice for company.
READER #2: These saints knew that to make that terrible walk, I needed to be armed with the truth.
READERS #1, 3: So, for your sake ...
READER #1: ... we put off our righteousness ...
READERS #1, 3: ... for a few minutes ...
READER #3: ... and shared the story ...
READERS #1, 3: ... of our garbage with you.
READER #2: Because these wonderful, unselfish people were willing to remember their sins and share them with me, I was able to walk the road to the cross with assurance.
READERS #1, 2: When the voice hissed ...
READER #3: ... nobody's trash stinks as bad as yours!
READER #1: You had the comfort of our testimony.
READER #2: *(Steps forward.)* And it gave me the courage to keep walking.
READERS #1, 2: When the voice said ...
READER #3: ... you won't ever be clean!
READER #1: You held fast to the promise that we were as dirty as you before we came to the cross.
READER #2: *(Steps forward.)* And I found the courage to keep walking.
READER #3: Without our love for you ...
READER #1: Without our willingness to share our walk to the cross ...
READER #2: *(Steps back.)* I would have listened to the voice. I would have turned back and never reached the cross.
READER #3: If you find that you are brushing away a tear or choking on a lump in your throat ...
ALL: We're glad.
READER #1: Because it means that you do remember us.
ALL: It is our heartfelt prayer ...
READER #2: ... that if, like me, you're indebted to some remarkable Christian ...
ALL: ... that you will remember.

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READER #1: And as a testimony to that memory, you won't ever get so comfortable in your ...

ALL: ... beautiful robe of white ...

READER #3: ... that you'll be too proud to take it off, ...

ALL: ... for just a few minutes, ...

READER #2: ... when you walk someone to the fork in the road ...

ALL: ... that leads to the cross.

(Close books in unison and bow heads.)

The End

AN ARGUMENT WITH GOD

This Reader's Theatre skit takes a poetic look at the problems in our society from a Biblical perspective.

CHARACTERS:

READER #1

READER #2

READER #3

READER #4: Must be male.

Props: Four matching three ring notebooks, matching outfits (optional).

Note: To perform a Reader's Theatre skit effectively the actor's voice and facial expressions are his/her most important tools. So go over the top, don't be afraid of over-acting! This Reader's Theatre piece is poetry. When performing poetry it is very important that the actor not speak in a singsong voice, with which we are taught to recite in school. Even though the words rhyme, it is important to make them sound conversational (think about Shakespeare's dialogue). In Reader's Theatre the actors do not interact with each other; their focus is directed toward the audience at all times. In a Reader's Theatre skit costumes and props are usually not used, if you choose to use them, keep them very simple. Movements and words that are performed in unison must be in sync (for example, page turning, or turning around). The term Reader's Theatre is somewhat misleading because although the actors have script books in front of them, the script must be memorized to be effective.

(AT RISE: READER'S #1, 2 and 3 stand together in a straight line. READER #4 is standing off to one side of the stage. Reader #1 opens book, Reader #2 follows, and then Reader #3. Finally, Reader #4 opens his book and then turns his back to the audience.)

READER #2: *(Steps forward.)* All the things that seemed so right ...

READERS #2, 3: *(READER #3 steps forward.)* So right ...

READERS #1, 2, 3: *(READER #1 steps forward.)* So right to me ...

READER #2: ... had brought my country down to shame.

READER #3: So I cast my eyes to heaven's door and asked God ...

READERS #1, 2, 3: *(Look up.)* ... are You to blame?

READER #1: Lord, You said, "Care for the poor."

READER #2: So we gave and did not count the cost.

READERS #1, 2, 3: *(Step back.)* We've done this now for many years ...

READER #1: ... and still they're homeless ... *(Turns back to audience.)*

READER #2: ... poor ... *(Turns back to audience.)*

READER #3: ... and lost. *(Turns back to audience.)*

READER #4: (*Faces audience.*) Child, you gave your help amiss. If in prayer you had first bent a leg, you would have taught my children how to work instead of how to beg.

(*READER #4 turns his back to audience as the other READERS turn to face audience.*)

READER #1: But Lord, Your Word says ...

READERS #1, 2, 3: (*Point to book to emphasize.*) ... "Do not judge."

READER #2: So we have left them all alone.

READER #3: Now, dads and dads get married.

READER #2: Babies are killed ...

READER #1: ... and thrown away instead of buried.

READER #3: There are children giving birth to children ...

READER #2: ... who grow up to murder playmates ...

READERS #1, 2, 3: (*Raise left arm to make point.*) ... and the greatest minds that science knows ...

READER #1: ... believe that we descend from primates!

READER #3: Families are being thrown away for selfish vices and addictions ...

READERS #1, 2, 3: (*Put right hand on hip.*) ... kids without dads will be fine ...

READER #2: ... according to predictions.

READER #1: God, look at the mess You made! (*Turns back to audience.*)

READER #2: We were following Your Word! (*Turns back to audience.*)

READER #3: Then the voice from heaven answered ... (*Turns back to audience.*)

READER #4: (*Turns to face audience.*) Child, have you not heard? I said in Proverbs 14:12, that all these awful things would be if you trusted in man's wisdom instead of putting faith in Me. My Word tells you all things clearly if you read it with your heart. It tells you what to hold to dearly and from which things to depart. It tells you how to raise your family, how to help the sick and needy. How to hold the gifts I give you without becoming greedy. (*READERS #1, 2, 3 turn to face audience.*) Child, read the Book I gave you!

ALL: Yes, the Bible is its name!

READER #4: Then come and talk with Me again if you still think I'm to blame. (*Turns back to audience.*)

READER #1: As I studied in my Bible.

READER #2: I began to see the light.

READER #3: When we threw away the Ten Commandments ...

READERS #1, 2, 3: (*Points to SELF.*) ... we gave up the fight.

READER #2: So once again ...

READER #3: ... I looked ...

READER #1: ... I looked ...

READER #2: ... I looked to heaven, my heart broken ... (*Kneels.*)

READER #1: ... sad ... (*Kneels.*)

READER #3: ... and black ... (*Kneels.*)

READERS #1, 2, 3: (*Look up.*) ... Lord, forgive me, You were right. (*Look down.*)

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(READER #4 turns to face audience.)

READER #2: *(Looks at audience.)* He answered.

READER #4: Imagine that.

(ALL close books at the same time and bow heads.)

The End

THE WHY'S AND HOW'S OF CHRISTIAN YOUTH DRAMA MINISTRY **By Tere Turner**

For the last seven years I have had the privilege of serving the Lord as the drama coach for “The Ready for Christ’s Time Players” drama ministry team. If you are also blessed with the privilege and responsibility of working with young people, you’ve experienced firsthand the uphill battles Christian youth workers are faced with in today’s society. I hope that in addition to experiencing the frustration that comes from competing with an ungodly world for the hearts and minds of our children, you have also experienced the awesome blessings that God bestows on the adults who accept that challenge.

Surprisingly, in my position as a drama coach, my foremost problem was not, as one might expect, finding young people who were willing to use their talents to minister to the people around them. The actors on my church drama team take the responsibility of witnessing to others very seriously. In fact, seeing the love that these kids have in their hearts for the lost souls around them has truly been my greatest blessing. However, that dedication on the part of these remarkable youngsters also created my greatest challenge as a drama coach.

Our drama team was always looking for “material with a message” to perform and to be honest, we couldn’t find very many pieces that the actors liked. What we did find were a lot of “cutesy” pieces with no real message and a lot of “preachy” material that the kids didn’t think would touch the hearts of people their age. Because we had such a hard time finding material that we believed would speak to young hearts, a few years ago I began writing material for our group to perform. This collection of monologues and speeches is the best of those writing efforts.

This book is dedicated to individual drama and speech efforts. There is one obvious disadvantage to beginning a youth drama ministry program with monologue or speech projects. Initially, most young people are intimidated by the prospect of getting up alone in front of a group and performing. If you have enough young people in your church who are interested in drama ministry, I recommend that you begin by doing group projects. If, however, you are in the position of having to begin with individual efforts, don’t be too concerned. The upside of starting with individual drama is that in some ways you’re skipping a step; after all, one of the goals of a drama ministry program should be to get your actor to the place where he or she is confident enough to stand alone and witness. Another advantage to working with only one or two actors is knowing that you will have more time to help them perfect their individual performances.

If your church or school has never used drama as a teaching or witnessing tool before, you may be asking yourself if the benefits of a drama ministry program justify the time commitment and funding that a Christian arts program requires. I believe that the answer is a resounding yes for the following six reasons:

- 1) When Christians with similar interests are brought together they form solid friendships. Studies indicate that to young people in today’s culture, friendship is of supreme importance and kids feel compelled to fit in somewhere. Because of the high value our youth place on friendships, a support network of Christian friends is vital if our

young people are going to succeed.

2) Youth that are united in an enjoyable common ministry learn how to work together to achieve Christian goals. It's a real blessing to see young people become active workers in your church.

3) The faith of our children is defined through the Biblical truths they learn and how they learn them. Drama allows our youth to learn (and yes, even question) Christian values in a casual environment. This might not sound important, but studies have found that Christians who grow up with the attitude that faith is a normal part of every activity are more likely to succeed in their walk. A drama ministry program takes Christian values out of the Sunday school classroom and makes them the focal point of a fun activity in which kids want to participate.

4) The confidence to be a bold witness increases when young people are given a forum where they can publicly express their faith. Be honest, most of us don't witness because we don't know how. Drama ministry teaches witnessing skills and instills the confidence to speak boldly.

5) Youth who grow up participating in Christian ministry programs are more likely to continue their education at a Christian college or university.

6) Churches that maintain active youth ministry programs such as drama have more young people who grow up, stay in church and use their gifts and talents in God's service. Remember, a lifetime of Christian discipleship starts with a small spark! For many young people that spark can be ignited with an arts program.

Now that you have an appreciation for the value of including a drama ministry team as part your churches youth program, the next obstacle you face is figuring out who is qualified to coach the team. Well, since you've expressed enough interest in Christian drama to pick up this book, my guess is that you are the perfect person to coach the team! There are only three requirements needed to be a great Christian drama coach. They are:

- 1) A genuine love for the Lord and his word.
- 2) A genuine love and concern for young people.
- 3) A genuine love of excellence!

The actual mechanics of good drama can be explained in just a few minutes. Teaching young people not to turn their backs on the audience and to speak loudly and clearly are concepts that no one needs to tell you, so I won't insult your intelligence. Instead, I'll use this space to warn you about the most common mistake I see at drama competitions and tell you how your drama team can avoid making the same blunders.

The most common error that drama/speech coaches make is not expecting enough from their actors. Remember, the only thing that good acting or great oratory has to be is believable, so impress upon your actors that a good performance is not just reciting lines of dialogue, it's becoming another person. Keep in mind that a script is nothing but words typed on a piece of paper. It's the feeling and believability an actor brings to those words that make them valuable. In individual drama every eye in the room is on one person and if your actor breaks character for even a second or two, people will notice! I've instilled this concept into my actors to the point that if they make a mistake, they actually do it in character! I remember one young actor who was playing an old man forgot his line and

the boy actually said, “Oh, what’s that word again? I knew it a minute ago!” Initially, I was mortified but because he didn’t break character, the audience had no idea that his mistake wasn’t part of the monologue! If you can teach your actors these kinds of skills (we call them recovery techniques) their confidence will grow quickly. Another important part of your job as a drama coach is to help your actors avoid talking or moving in ways that aren’t natural. A simple rule of thumb is this: if it looks or sounds phony to you, it will look and sound phony to your audience. You’ll be amazed at the excellent acting you can get from even the youngest children when they know you won’t settle for a less than believable performance.

Making a good speech is somewhat different than performing a monologue. In oratory there aren’t any characters, costumes or sets for your performer to hide behind. The only tools he or she has are voice, facial expressions and body language, all of which are essentials of good acting. But a speech also requires that your actor convince the listener that his or her position is the correct one. It’s the passion which an actor brings to a speech that makes it convincing. As with a monologue, during a speech every eye in the room is on one person and if the performance isn’t believable, people will not be convinced!

Other critical issues that a good speech or drama coach needs to consider are the age and especially the gender of the youngster who is performing. Gender is an especially important consideration in casting a speech because in many conservative denominations females do not preach. If you belong to a conservative denomination this is a restriction that must be considered in order to avoid offending people; however, this restriction does not mean that females should not give speeches.

In the last two years four of my female drama team members have won top honors at national speech competitions in spite of my denomination’s built-in bias against female speech presentations. In order to keep a speech from sounding like preaching I encourage my female orators to take on an imploring tone in places where male orators would naturally take on an authoritative tone. I also encourage my female orators to cultivate a softer, more pleasant sounding voice than is normally required of male drama team members. I’ve heard arguments against the value of teaching females to present speeches since preaching may not be in their future. I believe, however, that all of us are called to be witnesses and need to learn the necessary skills.

Another common mistake drama coaches make is not adapting the part to fit their performer’s speech style and oratory abilities. The words (even my words, so beautifully written!) aren’t the most important part of the monologue or speech. The pieces contained in this book are good but they are not the Bible! There’s no law that says you can’t rewrite a line or change something if it makes the performance work better for your orator or actor, as long as it doesn’t compromise the Biblical truth you are trying to convey.

I explain the concept of acting to my drama kids by telling them to say their lines like they are talking to one of their friends. This is especially important during a speech because the actor actually is talking to the audience! The other approach I use (you may not want to use this example, it’s inherently risky!) is to tell them that acting is like lying. Not surprisingly, most children understand the concept that when telling a lie, you have to

make your audience believe it!. I explain that the difference between acting and lying is that now they are channeling their inborn instincts for good instead of evil!

Above all, listen to your actors! If they tell you that people their age “don’t talk like that,” believe them (I learned this the hard way!) and let them help you make changes. Remember, this is a team effort!

I’m sure you’ve gotten the impression by now that I stress excellence as a major goal of any youth drama ministry project. While your top priority in starting a program may not be to create great actors, one of your highest priorities should be to create great people. I firmly believe that instilling the love of excellence in our young people is essential to accomplishing that goal. If you’re tempted to settle for less than the very best work your drama team is capable of producing, we need go back to the why of Christian youth drama for a moment and review. I understand that bad acting, mumbled words, forgotten lines and other mistakes are charming in school plays and church programs; but when drama is used as a ministry tool we need to expect only the best efforts for the following reasons:

1) The most important reason is because it’s for God. We need to teach our children early that our Savior is entitled to their best efforts.

2) When actors have to really explore a character and feel the things that the character is experiencing, they get a better understanding of God’s word and of themselves.

3) An important reason for having a drama ministry program is to teach young people how to witness. If your drama team is ever going to experience the joy of touching hearts for Jesus, their work actually has to be good enough to touch hearts. I beg you, please don’t cheat your young people out of that victory!

Now, before you begin your drama ministry I want to take a minute and reassure you about all the technical aspect of starting a Christian drama team. Yes, there will be a lot to do and it will overwhelm you quickly if you let it. Please, don’t worry! I promise, you don’t have to shoulder the burden alone or be good at everything to make a drama ministry work! I learned a valuable bit of information a long time ago, which I want to pass on to you: don’t worry about the things you don’t know how to do, God has already provided everything you will need! For example, I am a good writer/director who has absolutely no ability whatsoever to design sets, play music or make costumes. God, knowing my shortcomings, placed people in my church who possess the gifts and talents, which I lack. When I asked these wonderful people for help the results were amazing! It is my sincere hope and prayer that God will bless your drama ministry. I pray that your efforts as a drama coach will instill a love for “The Great Commission” in the hearts of your young people that will last a lifetime. I also pray that your group’s drama team ministry will touch the lives of many for the kingdom of Jesus, our Lord.

Yours in HIS service,

Tere L. Turner