

# **Putting Together A Powerful Puppet Program**

By Dick Gruber

This workshop will give the team director basic guidelines and ideas for organizing team performances in both the secular and church settings.

## **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

John 7:30b

but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come.

Acts 28:4-5

When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live."

But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects.

Col 3:22-24

Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

1 Pet 4:11

If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

## **INTRODUCTION**

I have been a puppet team director on and off since 1979. In this time I have organized programs/presentations for public and private schools, children's churches, banquets, libraries, and city parks. Each setting where your team finds itself is unique. When your team is asked to perform/minister, a trust is being placed in your ability to deliver an enjoyable non-offensive presentation. This means that in different settings, you will take a different approach when planning and carrying out your program.

But first, let us look at some universal guidelines and truths concerning puppet team and individual performance.

## **UNIVERSAL GUIDELINES**

1. Do remember that you are representing Christ. All actions, words, and attitudes will reflect the nature and character of Jesus.
2. Do clean up your act. Cleanliness is next to godliness. Brush your teeth, comb your hair, use deodorant, wear clean clothing. You are representing Jesus. Look and smell your best for Him. The audience and other puppeteers will appreciate this. We don't want to offend people before, during, or after the performance.
3. Do wear modest clothing. Remember, you represent Jesus and your church.

4. Do treat children with respect. Jesus said, "...I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."-- Mat 25:40 Your speech should always lift children to Jesus.
5. Do not invade another person's private space. Example: Clowns and/or costumed characters should never run right up to small children. Get down on the child's level and let them come to you.
6. Do everything you can to help the entire team succeed. Help set up and pack equipment, encourage/serve one another in love, and pay attention. Look for ways to serve the team and the audience.
8. Do enjoy yourself. Sing the songs, obey the rules, participate in the presentation. Local kids will get involved if they see the workers involved. (This is especially important when presenting a short segment within a greater service.)
9. Prayer changes things. Pray for God's anointing on the program, on the other puppeteers, and the prospective audience. God's anointing is important even in, or I should say, especially in a non-church setting.
10. Do practice your material. Preparation pays big time. Even the person with the smallest part must prepare. Remember Colossians 3:23-24. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."
11. Do remember that children want to serve. Whenever possible, involve children in your portion of the service. Have them hold objects, dramatize stories, or run the overhead projector. Compliment children for positive behavior. (Proverbs 16:21) Some call this positive reinforcement. Children are motivated by adults/teens who notice their good deeds and recognize them.
12. Remember the theme. Each presentation follows/teaches a specific theme. Keep the theme in mind and weave it into any lesson you might be called upon to present.
13. The Rule Of Three will be enforced. No worker will have one-on-one contact with a child apart from the group. You do not take a child alone into the hallway or rest rooms. You do not spend time privately with any child either on or off the church grounds. Always walk in three's or more. Spending time with several children is permitted. The Rule Of Three states, "there will never be less than three people together in any given situation. This can be two workers and one child, or one worker and two children."

14. Every song builds from start to finish. A song should not be a stagnate display of four puppets dressed like bananas. It should start with one or two bananas, joined later by the others, a dancing fruit basket, strawberry kick-line, and waving streamers. Each verse of a song should find the audience amazed and awed by another new character or prop.

### **DEVELOPING A PROGRAM**

- Choose this day whom you will serve.
  1. Think about your audience.
  2. Secular or church?
  3. Young or old? (attention span is important)
  4. Christian program or Christian performer? (do not break the trust)
  
- Choose a theme.
  1. Church: God's Love, Abundant Life, Big Ten, Faith...
  2. Secular: Book appreciation, history, drug resistance, conflict resolution...
  
- Choose your weapons
  1. What can best teach this theme?
  2. Is it cool or right?
  3. Will it scare the audience?
  4. Is it appropriate for this setting?
  
- Create an outline
  1. Who's on first? Best foot/hand forward.
  2. What should an outline include? **VARIETY!**
    - opening
    - songs
    - skits
    - audience participation
    - stories
    - visuals
    - conclusion
  
  3. Let's build an outline!  
**CHURCH:** Our theme is... John 10:10b. I want you to help me create a program around that theme using materials you have seen at this conference.
    - Opening: rules, theme introduced with vent
    - Puppet song:
    - Scripture memory with puppet
      - a) Respect
      - b) Set limits
      - c) Never joke at anothers expense

- d) Set an example in word and deed
- e) repetition is the key to learning

- Puppet skit:
- Puppet song:
- Bible Story: 4 methods
- Audience Song-A-Long:
- Object lesson:
- Response time:
- Puppet song: (strong number, best for last)

**PUBLIC SCHOOL:** Let me give you an example of a program I do for public schools. Choose a theme. Today's theme will be resist smoking. Or Do Not Smoke!

- Opening: rules, theme introduction with vent duck
- Song: Cigarettes Just Aren't Cool
- Object lesson on choosing (3 gifts, good & bad choice)
- Juggle lesson: story of Bob who chose not to smoke
- Audience Song-A-Long:  
Old McDonald has a farm, where animals don't smoke. And  
on his farm he has a dog, who barks and doesn't choke.
- Sam Saint Episode: Case of the Vagrant Vandals
- Magic drawing: true story of Dick's choices
- Response time: you can say no to smoke!

### **CONCLUSION:**

Conquer your fears. You can do it! Have confidence. You are God's leader for this team, for this program, for this time.

Organize around your theme. Everyone present should know what your theme was by the end of your show.

Give time for response. Even in a secular setting, I give kids an opportunity to respond to the theme. Do they agree or not? Can I give them an action step to take home that day?