

Quality Standards For Good CM Drama Productions

Enhancing “Professionalism”

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“...Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men...”

Colossians 3:23

Today’s children enjoy a good dramatic presentation. They aren’t exposed to drama very often in church. Good drama can make a connection with children in a way that no other presentation can. The challenge is to make it “good drama.” A skit or play can be drama, but it isn’t always “good drama.” Good drama takes work and planning. Good drama takes more than a script and a stage. It requires that those presenting the drama connect with the children in the audience. This connection is accomplished through several factors. All these factors require commitment and passion!

Free of Scripts

Actors must never walk on stage and simply read their lines from a script in their hands! This robs the drama of its “life blood”! Reading from a script blocks the children from being drawn into the action, conflict, or lesson of the drama! To get the actors “off script,” takes time. You can’t hand the actors their scripts just before the presentation. Getting the actors to “live” the story requires that they understand the script and “become” the character. Once this happens, the actors should be able to act out the script without holding it in their hands. This isn’t memorizing the lines; this is living the lines! Once actors are free of their scripts, they begin to act and cease to recite. This enhances the “real” factor.

Believability

The more “believable” the setting, props, dialogue, and costumes, the greater the impact on the children. If the actors’ clothing, their lines, the props, or the set are “cheesy” or cartoonish, then the children won’t be inspired to believe the action or the lesson. Make everything as “real” as possible.



Adlib vs. Memorization

Once an actor “embraces” his/her character and understands the script enough to be “off script,” he/she can begin to “play” with the lines through adlib. This significantly enhances the impact and “believability” of the drama. When an actor adlibs a line or a comment, the other actors must react to it “live”! This makes the drama “real” and interesting!

Use of Imagination

Whenever possible, connect with the children’s natural sense of imagination by limiting props and incorporating pantomime. The use of sound effects, lights, and simple stage pieces is more effective than large sets built out of cardboard.

Rehearsal

While a drama team is being developed, the amount of rehearsal time is the greatest. Once the team is “seasoned,” rehearsals can be reduced. At the beginning, a 6/1 ratio should be established. If the performance time is 15 minutes, the rehearsal should be at least 90 minutes. As the team gets used to the characters, scripts, etc., that ratio can be reduced to 4/1 (60 minutes for a 15-minute show). It is always better to plan for more rehearsal time than needed; rather than to present a disjointed, unprofessional show.



Line Delivery

Lines must be delivered cautiously. If, due to emotion, the delivery is rapid, loud, and high, the lines won't be understood. There must be "air" between the lines for the sake of drama and impact. Dramatic pauses for thought or during conflict must be provided. The drama of the lines must be paired with facial reactions and body movements. The whole actor must present the line, not just his/her voice!

Flow of Thought

To transfer the thoughts from the script to the minds of the audience takes work. Obvious progression of thought produces a greater impact. A "jump" from one thought to a rapid conclusion or a disjointed connection will destroy the impact of the script. The script may need to be adjusted to accomplish this. Careful use of conflict with which the children can identify is critical. Every child experiences conflict in their lives. The power of drama is that the presentation takes the children through a process of experiencing that conflict and then moves them into a suggested reaction or resolution. This is the "flow" of good drama!

