

# Drama Experiences

## Objectives

**After this lesson participants will:**

- To experience several dramatic techniques to help children better understand and apply a Bible lesson to their lives
- To value the use of drama for teaching children
- To apply a new drama techniques to a favorite Bible story

## Lesson Overview

Welcome and Warm-Up	5 min
Key Principles for Good Dramas	10 min
Types of Dramatic Experiences	30 min
Practicum	30 min
Wrap Up & Prayer	5 min

**Approximate Total Time: 80 min**

## Materials

**Illustration option:**

Drama props or clothes for the demonstration dramas (optional)

**Media option:**

PowerPoint slides for this lesson

**Scripture passages:**

- Luke 8:5-8
- 1 Samuel 3:1-14
- Luke 10:30-35
- John 9
- Psalm 136
- Acts 2



## Welcome and Warm-Up

10 min

### Activity: Jump In/Jump Out



Have participants form groups of 10-15 people. Have each group stand in a circle. Each person announces their name while jumping forward and striking a pose that reflects their personality. For example, Susan might jump forward, raise her arms high and joyously shout, "Susan!" and then jump back. Then, everyone else in the circle jumps forward and copies Susan's voice and movement before jumping back. Continue around the circle until all have had a turn.

Comment on how you saw everyone expressing their emotions and personality so freely. That is what drama is all about — creating characters and stories by using your voice, body and actions.

The Bible is an amazing book. God's Word is filled with drama, with real stories of real people, both good and bad, and their relationships with God and each other. Children love the stories in the Bible because they contain action, victories and struggles, heroes and villains, and the love of God poured into people's lives. Drama makes the stories come alive for our children, helping them enter into Bible characters' experiences and, through them, discover and understand who God is.

This lesson looks at several different drama experiences or techniques that can be used to help children apply the truth of the Bible to their own lives and grow as disciples. Each technique can be used with Bible stories or modern-day stories. **THE 1for50 HAND: This lesson helps us consider important skills to help us "Making Disciples."**

Before we learn the dramatic techniques, we're going to do some drama exercises to help us develop the skills to do dramas well.

## Key Principles for Good Dramas

10 min



Have everyone stand in one big circle or in an open space where they can move around. For each of the five key points, explain it, and then do a brief exercise so everyone can practice.

1. **Have Energy/Movement** – Actors in a drama must do more than just stand and say words. They create the setting through their movement.

**Exercise:** Have everyone walk in a circle, imagining different atmospheres and moving accordingly – normal day, windy, raining, stepping around water puddles, slipping in mud, step on a thorn, hot and sunny.



2. **Include Mannerisms** – Actors should make their body language match the character. Note: Make actions large (“larger than life” or larger than we normally would do it) so every one can see it.

**Exercise:** Walking again, pretend to be a proud Pharisee; a blind beggar; David and his men sneaking into Saul’s camp to steal his spear and water jug; 90-year-old Sarah, who is pregnant; Jacob limping after wrestling with an angel all night; a child coming to Jesus.

3. **Use your Voice** – Speak slowly and clearly. Good actors speak to the back of the room (they project by using a louder tone of voice) so everyone can hear. Note: Make sure you also change the pitch (high/low) and volume of your voice.



**Exercise:** Find a partner, then practice speaking low, high, softly, loudly, as a child, old person.

4. **Express Emotions** – Make the emotions larger than life... you want everyone to see them, so use your facial expression *and* body to express emotions.

**Exercise:** With a partner, practice joy (like the shepherd that just found his lost sheep); sadness (Peter just seeing Jesus after you denied him three times); anger (King Nebuchadnezzar after Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego would not bow down to your statue and you want to throw them into the furnace); fear (shepherds when they saw angels on the night Jesus was born).



5. **Watch your Position on stage (Blocking)** – Remember to not turn your back to the audience. **Why is this important?** (Get responses.)

Now we are ready to experience some drama techniques we can use with children.

## Types of Dramatic Experiences

30 min

Go through the list of drama techniques together, giving examples and allowing people to practice/experience the technique with an example. Use the example given or choose one of your own. If time is limited, choose just a few techniques on which to focus.

**Group Sound Effects:** Instruct children to make certain sounds or call out certain words during the telling or dramatizing of a story. This technique is very effective with little children (and can include actions as well), but it is a



good way to involve all children without much movement or preparation, especially large groups.

**Example:** Noah and the Ark – Everyone can make sounds of pounding of nails, sawing wood, sounds of animals as they go onto the ark, footsteps of all the animals walking onto the ark, sound of rain falling, etc.

**Narrated Action:** Specific children are assigned roles in the story, they move or act (without speaking) as the teacher or the narrator reads or tells the story. Note: The teacher/narrator may need to read a sentence and then allow some time for the children to respond with the appropriate actions. Some children may need to be given some direction or encouragement.

**Example:** Parable of the Sower (Read **Luke 8:5-8**) – Nine actors are needed: farmer, four seeds, bird, sun, and two weeds.

**Repeating the Lines:** The teacher assigns roles to specific children. While the teacher/narrator reads, the characters move and act in response to the narration, but they also repeat the spoken lines of their character. Note: Teachers should be careful to keep phrases short enough for children to repeat. Some children may need to be encouraged to speak up or use more expression.

**Example:** God calls Samuel (Read **1 Samuel 3:1-14**) – Two actors are needed: Eli and Samuel.

**Nonverbal Drama (Pantomime):** Children act out stories only with actions (no spoken words or sounds). This technique is great for parables. This also can be done with a musical background.

**Example:** Good Samaritan (Read **Luke 10:30-35**) – Nine actors are needed: man, three robbers, priest, Levite, Samaritan, donkey, and an innkeeper.

**Dramatic Reading (or Reader's Theater):** As a class, students read a Bible story or a written play. Assign different students to read different character voices. There is no action. It would be like listening to the radio. Note: You may want to stop at key points and discuss what is happening in the story.

**Example:** Jesus heals a man born blind (Read **John 9**).

**Role Playing:** Put students in a modern day situation in which a lesson-related problem or issue must be addressed. Children can also be assigned a Bible character and act as if they are that character.

**Example:** A believing and a non-believing student are faced with a temptation. The tempter continues to offer excuses trying to get the student to compromise. Act out the responses of both students.

**Choral Speaking:** The entire group/class reads or responds together in answer to a narrator or leader.

**Example: Psalm 136**

**Interview:** Ask students to imagine being a character from the story. Interview them as if you were a reporter from a newspaper or television station. The students answer interview questions as if they really were the character. Focus on deeper feelings, not just what happened in the story: "How did you feel when...?" "What were you thinking when ...?"

**Example:** Interview people in Jerusalem at Pentecost (Read **Acts 2**): disciples in the room when the Holy Spirit came upon them, people in the crowd hearing them speak, mockers, believers, Peter (preaching)

**Statues or Freeze Frame:** Ask children to imagine they are watching the action of the story. Suddenly the story stops, as if someone pushed the PAUSE button. Students create a scene showing the action and emotions of the characters. However they are not acting out the scene. It becomes like looking at statues or a photograph. You can do this at several points in the story.

**Example:** Invite everyone to imagine they are the people of Israel walking through the Red Sea on dry ground. What is it like? Do they see fish? Are they afraid the water will overcome them? What are they stepping on? What's behind them? "PAUSE" in the middle of the sea. Have half the group become statues and other observe (give 30-seconds to plan. Comment on what you notice and continue the story. Have the other group then become statues for what happens on the other side as the sea covers the Egyptians.)

**Prepared Drama:** Older children or adults practice a drama in advance of class to present to their peers or to younger children. Teachers should allow students some creativity in the presentation of their characters, including simple costumes and props.

Now that we have so many ideas, it's time for you to practice!

## Practicum

30 min



Divide into groups of six-eight people. Assign a different drama technique to each group. They must create a drama of a Bible story using that technique. Give ten minutes to prepare and practice and then have groups perform their drama for the other groups. If time is limited, have two groups join together and just share their dramas with the other group.





## Wrap Up & Prayer

5 min

We have talked about a number of drama experiences for children. Some are familiar, others are new, but the power of drama is God working through the words and the actions to help our children experience His Word, His love and truth so that they can grow as disciples in Christ.

**What is God saying to you as you think about using drama in a new or different way?**

I challenge you to try using something new with your children this week as you share God's word with them.

(Close in prayer.)