

How Sketch Drama Can Drastically Increase the Power and Impact of Your Church Services



Is a picture really worth a thousand words? In this age of multimedia and mass communication, it often seems so. Recent research supports the idea that visual communication can be more powerful than verbal communication, suggesting in many instances that people learn and retain information that is presented to them visually much better than that which is only provided verbally.

These are welcome findings for you and others like you who desire to use sketch drama to present the gospel. Even more welcome is the news that today, you have more resources than ever available for creating and displaying the most visually rich presentations possible.



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“Something is happening. We are becoming a visually mediated society. For many, understanding of the world is being accomplished, not through words, but by reading images.”

- Paul Martin Lester,
“Syntactic Theory of Visual Communication”



The connection between seeing and remembering

Why do people remember what they see so much more readily than what they hear? One recent article on the subject describes the endless capacity of long-term memory to store concepts. It also points to studies that seem to indicate that “pictures have a direct route to long-term memory, each image storing its own information as a coherent ‘chunk’ or concept.”⁵ If this is so, then it follows that the more visual content in a presentation, the more memorable the information will be over the long term.



Communicating effectively in the visual age

Visual communication is everywhere today, from electronic media like Web pages and television screens to road signs and retail displays. As the National Education Association has pointed out, “Western civilization has become more dependent than ever on visual culture, visual artifacts, and visual communication as a mode of discourse and a means of developing a social and cultural identity.”¹

That’s an interesting observation, but what’s even more fascinating is that there is evidence to suggest that people not only communicate visually more than ever, they also communicate *better* when they communicate visually. This is an important eye-opener to those who wish to present the message of Jesus Christ through drama for church services or outreaches and who want to make those productions as convincing and effective as possible.

This report is designed to help you:

- make the most of this information by describing the evidence for the power of visual communication
- identify the benefits of and keys to effective dramatic presentations
- discuss the resources available to you that will make it possible for you to have successful dramatic presentations

The case for visual communication

There is plenty of evidence from formal research studies to indicate that communication that has a visual element can be far more effective than communication that does not. Here are just two examples.

The psychologist Jerome Bruner of New York University has described studies that show that people only remember 10% of what they hear and

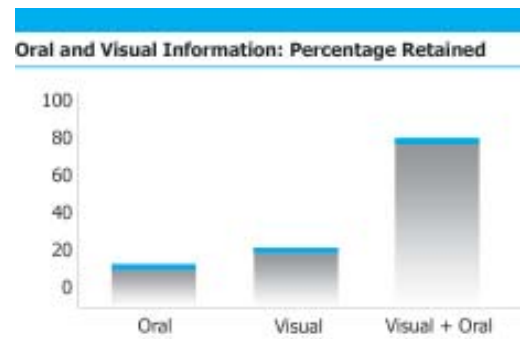
20% of what they read, but about 80% of what they see and do.²

Training materials used by the federal government indicate that the retention of information three days after a meeting is six times greater when information is presented by *visual and oral means* than when the information is presented by the spoken word alone. The same materials also cite studies by educational researchers suggesting that 83% of human learning occurs visually.³

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The intersection of visual and verbal

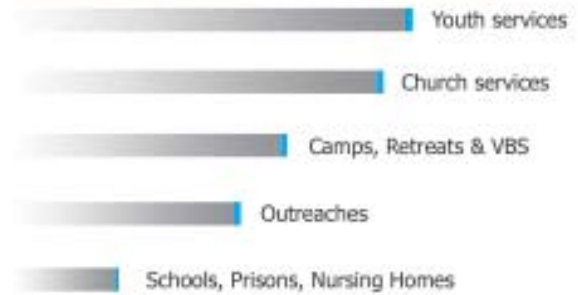
The previous examples of how effective visual communication is should be proof enough, but research also points to the fact that the most convincing communication combines both *visual* and *oral* content. The chart below shows the advantages you have in making your presentations both visual and oral.



Source: Jerome Bruner, as cited by Paul Martin Lester in “Syntactic Theory of Visual Communication”



Most Common Venues where Drama is Utilized:



Benefits of Effective Dramatic Presentations

The chart on page two illustrates precisely why dramatic presentations work so well. They give the audience a visual explanation through the actors actions, sets and costumes while the actors' dialogue provides the oral element.

Now that we have seen how effective dramatic presentations can be, what will it produce in those who watch it? After all, if it doesn't accomplish anything, there's not much of a reason to utilize it. Let's take a look at just a few ways that drama can benefit your church.

Drama makes the message to your congregation come alive

Seeing a dramatic presentation invites your congregation into the personal lives of the characters they are watching. This gives each person an opportunity to relate to the characters and their situations and it confronts them with the challenges associated with living the Christian life. It's bringing to life this kind of personal application of the Bible that causes change in the hearts and minds of those watching.

Drama is a great method to minister to children and youth in a way that they can understand

If there ever was a generation of people who respond to visual communication, it is young people. In their world of video games, television, movies and internet the common theme is "realism". Young people are looking for the genuine article when it comes to faith in God and drama can provide that.

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Drama can be a powerful tool in reaching the lost and growing your church

The days of the street preacher and tent revivals are not as welcome in our society as they once were. Drama is a terrific opportunity to present the love, healing and forgiveness of Jesus Christ to a hurting and seeking people. It not only illustrates the gospel, but it is a great way to spark more interaction between the church and people in the community.

Keys to Effective Dramatic Presentations

We hope by now you are convinced that drama is an effective tool to encourage your church and reach your community. But what does it take to create and display drama? Surprisingly, it's very simple. Let's take a look at the key elements that help make effective dramatic presentations. Understanding the following elements will greatly enhance your drama and create the most visually rich programs possible.

Understanding the three elements of every dramatic presentation

The three elements to every presentation are:

1. The Audience
2. The Message
3. The Actor

1. The Audience

Without an audience there is no production, no one to share the story with. As Christian actors, the audience is the reason we are sharing the love of Jesus through drama. Just think, if you were doing an evangelistic production and nobody came, there would be nobody there to hear the gospel. The audience is by far the most important element in a dramatic presentation.

2. The Message

Now that we have an audience, we need to show them something. The message is the next element because it is the reason why the audience is present. They have come to see and hear a message about Jesus Christ.

3. The Speaker

The speaker is the third element in a dramatic presentation. Without the speaker, there would be no one to deliver the message to the audience. The hardest part for actors to remember is that although they are a very important element to the production, they are not the most important one. As Christians, this keeps us humble. We are on stage to give the audience a message, not to exalt ourselves. Contrary to what Hollywood or Broadway might say, the actor or actress is not the focal point of a story. We need to remember that we bring the gospel of Jesus Christ, and there is a dying, hurting audience that needs to hear it.

“Preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words.”

- St. Francis of Assisi



Understanding the three mental tools of effective drama

There are three basic qualities every actor needs to be effective in his/her presentation. The three mental tools of drama are⁴:

1. Imagination
2. Imitation
3. Emotional Feeling

1. Imagination

It is very important to remember that acting is nothing more than “make-believe”. Just like a little girl who plays with her dolls or a little boy who imagines he is a cowboy, actors are “making up” a belief system that says they are a certain character in a certain situation. As we grow up, we are told that we need to start acting like an adult and making adult decisions. Consequently, we find it harder and harder to use our imagination. An actor needs to exercise using his/her imagination when playing a role on stage.

2. Imitation

Acting is reacting - nothing more. This is one of the most elementary aspects of acting. An actor must show the appropriate reaction to another person’s action. For example, if someone is playing the part of an orphan looking for a home and another character tells her that she is not going to be adopted, her reaction would probably not be laughing but rather crying.

3. Emotional Feeling

Our emotions are one of the most amazing things God has given to us, and through them we can communicate without saying a word. As an actor, the proper emotion must be portrayed for the role being played. If the actor’s emotions do not line up with the character, he is doing a serious injustice to the audience watching. And the audience is the most important element in a dramatic presentation.

Where to Go from Here

As you can see, sketch drama is a powerful and effective tool that can drastically increase the impact of your church services. The decision to utilize this form of visual communication is up to you. So where will you go from here?



At this point you can do one of three things:

1. Continue doing things the same way you’ve been doing them.

Your services will still be filled with prayer, worship and preaching. But will you see great change in your congregation? Will your youth be able to relate? Will the lost respond to the gospel the way it is currently being presented?

2. Try to solve the problem yourself.

But isn’t that what you’ve been trying to do? Aren’t you frustrated with the results? You’ve tried different evangelism and discipleship programs and seen little to no change. Is that really the way to go?

3. Get help from professionals who have helped others that have been in your same exact position.

THE CHOICE IS OBVIOUS

Notes

1 “Thriving in Academe: A Rationale for Visual Communication,” National Education Association Advocate Online, December 2001.

2 Paul Martin Lester, “Syntactic Theory of Visual Communication,” California State University at Fullerton, 1994–1996.

3 “Presenting Effective Presentations with Visual Aids,” U.S. Department of Labor, OSHA Office of Training and Education, May 1996.

4 “Skit Drama Made Easy,” New Life Drama Company, www.nldc.com.



In 2006, New Life Drama Company:

- Lead over 1500 people to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ in church services across the U.S.
- Ministered to over 600 churches
- Helped start or train hundreds of church drama teams all over the country

What New Life Drama Company Can Do for You

Using the powerful tool of sketch drama to reach the lost in your community and to encourage your church is now easier than ever. New Life Drama Company is America's leading sketch drama ministry. With almost 25 years of experience, we are well qualified to assist you in making your services as effective as possible.

The New Life Drama Company Mission:

1. *To evangelize the world through drama*
2. *To encourage the church*
3. *To equip young people for ministry*

Ministry to the Church

Different from full-length plays or passion plays, our sketch drama deals with everyday situations that most people face. We clearly show the truth of God's Word and His love.

Ministry to Young People

Our drama teams have greatly impacted youth groups all across the nation. The sketches encourage them to mature in their faith and confront the issues that many young people face today from a Christian perspective.

Ministry to Your Church Drama Team

Even if you already have a church drama team, NLDC can be of assistance. Through our drama workshops, we can help fine-tune your drama team and also bring a fresh spark of creativity to them should they need it.

What Others are Saying About NLDC

"Helped Our Church Grow"

"Your workshops, street ministry and Sunday morning services have helped our church grow in so many areas. Thank you!"

Pastor Couchman
Life Springs Christian Church
Leander, TX

"The Gospel Came Through Loud and Clear"

"The drama was some of the best I've seen - really! The skits were funny, well executed, moving and, most importantly, the gospel came through loud and clear."

Pastor Hana
South Broadway Nazarene Church
Boulder, CO

"I Felt the Power of God"

"I have seen many ministries over the years, but never have I felt the power of God like I did when NLDC began to minister."

Pastor Hill
River of Life Assembly of God
Woodsfield, OH

"One of the Best"

"We have had NLDC minister at our church since 1985 and every team has been excellent. This is one of the best ministry teams that we have in our church."

Pastor Lipscomb
Liberty Church
Pensacola, FL

Two words separate the impact of your church services from being average to being effective: COMFORT ZONE.

Don't let these two words stop your church from becoming the vibrant, cutting-edge and powerful church it was meant to be. God has given you a vision for your community. Let us help you realize that vision through the exciting and life-changing form of sketch drama.

CALL (877) 380-NLDC