



Let Me Introduce You to Our Puppet Play

By Tim Brown

Many puppet teams I've seen, work hard on their puppet skills, but don't seem to spend as much time on the introductions and applications of the plays. All three are important. This article will focus on introductions to puppet plays.

Delivery Is Important

Most of the introductions I've seen are quoted from a memorized script. While the content may be great, the delivery reduces its impact. Here are some reasons why.

- When quoting from a memorized script, you focus on getting the words out in the proper order, not on the audience. The words come out in a mechanical way that has little impact.
- Usually, as I watch the person's eyes, they are looking up or off to the side which is a normal subconscious movement when repeating memorized lines. Eye contact is important to communicate your message; it shows you care. Without it, the audience can become distracted.
- When quoting, the message comes from the head and not the heart. It often comes across as just words to the audience. When you speak from the heart, it captivates their attention and draws them in.
- Too often the emphasis is just on getting the words out in the proper order, so the introduction is rushed. When quoting memorized lines, for some reason the faster you speak, the easier it is to remember the words.
- You may have the script learned word perfect and can quote it in your sleep, but when you stand before an audience and get a bit nervous, you can lose the whole thing or forget a line halfway through. Then there's an awkward pause as you try to remember the line.

The bottom line is this: if you want to reach the heart, you have to speak from the heart. It's difficult to speak from the heart when quoting a script, especially one someone else wrote.

Aim for the Heart, Not the Head

If using a memorized script isn't the best way to go, then what is? The best way I know of is to follow a memorized outline. Here's how to do it.

- Brainstorm a list of what you want to include in your introduction. Think specifically about what question you want to ask, what illustration you want to give, scripture verses, etc. Read through the script asking God for ideas.
- Take your list of ideas and narrow it down to the key points. (Remember, you don't have a lot of time for your introduction.)
- Organize those points in the order you want to present them. The last point should be a question or statement challenging the audience to look for something specific in the presentation.
- Prepare your outline. Make each point as short as possible; they don't have to be complete sentences. They just need to be enough to remind you of the point.

- Then practice your introduction using just the outline. As you practice it, ask God to give you the right words to say. Practice it over and over until the presentation flows well.
- Just before you give the presentation, pray and ask God to calm you and speak his words through you.

By following this method, you don't have long lines to memorize, you can focus your attention on the audience and not your part, and you can speak the message from your heart. That's a great and effective combination.

Let God Use You

When starting our first puppet ministry in Junior Church, I tried to be just like the guy who taught me puppets. We did the same things he did, copied his mannerisms, and tried to minister just like he did. We found out it doesn't work. If God had wanted two of him, he would have made two. What God wanted from me was to be myself and to minister the way he designed me to minister. Once that truth sunk in, it made a large improvement in our ministry.

When you come out to do the introduction, one vital thing to remember is to be yourself. Don't try to mimic someone you think ministers really well. You can adapt some things they do, but don't try to copy them.

If you try to copy someone else while in front of the audience, you won't be relaxed and will add more stress to your nerves. Realize that God created you the way he wants you to be. He loves you and wants to use you for his honor and glory.

When you come out, present the introduction from your heart under the direction and power of the Holy Spirit. By spending a bit of extra time developing a solid introduction and then doing your play, you'll have a winning combination.