

PUPPET-TIME PARABLES

by Jeanne Fogle



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PRODUCTION NOTES

These puppet plays were especially written for elementary age performers, though older children or even adults can perform them for primary or pre-school audiences, or for adults!

All performers love an audience, but an audience is not essential to the production of these plays. They may be used as an in-class teaching tool with or without a stage or props. The Bible lessons they teach are for the performers as well as the audience. We suggest you adapt these plays to fit your own unique situation.

If you do choose to use these plays for audience presentation, you will find they work very well for children's church, children's sermons, and a Sunday School opening.

The scripts included in this packet provide a wide variety of theatrical production technique opportunities. They can be staged with all the frills or quite simply according to the circumstances of the puppet show equipment you have available.

On a practical level, it is not very likely that your puppet workshop has all of the puppet characters indicated in these scripts. In most instances, it is not necessary that you have them. We suggest you adapt what characters you have to fit the parts or make several "generic-type" puppets that, with a bit of costume added, can become almost anybody.

Many performances of these plays were done with great success using a wide assortment of commercially made puppets. This approach is the easiest and quite acceptable, but, of course, the best way is to construct your own. When everyone is involved in puppet making, the entire project takes on special significance. There are several books and filmstrips explaining and demonstrating how this can be done at low cost. Puppet construction is as great a joy as puppet performance. It's an activity that children will long remember.

The stage props can be constructed from poster board and colored. If the props are to be placed on the stage, a piece of wood can be added to the base. Better still, mount the prop on a dowel rod that can be inserted into a slot on the stage floor. This keeps the prop from falling off the stage if bumped (which happens all too often).

If the parts aren't memorized, scripts can be pinned to the inside of the curtain of your puppet stage for the puppeteers to read.

Most of all, be creative! These scripts are only the beginning place. They have been used many times and they work, but your success depends on your adaptations.

The Prodigal Son

A puppet play based on Luke 15:11-31

CHARACTERS: Narrator; Prod, the younger son; Father; Rock, the older son; Friend 1; Friend 2; Friend 3 (Fancy lady); Servant.

BACKGROUND SCENES:

1. The front of a large house.
2. City with lights and action.
3. A pigpen.
4. The front of a large house.

Scene One

NARRATOR: The priests and Pharisees were always pestering Jesus because he spent time with dishonest people and sinners. "You are too important to spend your valuable time with losers. What about giving some time to the good guys?" they said. So, Jesus told a story about a man who had two sons. One day, Prod, the younger son, came to his father.

PROD: Hey, Pop! I've decided that farming is not really my thing. I need some space — some time off.

FATHER: Sure. Take the rest of the afternoon off.

PROD: Actually Dad, I had a longer break in mind. I want to travel, meet interesting people and get in touch with my feelings. You know, find the real me.

FATHER: The real you?

PROD: Right. I'm going to need some bucks, so how about giving me my share of the farm now. No reason for me to wait till you kick the bucket to get it. I'm young. I want to live now.

FATHER: Well, I don't think it's a wise decision, but it is your choice so I shall have to agree.

NARRATOR: The father agreed to divide his money among

1 his two sons. A few days later, the younger son packed
2 his jeans, his guitar, and his skateboard.

3 **PROD:** Well, this is it Pop. No hard feelings, huh? Stay cool.

4 **FATHER:** Take care my son.

5

6

Scene Two

7

8 **NARRATOR:** So, Prod left the country and went to where
9 the action was. He had a wild time — it was a blast. Prod
10 made many new friends who were eager to help him
11 spend his money.

12 **FRIEND 1:** Hey, Prod baby! How about grabbing the dinner
13 check. I'm a little low on funds.

14 **PROD:** My pleasure.

15 **FRIEND 2:** C'mon, man. We are going to party tonight. You
16 pick up the food and the drinks, get some music; and I'll
17 get the chicks.

18 **PROD:** Right on! Party is my middle name.

19 **FRIEND 3:** Oh, Proddykins! I just love this itty, bitty mink
20 coat. You are just too good to little ol' me.

21 **NARRATOR:** Well, soon Prod's money ran out.

22 **FRIEND 1:** Sorry, Mac. I'm busy.

23 **FRIEND 2:** What a deadbeat!

24 **FRIEND 3:** I'm sorry Proddykins. I'm just not ready for a
25 serious relationship.

26 **NARRATOR:** And to make matters even worse, there was a
27 terrible famine in that country — no food!

28 **PROD:** I'm so hungry. I just know I'm going to starve to
29 death.

30

31

Scene Three

32

33 **NARRATOR:** Prod persuaded a local farmer to give him a
34 job slopping the hogs — that really means feeding the
35 pigs.

PROD: I am *so* hungry. Even these pea pods that I'm feeding the pigs look good enough to eat, and I'm not allowed to taste them. At home, my father's workers have plenty of food and some to spare; and here I am dying of hunger. I was really crazy to leave all that. I know what I'll do. I will go home and say: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Please let me work for you as a hired man."

Scene Four

NARRATOR: So, he returned home and while he was coming down the road, his father saw him and was filled with love and pity, for he really was a terrible sight — all dirty and smelly. The father ran and hugged him.

PROD: Father, I have sinned against heaven and you, and I am not worthy to be called your son. Please. . .

FATHER: (*Interrupts and calls the servant.*) Quick, bring me the fanciest suit you can find and put it on him. Better bathe him first and bring a new digital watch and some new Reebok[™] sneakers. And put on some thick, juicy steaks. We are going to celebrate with a big party because my son was dead, but returned to life. He was lost, and now is found.

NARRATOR: After a long, hard day of working in the field, the older son came home. As he came close to the house, he heard music and dancing.

ROCK: What is this? What is going on here? Someone very important must have come to visit.

SERVANT: Prod is back! Your father is having a big party to celebrate his coming home all safe and sound.

ROCK: I don't believe it. Well, *I'm* not going in there! (*Turns his back.*)

FATHER: Rock, please join us. I want us all to celebrate together. We are a family again.

1 **ROCK:** All this time I have worked like a dog for you. I did
2 everything you asked. I was practically perfect and you
3 did not even have a little cook-out for me and my friends.
4 Then along comes Prod. He wasted all of your money and
5 really let you down. Who knows where he was or what
6 he did? And, yet, you treat him like a king and give him
7 the royal treatment.

8 **FATHER:** Rock, my dear son. You and I are very close.
9 Everything that I have belongs to you and I love you
10 very much. But we must celebrate. Prod is your brother.
11 He was dead, and now he has come back to life. He was
12 lost, and now he is found.

13 **NARRATOR:** Even if we go far away from God, and even if
14 we choose to do wrong things, God will welcome us back.
15 God will find us when we are lost and will surround us
16 with love and care.

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The Talents

A puppet play based on Matthew 25:14-30

CHARACTERS: Narrator, Company President, Worker 1, Worker 2, Worker 3.

PROPS: Eight small bags.

BACKGROUND SCENE: An office.

PRODUCTION NOTES: This play may be done with any combination or types of puppets. It also may be adapted for dramatic interpretation with children directly assuming the roles.

(Scene 1 opens with the COMPANY PRESIDENT and WORKERS Onstage.)

NARRATOR: Jesus talked about the Kingdom of Heaven in the parable about a man going to another country. The man called his workers together and loaned them money to invest for him while he was gone.

PRESIDENT: Gentlemen, Madam. I called this meeting to tell you that I need to go out of the country for a month or so to do some business and check into my foreign investments. Now, I don't want to take my money with me, and I'm a little nervous about leaving it here — what with the shaky stock market and all. So, I have decided to ask the three of you to take care of my money and invest it for me.

WORKERS: Us?

PRESIDENT: Yes, and I am sure you will do just fine. Now, here are five bags for you — you have been with the company the longest. *(Gives five bags to WORKER 1.)* Here are two bags for you. *(Gives two bags to WORKER 2.)* And one bag for you. *(Gives one bag to WORKER 3.)* Now, take good care of my money and be wise with it. I will be back

1 in a month or so to pick it up. See you later.

2 **WORKERS:** (*Wave goodbye.*) Have a good trip! Bon Voyage!
3 Have fun!

4 **WORKER 1:** (*Ponders to self.*) Now, let me see. I wonder if I
5 should invest in tent construction, camel ranches or
6 maybe yogurt and cucumber stands. Maybe all three.
7 (*Hurries Offstage mumbling to self.*)

8 **WORKER 2:** Umm. I think I just may use these to start a
9 little business growing figs. Then my wife (*or husband*)
10 could make the newtons. Bet I could double this money
11 in no time! (*Hurries Offstage.*)

12 **WORKER 3:** (*Looks around suspiciously.*) Well, those guys can
13 fool around and take big chances. Not me. I'm not going
14 to touch a bit of this. I'll just go back and bury it under
15 a bush where it will be safe. (*Leaves stage.*)

16 **NARRATOR:** Well, a couple of months passed and the
17 company president returned and called the workers to
18 a meeting.

19
20 (*Scene 2 opens with PRESIDENT and WORKERS back*
21 *Onstage.*)

22 **PRESIDENT:** And, how did we do with our little projects?

23 **WORKER 1:** Good news, sir (*madam*). I invested in tent
24 condominiums and I bought a major league cricket team.
25 Both are *very* successful. You gave me five bags. Here are
26 ten back.

27 **PRESIDENT:** Wonderful. Wonderful. You have real promise.
28 Good work. How about you?

29 **WORKER 2:** Well, boss. I went into the fig newton business
30 in a big way. Started sixteen fig orchards and my wife
31 (*or husband*) is in charge of the newton bakeries. We are
32 doing *very* well. Never knew how many people liked those
33 little devils. You gave me two bags and here are those
34 two and two more . . . and also a bag of fig newtons.

35 **PRESIDENT:** Fantastic! I do love those little cookies. Good

1 **work. And how about you?**

2 **WORKER 3:** Well, the stock market fell one-hundred fifty
3 points in two days, and I just could not take the chance.
4 I thought it was best to hide the money safe away and
5 that is what I did. You gave me one bag and here it is —
6 all safe and sound.

7 **PRESIDENT:** What is all this dirt on it?

8 **WORKER 3:** I buried it.

9 **PRESIDENT:** You buried it! You are a coward and very
10 foolish, too. You should have had the courage to use your
11 gift to do something good. If you use the gifts given to
12 you, you will be richer and your life will have more
13 meaning. If you hide your gifts and do not use them, your
14 life will mean nothing. I gave you a gift to use. You did
15 not use it and now you have nothing.

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The Good Samaritan

A puppet play based on Luke 10:25-37

CHARACTERS: Narrator, Jesus, Lawyer, Jewish Traveler,
Robber 1, Robber 2, Priest, Levite, Samaritan, Innkeeper.

BACKGROUND SCENERY:

1. Along a deserted road near Jericho.
2. The front of an inn.

PROPS: Briefcase for traveler; backpack for Samaritan.

NARRATOR: Once a very important man, a lawyer, in fact,
came to Jesus.

LAWYER: (*JESUS and the LAWYER enter.*) Jesus, what should
I do to live forever in heaven?

JESUS: What does the Bible say you should do?

LAWYER: It says that I should love the Lord God with all
my heart, and with all my strength, and with all my mind.
And it also says I should love my neighbor as I love myself.

JESUS: Right. Do this and you shall live.

LAWYER: But that's the problem, Jesus, who is my neighbor?

JESUS: There was a man who was taking a little business
trip from Jerusalem to Jericho.

TRAVELER: (*Enters*) It sure is hot. I'd like to stop awhile,
but I have to get to Jericho before the bank closes and
I've heard this road is not exactly safe.

ROBBER 1: (*Jumps out and surprises TRAVELER.*) Hi, pal!
Whatcha got in that weird pocketbook there?

TRAVELER: (*Nervously*) Oh, uh, not much, just business
papers. I'll just step out of your way here.

ROBBER 2: (*Moves very close to the TRAVELER.*) No need to do
that, man. Now, how about being a nice little guy and
handing over all of your change?

TRAVELER: (*Shaking*) Well, well, okay, here it is. (*Gives*

- 1 **ROBBERS** *some coins.*)
- 2 **ROBBER 1:** We'll just take your bills, too. The whole roll of
- 3 them!
- 4 **TRAVELER:** *(Agreeing nervously)* Sure, sure. I don't want any
- 5 problems.
- 6 **ROBBER 2:** Good, 'cause we also want your watch, that weird
- 7 pocketbook, and all of your clothes.
- 8 **TRAVELER:** No, oh please don't take my clothes. I'll be
- 9 naked. *(ROBBERS strip him.)*
- 10 **ROBBER 1:** That's the plan, and we will have to make very
- 11 sure you don't decide to squeal to the law. *(ROBBERS beat*
- 12 *the TRAVELER and run away with his possessions.)*
- 13 **JESUS:** Soon afterward, a priest came by and saw the man
- 14 lying there in the boiling sun.
- 15 **PRIEST:** *(Enters hurriedly.)* I'm so late. I will never make
- 16 evening services if I don't hurry, and I have this
- 17 wonderful sermon prepared. It is all about brotherly love.
- 18 **TRAVELER:** *(Moans)*
- 19 **PRIEST:** *(Goes to TRAVELER and looks at him.)* Ugh! What a
- 20 bloody mess! Someone really should help him. I wish I
- 21 could, but I just cannot get my robes messy before
- 22 evening service.
- 23 **JESUS:** And so the priest passed by on the other side of the
- 24 road. Next, a Levite politician came along.
- 25 **LEVITE:** *(Looking at the injured man)* Now, isn't that
- 26 disgusting? That poor man must have been robbed by
- 27 some gang. It is time to get law and order back on our
- 28 streets and roads. You know it is time for a change when
- 29 hooligans attack everyday citizens and cold-heartedly
- 30 leave them in the boiling hot sun. Disgusting, I say. *(Passes*
- 31 *by on the other side of the road.)*
- 32 **JESUS:** Then along came a Samaritan, a stranger in these
- 33 parts, and not exactly a member of the in-group there.
- 34 In fact, Jews and Samaritans mix like oil and water.
- 35 **SAMARITAN:** *(Sees the MAN and kneels down.)* Well, what have

- 1 we here? Come on fellow, let me help you. Have a cool
2 drink of water. This sun is really hot. I'll just wash the
3 blood off of you, and I'll put some medicine on your cuts
4 and bruises. Poor fellow, you have had an awful time.
5 Let me put these bandages on you. (*SAMARITAN cares for*
6 *wounded man.*) Now, let me help you up, and we will go
7 to an inn near here and get some help. Just lean on me pal.
8 **JESUS:** And so, the Good Samaritan helped the traveler get
9 to the inn. He stayed with the injured man through the
10 night and tenderly cared for him. The next morning he
11 went to the innkeeper.
12 **SAMARITAN:** Here is forty dollars. Now take good care of
13 my friend. Give him whatever he needs to get well. If it
14 costs more than this, I will pay you the next time I pass
15 by here.
16 **INNKEEPER:** Thank you, sir, but I must ask you something.
17 You are a Samaritan and he is a Jew. Why are you doing
18 this? You are supposed to hate each other.
19 **SAMARITAN:** I did it because he needed me. Goodbye, sir.
20 **INNKEEPER:** Goodbye, good friend.
21 **JESUS:** Now, let me ask you which one was the good
22 neighbor — the priest, the Levite, or the lowly
23 Samaritan?
24 **LAWYER:** The one who helped and took care of the man.
25 **JESUS:** Yes, and now go and do the same.
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The Sower and the Seed

A puppet play based on Matthew 13:1-23

CHARACTERS: Narrator, Farmer, Seed 1, Seed 2 — Plant 2, Seed 3 — Plant 3, Seed 4 — Plant 4, Thomas, Birds.

BACKGROUND SCENERY: A field with a path, some rocks, a patch of thorny weeds, and a spot where soil is rich and brown.

PRODUCTION NOTES: This is a good play to use with a large group since there are many roles. Seeds, plants, thorny weeds, and birds could be stick puppets — made from construction paper and craft sticks.

NARRATOR: When Jesus preached and spoke about God's love, he often used stories and parables to help people better understand the lesson he wanted to teach. If you listen closely to each parable, you will find a message in that story that will help you be followers of Jesus, and to spread the good news of God's love. Here is a story that Jesus told:

FARMER: Ahh! Springtime. My favorite time of the year. Time to plant another crop. I do hope this year's harvest will be a good one. Weather's good! Time is right! Better get to work and sow my seeds. *(Pretends to scatter seeds and then leaves stage.)*

SEED 1: *(Pops up near path.)* Oh, no! I landed here on the path where the soil is hard. Everyone will step on me as they pass by, or even worse — *here come the birds!* *(BIRD enters and takes SEED 1 away.)*

SEED 2: *(SEED 2 pops up.)* Well, not great, but maybe I can take root in this rock. There's a little patch of soil here. *(Grunts)* It is very hard to grow here. *(SEED disappears and small PLANT appears.)* Wow! My hard work has paid off. I'm four inches high already, but that sun is too hot. Oh,

1 **no! My roots are drying up. This rocky soil is too hard**
 2 **for me to keep growing. I feel weak — ooooooh —** (*PLANT*
 3 *falls over.*)

4 **SEED 3:** (*SEED 3 pops up near patch of thorny weeds.*) **I don't**
 5 **believe it. A briar patch! I landed in a briar patch! I can't**
 6 **get along with these sticky guys. Maybe they will let me**
 7 **alone while I grow. Zip — zip — zip.** (*SEED 3 disappears*
 8 *and PLANT 3 appears.*) **Made it this far. Zip — zip — zip.**
 9 (*Thorny weeds appear.*) **Hey, give me some space. I need to**
 10 **breathe. Get those thorns out of here. Oh, no! I'm choking.**
 11 **Gasp! Cough! Choke!** (*PLANT 3 gets smothered by thorny*
 12 *weeds.*)

13 **SEED 4:** (*SEED 4 pops up near rich, brown soil.*) **Well, this looks**
 14 **like a great place to be. Ground is rich and fertile, lots**
 15 **of water, good shot of sunlight each day. I'll just settle**
 16 **in here.** (*Hums*) **I feel so wonderful, and so healthy.** (*Hums*)
 17 **This is the life.** (*SEED 4 disappears, PLANT 4 appears.*) **Look**
 18 **at me! I made it! I will be a part of a very rich harvest**
 19 **this year.**

20 **NARRATOR:** **And that was the end of the story. You don't**
 21 **understand it? Neither did the Disciples, and when they**
 22 **grouched to Jesus about the story being hard to**
 23 **understand, he explained the meaning. The seed is the**
 24 **word of God, and it needs really good soil to grow for the**
 25 **building of the kingdom. Let's look at the story again.**

26 **FARMER:** **Ahhh! Springtime. My favorite time of the year.**
 27 **Time to plant the seeds again. Will they take root? Some**
 28 **will. The time is right — people are in need. I'd better**
 29 **get to work and sow my seeds.** (*Scatters seeds.*)

30 **SEED 1:** (*SEED 1 pops up near path.*) **Oh, no! I landed here on**
 31 **the path where the soil is hard. I can't grow here. People**
 32 **are so busy running back and forth, they will never hear**
 33 **my message of love, and I'll disappear before anyone has**
 34 **a chance to hear me. Oh, no!** (*BIRD enters and takes SEED*
 35 *1 Offstage.*)



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