

## Director's Guide to *A Biblical Christmas Carol*

- I. **Cast:** Have tryouts where students read lines for meaning and ability. Select your cast members on the basis of the quality of their lives and their ability to express the personalities of the characters. Some cast members may take more than one minor part.
- II. **Rehearsal approach:** Students do not master the entire play at one time; they build skill upon skill—first with lines; then feeling and emphasis; then stage movements, actions, gestures, interaction, and timing—until everything becomes natural.
- III. **Goals:** Make up a goal chart (12" X 17") as follows:

<i>A Biblical Christmas Carol</i> Goal Chart				
	Lines	Actions	Rough	Dress Rehearsal
<b>Act I</b> <b>Scene 1</b>				
<b>Act II</b> <b>Scene 1</b>				
<b>Scene 2</b>				
<b>Act III</b> <b>Scene 1</b>				
<b>Scene 2</b>				
<b>Scene 3</b>				
<b>Act IV</b> <b>Scene 1</b>				

The goal chart is used to motivate students. First, they are challenged to obtain movement and flow of lines, one scene at a time. As this objective is achieved, a large star is placed in the appropriate box. Then the actions are built upon the lines, and the next star, usually a different color, is placed in the box in the "Actions" column, etc.

- A. **Lines:** The cast sits in a large circle and reads the play through three to five times, working for the proper interpretation, feeling, and emphasis. They also learn cue words in the last lines of the person whose speech precedes theirs. Plan memorization goals so that each cast member will know his lines long before dress rehearsal time.
- B. **Actions:** Lay out the stage setting and scenery. The set, furniture, and lighting may be simple or elaborate in construction. Walk through each scene a few times. Do one scene at a time, so that cast members can learn movements, interaction, and timing.
- C. **Rough:**
  1. With proper movements established, begin to develop the uniqueness of each character from his lines, emotions, actions, gestures, and interactions with others in the cast.

2. Serious scenes take more drill and concentration with individuals and their lines; humorous or lighter scenes take more drill in interaction. Students must work to eliminate tension and self-conscious reserve and to develop natural realistic movements and gestures.
3. Work on continuity from beginning to end, building intensity of meaning, coherence, use of props, and polish.
4. As students say their lines, the director must interpret and add feeling to each delivery and provide smooth flow and meaningful inflection and intonation.
5. Look for choppy lines and loose ends. Work toward bringing the performance to a very high level; this takes four or five complete runs.
6. The last run should be observed with clipboard in hand, taking notes on individual weaknesses. Return to the circle for a reading and have the cast enter in their manuscripts your comments for improvement.
7. Students practice a few days by restudying and incorporating comments and corrections into their delivery. Run through scenes until corrections are mastered.

#### **D. Dress Rehearsal**

1. Prior to dress rehearsal, cast members or a separate wardrobe department should research costumes of the Victorian era (mid-19th century). Costumes can be made or rented. The amount of makeup is dependent upon the size of the auditorium.
2. Allow time for changing clothes between scenes and have dressing rooms ready. Plan lighting sequence and ensure that all props are in place.
3. A scheduled dress rehearsal should be performance-ready at least two days before the scheduled performance. This is your opportunity to polish details and to solve new problems that may appear. Occasionally a second dress rehearsal is necessary.

**IV. Schedule:** Normally, with some rehearsals in the afternoons, after school, and on Saturdays, it will take about six weeks to get the play ready. Invite other pastors to attend a performance and seek opportunities for your cast to perform in other churches.

#### **V. Some Basic Principles:**

- A. Do not put hand over face, turn back on audience, stand in front of another character, or use any unnatural gestures or actions.
- B. Practice standing no more than 45° to the front of the stage, speaking loudly enough to be heard, waiting for audience reaction to subside, showing interest in others' actions and speeches, and creating appropriate facial expression in reaction to other characters: deep thought, surprise, agreement, disagreement, enlightenment.