

CROSSPOINT

S C R I P T S E R V I C E

LIVE FROM THE FIELD

An Interview with George Halitzka

Crosspoint: You've been doing drama in church for a long time. Do you think drama is still on the rise among churches?

I don't know. I suppose that's a question for those who study the church statistically. The trend that I've observed--and I think this is much more important--is that churches who already have drama are doing it better. Their learning how to perform for the glory of God.

Crosspoint: What would you say to the church that tried drama once or twice and gave up on it?

I'd say it's possible--and it's happened to me--that God wants you to start out on a small scale. You don't need a cast of thousands; a cast of two or three are fine. Four or five wholeheartedly dedicated actors are better than twenty irresponsible people who won't truly form a "team." I recently saw a church that tried to go from very occasional drama to weekly drama virtually overnight. I saw a couple of their performances and cringed all the way through them. They have since slowed down--and improved immensely!

Crosspoint: You can show drama with a video clip. But a live sketch seems to be more powerful. Why is that?

I knew there would be a deep philosophical question in here somewhere. Hmm . . . Live theatre is never the same twice. There is always a new audience; a new spark of creativity; a new energy; or--ahem--a new mistake. A live performance is three-dimensional. It's also life-sized; it's as close as one can get to real life, in some ways a living organism with a life of its own. The audience can interact with the actors following a live performance. They can ask questions; talk things over; pray with each other. On a less lofty level, audience members love to see actors they know on stage. It's more personal.

Crosspoint: What do you look for in a good script for church?

Well, here's a sort of shopping list I think through.

- 1) *Is it engaging? Does it grab me? Does it hold my attention? Are both my mind and emotions engaged?*
- 2) *Does the script challenge, but not overwhelm my actors?*
- 3) *Is it truthful about human nature? Nothing annoys me more than so many Christian scripts where everything turns out all right at the end. You do the Gospel a disservice by over-simplifying life or playing down the sin nature and making everything turn out okay at the end.*
- 4) *Is it truthful about divine nature? Does it accurately represent God?*
- 5) *Do I identify with the protagonist (the good guy)? Do I empathize with his predicament? Do I walk around in his shoes?*
- 6) *Is it "more than true"? One of the marks of great theatre is that it is universal. The conflict and characters are set in one place and time, but the truths about human nature that they uncover are true in ALL places and times.*
- 7) *Does it scream? Mark Twain said about writing, "Don't say, 'The old lady screamed.' Bring her on and let her scream!" That is doubly true of a good script. If major parts of the action--especially the inner action of the characters--take place offstage and are merely described to the audience, it's probably not a very good script.*
- 8) *Does it bite off more than it can chew? A five-minute drama can't answer all of the world's questions. It can't even ask most of them. Usually, it should focus on one. It shouldn't be simplistic, but it should be simple.*
- 9) *Is the dialogue realistic? Does it sound like real people talking?*
- 10) *Does it demonstrate subtlety? Audiences can be dumb, but they're not moronic. We are usually much more open to a message when we feel like we've figured it out for ourselves.*



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