

Acting Out the Covenant

Bill Garlow, Jim's brother, has created a memorable and engaging activity to illustrate the covenant-cutting ceremony of the Bible. The metaphors and symbolism of this interactive ceremony are powerful and direct the participants' attention toward the riches of the blood covenant between God and humankind through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Introduction

Acting out the covenant is an enjoyable way to physically involve a small group, Sunday school class, or any type of gathering learning about the truths of covenant. It is essentially a “visualized walk-through” approach that requires ten steps and different locations around a large room, church campus, or even private residence. The entire illustration takes about twenty minutes. It is recommended that you run through the steps a second time at a faster rate to instill memory through repetition. Before starting, be sure to obtain the necessary props and items mentioned below.

Establish several areas or corners for the various steps. Example: Corner A for steps 1-3, Corner B for steps 4-6, Corner C for steps 7-9, and the middle of the room for step 10.

Identifying the People

1. Divide the room in half to form two “tribes.” Have the participants introduce themselves with “ah” added to their names (Bill-ah, Jim-ah, Rob-ah, etc.). Have them write their names this way on their name tags.
2. Use a black washable marker or eyeliner pen to place a streak on their wrists. Have them say, “I am in a covenant with God,” as they hold up their wrists to display the markings. The black streaks will also serve as reminders of their covenant, since they will see them each day. (For some, the entire experience becomes very meaningful as they try to see how long they can keep the markings from being washed off.)
3. Have each one create a name tag with the picture of a heart on it, either drawn by hand or affixed using a heart sticker. Put a black mark on the heart, and then instruct everyone to touch his or her wrist to the heart tag and say, “I have a covenant heart” (or “circumcised heart,” if they choose).
4. Tell the participants to say loudly, “I am now a “Christ-ian!” (pronounced Christ-ē-ann).
5. Instruct them to think of their favorite Bible verse and then say, “My most powerful weapon is . . .” (then say the verse).
6. Have them call out the number of children they have, but ask them to name the oldest (if they have no children, they can use the number of their siblings, with the name of their oldest sibling). They can finish this by saying, “And Jesus is the Son of Man.” This serves to remind them of the impact of the tenth step--exchanging the oldest child--if they would have had to complete an Old Testament covenant.
7. Select one person from each tribe to serve as the representative.

The Covenant Steps

Action Steps

1. Exchange robes: have the two representatives switch their bathrobes or choir robes, which should be different in color.
2. Exchange belts: instruct them to now swap their bathrobe belts or big leather belts (the bigger and funnier, the better).
3. Exchange weapons: have them trade toy swords, rubber knives, toy spears, hatchets.

The Blood Steps

4. Sacrifice animal: use a deer head (most hunters have one), doll animal, fur coat, or furry rug. Lay it on the ground.
5. Walk of death: have them walk in a figure eight through and around the “sacrificed animal.”
6. Covenant mark: have them take a fake weapon (knife or sword) and make a “cut” on their wrists, use a black eyeliner pen or marker of some kind for the cut “tattoo.” Use lipstick if you want a “blood” effect on their wrists.

The Celebration and Sealing Steps

7. Blessings and curses: assign one tribe to be the “curse callers.” Provide them with some scary Halloween masks, and instruct them to raise their hands and yell, “Curses, curses!” on your command. Assign the other tribe to be the “blessing blowers.” Provide them with children’s bubble sticks and soap, and instruct them to raise their hands and yell, “Blessings, blessings!” on your command. Have the covenant partners walk between the groups as you point to each side. Then have the partners walk a second time between the groups, but now tell the “curses” side to be quiet. Only the “blessings” side responds. Mention that this shows how the new covenant differs from the old covenant.
8. Covenant meal: have the two representatives link their arms and drink grape juice from goblets or glasses.
9. Exchange of names: now have them change the name tags on their shirts or have them make new tags so that one person’s last name is inserted as the “middle” name of the other person (e.g., Jim Price-Garlow or Rob Garlow-Price).
10. Exchange of sons: have them exchange pictures of their oldest son, daughter, or grandchild or make up pictures from something else that is meaningful.

Application

When this illustration is completed, run through it a second time at a rapid pace. Then share the gospel revelation. Allow time for people to respond with questions and comments. The eyes of many hearts are typically opened to new levels of understanding God’s extraordinary love for us.

Checklist

- 2 bath robes or choir robes
- 2 belts (bath robe belt or large leather belt)
- 2 toy weapons (swords, knives, spear, hatchet, etc.)
- Animal figure, such as a deer head, large doll, fur coat
- Black eyeliner (lipstick if you want a “blood” effect)
- Halloween scary masks (several)
- Blowing-bubble bottles or sticks (several)
- Grape juice
- 2 goblets or glasses (older looking if possible)
- 2 name tags with pens for writing
- 2 pictures of oldest sons/daughters/grandchildren/siblings