

# You Can Choose

from *Invitation to a Party*

By Debbie Salter Goodwin

(Matthew 5:1-11)

This sketch involves carefully sequenced action, planned to emphasize the rhythmic beat of the poem. In order to get the main idea of the sketch, read the poem before studying the action. Emphasize the underlined word to achieve predictable rhythm. Then, read the Rehearsal Strategies through, being sure to study Appendix B. It will help you understand how the action synchronizes with the poem. Stanzas are numbered to help with rehearsal instructions. Letters A-F identify stage placement formations. You will find illustrations of these formations in Appendix B.

## Characters:

NARRATOR OR CHORUS: Either a single reader, preferably an adult, or use a group of readers that an adult leads.

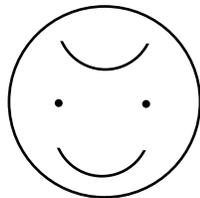
HAPPY FACES: Half of the actors in the Action group who usually show the happy face of their hand-held, reversible happy-sad face mask.

SAD FACES: The other half of the actors in the Action group who usually show the sad face of their hand-held, happy-sad face mask.

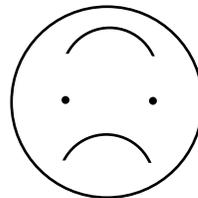
## Props:

Happy-Sad Face masks for each member of the Action group

To make: Draw a happy face on a Styrofoam plate using a permanent black marker. To make it reversible, flip it over and draw another smile. (See Examples A and B.) Use a cool glue gun to connect a craft or paint stick to the plate so that half can be held as Happy Faces and the other half as Sad Faces.



A Happy Face



B Sad Face

Jesus Picture

Glue a picture of Jesus' face on the back of one of the Happy Face masks. Give to the actor who stands nearest the center.

One Way Signs, also hand-held

You will need one for each of the Happy Face sign holders.

First Aid Kits for use in stanza 13 with easy-to-apply Band-Aids or band-aids.

Large red hearts on the back of all masks except for Jesus.

**Stage Arrangement:**

There are six basic formations for this play, lettered A-F. Formations place actors in one or two rows. In a two-row placement only front row masks should be visible to the audience. See Appendix B for illustrations. The lettered formations appear on the Action side as a sample row of five Happy Faces and five Sad Faces, as they appear in Appendix B. You will find complete instructions about how to introduce and sequence teaching these formations in Rehearsal Strategies. The CHORUS or NARRATOR stands to one side of the face mask holders. They read the lines emphasizing a pronounced two-beat rhythm. The underlined syllables indicate this rhythm. Clapping may help, but be sure it does not get in the way of good pronunciation. Also, make sure the CHORUS doesn't go so fast that the Action group has trouble keeping up.

**Chorus**

**Action**

**1:**

*Formation changes on each line.*

You can choose to be happy.

(A) ☹☹☹☹☹  
☺☺☺☺☺

You can choose to be sad.  
helper.

(B) ☺☺☺☺☺  
☹☹☹☹☹

You can choose to be a

(A) ☹☹☹☹☹  
☺☺☺☺☺

You can choose to be bad.

(B) ☺☺☺☺☺  
☹☹☹☹☹

**2:**

It's what Jesus tried to teach us

(C) ☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺☺

In the sermon on the mount,

*Center person holds picture of Jesus.*

And we'd like to share it  
with you.

*The rest point to picture  
and then to audience.*

You can help us keep a count.

**3:**

You can be a kingdom-liver

(E) ☹️😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊

In a happy, humble way.

*Sad Faces turn with backs to audience.*

Choosing God as first adviser,

*Happy Faces point heavenward.*

Letting Him have His first say.

**4:**

You can also shun God's kingdom.

(B) ☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️

Make yourself the central dude.

☹️☹️ ☹️☹️

Speak your mind when it's  
convenient,

*Sad Faces sit and point to  
seats.*

Even when your thoughts are stupid.

**5:**

And when your heart is heavy,

(D) ☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️

And when your world is sad,  
God can bring His special comfort.

*Happy Faces console Sad Faces until  
all are changed to happy on last line.*

Choosing Him can make you glad.

(F) ☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️

**6:**

Turn God's happy way of living

(E) ☹️😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊

Upside-down and you will see,

(D) ☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️

You can choose a pouty spirit

*On second line, Sad Faces turn around.*

If that's who you want to be.

**7:**

*Repeat from stanza 1:*

You can choose to be happy.

(A) ☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️  
😊😊😊😊😊😊

You can choose to be sad.

(B) ☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️  
☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️







# Rehearsal Strategies

Suggested Rehearsal Time: Three 1-hour sessions

## *Rehearsal Materials:*

Make rehearsal posters picturing each lettered formation from Appendix B. On a separate poster, make a master chart showing two lines of circles equal to the possible number of participants. Draw Happy Faces on front row and Sad Faces on back row. Leave room under the circle to write the name of the actor who will fill each place. See example in Appendix B.

## **First Rehearsal**

GETTING INTO THE ACT: 5-10 minutes

1. Have each participant make the reversible happy/sad face on a paper plate. These will be practice props. Encourage positive sharing about good things from the day or week.
2. Divide the group into couples, even if it means you pair with one. Then play Mirror. Let the person whose birthday is closest to the day be the leader. Couples face each other, arms up with palms out, without touching each other. The leader emphasizes movement above the waist, including facial expression. The partner acts as his mirror. After everyone tries it, consider asking one or two volunteer teams to demonstrate for the whole group.

ACTING IT OUT: 40-45 minutes

1. Present the subject of the play by talking about following Jesus as a kind of Mirror activity. Explain that Jesus gives us clues about how to mirror His actions in the Sermon on the Mount, especially the Beatitudes.
2. Pass out scripts, asking participants to share. Then, read through the first two stanzas, demonstrating the importance of vocal expression and rhythm. Begin again, asking the whole group to read the script, stanza by stanza, using good expression and rhythm. If you are looking for a possible narrator or group of unison voices, this is a good time to try out some possibilities. Separate this group out before the next step.
3. Begin working on the Action by asking the rest to get into Mirror pairs again with their paper plate reversible faces. Adjust groups as necessary, identifying new leaders if needed. If the duets have changed dramatically, go through a quick Mirror exercise.
4. Introduce position A as Home Base. This makes it easy to get actors into starting position for announcements or instructions. Ask Mirror leaders to stand on the front row and show Happy Faces. Ask Mirror followers to stand behind with Sad Faces. Then, fill out the master lineup poster to reflect this order.
5. Introduce position C: working on specific instructions for moving from one

position to another. (Example: Happy Faces always step to back row on the left of Sad Faces, and Sad Faces step forward on the right. Use this same rule when making a straight line. Work on learning the first three most used positions. (If using a unison CHORUS, get helpers to hold the sign cards prepared for each numbered formation.)

6. Practice movement and motions with the first two stanzas, using position cue cards.
7. Introduce each position. Practice position order for stanzas 1-8 without narration, almost like a game. Show cue cards and observe how actors get into place. Then, practice with the reading of the stanzas. If time allows, go through the sequence again. Don't work for perfection, just familiarity with the order.

TAKING THE ACT HOME: 10 minutes

1. Ask actors to get a Bible and turn to the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-11. Ask them to identify the specific Beatitudes paraphrased in the stanzas. Talk about real-life examples of mirroring these *be*-attitudes.
2. Announce the next rehearsal. Close with prayer.

## Second Rehearsal

GETTING INTO THE ACT: 10 minutes

1. Encourage first-comers to re-new stage positions. When everyone is together, use a variation of the game, Director Says, by calling out position numbers and giving actors a chance to get into place. Throw in wrong numbers. Speed up the number-calling for fun. Make a note of any problems you detect. (If using a CHORUS, let them take turns playing director.)

ACTING IT OUT: 40-45 minutes

1. Consider enlisting a helper who could work with NARRATOR or CHORUS on rhythm, expression, and enunciation. Use any of the rhythm stories to help practice vocal expression. Consider approaching the CHORUS script as a rhythm story and allow the group to echo the leader.
2. Review the stage positions and actions with the first eight stanzas.
3. Practice new material again.
4. Start over. This time add other props and specially made hand masks. Reunite with NARRATOR or CHORUS. Work for easy transition between stanzas, specially the stanzas requiring props. Practice problem stanzas one more time before closing rehearsal.

TAKING THE ACT HOME: 10-15 minutes

1. Divide into groups of two to three. Assign one or two Beatitudes from Matthew 5:1-11, asking the group to match their verse(s) with one of the stanzas from the play. Share with whole group as time allows.
2. Ask leading questions to push toward application. Example: Which attitude is the hardest to mirror? Which attitude have you seen an example of this week? Which attitude do you need to work on the most? Which attitudes have you seen during rehearsal?
3. Close with a group Mirror exercise that you lead. Then, remind them that

we are to mirror Jesus' words from the Sermon on the Mount, not just in the play, but in real life.

4. Ask for some volunteer sentence prayers or lead in prayer yourself.

### **Third Rehearsal**

GETTING INTO THE ACT: 5-10 minutes

1. If possible, this rehearsal should take place on the performance stage. Involve early arrivers to place props.
2. Use the game from last week to review all positions. Variation: Have NARRATOR or CHORUS choose a stanza to read and see if actors remember correct position.

ACTING IT OUT: 40-45 minutes

1. Rehearse stanzas where action or transition needs strengthening. Then, start at the beginning and try to go all the way through without stopping.
2. Be sure to practice how to walk onstage and how to leave.
3. Make sure performance time is clear to all. Agree on where to meet and how to practice at least once before performance.

TAKING THE ACT HOME: 5-10 minutes

1. Ask what the audience should remember about "You Can Choose." Talk to the group about *being* the Bible for their audience. What will help the audience really hear the message.
2. Close by praying sentence prayers about being a part of making God's Word come to life with their performance.

# APPENDIX A

## Warm-up Exercises

These exercises can be used for any dramatic experience with children. Choose the one that best leads into the dramatic activity of the script. For example: "Animal Walk" is a good activity when the children need to act like animals. Adapt the exercises to fit the needs of the script and to enhance the focus of your rehearsal.

### Animal Walk

#### *Variation I*

Place an animal sticker on a 3" x 5" card. Use animals like bear, duck, monkey, goat, etc. Make three to four of each animal card. Hand out a card to each individual and ask each participant to keep the animal a secret. Then, on cue, ask everyone to walk around the room without making sound and act like the animal on the card. They are to find others who are acting like the animal they were assigned. It is an easy way to divide into groups for another activity.

#### *Variation II*

Prepare the cards as before but use a set of animals that can be easily identified by their sounds. (Example: lion, cat, duck, dog, etc.) Hand out the cards and ask them to walk around like the animal to find their group.

#### *Variation III*

Start this activity in small groups of no more than three. Make animal cards as above, this time using more difficult animals. (Example: elephant, giraffe, ostrich) Hand a card to each group. The group must then find a way to put their bodies together to represent the animal on the card. Ask each group to share their animal with the others. Results are fun to watch.

### Charades

This familiar party game makes a wonderful warm-up activity, especially if you use characters, lines, or objects from your play. You can also develop character, emotion, and action cards to use on a regular basis.

### Director Says

Use this game to introduce and review stage vocabulary. Gather the children on the stage or in a cleared space in your rehearsal room. Give stage directions such as "Take two steps downstage." Just as in Simon Says, the children are to follow only the statements you make preceded by "the director says . . ."

### Finish This Line

Choose some key lines from the play. Give only part of the line and ask the

group to "Finish this line." Actors who think they can must stand up and repeat the whole line. Have candy kisses to give to those who complete the line correctly. Take farther, if desired, by asking for where the actor stands to deliver the line, who the line is delivered to, etc.

### **Freeze Play**

Have actors stand in a large circle. Have each actor choose an action or character from the play. It does not have to be the part they have been assigned. Instruct everyone to walk around the circle until you call "Freeze." Then, affirm good ideas. Continue playing by allowing actors to experiment with different ideas. Another variation is to introduce a what-if motivation that changes the actions and responses. Talk about the changes. You may also warn actors that you may call a Freeze Play at any moment. Use this technique when you need to fine-tune placement in group scenes.

### **Instant Puppet**

For this activity, you need a handkerchief-sized piece of material, a sheet of newspaper to be wadded, and three rubber bands for each person who will make a puppet. Wad the paper into a ball around the index finger. Place the material square over the ball. Secure the first rubber band underneath the ball to identify a head. Secure the second and third rubber bands over material-covered thumb and second finger to make the puppet's hands. Add no facial expressions.

Direct your puppeteers through some exercises where they must make their puppet demonstrate an emotion such as happy, sad, angry, worried. They may also demonstrate actions: praying, saying good-bye, crying.

Watch the faces of your puppeteers as they do this. You will find their faces very expressive. This is a good exercise to focus on how the body communicates.

## **Machine**

### ***Part I***

Cut out pictures of household machines from a catalog and paste them on 3" x 5" cards. (Example: popcorn popper, vacuum cleaner, toaster, lawnmower) Divide into groups of three to four. Hand out a card to each group. Tell the groups they are to use their bodies to make the machine. After giving a short time to practice, allow groups to share their machines with the whole group.

### ***Part II***

If using at a different rehearsal, give time for each group to practice their machine the way they shared it from the last rehearsal. Then, tell the groups to decide how their machine breaks down and what happens as a result. Does it slow down, speed up, work incorrectly, etc.

Next, ask the groups to decide what happens to the broken machine. Is it repaired, is it hopelessly broken, etc. Share comparisons between the parts of a machine and the different actors working together on a play.

## **Make a Face**

Compose some one-line statements that evoke an emotional response and ask your group to "Make a face" to reflect the emotion. For example: "School's out!" "Your dog died." "Mom says you can't watch your favorite TV show."

## **Mirror**

Actors pair up. Identify a leader and a follower. The leader uses his face, arms, and body while feet remain planted to one spot and the follower "mirrors" the activity. The idea is to accomplish such teamwork that it is difficult to determine who is leader and who is follower.

After a few minutes, reverse leader and follower. Encourage pair to discuss how to accomplish better unity.

Bring the exercise back when there are acting pairs who need to learn how to work together.

## **Name Tag**

Suggest a symbol or group of symbols from the play. Ask children to draw or cut out one of the symbols and use as a name tag. Later, after parts have been assigned, give actors a chance to choose a symbol that best represents their character.

## **On the Spot**

Have the children stand or sit in a circle. You begin by taking a place in the center of circle. Close your eyes and turn around a couple of times. Then, point to someone without knowing who it is. That person must quote a line from his part in the play. Then, that character takes a turn in the center. Continue the game until everyone has had a chance to give a line. No line may be repeated.

## **Pair Off**

This is one way to introduce a kind of group pantomime and teamwork at the same time. Ask the group to pair off with the person on the right. If necessary, use one group of three. Then, suggest short, pantomime actions that require more than one person to complete. Select actions that relate to the play, if possible. Examples: playing on a see-saw, mending a net, moving a sofa. Be as concrete with the action and object involved as possible. Later, you can introduce more open-ended pantomimes where the children must define the object for themselves.

## **Pass It On**

Sit in a circle with your group. Explain that you have an imaginary object to pass around. It can be anything from a butterfly trying to escape, an apple or a rose, or some object that is important to the play. Identify the object to the group. Everyone must take the imaginary object in their hands, examine it, do something with it, and "pass it on" without losing it.

## **Round-Robin Memorization**

Sit in a circle. Without books or scripts, have actors quote lines, repeating them in sequence as fast as possible but not so fast that it becomes needlessly silly.

## **Tongue Twisters**

Compile your favorite list of tongue twisters. The object of this exercise is improved articulation. Try handing out tongue twisters privately and give these children a chance to practice. Then, have them repeat the tongue twister for everyone. The catch is that the group must correctly identify each word in the twister. Get the children to bring in their favorite tongue twisters. This is an easy way to build your supply.

## **Word You Heard**

This is similar to Make a Face except you only give one word for the group to respond to. For example: angry, excited, confused. Make sure to start with easy to identify emotions. Work toward less stereotyped ones such as: contented, frustrated. Variation 1: Start by ordering your words by opposites. Variation 2: Give a string of related emotions, like happy, excited, ecstatic. Talk about the ways to show differences.

SAMPLE  
DO NOT PRINT

# APPENDIX B

## Staging Positions for "You Can Choose"

Make a rehearsal cue card for each position listed below. Use them to help actors learn their positions for the sketch "You Can Choose" (see page 43). Keep the cue cards with an easy-to-see representative number even when there are more or less actors involved.

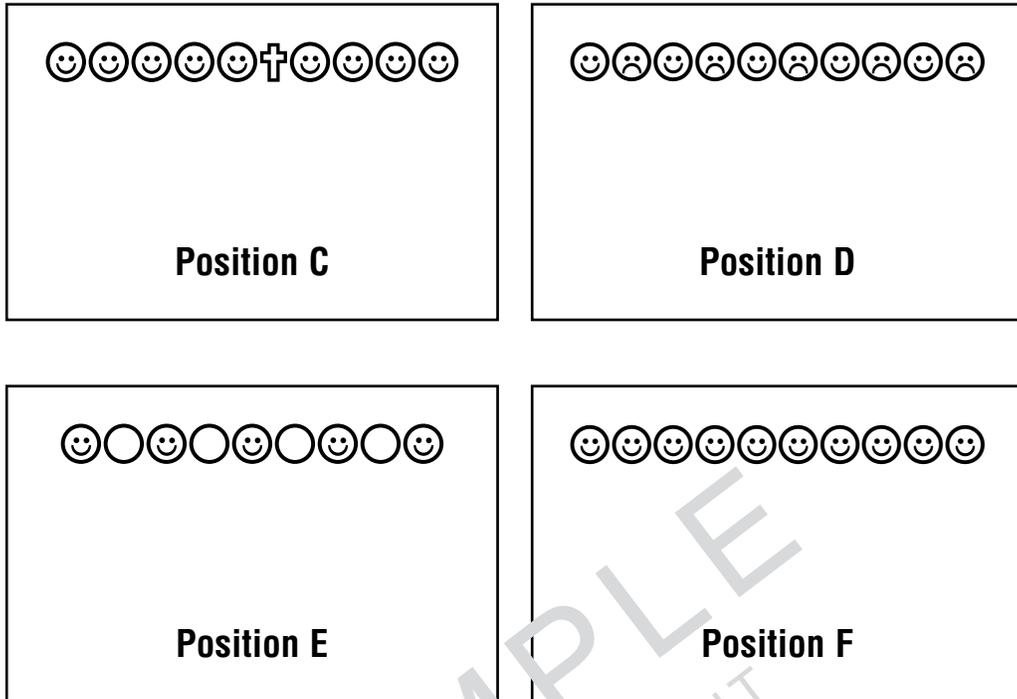
MASTER CHART				
6	7	8	9	10
				
<hr/>				
1	2	3	4	5
				
<hr/>				



<b>Position A</b>
(Home Base)



<b>Position B</b>



SAMPLE  
DO NOT PRINT



The purchase of this sketch entitles the purchaser to make photocopies of this material for use in their church or nonprofit organization. The sharing of this material with other churches or organizations not owned or controlled by the original purchaser is strictly prohibited. The contents of this sketch may not be reproduced in any other form without written permission from the publisher. Please include the copyright statement found below on each copy made.

Questions? Please write, call, or E-mail:

Lillenas® Publishing Company  
 Drama Resources  
 P.O. Box 419527  
 Kansas City, MO 64141

Phone: 816-931-1900  
 Fax: 816-412-8390

E-mail: [drama@lillenas.com](mailto:drama@lillenas.com)  
 Web Site: [www.lillenasdrama.com](http://www.lillenasdrama.com)

The sketch collection *Invitation to a Party* (MP-781) is available for purchase from Lillenas® Drama or from your local Christian bookstore. For a full description of the rest of this collection, or to purchase other individual sketches, refer to [www.lillenasdrama.com](http://www.lillenasdrama.com)