



On your marks

This is a technique which sounds much more complicated than it is. Basically, you're turning phrases from a Bible story into a meditative piece of worship. The idea comes from Tom Long of the States. The preparation of this is a Bible study in itself as you all analyse which part of the story you think is most significant and work out how to demonstrate it in words and movement. The end result is a slow, thought-provoking stimulus to worship. There is also very little to learn - ideal for most of us!

Get set

Here's the basis - you can decide how much to drip-feed your group and how much to let them come up with the goods themselves (far preferable, of course)

Go!

After reading and studying your Bible passage together, ask each person (up to a maximum of about eight) to choose one phrase from the story which they think is the most important. If you have larger numbers, this could be done in groups of three. If you have a story like the Creation, you might designate each day to a person and ask them to think of a phrase that would best describe that day, or something that happened on that day.

Then ask each person to devise a simple movement that can be done on the spot, to go with that phrase.

Next arrange perhaps two chairs and a stool or stage block into a group for your set, and ask the actors to sit, lie, kneel or stand in, on beside and behind them. Rearrange the actors until you have a shape that is interesting to look at, even in the neutral position.

Actor 1 begins and says her phrase three times out loud, accompanying it with her movement each time. Then she carries on with the repeated movement, but is silent, while actor 2 begins with his words and movement. He repeats this likewise three times, then continues silently with his movement while actor 3 begins. And so on until all the actors are in motion. It's good to finish with a line that all say together and finish on a freeze.

For example, if you were meditating on Holy Week, the phrases might be:

Hosanna (wave arms)

This is a house of prayer! (violent pushing gesture)

She has given more than all the others (outstretched arm)

Take, eat, this is my body (mime breaking bread)

I don't know you (look away)

Crucify him! (punch air)

Father forgive them (arms outstretched)

My Lord and my God (arms outstretched and smiling)