

## The Divine Drama in Miniature

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### Prayer

Lord of creation, time, and eternity, as we begin our journey through Your Holy Word, help our little minds to understand the Bible's big message. Above all, help us to understand why You made us, and what plans You have for us—both in this life and in the life to come. We thank You that You have not kept Yourself hidden from us, but came among us in the person of Your Son, Jesus the Messiah. We know what You are like, because we know what Jesus was like during His time on earth. Teach us that because we believe Jesus lived, died, and rose from the dead, our sins have been forgiven, and we are called to learn to live in this life as we will when we enter eternal life. May our faith in Jesus' completed and saving work give us joy, peace, hope, and purpose in all we do. We pray in His holy and precious name. Amen.

### PICTURE TALK

#### ILLUSTRATION 2A

It is important to memorize the names and sequence of the 66 books in the Bible. Why? (Try to memorize eleven names on each of the next six days. Memorize the names of Old Testament books according to the *Christian structure*.)

**When we are familiar with the names and sequence of the 66 books in the Bible, we are better equipped to find and read specific Bible verses when asked to do so.**

#### ILLUSTRATION 2B

**ILLUSTRATION 2B** depicts Sylvester asking questions about opinions and practices in relation to the Christian faith and lifestyle. Discuss the questions that relate to each of the eight symbols in the illustration.

**Bible:** The narrative that runs through the Bible is indeed complex and challenging. Those who wish to understand it need to become “biblical bloodhounds”—people who persist in studying the biblical materials so that they might understand (clearly, correctly, and joyously!) God's Good News.

**Person wearing clerical collar:** Although there is certainly a need for professional church workers, every Christian is called to full-time church work, to full-time discipleship. Professional church workers are not called to do the work of the church for those who sit in the pews. They are there to equip God's people to know and do the will of God, seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

**Faces and music:** Singing in a church choir can be an inspirational experience for those who sing and for those who hear. In addition, God's people are called to sing God's praises *in all they do* by serving those around them.

**Law-codes:** The big thing in the Bible is God's revelation of Himself. Furthermore, the key concept is “covenant”—not commandment. **ILLUSTRATION 2G** will deal with this issue in greater detail.

**Angel on cloud:** The Bible makes frequent reference to angels and angelic beings. Matthew, Mark, and Luke teach that the first thing Jesus encountered after His baptism was the demonic, Mark 1:12,13; Matthew 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13. The point seems to be that although the Canaanites were the occupying power in Canaan at the time of the conquest under Joshua, when Jesus entered the land after His baptism, the occupying power was the demonic. The rabbis taught that when God created the first humans, God commanded the angels to honor them—which some of the angels refused to do. However, after Jesus refused to yield to Satan's temptations, the angels ministered to Him. In short, things were being put right!

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**Dollar sign on envelope:** Those who work through **THE DIVINE DRAMA** materials will eventually understand that the challenge facing the church in today's world is not to persuade people to *give more*, but to inspire them to *rob less*. God owns all things. We are not “owners and givers.” We are merely managers of what belongs to God, Luke 12:13–21.

**Church building:** “The true Church is what remains after the building burns down.” Belonging to God's church is not about belonging to any particular denomination. It is about belonging to Jesus the Messiah as Savior and Lord. Christians are to measure all that they are taught and all that they hear according to what God teaches and reveals through His written and Living Word.

**Gravestone:** Comfort at the approach of death is not found in the ability to purchase a comfortable coffin. It is found in the eternal and forgiving presence of Jesus the Messiah—crucified, risen, reigning, victorious! He who rose from the tomb on Easter Sunday morning can and will raise the dead, and give eternal life in His presence to those who have believed in, trusted, and followed Him.

#### ILLUSTRATION 2C

**ILLUSTRATION 2C** suggests that Sylvester views Christianity as *an important part* of life, perhaps even as *the most important part* of life (as depicted by the *Bible* and *church building* featured within the yellow “pie wedge” inside the circle).

- ◆ Why must we think of Christianity in terms bigger than that?

**Jesus calls us to follow Him full-time—not part-time or most of the time.**

- ◆ Discuss the questions that relate to the seven symbols in the illustration.

(The comments below are those which explain **ILLUSTRATION 16A**.)

**Dome:** There is no such thing as a “secular” realm. Christians are to take an active interest in, and serve in, government so as to enable all to live together harmoniously at local, national, and international levels.

**Diplomas:** Christians develop their minds and abilities to be equipped to serve others in a meaningful, useful way.

**Plate, knife, and fork:** Christians eat healthfully in order to live usefully. They eat to live; they do not live to eat.

**Family:** Parents influence children enormously—whether they realize it or not. The Christian faith must be taught, shared, modeled, and passed on in homes by parents who equip themselves to do so.

**Dollar sign:** Money is service in a storable, transferable form. It is not wrong to have money. The question is: How was it obtained, and how is it being used?

**Ball:** People need to exercise and participate in sporting activities and leisure pursuits in order to keep their bodies and minds healthy and alert.

**Factory:** Christians see daily work as an opportunity to provide needed goods and services for the good of the community.

**ILLUSTRATION 2D**

A person's hat can make a statement about the wearer's character, role, and abilities. What might the hats depicted in **ILLUSTRATION 2D** suggest about how some people think in relation to God's character, role, and abilities?

The significance of each hat in relation to "God's character" is outlined in the notes which explain **ILLUSTRATION 2D**.

**ILLUSTRATION 2E**

Frame 1 reminds us that God, in the person of Jesus the Messiah, once wore a hat—a **crown of thorns**.

Frame 2 depicts the concept of Jesus' **circular crown** with **thorns protruding** (going out) **from it** to introduce the symbol that the illustrations in *THE DIVINE DRAMA* use for God.

Frame 3 shows God's original and present will for humanity.

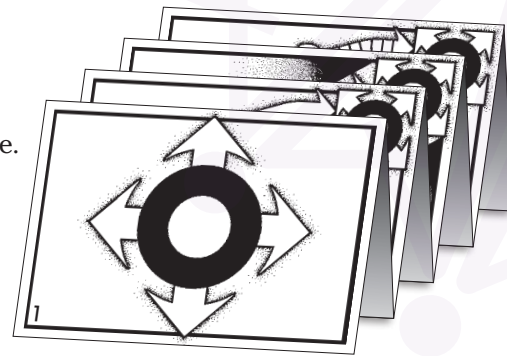
Frame 4 illustrates the nature of sinful human behavior.

Each frame is explained in detail in the manual. Explain each frame to your students, and then ask them to explain each frame to you and each other.

**ILLUSTRATION 2F**

**ILLUSTRATION 2F** has helped thousands of people around the world to *understand* the sweep of God's plan for humanity, and to *explain* it to others. Study the eight frames in the illustration. Explain it to others in your group. Use it as a witnessing tool to explain the Good News about Jesus the Messiah to people you meet in everyday life.

Crossways International has produced *The Divine Plan* in an accordion-style fold-out format that measures 19" x 3<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>". There are explanatory notes on the reverse side of each frame. This witnessing tool comes with a small protective envelope measuring 2" x 3<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>". Consider purchasing this witnessing tool in quantity to equip as many as possible to explain **God's plan of salvation** to each other, to family members, and to people at work, at school, and in the community.



Encourage students to explain the content of **ILLUSTRATION 2F** to each other, to family members, and to friends at work, at school, and in the community.

**ILLUSTRATION 2G**

**ILLUSTRATION 2G** depicted Sylvester looking on Christianity as *an important part* of life, as perhaps *the most important part* of life.

What growth in Sylvester's understanding is portrayed in **ILLUSTRATION 2G**?

Refer to the explanatory notes for **ILLUSTRATION 2G**, in particular point 3.

**BEGINNING TO DIG**

1 Why do people sometimes find the Bible puzzling and confusing?

The Bible is a library that contains many books, and tells a big and complex story that takes place over thousands of years. To unravel that story and its key themes is a challenging task.

2 Everyone has a personality—distinctive qualities and traits. What one word best describes God's personality? **Love**

3 Give some examples of how you, in your everyday life, can serve (love) God by serving (loving) other people.

Use **ILLUSTRATION 2G** to encourage students to suggest specific examples that relate to their family, school, employment, and community situations. Although the possible answers are limitless, the following suggestions might spark additional suggestions:

- ◆ Help with household chores
- ◆ Offer assistance to those who are physically and mentally challenged
- ◆ Write to, and help, children and people living in poor countries
- ◆ Show kindness to people in the neighborhood

4 What would you say to a friend who asks you to explain, in simple terms, the "main message of the Bible"?

Perhaps have students explain **ILLUSTRATION 2F**, "The Divine Plan," to each other. If the illustrations are being projected on to a screen, ask for volunteers to explain the eight frames to fellow-students. Seek to develop skills within the class that can be put to work beyond the class.

5 What does it mean to be a Christian?

Some people are content to respond: "I am a sinner. Jesus died for my sins. I will go to heaven." True as these statements are, the Bible confronts us with a big story and with God's plan to restore creation and humanity to God's original plan. Help students take their "first steps" in the challenging journey that awaits them in the units that follow—a journey that will culminate in the "grand finale" of seeing Jesus the Messiah, and the Kingdom of God, at center stage.

**DIGGING DEEPER**

1 Which of the following two statements is correct? **b.** Why?

- a. The Bible teaches us how to behave in a way that causes God to accept and love us.
- b. The Bible teaches us how to respond to the fact that God has already forgiven us and already loves us.

The biblical message is not about how to get God to love us. Its goal is to teach us that, despite our sins, God has already forgiven us, already loves us, and seeks to involve us in His glorious, grand, and gracious plan for time and eternity.

2

Which of the following five statements gets your vote? e. Why?

- a. We should serve other people as we feel moved to serve them.
- b. We should serve other people as they want us to serve them.
- c. We should serve other people if it seems they might return the favor.
- d. We should serve other people only if it does not interfere too much with our own routine and comfort level.
- e. We should serve other people as God wants us to serve them.

**God writes the program concerning what we are to believe and how we are to live.**

3

Some people who attend church services regularly are not sure that God loves them, and are not sure that they will go to heaven after they die. What does this reveal about the way some people “do church”?

**There are those who see “being a Christian” as going to a worship service from time to time, but see no need to involve themselves in the reading and study of God’s Word. Their knowledge of God and His Word is limited and superficial. They have not probed the biblical message in any detail. They need to understand God’s wonderful Good News that God has already forgiven them through Jesus’ sinless life and atoning death, and that God has already declared them His “eternal children”—those who will eventually enter the Heavenly Home God has promised them and prepared for them. Furthermore, they are to understand that all they do in life is merely a response to what God has already done for them. So-called “good works” are not to be seen as a *reason* for salvation, but as a *response* to the salvation that is fully and eternally theirs.**