

A PUPPET PLAY IN ONE ACT

A Life of Adventure

Based on Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 13:2–3, 28:1–6 · Written by Carrie Elderberry



SUITABLE FOR
Ages 5 and up

CAST SIZE
5 puppets

PERFORMANCE TIME
8–10 minutes

PROPS REQUIRED
Toy snake, suitcase, hat

MAIN THEME

God sends ordinary people out to tell others about Jesus — across the ocean or across the street.

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To print just the play on its own, print pages 5-8.

PRODUCTION OVERVIEW

Synopsis

CHILD 1 announces a plan to grow up to be a missionary, and CHILD 2 is skeptical—picturing nothing but jungles, wild animals, and danger. An audience-participation “jungle” chorus and the true story of Paul and Barnabas (including the snakebite from Acts 28) help CHILD 2 understand that missionaries go wherever people haven't heard about Jesus—even right in their own neighborhood.

Spiritual Concept

Jesus's call to take the good news to “all the world” isn't only about faraway, exotic places—it's just as much about the people nearby who have never heard the truth about Him. Being a missionary can mean crossing an ocean, or just crossing the street.

Age Suitability

Suitable for all ages. The audience-participation song makes it especially good for younger, more active audiences.

Performance Time

8–10 minutes

CAST & TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Characters (in order of appearance)

NARRATOR — Introduces the play and leads the audience singalong of “The Lion Sleeps Tonight.”

CHILD 1 — A little older than CHILD 2, more mature, and set on becoming a missionary.

CHILD 2 — About 8 years old, mischievous, and skeptical about the whole missionary idea.

SNAKE – Scary; appears briefly to hiss and dramatize Paul's snakebite in Acts 28.

WILD ANIMALS – As many as you want, up to one per audience member—pictures on sticks, puppets, or audience-held figures all work.

Prop Options

- Pictures or puppets of wild animals, one per audience member if doing full audience participation
 - If nobody knows the song “The Lion Sleeps Tonight,” the WILD ANIMALS can just make noises—howling, roaring, etc.—instead of singing.
 - If time permits, read the story from the Bible to the audience ahead of time (maybe the day before) or after the play.
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PERFORMANCE NOTES FOR PUPPETEERS

New to puppets? General prep, technique, and voice tips live at gospelpuppets.org/getting-started.

Character Notes

CHILD 1 stays serious throughout; CHILD 2 is the tease. Both are established as Christians—CHILD 2's skepticism is about the missionary life sounding scary and impossible, not about faith itself.

The WILD ANIMALS can peek out from behind the curtain for a brief cue-based appearance, or can be handed out to audience members for full participation—the author's hint notes both options work.

Staging

Teach the audience the refrain of “The Lion Sleeps Tonight” at the very top of the play, then cue them to sing every time the word “jungle” comes up—this running gag carries most of the comedy.

The SNAKE's appearance is brief: it hisses, both children scream, and it exits immediately.

Reading the Script

CAPS = volume/intensity or emphasis.

Ellipsis (...) = the author's pacing notation.

A LIFE OF ADVENTURE

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NARRATOR: This play needs your help. Do you know the song, "The Lion Sleeps Tonight"? Can you sing the first line once with me?

(ALL sing.)

NARRATOR: Good! Now, every time you hear the word "jungle", sing that nice and loud!

(Enter CHILD 1 and CHILD 2, greeting each other and the audience.)

CHILD 1: I've decided what I want to be when I grow up!

CHILD 2: Really? I have, too! I'm going to be a baseball player, a doctor, AND a police officer!

CHILD 1: All at the same time?

CHILD 2: Sure! Why not?

CHILD 1: That's impossible. Can't you be serious?

CHILD 2: OK, scratch the doctor. How about you? What do YOU want to be?

CHILD 1: I want to be...a MISSIONARY!

CHILD 2: *(not too impressed)* That... is...great?

CHILD 1: You don't like it?

CHILD 2: What is a MISSIONARY, anyway?

CHILD 1: A missionary takes the good news, about Jesus, to people who have NEVER heard the truth about Him before.

CHILD 2: Oh, please. Now who's not being serious?

CHILD 1: Why?

CHILD 2: Because, EVERYBODY knows about Jesus.

CHILD 1: No, they don't!

CHILD 2: We hear about Him EVERY week at church.

CHILD 1: Lots of places have NO churches at all. Missionaries go to places like that.

CHILD 2: And get CHASED by wild animals? And get lost in the JUNGLE?

(WILD ANIMALS sing "The Lion Sleeps Tonight".)

CHILD 2: And maybe get eaten by CANNIBALS!

CHILD 1: The rest of the world is not all JUNGLE.

(WILD ANIMALS sing.)

CHILD 1: Other countries have villages and cities, too.

CHILD 2: Places like...BRAZIL?

CHILD 1: Yeah, missionaries might go to Brazil.

CHILD 2: Aha! Brazil...THAT'S where the Amazon rainforest grows!

CHILD 1: Yes, I think so.

CHILD 2: A rainforest is a kind of JUNGLE!

(WILD ANIMALS sing.)

CHILD 2: And get captured by HEADHUNTERS! I want to KEEP my head, thank you very much!

CHILD 1: I just wish you would USE your head, sometimes.

CHILD 2: OK, ok. SO...who started this whole missionary thing, ANYWAY?

CHILD 1: Jesus did!

CHILD 2: Oh! That...changes everything.

CHILD 1: Yes. He told His followers to take the good news to ALL THE WORLD!

CHILD 2: See? That includes the JUNGLES!

(WILD ANIMALS sing.)

CHILD 1: Listen, you've got to stop saying "JUNGLE".

(WILD ANIMALS sing.)

CHILD 1: Stop! Enough already!

CHILD 2: So, you were saying?

CHILD 1: I was going to explain about the first missionaries. Two of them were named Paul and Barnabas.

CHILD 2: OK. I think I have heard about Paul.

CHILD 1: God CALLED them.

CHILD 2: I didn't know there were phones back then!
CHILD 1: Not THAT kind of calling, silly!
CHILD 2: Like this? "OHH, PAU—L, OH, BAR—NA—BAS..."
CHILD 1: No! Maybe it would be better to say that God spoke to their HEARTS.
CHILD 2: ACTUALLY, I knew what you meant all along. So, where did Paul and Barnabas go, after God called them?
CHILD 1: Oh, LOTS of different places!
CHILD 2: Any JUNGLES?

(WILD ANIMALS sing.)

CHILD 1: Stop saying that word!
CHILD 2: What word?
CHILD 1: JUNGLE! Oh no—

(WILD ANIMALS sing.)

CHILD 2: So did Paul and Barnabas go to any...you-know-where?
CHILD 1: I don't think so. But there WAS a poisonous snake, in one place, that bit Paul.

(Enter SNAKE, who hisses. CHILD 2 and CHILD 1 scream. Exit SNAKE.)

CHILD 2: That was close! So a snake bit Paul, huh?
CHILD 1: Yes, it was a VIPER.
CHILD 2: Did Paul swell up and DIE?
CHILD 1: Actually, no, God saved him from the poison.
CHILD 2: Still it sounds like kind of a DANGEROUS life.
CHILD 1: It could be.
CHILD 2: Are you SURE God has called you to be a missionary?
CHILD 1: No, I'm not sure. So I've been praying about it a LOT.
CHILD 2: Where would you like to go?
CHILD 1: Oh, anywhere!
CHILD 2: I wonder where there ARE people who have never heard the truth about Jesus?

CHILD 1: My mom and dad say there are plenty of people like that, right here in our area.

CHILD 2: Really?

CHILD 1: Yes.

CHILD 2: LOTS of people?

CHILD 1: Lots! My dad says that God **LIKES** it when we cross oceans to tell people about Jesus, but He **LOVES** it when we just cross the street.

CHILD 2: Well, at least here, there are no—

CHILD 1: No! Don't say it—

BOTH: Jungles!

(WILD ANIMALS sing.)

CHILD 2: If you **DO** grow up to be a missionary, I will buy your plane tickets with the money I make, staying here at home!

CHILD 1: Great! We will be a team!

(They slap hands with a "high five".)

CHILD 1: *(to audience)* And, if you want to read more about missionaries, especially about Paul and Barnabas, look in your Bible, in the book of Acts.

CHILD 2: Come on out, all you wild beasts! Help me with the ending! Come out from the...JUNGLE!

(Enter all BEASTS, singing.)

CHILD 1: OK, 1, 2, 3...

ALL: That's all for today! Bye!

(ALL line up for a bow.)

THE END

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

Discussion Questions

1. What does a missionary do?
2. Who were two of the first missionaries?
3. Why didn't Paul die when the snake bit him?
4. Where can you find stories about missionaries in the Bible?
5. CHILD 1's dad says God loves it when we "cross the street" to tell people about Jesus, not just when we cross oceans. What would that look like where you live?

Related Bible Passages

Primary Text: Matthew 28:19-20 – Jesus commissions His followers to go and make disciples of all nations.

Additional Scripture:

- Acts 13:2-3 – The Holy Spirit sets apart Paul and Barnabas for missionary work, and the church sends them off. (Reference only.)
- Acts 28:1-6 – Paul is bitten by a venomous snake on Malta and is unharmed. (Reference only.)

Song Suggestions

- "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" – The Tokens (the audience singalong, English) – <https://open.spotify.com/track/2F4FNcz68howQWD4zaGJSi>
- "El León Duerme Esta Noche" – Grupo Vientos De Los Andes (same tune, Spanish-language instrumental) – <https://open.spotify.com/track/6kNSGQAF00I01pVxHMSItb>
- "Le lion est mort ce soir" – Henri Salvador (same tune, French) – <https://open.spotify.com/track/7z2x39uuT7Yp5glRUjE2Fb>
- "This Little Light of Mine" – Praise and Harmony – <https://open.spotify.com/track/5ht3ZzrTXcxGQVowyrGxyx>
- "I Love to Tell the Story" – Eddy Arnold – <https://open.spotify.com/track/1bLXflJ5bw3ZfXiCp5p7BR>
- "Go Tell It On the Mountain" – Dolly Parton – <https://open.spotify.com/track/7dY4EboguteCGTlthY78rL>
- "Easter Song" – Keith Green – <https://open.spotify.com/track/5MUsiIncUIN6VY5vusxz87>

Ministry Context

This play works well as an interactive opener for a missions-themed series or missions Sunday—the audience-participation song makes it a natural fit for a livelier, more active service. It's also a good match for VBS or any setting where a mix of ages will be in the audience.