A PUPPET PLAY IN ONE ACT

# Oil for My Lamp

*Based on Matthew 25:1–13 · Written by Carrie Elderberry*



**SUITABLE FOR**
Ages 5 and up

**PERFORMANCE TIME**
8–10 minutes

**CAST SIZE**
6 puppets

**PROPS REQUIRED**
Two oil-lamp pictures on sticks

**MAIN THEME**
Being ready for Jesus is not something anyone can borrow at the last minute.

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*To print just the play on its own, print pages 5–9.*

## PRODUCTION OVERVIEW

### Synopsis

CHILD 1 is offended at being called a “sinner” until CHILD 2 gently explains what the word really means. Two bridesmaids from Matthew 25 act out Jesus's parable—one prepared with extra oil, one not—helping CHILD 1 understand that being ready for Jesus isn't about being good enough on our own, but about receiving His Holy Spirit.

### Spiritual Concept

Being a sinner isn't about being especially bad—it's about wanting to be in charge of our own lives instead of God. The Holy Spirit is often pictured as oil in the Bible: we can't light our own way, but He can fill us and light the way for us, if we're willing to receive Him.

### Age Suitability

Suitable for all ages.

### Performance Time

8–10 minutes

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## CAST & TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

### Characters (in order of appearance)

NARRATOR — Either a puppet or a person out in front of the theater; explains ancient oil lamps at the top of the play (optional section).

CHILD 1 — Attends church but doesn't yet understand her need for Jesus.

CHILD 2 — Cares about her friend, and shares the truth in love.

BRIDESMAID A — One of the wise maidens in Bible clothing; brought extra oil.

BRIDESMAID B — One of the foolish maidens in Bible clothing; didn't bring extra oil.

VOICE — The herald announcing the coming of the Bridegroom (Matthew 25:6), heard offstage.

**Prop Options**

- Two pictures of ancient oil lamps, printed and affixed to sticks
- The NARRATOR's opening explanation of ancient oil lamps can be skipped if time is limited or the audience already knows how they worked.

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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's early defensiveness (“I am a NICE person!”) isn't played as genuinely angry—it's the comic setup for the real conversation CHILD 2 walks her through.

BRIDESMAID B isn't played as careless or foolish-acting—she's confident right up until her lamp goes out, which is the point: unpreparedness doesn't always look obviously wrong in the moment.

**Staging**

The bridegroom's midnight arrival works well with a simple lighting or sound cue to mark the time jump (A and B “nod off,” then wake to the shout). Prereading helpers will enjoy doing the “scene changes”. Have two of them hold up a cloth screen whenever the puppets trade places. Another helper can play a chime or other sound effect.

**Reading the Script**

CAPS = volume/intensity or emphasis.

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

## OIL FOR MY LAMP

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*(Skip this Narrator part if time is limited or if your audience already knows about oil lamps.)*

*(Enter NARRATOR.)*

**NARRATOR:** In the olden days of Bible times, there was no electricity yet. They did not know about electricity, or batteries either. So at night, when it got dark, they would light candles, or lamps that burned oil.

**NARRATOR:** These lamps did not look like our lamps. They were usually shaped like a bowl or pitcher, and made of clay or stone (if you have one, demonstrate to the audience how it works). They held olive oil inside them. A string, called a "wick", came up out of the oil and the tip of it was lighted, kind of like our modern day candle wicks.

**NARRATOR:** The oil in a lamp like this burns quickly, and has to be refilled often. Also, the wick has to be trimmed often, or the lamp will get smoky or go out. It is quite a lot of work!

**NARRATOR:** In the Bible, oil is often talked about to help us understand our need for God's Holy Spirit. We are compared to lamps, and we need His Spirit to fill us. His Spirit burns in us so that we can light the world with the love of God. We have no light of our own!

*(Exit NARRATOR. Enter CHILD 1 and CHILD 2.)*

**CHILD 1:** I am so mad!

**CHILD 2:** Why?

**CHILD 1:** My mom told a lie!

**CHILD 2:** Yikes! That's awful. What—

**CHILD 1:** She said I was a SINNER!

**CHILD 2:** Oh! But—

**CHILD 1:** What a mean thing to say!

**CHILD 2:** But you ARE a sinner.

**CHILD 1:** Oh, GREAT. I thought you would be on MY side.

**CHILD 2:** *(giggles)* Well I am!

**CHILD 1:** Then why would you say such a mean thing?

**CHILD 2:** It's not mean, it's just the TRUTH!

**CHILD 1:** That I am a sinner?

**CHILD 2:** We are ALL sinners.

**CHILD 1:** I am not a sinner! I am a NICE person!

**CHILD 2:** That's not what it means—

**CHILD 1:** I never do ANYTHING very bad…

**CHILD 2:** Never?

**CHILD 1:** At least, not VERY bad.

**CHILD 2:** But—

**CHILD 1:** And usually, it's not on purpose!

**CHILD 2:** Yes, but—

**CHILD 1:** Plus, I am just a child.

**CHILD 2:** Wait a minute—

**CHILD 1:** Especially compared to some of the OTHER kids I know. Now, THEY are sinners.

**CHILD 2:** That's not really—

**CHILD 1:** But not me! I'm not a sinner! I'm a GOOD person.

**CHILD 2:** I don't think you understand what "sinner" means.

**CHILD 1:** What?

**CHILD 2:** To be a sinner just means we want to be in charge.

**CHILD 1:** Oh. And what is wrong with that?

**CHILD 2:** We don't want to obey God, to SERVE God.

**CHILD 1:** But I DO serve God. I go to church, almost every Sunday! And I'm NICE.

**CHILD 2:** So are you saying that you don't need Jesus—to forgive your sins?

**CHILD 1:** What sins? I just told you—

**CHILD 2:** Look, the Bible says we all fall short of being perfect.

**CHILD 1:** Well, sure. Nobody's perfect!

**CHILD 2:** And that makes us sinners.

**CHILD 1:** Ughhh…I hate that!

**CHILD 2:** So…since we are all sinners… We all need Jesus.

**CHILD 1:** Oh. Well, when you put it THAT way…

**CHILD 2:** So even you need Him.

**CHILD 1:** Ok, fine. Be that way.

**CHILD 2:** And we need Him, to give us His Holy Spirit, if we want to please Him.

**CHILD 1:** What's wrong with MY spirit? Why do I need His Spirit too?

**CHILD 2:** Listen, there's some other puppets that might help you understand. Want to see them?

**CHILD 1:** Sure. I guess. Whatever.

**CHILD 2:** OK, let's make room for them! Scene Change!

*(Helpers can hold a screen while puppeteers trade places. A chime can play. The CHILD puppets can watch from the wings or even "sit" out front with the audience.)*

*(Exit CHILDREN. Enter BRIDESMAIDS A and B.)*

**BRIDESMAID A:** I'm so excited that we get to hold the LIGHTS for the wedding feast!

**BRIDESMAID B:** Yeah, me too! And our dresses are so pretty.

**BRIDESMAID A:** These lamps sure take a lot of oil.

**BRIDESMAID B:** Do they?

**BRIDESMAID A:** Yes. Good thing the bridegroom gave us plenty of extra oil.

**BRIDESMAID B:** I don't think MY lamp is going to need as much as yours.

**BRIDESMAID A:** Wait a minute. Where is your extra oil?

**BRIDESMAID B:** Don't need any! I'll be fine, with just this lamp.

**BRIDESMAID A:** But the BRIDEGROOM said we might have to wait here for quite a while!

**BRIDESMAID B:** Well—I'm not worried.

**BRIDESMAID A:** So…you didn't even BRING your extra bottle?

**BRIDESMAID B:** No! I didn't want to. It was heavy.

**BRIDESMAID A:** Oh, come on. It's not that heavy.

**BRIDESMAID B:** Plus, I was afraid it might spill oil on my beautiful dress.

**BRIDESMAID A:** But what if you run out?

**BRIDESMAID B:** I'll just take some of YOURS!

**BRIDESMAID A:** Oh! But, no, you CAN'T. The bridegroom only gave me enough oil for this one lamp. I'm so sorry, but I can't share.

**BRIDESMAID B:** Never mind. I'm good.

**VOICE:** The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and night fell. All of the bridesmaids fell asleep.

*(A and B nod off.)*

**VOICE:** At midnight there was a SHOUT: Behold, the Bridegroom! Come out to meet Him!

*(A and B wake up.)*

**BRIDESMAID B:** Oh, rats! My lamp has gone out! QUICK! Give me some of your oil! Hurry!

**BRIDESMAID A:** I'm so sorry! I just CAN'T. I've got to go!

*(Exit BRIDESMAID A.)*

**BRIDESMAID B:** FINE. Be that way. I'll get some oil of my OWN… But…Hmm…Now where am I going to find any oil? In the DARK, in the middle of the night… when my lamp is out? Oh well, scene change!

*(Scene change helpers do their thing again.)*

*(Exit BRIDESMAID B. Enter CHILD 1 and CHILD 2.)*

**CHILD 1:** See? I bet it worked out just FINE.

**CHILD 2:** That's where you're wrong. Jesus said there were actually FIVE wise bridesmaids, and five FOOLISH ones, and ALL FIVE of the foolish ones missed the whole wedding.

**CHILD 1:** Yikes!

**CHILD 2:** In Bible stories, the Holy Spirit is often compared to oil.

**CHILD 1:** I've seen an oil lamp; that is how people had light in the darkness.

**CHILD 2:** So the oil for their lamps, is like the Holy Spirit for us. He lights our way in life.

**CHILD 1:** I noticed that the bridegroom gave EVERYONE enough.

**CHILD 2:** But the foolish ones did not want to bother with it.

**CHILD 1:** Right. The foolish girls did not think they needed to obey Him. I get it now.

**CHILD 2:** So, if Jesus comes back TODAY, will you be ready to meet Him?

**CHILD 1:** What a question! Are you trying to make me feel BAD about myself again?

**CHILD 2:** No, no! Jesus will give you His Spirit! Today even.

**CHILD 1:** Even though I am a sinner?

**CHILD 2:** Yes! If you can put your trust in Him, and obey him.

**CHILD 1:** Well, now that you mention it…

**CHILD 2:** He has given us EVERYTHING we need.

**CHILD 1:** Wait. I want to get rid of my sins first.

**CHILD 2:** No, silly. That is why Jesus had to die for us! He took our sin-nature to the cross!

**CHILD 1:** Mine too?

**CHILD 2:** Yours too.

**CHILD 1:** Then why do I still do bad things?

**CHILD 2:** Ha! You admit it!

**CHILD 1:** Alright, I do.

**CHILD 2:** And that is why you need His Holy Spirit.

**CHILD 1:** Ok, right. So THAT'S what all that means.

**CHILD 2:** He offers us His Spirit, just like the bridegroom offered those girls plenty of oil for their lamps.

**CHILD 1:** I can see I need to think about all this.

**CHILD 2:** Why? Why not just give your life to Him right now?

**CHILD 1:** Because, then I can't be in charge, anymore. That is a big thing with me.

**CHILD 2:** OK. Can I pray with you?

**CHILD 1:** Sure.

**CHILD 2:** Lord Jesus, please help my friend to see how much you love us! Help us all to trust You with our lives! Thanks, Father! Amen!

*(Enter BRIDESMAIDS.)*

**ALL:** You can read the story of the Wise and Foolish Maidens in the Bible. It's in Matthew, Chapter 25. Goodbye!

**THE END**

## SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

### Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to be a sinner?
2. Whose Spirit fills us when we are saved?
3. How can we know we are saved and are going to be with Jesus when we die?
4. Why do you think the foolish Bridesmaid thought she wouldn't need extra oil?
5. What are some ways we can “bring extra oil”—stay ready—in our own lives?

### Related Bible Passages

Primary Text: Matthew 25:1–13 — Jesus tells the parable of the ten bridesmaids, five who brought extra oil for their lamps and five who did not, and only the prepared ones make it into the wedding feast.

**Additional Scripture:**

- Romans 3:23 — “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”; the plain answer to CHILD 1's question.
- Ephesians 1:13–14 — believers are marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit, the deposit guaranteeing what is to come.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:1–6 — the day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night; stay awake and sober.

### Song Suggestions

- “Father, I Adore You” — Praise and Harmony — https://open.spotify.com/track/2MFrFq1mwnlQNUKW8yUZZ7
- “Give Me Oil in My Lamp” — Smoky Mountain Jubilee Choir — https://open.spotify.com/track/0WJUtyFONQHkU5z1jPVu2k
- “This Little Light of Mine” — Praise and Harmony — https://open.spotify.com/track/5ht3ZzrTXcxGQVowyrGxyx

### Ministry Context

This play works well for a series on the Holy Spirit, salvation, or being ready for Christ's return. It also makes a good lead-in to a baptism or confirmation class, since CHILD 1's honest objection—“then I can't be in charge, anymore”—is often the real question sitting underneath a child's hesitation. Consider pairing with a reading of Matthew 25:1–13.