

A PUPPET PLAY IN ONE ACT

Psalm 1, or The Happy Tree

Based on Psalm 1 · Written by Carrie Elderberry



SUITABLE FOR
Ages 5 and up

CAST SIZE
5 puppets

PERFORMANCE TIME
12–15 minutes

PROPS REQUIRED
Scene cloths (rocks, earth, stream)

MAIN THEME

A person rooted in God's word is like a tree planted by water—flourishing, even through hard seasons.

Carrie Elderberry's Gospel Puppets · gospelpuppets.org

© 2019 · Free for ministry use

Illustrations © Sweet Publishing

v.2.0 · June 2026

To print just the play on its own, print pages 5-10.

PRODUCTION OVERVIEW

Synopsis

CHILD 1 is miserable—parents fighting, phone taken away, nothing to do. CHILD 2 and CHILD 3 try to interest them in trees, and in Psalm 1. When CHILD 1 falls asleep, two talking trees play out the psalm's metaphor: TREE 2 is struggling in dry rocks; TREE 1 introduces her to the Gardener, who moves her to good soil and water. CHILD 1 wakes up changed by the dream—and begins to understand that Jesus is the Gardener, the good earth, and the water all at once.

Spiritual Concept

Psalm 1 describes a person who delights in God's word as a tree planted by streams—flourishing and fruitful. This play extends the metaphor: just as a tree in poor soil needs the Gardener to move it, people who are struggling need Jesus to transplant them into His kingdom. The Holy Spirit is the water; God's word is the good earth.

Age Suitability

Best for ages 5-12; the dream-frame device and talking trees make it especially magical for younger children.

Performance Time

12-15 minutes

CAST & TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Characters (in order of appearance)

CHILD 1 – Unhappy and disconnected at the start—parents fighting, phone gone. Gradually drawn in by the dream.

CHILD 2 – Enthusiastic about trees and the Bible—the one who first makes the connection.

CHILD 3 – Also enthusiastic—just got a tree for their birthday. Children can be either boys or girls.

TREE 1 – Happy and flourishing—a tree in good soil. Introduces TREE 2 to the Gardener.

TREE 2 – Struggling in dry rocks—few leaves, no fruit. Willing to risk being transplanted.

Prop Options

- Scene cloth to represent rocks (for the tree scene).
- Scene cloth or backdrop representing brown earth and a stream (for after the transplant).
- Leaves and fruit added to TREE 2 puppet after the scene change.
- Simple blue ribbon or fabric for the stream in the second tree scene.
- A simple cardboard or cloth screen can hide the transplanting and transformation of TREE 2. You can write "One Year Later" on it and let members of the audience help hold it in place.

PERFORMANCE NOTES FOR PUPPETEERS

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

Character Notes

TREE 2's line "But that would HURT!" when told she needs to be moved is the emotional center of the tree scene—it resonates with anyone who has resisted change.

TREE 1's confidence ("You can trust HIM. He knows EVERYTHING about trees") should be warm, not preachy.

CHILD 1's waking question ("How would a tree, planted in a BAD place, get to be like that happy tree?") is the turning point of the whole play.

Staging

CHILD 1 falls asleep and stays on stage during the tree scene—covered or still.

Add the rocks scene cloth before TREE 1 and TREE 2 enter.
Replace with earth-and-stream cloth for the second tree scene.
CHILD 2 and CHILD 3 exit before the tree scene and return to
wake CHILD 1.

The two ground scenes can be one reversible cloth (or drawn
paper): rocks on one side, brown soil with worms on the other –
let the audience help turn it.

Reading the Script

CAPS = Volume / intensity.

Extra commas = pause for breath.

PSALM 1, OR THE HAPPY TREE

Based on Psalm 1 · Written by Carrie Elderberry

(Enter CHILD 1, head down, very sad.)

(Enter CHILD 2, very happy.)

CHILD 2: *(be happy!)* Hi! Hey! Guess what?

CHILD 1: *(stay very depressed and flat)* What.

CHILD 2: The word "tree" is found 269 times in the Bible!

CHILD 1: *(pause before replying)* So?

CHILD 2: So? So that is a LOT of times!

CHILD 1: And WHY should I care about that.

CHILD 2: Um... I know! It means there is something IMPORTANT about trees! And that... helps us to know about GOD.

CHILD 1: Maybe it helps YOU...

CHILD 2: And I love trees. Don't you?

CHILD 1: No. Trees are just... TREES. Trees are not important.

CHILD 2: Yes, they are! God gives us trees for food, and shelter, and also for cleaning the air.

CHILD 1: OK, OK, whatever. Don't you have somewhere else you need to be?

CHILD 2: And trees have roots! Roots that hold the ground from washing away in STORMS!

CHILD 1: Fine. Now, will you just leave me—

CHILD 2: AND they give us shade in the summer!

CHILD 1: Look. Enough about trees, OK?

CHILD 2: Wow, you sure are GRUMPY today! What is wrong?

CHILD 1: *(first sign of life)* You would be grumpy TOO if your parents were fighting all the time, and then they took away your PHONE and sent you outside.

CHILD 2: Oh!

CHILD 1: There is nothing ELSE I want to do.

(Enter CHILD 3.)

CHILD 3: Hi guys! Guess what! Guess what I just got for my birthday?

CHILD 1: *(perk up a little)* A new phone?

CHILD 3: No, a tree! My very own tree!

CHILD 2: Awesome! We were just talking about trees!

CHILD 1: You mean YOU were talking about trees.

CHILD 2: Never mind, they are grumpy today. When are you planting your tree?

CHILD 3: Right now! Want to come help? The dirt has to be made better, and then we'll make sure there is water for it. Trees need good soil and water.

CHILD 2: Yeah! Let's go!

(Exit CHILD 2 and CHILD 3.)

CHILD 1: Well, HURRAY for them. I got nothing to do. Guess I'll take a nap.

(CHILD 1 covers face and sleeps. Add scene cloth to represent rocks.)

(Enter TREE 1 and TREE 2. TREE 2 droops, looks down.)

TREE 1: *(happy and excited)* Guess what? Guess what?

TREE 2: *(flat and depressed)* What.

TREE 1: The word "tree" is found 269 times in the Bible!

TREE 2: *(pause before replying)* So?

TREE 1: So? So that is a lot of times!

TREE 2: And WHY should I care about THAT.

TREE 1: Why? Um... I know! It means there is something about trees that... helps us to understand about GOD.

TREE 2: Maybe it helps YOU.

TREE 1: And I LOVE being a tree. Don't you?

TREE 2: To be honest, it's not. That. Great.

TREE 1: Hmm... Let's take a look at you.

(TREE 1 takes a good look at TREE 2.)

TREE 1: Wow, hardly any leaves, and they are kind of withered.

TREE 2: Thanks. I knew that.

TREE 1: No flowers, no fruit.

TREE 2: I knew that, too. Don't you have somewhere else you need to be?

TREE 1: *(dip towards roots of TREE 2)* Oh, look! There is your problem! You are trying to grow in dry old rocks!

TREE 2: *(first sign of interest!)* What do you mean?

TREE 1: Trees need GOOD soil, and WATER, to grow healthy and strong.

TREE 2: Well, that's not MY fault. It's just where my seed LANDED.

TREE 1: Look, you can't grow very well, HERE.

TREE 2: *(frustrated but curious)* I already knew that.

TREE 1: No, what I mean is, you need the GARDENER to MOVE you!

TREE 2: MOVE me? But that would HURT!

TREE 1: Yes, it will. But it's your only HOPE!

TREE 2: But...how do I know, that the Gardener will put me in a better place?

TREE 1: Oh, you can trust HIM. He knows EVERYTHING about trees.

(Pause to think about that a little.)

TREE 2: Well, to be HONEST, my life is terrible here. I'm willing to risk it.

TREE 1: Good! Let's call for Him and let Him take over!

(Scene change—one year later. Replace rocks cloth with brown earth and a stream. TREE 2 is now covered with green leaves and fruit.)

TREE 1: Wow! Look at YOU! You are doing so well now!

TREE 2: Yes! Thank you SO much for telling me about the Gardener. I could never have saved MYSELF.

TREE 1: True.

TREE 2: It was hard getting dug up out of those ROCKS, and my roots hurt for a while.

TREE 1: Change is hard, even when it's for the better.

TREE 2: But now I can be what God created me to be! Life is GOOD.

TREE 1: Hey! Remember that unhappy child, in the beginning of the play—

TREE 2: The one who only loves phones?

TREE 1: Yes. Do you think there is a Gardener for people, too?

TREE 2: Oh, yes! Let's see what happens next!

(Exit both TREES. They can watch from the sides.)

(Enter CHILD 2 and CHILD 3.)

CHILD 2: Wake up! Wake up!

(CHILD 1 raises head.)

CHILD 3: Come see the tree we just planted!

CHILD 1: Oh, wow... I just had the strangest dream. About trees...

CHILD 2: A nightmare?

CHILD 1: No! No... it was... beautiful.

CHILD 3: What was it about?

CHILD 1: There were trees, talking trees!

CHILD 2: Awesome!

CHILD 1: What were you saying, about trees, in the Bible?

CHILD 2: Trees help us to know about—

CHILD 1: About GOD, right?

CHILD 2: You remembered that!

CHILD 3: My favorite place is a psalm about trees and God.

CHILD 2: Right. We know a song about that!

CHILD 3: Yes! From Psalm Number 1!

(They sing or recite.)

CHILD 2 and CHILD 3:

I will delight in the law of the Lord

I will meditate day and night

And like a tree firmly planted I'll be

Grounded in Your word

Blessed is the one who follows the way of the Lord

Blessed is the one.

CHILD 1: So... let me ask you something.

CHILD 2: What?

CHILD 3: What?

CHILD 1: How would a tree, planted in a BAD place, get to be like that happy tree?

CHILD 3: Well, that tree is like a person, actually.

CHILD 1: But a person can't be dug up... moved... transplanted.

CHILD 2: Not EXACTLY like a tree, maybe! But we can come to Jesus, to save us.

CHILD 1: I've heard about that. So would Jesus be like a Gardener? For a tree that needs to be saved?

CHILD 2: Haha! Yes!

CHILD 3: And the Bible also tells us to ROOT ourselves in Jesus, like little trees in good earth!

CHILD 1: So Jesus is the good EARTH too...

CHILD 2: Yes! And remember WATER! The water is the Holy Spirit! The Comforter from Jesus.

CHILD 1: JESUS again.

CHILD 3: This is so great.

CHILD 2: I want to be a tree when I grow up! Haha!

CHILD 1: Seriously, how do you two know so much about Jesus and the Bible?

CHILD 3: We go to church. And we can read.

CHILD 2: We can get YOU a Bible!

CHILD 1: I want to tell you about the dream I had.

(Enter both TREES.)

CHILD 1: Oh! Here they ARE!

CHILD 2: Awesome!

CHILD 3: Wow!

TREE 1: Can we do that poem/song again from Psalm 1?

CHILD 1: I want to do it again, too.

ALL:

I will delight in the law of the Lord

I will meditate day and night
And like a tree firmly planted I'll be
Grounded in Your word
Blessed is the one who follows the way of the Lord
Blessed is the one.

TREE 1: Our puppet show ends here—

TREE 2: But you can find out more about JESUS in the Bible.

CHILD 3: Colossians 2:6–7 says: "Be rooted in Christ, grow in him like a little tree and your life will overflow with thanksgiving."

ALL: So live like a TREE! Rooted in Jesus! Goodbye!

(THE END)

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

Discussion Questions

1. What was wrong with TREE 2 at the start? What did she need?
2. TREE 2 said being moved would HURT. What are some changes that are painful but good for us?
3. What does it mean to be "rooted" in Jesus?
4. In the play, Jesus is the Gardener, the good earth, AND the water. What does each of those word-pictures mean?
5. CHILD 1 started the play miserable and ended it curious about Jesus. What changed?

Related Bible Passages

Primary Text: Psalm 1 – The blessed person is like a tree planted by streams of water.

Additional Scripture:

- Psalm 1:1-3 – "Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night. They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season." (NLT)
- Colossians 2:6-7 – "And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him." (NLT)
- John 15:5 – "Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit." (NLT)
- Jeremiah 17:7-8 – Blessed are those who trust in the Lord—like a tree planted by water. (NLT)

Song Suggestions

- "I Will Delight in the Law of the Lord" – Maranatha! Music / Praise 15 – <https://open.spotify.com/track/1csl3mvx8KzWgdXvW7yzA3>
- "Trees of the Field" – Gaither / A Billy Graham Music Homecoming Vol. 2 – <https://open.spotify.com/track/2voYRklvdQLm52kQw5Amxx>
- "Thy Word" – Amy Grant / Straight Ahead – <https://open.spotify.com/track/580oLCgCm83Wogp7JLl30g>
- "Seek Ye First" – Karen Lafferty / Tapestry Chamber Singers – <https://open.spotify.com/track/3CDWmJfho5z4b0mbtRAD6Q>

Ministry Context

This play works well for any series on God's word, spiritual growth, or Psalm 1. The dream-frame and talking trees make it especially imaginative and memorable. Consider pairing with a reading of Psalm 1 before or after the performance. The embedded Psalm 1 song can be taught to the audience for sing-along.