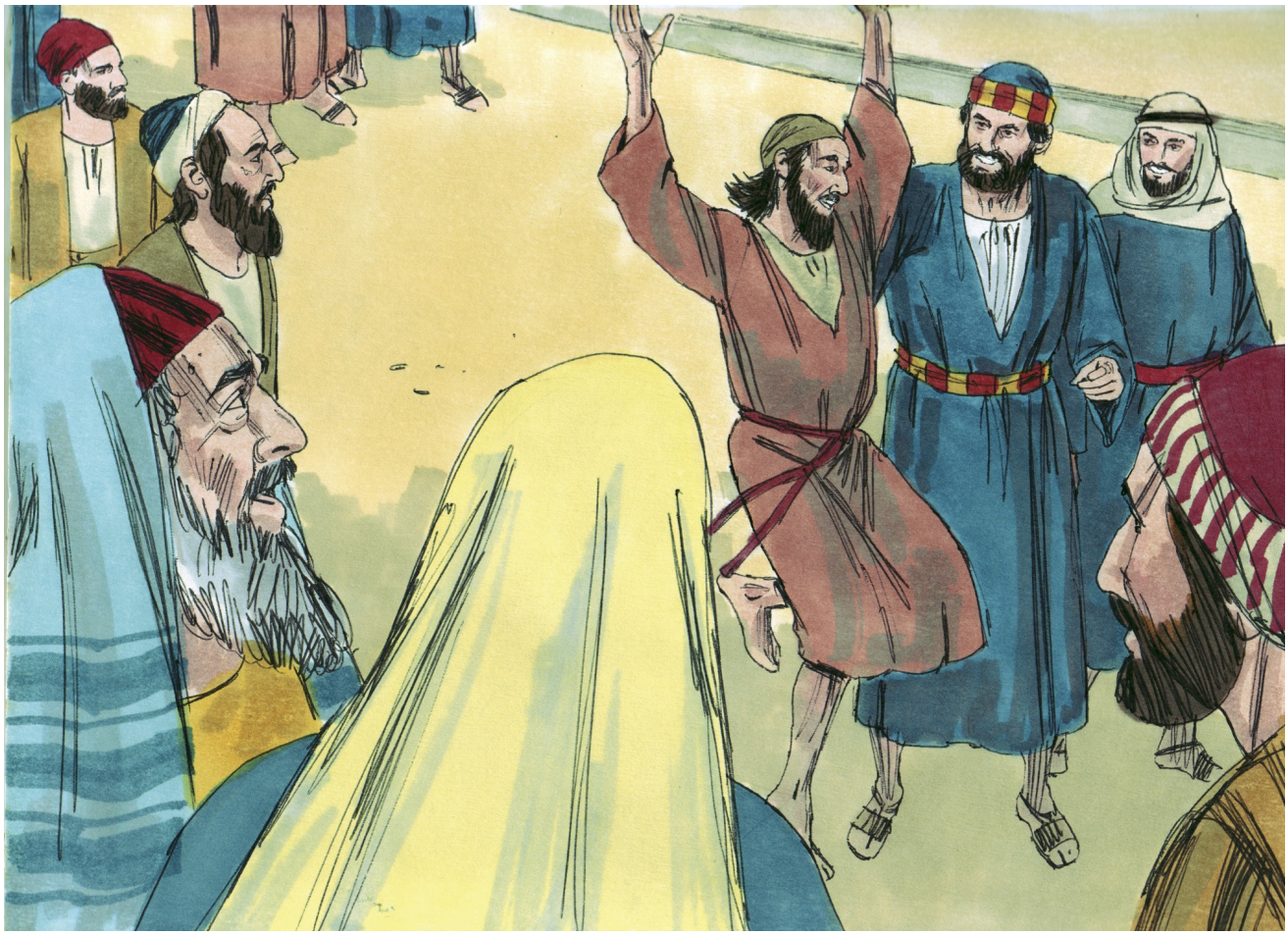
A PUPPET PLAY IN ONE ACT

Walking and Leaping

Based on Acts 3:1–10 · Written by Carrie Elderberry



SUITABLE FOR
Ages 6 and up

PERFORMANCE TIME
10–12 minutes

CAST SIZE
4–6 puppets + 1 live volunteer

PROPS REQUIRED
Time Machine; slide whistle

MAIN THEME
Real thankfulness can't be faked. It grows when we trust Jesus, who is alive and cares about us, even when life is full of trouble.

Carrie Elderberry's Gospel Puppets · gospelpuppets.org
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To print just the play on its own, print pages 5–10.

PRODUCTION OVERVIEW

Synopsis

A child is practicing being thankful, because her pastor says we should have “an attitude of gratitude,” but she doesn't feel thankful at all: her parents are fighting, her best friend has moved away, and her grandma has cancer. Her friends wish they could visit Bible times, and a Time Machine brings them the man who was lame from birth, singing the Doxology, his feet bandaged from running a marathon. He tells how he begged at the Temple gate, angry at God, until Peter and John gave him something better than money. Jesus, alive again, healed his legs, and most of all his heart.

Spiritual Concept

We can't make ourselves thankful by pretending harder. The lame man asked for money, but God knew what he really needed: to trust Jesus. When the risen Jesus healed him, He healed his legs, his ankles and his feet, and most of all his heart. Life will always have trouble, but it can be full of joy too, because we always have God's love and His promise to work all things together for good for those who love Him.

Age Suitability

Best for ages 6 and up. CHILD 1's troubles are real ones: parents who fight, a best friend who moved away, and a grandma with cancer. Some children in your audience may be living with the same things, so be ready to talk and pray with them afterward. The dog-and-cat chases keep it light.

Performance Time

10–12 minutes

CAST & TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Characters (in order of appearance)

CHILD 1 — A modern child, struggling to be thankful in the middle of great trouble.

CHILD 2 — A modern friend.

CHILD 3 — Optional. Another modern friend. CHILD 2 and CHILD 3 can be played by one puppet for a smaller cast.

BEGGAR — The man who was lame from birth (Acts 3), in Bible clothes, visiting through the Time Machine. His feet are bandaged: he has just run a marathon.

SPARKY (DOG) — Optional. Provides animal humor. Never speaks.

FLUFFY (CAT) — Optional. Provides animal humor. Never speaks.

VOLUNTEER — Brings the Time Machine onto the stage.

Prop Options

- Time Machine: can be as simple as a ring of cardboard for the puppet's head.
- Slide whistles make a great sound effect for the Time Machine!
- Bandages for the BEGGAR's feet.

PERFORMANCE NOTES FOR PUPPETEERS

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

Character Notes

CHILD 1's opening “thank you” practice should be ad-libbed and exaggerated several different ways, so the audience can tell it's pretend.

The BEGGAR is joyful. He was angry at God once, and he isn't ashamed to say so, but now he can't stop praising God.

Make sure the puppeteer playing the BEGGAR can sing the Doxology.

Staging

CHILD 2 and CHILD 3 can be just one puppet, for a smaller cast.

The DOG and CAT chases are free comic relief. Between chases, the animals rest and watch. Stay alert!

If time permits, ask the audience questions after the play to encourage retention.

Reading the Script

CAPS = volume/intensity.

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

Em dashes (the long dash, —) = the author's interruptions.

WALKING AND LEAPING

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“But Peter said, ‘I don’t have any silver or gold for you. But I’ll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!’ Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man’s feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them.”

Acts 3:6–8 (NLT)

(Enter CHILD 1, looking towards DOG.)

CHILD 1: *(ad lib and exaggerate this several different ways)* Thank you! What a BLESSING. (big sigh) Oh, that is no good. I’ve got to try harder. I’m so grateful…Thanks so much! Oh…Blechh...

(Enter CHILD 2 and if desired, CHILD 3.)

CHILD 1: *(to DOG)* THANK you! Thank you so much!

CHILD 2: Uh…Hi?

CHILD 1: *(surprised and embarrassed)* Oh! Ha ha! Hi.

CHILD 3: Who were you talking to, just now?

CHILD 1: Nobody. I was just kind of practicing.

CHILD 2: Practicing for what?

CHILD 1: My pastor says we should have “an attitude of gratitude”. But I am NOT feeling thankful, so I thought I should practice, at least pretending to be thankful.

CHILD 3: Oh, I get it. That sounds really hard.

CHILD 1: Right. But if I pretend hard enough, maybe God will be happy with me.

CHILD 2: Can I ask —why are you not feeling thankful?

CHILD 1: My life is just a mess. And God is not doing ANYTHING about it. I have prayed and PRAYED but God doesn’t answer.

CHILD 3: Can you tell us what’s wrong?

CHILD 1: Well, for one thing my parents are fighting, all the time.

CHILD 2: Oh. Sorry. That is awful.

CHILD 1: And for another thing, my best friend just moved away.

CHILD 3: That hurts too.

CHILD 1: Also, we just found out my Grandma has CANCER.

CHILD 2: Wow. That is a lot to deal with!

(Enter CAT. DOG takes off after CAT. CHILDREN yell "Sparky!" or "Fluffy!" Then they all come back. Animals rest and watch. Stay alert!)

CHILD 3: So you were saying…

CHILD 2: That it's hard to be thankful.

CHILD 1: Yeah! If God loves us, like the Bible says, then why does He let bad things happen?

CHILD 2: I just heard a true story about that. There was a blind man, born blind, and Jesus said he did not do anything to deserve it.

CHILD 1: Then why did God make him blind?

CHILD 2: Jesus said that he was born blind so that God could do a miracle in his life.

CHILD 1: Are you saying that God is going to do a miracle in my life? I wish He'd hurry up.

(DOG and CAT chase scene again!)

CHILD 2: I feel like that too sometimes. It's so hard to be patient. The world is full of trouble, but God can work it all out for GOOD. He has promised!

CHILD 1: Well, that is really hard to believe.

CHILD 2: I bet the blind man did not believe it, either. At least- until he was suddenly able to SEE!

CHILD 1: *(discouraged)* Yeah. Maybe.

CHILD 3: You know what would be really cool?

CHILD 1: What?

CHILD 3: I wish we could get into a Time Machine and go back to when Jesus was on earth, doing all those miracles the Bible talks about.

(VOLUNTEER brings Time Machine onto the stage. DOG barks at it and sniffs at it.)

CHILD 1: Wow! Look at that! What is that?

CHILD 3: I bet it is a time machine! After all, this is a puppet show! Anything can happen!

CHILD 1: Do you think we could go into it, and go back in time? I'd like to talk to that blind man…

(Time Machine starts to blink; add sound effects.)

(Enter BEGGAR, singing the Doxology.)

BEGGAR: Praise God from Whom all blessings flow, praise Him all creatures here below—woah! Where am I?

CHILD 3: Excuse me, are you from Bible times?

BEGGAR: Um…are you talking to me?

CHILD 3: Yes, sir.

BEGGAR: No, I'm from back-stage. I'm a puppet.

CHILD 3: I know that! I mean, you just came through the Time Machine!

BEGGAR: Did I? Oh, yes!

CHILD 1: Yes. And you are dressed like a person from Bible times.

BEGGAR: Oh, I see what you mean! Yes! I have come to explain a Bible story!

CHILD 2: Oh! Are you the blind man— that Jesus healed?

BEGGAR: No. That was someone else. I was the lame man!

CHILD 3: So you were not blind?

BEGGAR: Nope.

CHILD 1: Why are YOU here then?

CHILD 2: We were talking about a blind man.

BEGGAR: Yes, well, he is too busy to come, he's repairing some jewelry. Now that he can see!

CHILD 3: Excuse me but what does LAME mean?

BEGGAR: My problem was that I could not WALK.

CHILD 1: Is that why your feet are all bandaged up?

BEGGAR: Oh, no! Jesus has healed me! I can walk just fine now! I can leap! I can even run!

CHILD 2: *(doubtful)* Really? But those bandages!

CHILD 1: Um, sir? Then why are your feet such a mess?

BEGGAR: Because! I just finished running a Marathon! 26 miles! It was fantastic! But I did get a few blisters…that's all.

CHILD 2: A Marathon. That is a very long race.

CHILD 3: More than 20 miles.

BEGGAR: Yes! What a joy, to run and run, and run!

CHILD 1: Did you say that Jesus healed you?

BEGGAR: Yes. I was born lame. I never walked. I could only kind of crawl.

(CAT and DOG go to BEGGAR. They sniff BEGGAR and get some petting.)

CHILD 2: Can you tell us all about it?

BEGGAR: Certainly! I used to beg for money. I did not even try to work.

CHILD 1: Sir? Were you ever…were you ever mad at God?

BEGGAR: You could say so.

CHILD 2: But weren't you AFRAID to be mad at God?

BEGGAR: Yes. And I was ashamed. But angry too.

CHILD 1: Because…maybe you did not trust Him? To take care of you?

BEGGAR: Exactly.

CHILD 1: I know that feeling!

BEGGAR: God made me to be born lame, after all.

CHILD 3: Right.

BEGGAR: But then one day—and it was just an ordinary day, like any other day—

CHILD 1: Oh! You just woke up and you could walk?

BEGGAR: Oh, no. I was begging, as usual. I did not expect anything from God that day.

CHILD 2: What happened?

BEGGAR: Well. It was after Jesus had been killed. People were saying that He had come back to LIFE!

(DOG and CAT get all excited. Bark and Meow!)

CHILD 1: We have heard about that. The Bible teaches that too.

BEGGAR: Lots of people had said that Jesus healed them- of all kinds of problems. But Jesus had never healed ME!

CHILD 1: So you thought He didn't care…

BEGGAR: Right. And then, He went and got Himself killed.

CHILD 3: That must have been so awful.

BEGGAR: It was. And I just figured it was all over, whatever it was. And so I just kept on begging.

CHILD 1: Wait. If Jesus was killed, then how could He heal you?

BEGGAR: Because, sweet thing, He didn't stay dead.

CHILD 1: So that's all really TRUE?

CHILD 2 AND 3: Yeah!

BEGGAR: And then two of His friends, Peter, and John-

CHILD 2: Oh! We've heard of them!

BEGGAR: Right. They saw me begging. I asked them for money.

CHILD 1: Did they give you any?

BEGGAR: No. At first, Peter just said, "Look at us!"

CHILD 2: And so you did…

BEGGAR: Yes. Then Peter said they didn't HAVE any money.

CHILD 1: So you did not get what you wanted. I know that feeling…

BEGGAR: Wait! Little one, I just THOUGHT I knew what I wanted. I thought it was money, and so I asked for money. But God knew what I really NEEDED.

CHILD 1: What was that? An operation?

BEGGAR: No, no. I needed to be able to put my trust in Jesus.

CHILD 3: Wait a minute. Didn't God heal your legs right then?

BEGGAR: Oh, yes. He healed my legs, and my ankles, and my feet. But most of all, He healed my HEART. Because now I know that Jesus is alive! And he cares about us ALL.

CHILD 1: *(Big sigh)* That's what I need, I think.

(DOG and CAT snuggle up to her.)

CHILD 2: Then all those other things will not crush you.

BEGGAR: Life is always full of trouble, of different kinds, but it can be full of joy too.

CHILD 1: Oh! (suddenly happy) Thank you for coming to tell me that. I really appreciate it!

CHILD 2: Hey, you said that like you really mean it.

CHILD 1: Oh! All of a sudden I do feel better! I feel thankful!

(DOG wags and licks her.)

BEGGAR: God loves us so much! We always have His love, no matter what else is going on.

CHILD 3: And we have His promise that “God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God”. That’s my favorite Bible verse.

CHILD 1: I think it’s going to be mine, too.

BEGGAR: You can read all about me in the Bible, in Acts Chapter 3.

ALL: And that’s all for today!

(CAT and DOG give chase. Everyone follow yelling and wind up in front of theater for a bow.)

THE END

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

Discussion Questions

1. At the start, CHILD 1 was “practicing” being thankful. Why didn't that work?
2. What did the man at the Temple gate ask Peter and John for? What did God know he really needed?
3. The man said Jesus healed his legs, but most of all He healed his HEART. What do you think that means?
4. Have you ever felt like God wasn't answering your prayers? What can you do NOW?
5. What is one thing you can thank God for today, even if something hard is going on?

Related Bible Passages

Primary Text: Acts 3:1–10 — Peter and John meet a man who has been lame from birth, begging at the Temple gate called Beautiful. Peter has no money to give him, but in the name of Jesus Christ he tells the man to get up and walk. The man jumps up and goes into the Temple walking, leaping and praising God. (Summarized.)

Additional Scripture:

- Romans 8:28 — “And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.” (NLT)
- John 9:1–3 — Jesus' disciples ask why a man was born blind. Jesus answers that it wasn't because of his sins or his parents' sins: “This happened so the power of God could be seen in him.” (NLT, verse 3)

Song Suggestions

- “Doxology” (Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow) — Cedarmont Kids — https://open.spotify.com/track/2k8LfodXbKVj0iF4fYTx0W
- “Silver and Gold Have I None” — Cedarmont Kids — https://open.spotify.com/track/4VA95RMfqI85sx6hlzzToy
- “Now Thank We All Our God” — Choir of King's College, Cambridge — https://open.spotify.com/track/1PV2MW1T66bWeQUMwJhd9v

Ministry Context

Written for Thanksgiving, but it fits any time a group is talking about gratitude, unanswered prayer, or why God lets bad things happen. It meets children where they are: it doesn't tell a hurting child to just “be thankful,” but points them to Jesus, who is alive and cares. Consider following the play with a time of sharing things you're thankful for, and singing the Doxology together.