

An Embodied Performance Approach to Biblical Storytelling

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Preparation

Choose your translation

Lay out the composition in a format for learning that works for you

Read the composition aloud straight through several times

Note where you stumble over words and phrases, and make adjustments to language, phrasing, blocking

With your audience in mind, consider how the language will communicate effectively and make adjustments to the 'script'

Engage with commentaries, lexicons, and other materials to explore the questions concerning language

Settle on a script and begin to learn by heart

Listen to your body

As you read, then speak by heart, notice how your body moves intuitively and instinctively

With each movement, gesture, vocal stress or expression, ask:

What is my body telling me about this composition?

What is my body telling me about my personal response to and history with the composition?

What questions is my body posing?

Engage with scholarship and employ other methods of interpretation to explore your responses and the questions raised

Discern which movements of your body you will employ in your performance, which will communicate effectively the meaning you have found in preparation

Listen to your emotions

As you read, then speak by heart, notice how your emotions arise intuitively and instinctively

As you feel your responses, seek to name the emotion and understand it

With each emotion, ask:

What is this emotion telling me about this composition?

What is this emotion telling me about my personal response to and history with the composition?

What questions are my emotions posing?

Engage with scholarship and employ other methods of interpretation to explore your responses and the questions raised

Discern which emotions you will express in your performance, which will communicate effectively the meaning you have found in preparation

Listen to your audience

Consider your audience

How would you describe them – how would they describe themselves?

What are the concerns and challenges they face?

What are their core values, expressed and lived?

As you read, then speak by heart, envisage your audience, picture yourself speaking these words to that particular audience

Consider how your audience may hear this composition:

What will be life-affirming for them?

What will be a challenge?

What may they not understand because their culture is far removed from that of the intended audience?

How can you help your audience to find meaning in this composition – through your embodiment of the composition, through conversation within or after the performance or telling, through adaptations in language ... ?

Engage with scholarship and employ other methods of interpretation to explore your responses and the questions raised

Performance

A decent warm up – such as a body roll – will connect you with your breath, body, voice, and emotions, and centre you in this place with these people

Body roll: fold at the waist and hang your head and arms feeling their weight

As you're folded, take several deep breaths in and out

Slowly unfold back to straight on a deep in breath

As you exhale, pull your shoulders back, feel your head settle and your back straighten

As you tell this portion of the Bible, some of the things you have rehearsed will happen, some of them won't – be open to the influence of the live moment

Notice what the composition meant in this performance, this moment

Reflection

Did the telling go as you expected?

How did the listeners respond?

At what point were the listeners really involved with the development of the story?

What did you enjoy or appreciate most about the experience?

Were you able to go through the story without being lost or distracted?

If not, what can you learn for next time?

Be kind to yourself as you reflect, acknowledge what did not work well and learn, then move on.

What did you do in this telling that you had not rehearsed? Did it work well, or not?

What did you enjoy or appreciate about shaping your story and telling it?

You may choose to write up your reflections for yourself, to share with others, or simply to engage in reflection in a general way.