Anatomy Of A Gospel Magic Show

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January 2009

Published by LAFLIN MAGIC
1310 Blue Ridge Drive
Sevierville, TN 37862

www.christianillusionist.com

Cover Photos: Gerry Godolphin
Knoxville, TN  865-966-5690
Authors Note: Most of this book was originally published in a spiral bound volume, written in 1991, titled “Making The Point With Gospel Magic”.

Recently I was reviewing that volume and reminded of the useful and helpful information it contains. I became convinced that the time had arrived, nearly eighteen years later, to put the information out again. This time the material would be released in true book form to make it more appealing and easier to find on the library shelf. I have entirely rewritten the book and made a number of edits, updates, and additions.

I also have given it a new title. Although “Making The Point With Gospel Magic” was a good title, I think “Anatomy Of A Gospel Magic Show” reflects the updated nature of the publication.

My desire and prayer is that the book will help gospel magicians become more effective in their work.

To God Be The Glory!

Duane Laflin
January 2009
“For With God, Nothing Shall Be Impossible”
Luke 1:37

My life verse. I focus on the words “with God”, for it is only with Him that the impossible becomes possible. I know I am with Him through salvation (by grace, through faith, In Jesus Christ). My prayer is to daily be with Him by way of prayer, worship, obedience, and yielding to His will rather than following my own.

Duane Laflin

Dedication

To David McMichael in Dayton, Tennessee. An inspiration to me and many others. A man with a ministry through gospel magic that is greater than he knows.
Chapter 1: The Difference Between Talking A Lot And Having Something To Say!

There is a story often told in management circles. It goes like this...

One morning, a farmer awakened and looked up to notice a hole in the ceiling above his bed. He realized the hole was in the roof, as well as the ceiling, and that the next time it rained his bed would get wet. He said to himself, “The most important thing for me to do today is fix the roof!”

After breakfast, he started outside to fix the roof. On the way out, he noticed the spring on the screen door was broken. He thought, “I’d better take a few moments to fix that door.” So he started toward the garage to find his tool box.

One the way to the garage, he noticed that the front tire on his old pickup was flat. “I’d better take a moment to fix that flat tire”, he thought. “I might need the pickup today”. When he looked in the back of the pickup to find his jack, he noticed some sacks of feed that had not yet been unloaded. He thought, “I had better unload that feed before I fix the tire. That’s a lot of extra weight in the pickup”. So he picked up a couple of sacks of feed and carried them to the shed.

On the way to the shed, he passed his dog and realized the dog hadn’t been fed yet. The dog certainly needed to eat, so he put the feed sacks down and walked over to the bin where he kept the dog food. When he opened the dog food bin, he noticed that some mice had been into it. He said to himself, “I must buy some mouse poison. Those mice are likely to eat up all the dog food! I had better go into the house and write myself a note
about buying mouse poison.”

He left the dog food and walked into the house to write himself a note. Once in the house, he noticed a stack of unpaid bills. He thought, “Oh, no! I had better pay those bills right now or the creditors will be knocking at my door!” But he couldn’t find a pen, so he began rummaging through the kitchen drawers. In doing so, he discovered a broken drawer and thought, “My wife would sure appreciate it if I fixed that drawer. I’ll take just a moment to do it”. So he started back outside to find a screwdriver. On the way outside he noticed the broken spring on the screen door…and the story goes on and on!

What’s the moral? At the end of the day the man had achieved nothing. He had gone from one thing to another without getting anything accomplished. He never completed his most important project, fixing the roof. (And, by the way, it rained that night!)

Is your gospel magic program like the farmer’s day?

I have seen gospel magic programs that could be compared to that man’s day. They consist of “some of this” and “some of that”. These performers string together unrelated effects, going from one thing to another, delivering--at best--a vague message. Spectators walk out afterwards, saying to themselves, “That magician did a lot of interesting things, but I’m not really sure what the point of it all was.”

It is like the response of people to a longwinded preacher. “He talked a lot,” they remark. “But he didn’t have much to say!”. Some gospel magicians could be
described in a similar manner: “He did a lot of stuff, but he didn't have much reason for doing it.”

I certainly don’t mean to sound harsh, but this is a serious point. Having observed many gospel magic presentations, I am convinced there is a need for gospel magicians to get more organized in their presentation of the spiritual message.

Is your gospel magic program built around one key idea? Or are you the scatter-gun type of performer?

Rather than using tricks in a scatter-gun fashion, hoping to get the message to the observer’s heart, it is time to start taking more careful aim. We need to use the straight-shot approach. It is much easier to make a point when an idea is carefully thought out and set forth with logic, planned repetition, demonstration, and illustration. Planning a gospel magic program around one key idea is the way to make a strong impact on audiences.

If the gospel magic show is not planned around a central theme, it will be weak and ineffective. It may still be entertaining because tricks themselves are fun, but the material will not be strong in helping people learn in their personal relationship with God.

So then, the first thing a person should do in preparing a gospel magic presentation is decide upon a central idea of theme for the entire program. The performer needs to ask himself, “What is my point? What major objective do I want to achieve? What do I want people to be thinking about as they leave the program?”
Learning to answer such questions, then building a program around the answers, is crucial to making a difference in the lives of people who attend your presentations.

Don’t be like that disorganized farmer who wandered around all day without accomplishing anything. Instead, identify your goal and make sure your program carries it out.
Chapter 2: Possible Key Ideas For A Program

There are many possible topics which could serve as the main point for a gospel magic presentation. A later chapter will explain how to build a complete show around such a topic. It should not be difficult to come up with key ideas and message concepts of your own. Here are suggestions to help you understand what I mean by centering a program around a key theme.

* Things That Lead To Abundant Life
* Foundations For Spiritual Strength
* Why Is It Grand To Be A Christian?
* Who Is Jesus Christ?
* What Is Sin?
* What Helps Christians Grow Spiritually?
* What Is Salvation?
* Why Is The Gospel Good News?
* Important Things To Remember About Life
* The Life-changing Power Of Jesus Christ
* Why Should Christians Witness?
* The Basic Truths Of The Gospel Message
* Five Vital Qualities Of Christian Character (or whatever number of qualities you choose to talk about)
* Steps To Happiness
* How To Have Peace With God
* Some Important Truths About Prayer
* What The Power Of God Can Do In Your Life
* Why Is The Bible An Important Book?
* How To Be Effective In Christian Service
* Basic Truths About The Nature Of God
* What Is A Christian?
* What Is Man?
* Some Things Involved In Following Jesus
* How Does A Loving Person Act?
* Lies Satan Loves To Tell
* What Does It Mean To Be A Disciple?
* What To Do When Life Is A Mess
* Some Things That Will Definitely Happen In The Future

As you can see, many of these suggested themes are general. Nevertheless, these are the kinds of ideas which can provide a good central focus for your presentation. Once you have chosen a theme, you can begin to outline the full program. Whether or not you use one of the suggested themes is not important; having a definite theme in mind for your program is very important!
Chapter 3: Planning The Full Program

Once you select an overall goal for your program, it is time to map out a plan to reach that goal. Your gospel magic presentation is like taking a trip. There are definite stops along the way, and maybe a few scenic detours, but you must follow a course to end up where you originally planned to be.

What is the course you will follow?

Obviously, there must be a starting point--this means **an introduction to your program**. You will need to let the audience know who you are. You will also need to give them at least a clue--and maybe even a direct statement--about where you both will be going.

Once you have introduced the program, you may need to spend some extra time convincing the audience they will enjoy and benefit from coming along with you. This is called **developing rapport**.

When you have established rapport, you can get down to the business of presenting the biblical message. Practical steps must be taken so a proper conclusion can be reached. This means it is time to **lay out the practical steps**. Decide on the three or four or five things that need to be dealt with in the process of making the primary theme clear and meaningful.

Finally, once you arrive at your destination, how will you wrap things up and make memorable the journey you and the people have just taken? The last thing you do is carefully plan **the climax and close of the program**.

So then, in skeleton form, this is the process for planning your program (after you have chosen a theme).
(1) Putting together an introduction
(2) Determining ways to build rapport
(3) Laying out the practical steps that lead to the overall conclusion
(4) Preparing a strong climax and close

Below is a sample outline for planning a program.

- Theme
- Show Introduction
- To Build Rapport
  - Main point #1 (Effect or effects to illustrate it)
  - Main point #2 (Effect or effects to illustrate it)
  - Main point #3 (Effect or effects to illustrate it)
- Conclusion (Effect or effects use for the Wrap-up)
Chapter 4: Preparing The Introduction

The introduction of a program is extremely important. It must be planned with great care. As the old saying goes, “You never get a second chance to make a first impression”.

A good introduction achieves several things.

First it lets the audience know who you are. The master of ceremonies has already told them your name. The introduction is where you become a person to them. The people will immediately assess your attitude and capabilities--and they will decide whether or not you are worth listening to. Frankly, within the first few minutes, maybe within the first few seconds, of a presentation; most people make up their minds about the quality of the entire program and decide if they are going to like it or not.

Secondly, an introduction can and should give the audience a sense of their responsibility. This is sometimes overlooked. People don’t always know how they should react to a performer and his or her presentation. This is especially true of a gospel magic program.

Is it acceptable for them to clap in response to what you do? Is the program meant to be fun? Is laughter appropriate? How serious are they supposed to be? Should they relax and enjoy themselves or should they sit quietly as if listening to a sermon?

The gospel magician needs to have some method of communicating to people what is expected. He may directly tell them it is OK to clap, laugh, etc., or he may have some clever technique of letting the people know what to do without verbalizing it. This is where audience
participation exercises known as “warm-ups” come in. In my book *LAFLIN'S LAUGH-LINES* I have published a collection of warm-up gags that work well for me. David Ginn, the prolific author of magic books, has written a great pamphlet type book on the subject.

Here is an example of one of my favorite warm-ups: I ask the audience to do exactly as I do. I then stretch my arms out directly in front of me. The audience does the same. With a loud count of “One”, I clap my hands. The audience follows along and claps a loud “One”. I then say, “Ah”, and spread my arms back apart. The audience does the same.

Then I shout “Two”, and clap my hands again. The audience does the same. I again say, “Ah”, and spread my arms back apart. The audience continues to do as I do.

Next I shout, “Three”, and swing my hands toward each other, but I do not clap—instead my hands swing past each other. The audience is trying to keep up and thinks I am going to clap, so most of them will clap their hands. I then laugh and say, “*I told you to do exactly as I do!*” There is usually much laughter from the audience at this point.

“*Let’s try it again,*” I continue. Stretching my arms out I shout “One”, and clap my hands. The audience does the same. I say, “Ah”, and stretch my arms apart. Then I quickly shout, “Two”, and swing my hands toward each other, but I let them miss. I do not clap. The audience will realize too late that my hands miss each other, and most spectators will clap again. Once again, there is laughter.

With a smile I say, “*Well, some of us got our hands together at the right time, and some did not. However, we*
are now all together, and it is the right time to enjoy ourselves and learn something about life in the process. Let’s go ahead and put our hands together in applause to say we are glad we can be together for this program!”

Notice that this warm-up encourages laughter, directly leads the audience into participation, and lets them know applause is acceptable. A big speech on the subject has not been necessary. A little bit of “business” and fun has informed the audience about their role in the program.

By the way, remember to smile and enjoy the warm-up yourself. To a large degree, the audience will form its attitude about the program from the attitude it sees in you.

You should also remember that some churches have given their congregations the impression that having a good time during a church service is improper and inappropriate. They may not mean this--usually they don’t--but they still have given such a message via their sober emphasis on “reverence“. The gospel magician is then faced with the challenge of convincing the congregation that the program is spiritual and God-honoring, even though it involves a lot of fun. It takes thought and careful preparation to accomplish this.

The gospel magic program’s introduction also needs to accomplish a third objective: identifying this thing called “magic”.

It must not be forgotten that many Christians have been misinformed or never properly informed about the difference between the effects of the modern-day magician and sorcery. They will sincerely suspect that magic is a from of occult activity and possibly even a work of Satan.
If their fears and suspicions are not put to rest, the program will not be spiritually effective. It may even result in problems. Remember the teaching of Romans chapter fourteen about not leading a brother to stumble. We must do our best not to offend the conscience of other believers.

My conviction is this: It is wise and necessary to show the people that although it is called, “magic,” it is nothing but visual puzzles and illusions. Although mysterious, it is a natural and normal thing. It uses principles from God’s creation in a fun and amazing way.

There are a variety of methods for doing this. I do not believe a secret of magic should be exposed to meet this end. It is possible to give people a simple explanation of the difference between illusion and sorcery that quickly puts them at ease without “showing how it’s done”. Please take this to heart. If the “how-to” of magic becomes public knowledge, the tricks themselves will no longer be tools for gaining the interest of the audience. If one feels obligated to reveal the workings of magic, it would be better to forget about it altogether and go back to standard object lessons. There is no need to ruin this means of ministry for others. Beyond that, such a thing would be unethical. Learning the secrets of magic to begin with is allowed on the assumption that the one learning will not expose the tricks of the trade to the general public. Yes, there are better ways to deal with the issue than by exposure.

For instance, I often ask the question, “Is the hand quicker than the eye?” and do something with my hands (such as using a thumbtip to vanish and reproduce a silk) to give the idea that the mystery is produced by skill, not by some strange power. While I perform the effect, I
comment about “illusions” and make it clear that I have nothing to do with the occult. One of my favorite lines is, “I don’t play with ouiji boards and I don’t even know my horoscope! Everything I do in this program is only a trick or surprising object lesson. God is the One who really does the impossible. I am only a man with some unusual visual effects to make a point.”

A fourth result of a good introduction is establishing in the mind of the audience the fact that you are a skillful performer. It is very helpful to an overall program to have the audience convinced from the start that you are well-versed in your art and good at what you are doing. There is also nothing wrong with getting people excited about your ability to show them something astonishing.

Whenever possible, it is good to include a fast and flashy effect at the start of the program. It is especially good to do something that apparently happens in your bare hands. If the audience gets the impression in the beginning that you can do amazing things without any special props, it will be less likely to suspect that the boxes, tubes, and cages you bring out later are gimmicked. People will assume it is your knowledge and skill which are creating the mystery. It is better to have them assume that than to have them thinking anybody could do what you do if they owned the same strange props and contraptions!

By the way, it does not require unusual knowledge and skill to use a trick box or tube. But only a good performer can make the working of a prop into an entertaining and meaningful event.

A fifth thing that should happen during the introduction is the making of a definite statement
about the fact that you have come with a message. You are a gospel magician. Therefore the assurance must be given about your commitment to the gospel. We have already discussed how people need to be convinced about your abilities as a magician. It is even more important that they view you as a Christian who is serious about proclaiming God’s truth. The message of the gospel is the greatest one this world has ever heard; it is the greatest message you have ever heard. Let your enthusiasm about that message--and the Christ who is the center of it--be powerfully evident.

The apostle Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ...” (Romans chapter one; verse sixteen). The gospel magician is to be an unashamed ambassador as well. This doesn’t mean that a program should start with a heavy-handed emphasis and preachy statement. It does mean that there should be no apology for the fact that the presentation is more than another magic show--it is gospel magic.

My experience as been even non-churched, non-Christian audiences appreciate the honesty of a performer who makes it clear from the outset that he will talk about his personal beliefs during the performance. It is far better to have people know who you are up front than to have them think they were “tricked” into hearing the gospel when it comes out later in the program.

So a good introduction can accomplish much. It is well worth the effort to give your program the best beginning possible. Select a few tricks and maybe some jokes to give the audience a definite sense of who you are, why you are there, what you are able to do, what your “magic” actually is, and how they should respond.
Chapter 5: About Opening Effects

Do not start your program with anything that takes time to reach a climax!
You will lose the audience right away if you begin a show with a trick that requires build up and explanation before anything happens. Your first tricks should be quick tricks. It is hard to beat something like the appearing or vanishing cane for use as an “opener”. They provide instant magic. That is what you want to present. Something that immediately makes a strong impression.

Do not start your program by asking for a volunteer!
Audience participation routines are often highlights of a show, but they should not be used at the start. Asking for a volunteer can result in a delay while the selected person makes his or her way to the stage. This delay may convey the message that the program will be slow. A slow moving show is often a boring show. This is not what the audience should be wondering about when they are first seeing you on stage.

Apart from the delay, there is also a need to establish your credentials as a performer. You establish yourself by showing what you can do, rather than by putting attention on what a volunteer may do.

Do not start the program by saying, “Hi, how are you all doing?”
You do not really want to know the answer to that question. What if they actually started telling you how they were doing and there ended up being a conversation rather than a performance? This is not what you are about. In the context of opening a show a question like
that is meaningless. Normally those who ask it do so because they are nervous and because they have not taken time to think of a truly interesting way to get things started.

A good question or interesting statement that is directly connected to your first effect is one strong way to begin a program.

If you start with words, start with a question such as, “Who can go to heaven?”, then quickly get into a trick that illustrates the answer. (The “Professor’s Nightmare” rope effect would be good. Three unequal ropes become the same length as an example of the fact that anyone can go to heaven--if he or she puts faith in Jesus Christ.)

When the routine is finished, continued the introduction to the show by saying something like, “I am here today to share with you how Jesus Christ gives us all equal opportunity to be in heaven. As I share this, I will be showing you something called “illusions“. Let me explain what I mean by the term “Illusion”. This leads into the next effect which will be used to help the audience understand that only God does true miracles, the gospel magician just does tricks.

I have started programs by asking “How many ways are there to heaven?” and then done a trick called “The Illusion Of One Rope” to illustrate the answer. (In that effect one rope seems to become several ropes before turning back into one rope. The message is there are not many ways to heaven, only one way!) This is followed by an introductory statement about the fact that I am there to share about the true way to heaven and will illustrate it through the vehicle of illusion.

I have also used the question, “Do you believe God wants you to be happy?” then changed a sad clown
face silk into a happy clown face silk to convey the answer that God wants us to happy both now and forever! This might be followed by a statement such as, “So prepare yourself to have a good time! We are about to enjoy some tricks as we learn about God’s wonderful truth!”

An effect such as the “Direction Arrow” allows you to begin with an attention grabbing statement. “Today it is my job to encourage you to go the right direction!” (The “Direction Arrow” is then shown to be pointing to the right before it begins to point every which way. It ends with the challenge that the ultimate right decision is to give your heart to Jesus Christ.)

In Bible School programs I have walked on stage with Ali Bongo’s “Pompom” stick effect in hand and made the opening statement, “The Bible is a wonderful book”. This statement is followed by pulling on the pompoms as I discuss the marvelous connection between the Old and New Testaments and how God’s Word amazes us with its message. When this trick is completed I say, “I am here to share with you wonderful Bible truths. I will illustrate them through the art of illusion. Let me explain to you what I mean by the term illusion…” (which leads into the next trick).

My preferred way to begin a program is by doing a short collection of effects to a musical background.

The audience has come to see a show involving tricks and illusions so why not right away show them some. I choose upbeat music that creates a good feeling. I do not talk at all. For anywhere from one to as many as eight minutes I just do magic. The tricks are exciting and colorful. By the time the music ends, the audience is
thoroughly impressed that I am a magician and they are curious to find out what I will have to say. When I begin to talk and explain that I am only an illusionist, it is God and God alone who does miracles, I definitely have their attention.

Examples Of Good “Openers”

* Silk tricks such as “Knots Off Silk”, “Color Changing” silk, and the “Silk Fountain” done to music.

* Production and vanish of a silk via the Thumbtip.

* Appearing or Vanishing Cane

* Vanishing Bird Cage (Blackstone style)

* Dove production from silks

* Russian Rings

* Color Changing Shoelace effect

* Vanishing Coke Bottle

* Rope Effects such as “Illusion Of One Rope” or “Professor’s Nightmare”

* Direction Arrow Trick
Chapter 6: Establishing Rapport

Because of the “magician” part of gospel magician, people will expect your program to be entertaining as well as meaningful. Don’t disappoint them. Instead, take advantage of it. Audiences tend to “reward” performers who give them a good time, by paying extra attention to the serious side of the program when it comes later on.

*This is basically the concept of “winning the right to be heard”*. Taking time for humor and delightful experiences is not poor stewardship of time. To the contrary, it pays off richly. A person who in good taste has led people into smiles, good feelings, and laughter, is one who can also lead people into serious thinking.

After an introduction has been made, it is usually best to have some fun! A question commonly put to lecturers in the field of gospel magic is, “Does every effect you do have a gospel illustration?” The answer is, “No!”

*It is perfectly acceptable (and actually very sensible) to do some things for the sake of enjoyment and/or comedy.*

You can view the “fun time” portion of the program as the softening up of the audience, so the final blows of truth will break through. I think it is a matter of wisdom to recognize human nature for what it is. If people are made to feel good, they will likely conclude that what is being said to them is good. Such thinking is fallacious, but even so, many are guilty of it. Cults abuse the concept. A Christian involved in ministry should carefully and considerately use it.

This is the time in your presentation for “Hippity Hop Rabbits” and other “sucker effects”—presented, of
course, in a tasteful way. People love sucker tricks when you do them with the attitude of “Ain’t we having fun?” People resent them and may even turn on the performer if his attitude is, “Ha, I fooled you!” Routines such as Seabrooke’s “Burnt Bill In Wallet”, or maybe a bit of business with a milk pitcher and funnel, can also be a lot of fun when presented properly.

When going for comedy, if there is any way possible, make it appear in the end that the joke is on you. When you laugh, laugh with the people. Do not laugh at the unsuspecting assistant you have called up on stage to help. Make your helpers heroes! Present yourself to the group as a friend and fellow traveler in the midst of a happy adventure!

There is a wealth of fun and funny material available in magic. Invest in a few good “fun time” effects. Learn to use them to give yourself and the audience a good time.

Win the right to be heard!

There are also many effects which are not necessarily comedy tricks, but are highly entertaining. These effects can be considered as door-openers. They may not be used directly for a gospel message, but they can help people set aside attitude barriers which might keep the message from being heard.

Years ago I heard someone say, “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” Applied to magic, that would read, “People don’t’ care how tricky you are until they know you respect them and appreciate them as human beings”.

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When the gospel magician does some things with the primary purpose of creating an atmosphere of happiness and mirth, he or she is actually creating a good situation for great communication.

I Corinthians chapter thirteen; verse one, tells us, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass and a tinkling symbol”. Great speech without love is just a lot of noise.

Proverbs chapter seventeen; verse twenty-two, tells us a merry heart does good like a medicine. Part of our ministry should be creating the blessing of a merry heart! So have some fun in your program! Not every trick has to have a preachy message. The value of some tricks is simply in the fact that people really enjoy seeing them performed.

If people are not convinced that we have their best interests in mind, they will not treat our message as credible. A way of showing them we are interested in their well-being is by helping them have fun. Doing so indicates that we care about how they feel. We really do want them to be happy!

People will care about what we know, say and do once we have shown that we care about them. Establishing rapport means doing things that help people relate to us as someone who has the sincere intention of bringing them joy and making a positive contribution to their lives.
Examples Of Good Tricks For Building Rapport

* What’s Next
* Soft Soap
* Duke’s Dye Version
* Multiplying Sponge Balls to spectator’s hand
* Die Box
* Color Changing Russian Rings
* Blooming Bouquet (as presented by Trevor Lewis and David Ginn)
* Hippity Hop Rabbits
* Shadow Rabbit Comedy Silk Trick
* Silk To Egg
* Color Changing Rabbit In A Hat
* Linking Rings (when done in a lighthearted way, with a sense of wonder over what occurs!)
* Mutilated Parasol
Chapter 7: The Body Of The Message

Entertainment is important in order to establish rapport, but entertainment is not the primary goal of a gospel magician. His or her major work is the presentation of a clear message.

Fundamentally, a clear message is the result of following logical steps that lead to an obvious conclusion. When a parent tells a teenager, “If you stay out past midnight, you will be grounded for a week!” the message is plain. The logical steps are first, staying out too long, and second, experiencing a consequence. What is the conclusion the teenager should easily draw? Staying out past midnight is the wrong thing to do!

An effective gospel magician will give people distinct steps to follow that produce a definite conclusion. In other words, the effects used in the message portion of the program should be linked together, a series of illustrations which focus on the same key concept.

An example of a program with logical development that leads to an obvious conclusion...

Let’s say, for example, that your key idea is: Jesus solves the problem of sin and guilt.

The first effect in the message part of the program might be the cut and restored rope. Cutting the rope presents man’s separation from God because of sin. Restoration of the rope presents the fact that Christ can put back together what sin has destroyed.

The second effect might be a flaming dove pan
to flowers routine. The flaming pan is used to explain that sin is more that separation from God, it is also a state of eternal condemnation. When flowers are produced, the message, Jesus Christ not only restores us to God, He also delivers us from the fiery judgment.

A third effect could be a “Grandmother’s Necklace” routine (also called “Cords Of Phantasia”), involving three large blocks of wood. The middle block is labeled sin. The block on one side is labeled God. The block on the other side is labeled man.

The performer points out that sin is a barrier between God and man. Not only is man separated from God by sin, not only is man eternally condemned by sin, but man is also blocked off from God by sin. Unless something is done about the problem of sin, man will never see or know the true God. There is no hope for a human being to ever meet the Creator unless the barrier of sin is removed. The block labeled sin is then covered with a cloth and mysteriously removed. The explanation is given that Jesus Christ has the power to take away the spiritual block that keeps us from God.

A fourth effect could be the “20th Century Silks”. The silk that vanishes and finally reappears tied between the other two could be an illustration of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The point is made that Jesus ultimately demonstrated His power over sin by coming back from the grave after Satan and evil men had done everything they could to put Him down.

The final effect in this program could be a production from a “Phantom Tube”, “Square Circle”,

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“Mirror Box”, etc. When the production box or tube is shown empty, the gospel magician comments that sin means no happiness and no blessing in a person’s eternal future. When the box or tube is filled, the comment is made that Jesus came to give us abundant and eternal life. He takes away the damage and hopelessness caused by sin and gives us joy and everlasting life instead.

On the next page is a review of the logic and conclusion involved in this program.

**This approach to giving a clear message could be likened to driving a nail into a board.** A point of penetration is established and then hit at again and again until driven home.

It is good to look at the tricks you do as a variety of hammer blows that send a truth deeper and deeper into a heart. The central goal of your presentation is reinforced, clarified, and even intensified by each successive effect you demonstrate.

**This does not mean that the application of your illusions should be redundant.** If you are apparently saying the same thing with every trick, the audience will become exasperated with your program and feel like you don’t really have much to say.

A well-known gospel magician from years past had this problem. He was often criticized for having the same patter for everything he did! One thing always stood for sin, another for Jesus, and another for salvation. This magician was a good man. Sad to say, he eventually got out of gospel magic altogether and became quite bitter. I don’t know everything about his situation, but it does appear that he became frustrated because he sensed
The logic of the sample program

* Sin separates man from God, Jesus restores
  (Cut And Restored Rope)

* Sin means condemnation, Jesus delivers
  (Dove Pan Flame To Flowers)

* Sin means barrier between God and man,
  Jesus removes the barrier.
  (God Sin Man Block Release)

* When sinful men and Satan did all they could
to defeat Jesus Christ, He overcame and had
the final victory. This means His power is
greater than that of sin.
  (20th Century Silks)

* Sin means hopelessness and misery in the
eternal future, but Jesus Christ brings
everlasting life and joy.
  (Phantom Tube)

The obvious conclusion of this presentation

* Jesus is the solution to the problem of sin and
  guilt. If we want a joyful hope for eternity, we
  need Jesus Christ!
audiences were frustrated with him. He didn’t understand that their frustration was produced by his failure to tell them anything new as he went on and on with his program.

The genius in the approach that uses practical steps all focusing on the same conclusion is “creative repetition”. Rather than saying the same thing with every trick, a new and different angle is presented each time—even though the overall message is the same. This way one great conclusion is powerfully set in front of the people without losing their interest or having them decide the gospel magician has little to offer.

It is possible to stick with one theme and give it tremendous emphasis while making each individual magic effect seem special and different. The secret to doing this is linking the effects and making them each part of the pathway that leads to the common destination.

Basically, the message portion of the gospel magic program should be prepared just as one would prepare a speech or sermon. Good speakers bring to an audience a sensible sequence of thought. Often they literally announce the A, B, C, and D of their thinking process. They use variety and a combination of ideas to point to one core concept. (By the way, why is a “point” in a sermon called a “point”? Could it be because it is something that is hoped to point the listeners toward the main conclusion?)

The gospel magician would be wise to sit down and outline on paper how each of his message tricks will point toward the main thing he or she wants the audience to hear. He or she will be careful to see that each trick points from a different angle or different perspective. He or she will be careful to keep the audience’s interest level
high by making each effect and application distinct in itself. Nevertheless, it will also be the aim that the effects and applications blend into one meaningful and dynamic conclusion.

*Note*

This approach is a huge contrast to the kind of gospel magic show where one trick is about tithing, another is about love, another is about witnessing, another is about creation, and another is about forgiveness, etc. Such a show does not have one main message. It is a conglomeration of ideas that do not focus on any one theme. (Remember the farmer story at the beginning of this book. Such a show is like the man who goes all over the place, but really does not accomplish anything.)

I am strongly advocating the need for the one theme approach to a show where every routine somehow relates to the one theme. I very much believe that the “conglomeration” format is ineffective and it may be a reason why gospel magicians tend to be characterized as slipshod performers. When their shows are a mishmash of tricks and concepts, what they do simply does not make sense.
Chapter 8: The Flow Of The Show

So far I have emphasized presenting the message in a powerful manner. And truly, the most important word in gospel magic is “gospel”.

However, the “magic” is also an important concern. Christians should be committed to excellence in life and testimony. After all, we are to be imitators of God and His name is “excellent” (Psalm eight; verses one and nine, Psalm one hundred forty eight; verse thirteen). Beyond that, excellence is attractive, and we should desire to make our witness in an appealing way. Therefore our magic should be done well. The quality of our performance has much to do with our credibility with the audience.

Part of doing magic well is realizing there is a pace to a program much like what is found in a good play or well produced movie. *Pace* means that the energy levels of the various acts or actions are balanced with one another. When properly planned, this guides the emotions of the audience and keeps them “with” the show all the way through. It also makes possible a terrific conclusion, where the audience feels the presentation was complete and great. People leave the program satisfied and maybe even exhilarated over the fact that they attended.

To properly pace a program you should have the following aims:

#1. **Getting off to a great start.** You want to quickly captivate the audience and impress them that the program is worthy of their attention.
#2. **Getting the audience involved.** This may mean creating tension or a concern the audience can identify with. (This is usually accomplished by asking a penetrating question). Or it may be a fun routine with audience participation.

#3. **Developing the theme or plot of the show.** This is the main body of the program. Normally it is the largest or longest part of the show.

#4. **Building the level of interest and excitement as the conclusion draws near.** Lift the emotional involvement of the audience to a higher and higher degree for the finale’ of the program.

#5. **Presenting a successful climax.** This is the high point of the show. It is where the emotions of the audience are satisfied by something that either draws together all the earlier parts of the show or else by something that obviously is the big and final event.

**How does this business of “pacing a show” apply to the gospel magician?**

Since most gospel workers prefer to view what they do as ministry rather than a show, the temptation may be strong to think that “pacing” doesn’t apply at all. They might offer the term, “I will just let the Spirit lead”, which as often as not is an excuse for poor preparation and lack of diligence as it is a true spiritual commitment.

The Bible is clear that Christians are to “**Walk in wisdom**”. The New Testament tells believers to be “**Wise as serpents, yet harmless as doves**”. Proverbs tells believers to **“ponder the path of one’s speech”** and to
seek wisdom.

Wisdom is the knowledge of the “best ends and the best means”. It is the “profitable and practical application of that which is known”.

It is a matter of wisdom to learn how and why people are affected by forms of communication. It is a matter of wisdom to be a student of human nature. Understanding how people think and feel gives one the ability to be a good leader and teacher.

If a gospel magician is seriously interested in leading people to a good conclusion through his or her program, he or she must understand how to keep people “with” the program from beginning to end.

This does not mean that every gospel program must be approached as a major production. Gospel workers are usually on a small stage (if there is a stage at all), and often the setting is somewhat intimate. Just as there is no need to set up a giant sound system to sing in a living room, there is no need to treat a gospel magic program for fewer than fifty people as if it were a Broadway play.

So, I am not suggesting an extravaganza approach to gospel magic. I am encouraging you to consider how even simple things impact the emotions and interest of an audience. It is wise to examine, at least on a simple level, the pacing of a program.

**Ask yourself these questions:**

**#1. Does the opening of my program get people excited about being there?** Does it make them want to see what the rest of the program is going to be?
#2. Does the audience feel like it is a part of the program? Do I need more audience participation? Do I need to use more stories they can identify with? Should I ask more questions to which they can relate?

#3. Does the interest level of the audience grow as my program progresses—or does it sag? Are the people still “with me” two-thirds of the way through, or are they starting to hope it will soon be over?

#4. Is the conclusion of my program strong and satisfying? Or is it somewhat of a let-down?

Along with asking such questions, keep the following elements in mind. They keep a program “well paced”.

VARIETY IN PROPS

Interest of the audience is maintained by showing it new and different things. Don’t follow one silk production with another silk production. Go from a restoration to a transposition, from a production to a vanish. If one trick uses ropes, let the next one use rings…or sponges…or silks…or paper…or boxes…or animals.

Analyze a recent program you have done. Were the effects similar to each other or were they distinct? How many different types of props did you use? (There is not necessarily great value in using many different props, but there is value in making each individual effect unique).

If you are putting together a new program, think about the different effects you have available. You may
even want to categorize your magic. I have listed all my “magic stuff” under headings such as: Rope Effects - Silk Effects - Comedy Effects - Spectator Assisted Effects - Flash Opening Effects - Productions - Vanishes - Large Illusions - Sucker Effects - Standard Opening Effects - Warm-ups - Mentalism Effects - Closeup Effects. In planning a new show I make sure to draw from a number of categories.

PATTER

No matter how clever a trick may be, the audience will not care about it long unless it is presented in an appealing manner. Don’t make the mistake of practicing a trick, but not practicing what you are going to say!

Work at using as few words as possible to say what needs to be said. An easy way to bore people is by being “longwinded”. This usually means you are continuing to talk long after they already have figured out what you are trying to say. Work at speaking concisely. Record your shows and study how you talk. Find the best way to say things and discipline yourself to cut out unnecessary expressions and rambling words.

I urge gospel magicians to work from a script. This means actually writing out ahead of time the words you are going to say as you do your routines. Why is writing a script a good thing to do? It allows you to find the best way to say things. It is much easier to do this when studying what to put down on paper than it is to just “think of it at the spur of the moment”. I work from a script because I really do want to know the best way to communicate my message. The discipline of writing a script is where I determine the best way to convey the lesson I have to share. It is true that once I am on stage I
may discover I need to adjust what I wrote. The “live” presentation is where the final honing of the words takes place. However, if a person has not first prepared a script, he or she has nothing to hone when in the “live” situation.

One more thing about a script...

I believe in writing a script. I think it is very important that the script exists. I also believe that once on stage we should not worry about staying exactly on script. We do not want our presentations to seem canned or mechanical. The fact that we wrote the script means we know what to say and where we are going with our words. This gives us the foundation and the freedom to speak in a more relaxed manner.

Truth is, I prepare the script of my shows on a word for word basis, but almost never stay perfectly on script. Things often change when in front of an audience.

It is also wise to put special thought into making patter personal and relevant to the audience. Think about how the application of your effect translates into everyday life and plan to talk about it in “real life” terms.

For example: When doing the “Stop Light” trick, tell the truth about the meaning of the yellow light. In the minds of most people it does not mean caution. Instead they think, “I must speed up and hope I make it through!” People will relate to this and laugh when you mention it.

Another example: When doing the “6 Bill Repeat”,
say, “As Christians, we know that money does not make the world go around...but we also know that when we run out of money the world tends to come to a screeching halt!” People identify with this type of statement and may find it humorous. We all know that money should not be as important to us as we often let it to be, we also know that we are personally concerned about having enough of it! (Usually more concerned than we should be!)

Jokes, comments about life, insights about “man and wife”, “boy and girl”, “babies”, etc., all draw the audience into what you are doing.

**PEOPLE**

People relate to people. Keeping this simple concept in mind can be a great help in pacing a program. Watching a dollar bill being burned and restored is one thing...watching the magician take a dollar bill from one of your peers and burn it and then restore it is another. The fact that you know the person to whom the “money problems” are happening changes everything!

If there is a spot in your presentation where the interest level of the audience is likely to sag, plan to bring someone from the crowd up on stage. When in the main message portion of a program, I try to do a spectator assisted effect about half way through. That way, if the minds of those watching have started to wander, I know I will immediately have their attention again.

My opinion is it is not wise to have “helpers” on stage with every trick or even for several tricks in a row. I recently saw a children’s performer do a forty-five minute show in which he had two or three different children on stage with him for everything he did. This resulted in his show having a slow pace (calling up children every time
and getting them in place took a lot of extra time). It also resulted in an apparent sameness to all of his tricks (it seemed all he was doing was having children hold something while he made something else happen.) It also resulted in the “magic” being lost. People around me at times commented after an effect, “What did he do?” The constant assistance of the children distracted people from the actual illusions he performed.

Using people as assistants every time produces a slower and possibly boring pace. Using people on occasion produces a change of pace and normally increases the level of interest. Unless you do it too much, there is a sense in which you bring the mind of the audience up on stage with you when you call a person from the audience up to help you.

Take a look at your program and place spectator participation effects at strategic points within it.

**TIME**

Another good tool for maintaining interest and keeping the audience “with” you is the length of time used for different effects. People will be excited and almost anxious for the next thing you do if you keep them unsure of the time it will take for it to happen. In other words, some things should happen fast while others should build up before the action occurs.

The “Vanishing Cane”, for instance, can be done quickly. The effect itself happens in a flash. This tells the audience to watch closely and pay attention to every move, because some of your illusions are instantaneous.

Other effects, such as the “Genii Tube” production, take longer. This type of effect gives the spectators a mental rest. It almost comforts them with the fact that you
We are not all the same!

Most of the routines I do are around three minutes in length. I have only two or three tricks that take much longer than that. I have a number of tricks that take even less time than that. This suits my personality.

I have a close magician friend whose tricks average around six minutes in length. Some of his routines are even longer. Very few are shorter.

There is no ideal length for particular routines. Different personalities mandate different kinds of timing. The key is to vary the timing. Whether your routines average three minutes, six minutes, or another number, you must not fill the show with these average length routines. Several of your routines will last your standard amount of time, but you must deliberately make sure there are at least a couple of routines that are quite a bit shorter and maybe one or two that are a bit longer.

One more thing...

When it comes to the length of your routines, if you must err, it is better to keep them too short than to allow them to get too long.

are not “moving so fast they can't think about what you are doing”.

Other effects, such as the “Linking Rings”, involve repeated action throughout a routine that may last seven minutes or more. This makes people feel like they are being given plenty of opportunity to enjoy what is
happening, but not being made to wait to see something happen.

Recognizing that the length of a trick produces different attitudes in spectators helps you set a good pace for your show.

When you want the people to be excited and eager, the magic (and patter) should be quick, clever, and flashy.

When you want them to be thoughtful and even contemplative, do something that involves more of a build up. Maybe something where the illusion itself happens slowly before their eyes.

When you want the people to be happily watching and listening, do a routine that provides some repeated action.

A good order for pacing your show may be to start with things that happen quick, then do something that involves repeated action. Next, do a few things involving more of a build up, then go back to a few things that happen rather quickly. Finally close with something that involves a build up and results in the most impressive effect of the program.

**SIZE**

The size of your props can affect the pacing of your program. Most of the time when you bring out a larger piece of equipment, people naturally get excited. However, along with excitement a program needs comedy relief, time to ponder something fascinating, and more. So bringing out a smaller item before or after a big effect allows you to easily impact the emotion and “feeling“ of a program. People will sit back and wonder at a large scale effect. People will sit forward in their seats with intense
interest at a display of “sleight of hand” with comparatively small objects.

Strangely enough, the opposite can also be said. People will sit forward in their seats and stare with intense interest at a big illusion, then sit back in their seats and ponder over a smaller scale sleight of hand trick. The point is not that a particular size trick always produces a particular emotion. The point is that changing size tends to change emotion. It is simple, but true. Different sizes in tricks evokes different feelings in those who watch them.

Therefore, if you want to rekindle the “excitement level” in a portion of your program it may help to bring out a large prop. If you want people to be intent upon what you are saying and doing, you may choose to do something smaller…that can be held in your hands. If you want to create a sense of happy relief, you will likely need to use an average size prop.

*NOTE

Undoubtedly, you will find exceptions to these concepts about pacing a program. The concepts I am suggesting are not laws around which a program must be built. They are angles to consider when trying to put together the best program possible. Analyze the angles and then do what works best for you.
Factors you can work with to impact the pacing of a program are...

*Variety - Which means shifting from silks to ropes, to balls, to cards, to boxes, to rings, etc., helps maintain interest. You do not want all of your tricks to look the same.

*People - Bringing volunteers on stage can powerfully impact the pace of a program as long as this is not done so much that every trick seems to be a “volunteer” trick.

*Patter - Words and expressions, when prepared well and used wisely, have much to do with holding the interest of the audience.

*Time - Being careful to make sure that not all routines are the same length, helps pace a program in a way that maintains interest. It is much better to mix things up by way of just a few long tricks and occasional short “quick” tricks interspersed with routines which go a mid-range length than to have all routines take about the same amount of time.

*Size - Going from something big to something small, or from something small to something big, can automatically change the pace of a program. Try not to have everything seem to be the same size,
Chapter 9: The End Of Your Program

The end of a gospel magic program involves three main elements: the climax, the call, and the conclusion. These three things do not happen sequentially. They are rather the three concerns you should have in mind as your show comes to a close.

CLIMAX

The word climax means highest point or highest degree. The end of the program is where you want to have either your most impressive or biggest magic effect.

Sometimes one’s biggest trick is not necessarily the best trick. If the big trick is mystifying and strong, it is probably best to close with it even though another effect is more baffling. People tend to associate bigness with value and significance. You can count on a large effect working well as a “closer” and making a solid impact on those watching.

It could be said that as a general rule, “Bigger is better”, when selecting tricks to use at the end of the program. However, the fact that the final trick is impressive is even more important. The matter could be stated this way, “Bigger is better, but impressive is best”.

A terrific example of this is the secular magician Kevin James and his snowstorm illusion. In spite of the fact that during the course of his show he makes a Charlie Chaplin doll come to life and saws a person in half so the two parts of the person get out on the stage and walk around, Kevin finishes his show sitting in a chair and talking about snow. The trick he does at this time is really quite simple. It certainly is not his biggest nor his
most difficult effect. But it is a trick that affects the audience. For reasons that go beyond logic, the snowstorm routine reaches the heart of the audience and almost always brings about a standing ovation. It makes people feel good and makes them want to rise to their feet and cheer. Kevin does it at the end of the show because he has learned that none of his other tricks can follow it.

If you have a trick that you know touches or moves an audience in an extra special way, don’t hesitate to use it as a climactic effect.

The core of this matter is that it is not enough that the final trick be a good trick or even a great trick. It must be something that *impresses* the audience either by its size or its “feel”.

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The tricks you use to close a show should create good will and good feelings within the audience.

At the end of a show there is something much higher to be accomplished than just “really fooling them”. You want your last trick or tricks to make people glad they experienced the program and glad they heard the message. Ideally the final effects should touch people in such a manner that they can hardly wait to see a show like yours again.

So…work on having your last trick be one that reaches the emotions of the crowd as well as their intellect!
CALL

A gospel magic program should finish with a start. What does this mean? It means the performer’s work ends, but the personal response of the audience begins and hopefully keeps going long after the program is done.

A presentation of spiritual truth should end with a practical challenge that helps listeners know what to do next.

It does not make much sense to fish with bait, but no hook. It does not make much sense to present people with a great idea and then not tell them how to apply it. It is necessary to talk to people about decisions they can and should make.

Do not confuse this matter of leading people in response with “the giving of an invitation” or “giving an altar call”. Invitations and altar calls are handled in different ways by different groups of believers. You are encouraged to give one in whatever manner you are accustomed. At this point the issue is calling people to a personal decision rather than a public declaration.

If you have given people the plan of salvation...tell them they need to personally put their trust in Christ. Maybe even give them time to bow their heads and do so.

If you have challenged Christians to witness or take advantage of spiritual resources, ask them to examine themselves. What are their priorities? Encourage them to recommit themselves and their daily activities to God.

If the message has been about sin, urge them to personally confess their sin to God and turn to Christ for forgiveness.

If the message has been about joy, urge them to leave the program focusing on blessings rather than their
problems.

To state the matter simply, make sure the people know “what to do” about “what they have heard”.

**CONCLUSION**

Not only should your program end in a way that is *magically* strong, it also should end in a manner that is *conceptually* strong.

The audience needs to leave with a perfectly clear understanding of the truth you came to share. The end of the show is where you must bring together any “loose ends” of thought and restate the theme of the program as effectively as possible. If you posed a question during the show, the conclusion is where you give the answer. If you have already given the answer, the conclusion is where you say it once more.

Preachers are taught that even if they only *outline* the body of a message, the introduction and conclusion should be written out. The purpose in writing is to make sure the sermon is wrapped up in the best manner possible. Writing is a discipline that focuses the speaker to make sure he or she knows exactly what to say. A conclusion is too important to be approached with only haphazard preparation.

Gospel magic is different than preaching a sermon. Nevertheless it is basically preaching through the use of magic. Whether or not a conclusion is written out is a personal matter. Making sure final statements are well thought out is vital to all.

Take the preparation time necessary to be sure your program ends in a most convincing and inspiring manner.

**So how does this matter of the climax, call, and**
conclusion work in practical terms?

My suggestion is to look at it as a “split in two” process. This means there is a two part climax with the call and conclusion in between.

Here is an example from my own program:

1st Stage Of The Climax: We present a “Cross” illusion where a young man, representing the thief on the cross who repented, is amazingly freed from a restraint. This is a big and impressive effect.

Conclusion And Call: I then do a “20th Century Silk” routine where I exactly explain what a person must believe to be saved. This is followed by asking the audience to bow their heads and pray about what they have seen and heard.

2nd Stage Of The Climax: After the prayer time we do one more effect. In our illusion show it is the “Canvas Covered Box” escape. In a smaller show it would be a silk production from a “Giant Hank Box”. Both of these are “Wow” tricks that take place to an exciting musical background. They are the kind of tricks that make the audience want to clap their hands and cheer….therefore they leave the show with a sense of enthusiasm about what they just experienced.

Put together this means it is good to have an impressive illusion that starts the climax, then take time to nail down the message and challenge the audience to respond, before one more illusion that finishes the climax.
*Note*

Earlier in my career as a gospel magician I did not use the “split” approach to ending a show. Instead I did a climactic trick, then gave the final challenge and closed with prayer. As time went by I sensed that because I was not there as “sermon giver” but rather as one who speaks through entertaining illustrations, it was better for me to do one last trick that put the finish of the show on an upbeat. The pastor is free to follow this with a “come forward” type of invitation if he chooses. It is his prerogative.

I have come to believe that my responsibility is to leave people with a happy feeling that reminds them of how good it was to be at the show. Hopefully it also motivates them to return to the church at another time to see what else happens in a place that provides wonderful programs like what they just saw!
Chapter 10: Warning! Two Extremes

Two extremes are commonly found among gospel magicians. Both are detrimental. One of them is having a lot of magic, but little spiritual application. The other is having a lot of spiritual application, but little magic.

Some performers may have much more depth in their abilities as magicians than they possess in their knowledge of Scripture and Christian doctrine. The intentions of such performers are good. Nevertheless, their gospel magic programs are usually anemic. It is vital that they do more study in the area of Bible truth.

The magic must not overshadow the message. If it does, a performer must work diligently to correct the problem or else stop using the label of “gospel magician”.

The other extreme is too much talk and too little action. If the magic portion of gospel magic is to be an effective tool, it should be used liberally during the course of a program. If you are known as a gospel magician the audience will be expecting you to do magic. If you talk a lot and do only a few tricks, the audience will be unhappy and maybe even conclude a false impression has been given about who you are.

Some years ago a man came through the western edge of South Dakota where I lived at the time, who was billed as a gospel magician. The “magician” part of his promotion was emphasized in an effort to attract unbelievers.

It turned out the man only did three small tricks during his program and used them to launch a forty-five minute sermon.

This produced embarrassment among Christians who invited unsaved friends to come to the meetings and
actually made people angry. The man concluded people were upset because they were too unspiritual to listen to a long sermon. The truth was they had legitimate cause for being unhappy. There is nothing wrong with a forty-five minute sermon. There is much wrong with attracting people to church through false pretenses. A man who does three cheap tricks that together do not take a total of five minutes and then preaches for three quarters of an hour is not a gospel magician.

The problem is not always that extreme, but it is common to find a person sincerely going overboard in the application of an effect.

It is not necessary to develop a sermonette from every piece of rubber fruit or every color of silk produced from a box that was previously shown empty. It is possible to complicate a presentation so much that people grow weary of your words.

Beyond that, people are easily disappointed when expectations are high and they are not met. If those coming to see you expect magic, make sure they get it. Try to give them lots of magic and lots of application.

An exception would be when a magic trick is being used as a tool to teach a lesson in a class situation. Here the audience is not viewing the teacher as a gospel magician. The audience is not expecting to see many unusual things happen. Instead the audience is pleasantly surprised because something extra is being used as an illustration. In this circumstance there is nothing wrong with taking a long time to talk about objects brought out of a production box or whatever. There is a difference between using magic as an occasional teaching aid and presenting a full program as a gospel magician!
*Note*

There is nothing wrong with being a Christian who also is a magician. A Christian magician is a Christian who does magic. The magic may be a means of making a living or simply providing others with some good clean entertainment. It is not used as a tool for "teaching and preaching".

If you are basically a “Christian magician” *please do not promote yourself to churches* unless you make it clear that you come mainly to entertain. Churches usually expect a person who is invited to their platform to bring a spiritual message and challenge. Churches will resent being booked as a “market” instead of being approached as a ministry.

- Strong magic and weak message is a major problem.

- Strong message and weak magic hinders effectiveness and causes problems.

- The ideal is strong magic and strong message. This ideal is not easily achieved, but it is an important and worthy goal!
Remember that the sample programs are only that. “Samples”. You are welcome to follow them as closely as you wish, but it is best to adjust them to suit your personality and style.
Chapter 11: Sample Programs

Before I list the sample programs, here is a practical matter to consider: Gospel magicians are often asked to do Bible camps, Bible schools, kids’ crusades, and other kinds of repeat ministry. How does the gospel magician put together more than one program for the same group of people? The answer is found in choosing a particular theme for each night, and then preparing a program around it.

For example, if you are holding evangelistic meetings for five consecutive nights, and you are expected to use gospel magic in each program, here is a possible approach. You could use gospel magic to answer a different question each night. The questions are the themes for your programs.

Night 1: Who Is Jesus Christ?

Night 2: What Is Sin?

Night 3: What Is Salvation?

Night 4: What Helps Christians Grow?

Night 5: Why Should Christians Witness?

Carefully themed programs provide opportunity for repeat ministry to the same groups. The first five sample programs you will see on following pages are actual outlines of presentations I have made in evangelistic ministry around the country. They follow the five questions listed above.
Most of the other sample outlines are also of actual shows I have done. You are welcome to follow them as closely as you wish, but I think it is best to adapt them to suit your personality and style.

**About the props listed in the show outlines**

I hope you will be familiar with many of the tricks I mention, but some of them may involve apparatus you have not seen. If you do not know the apparatus or routine, you still should be able to understand the point being illustrated and likely will be able to figure out a way to make the message with a prop you do know about.

The important thing is not having a vast collection of “magic stuff” (although most of us end up with such a thing). It is learning to apply a message concept to an effect. Analyze what I was trying to accomplish at the point in the outline where you find an unfamiliar piece of equipment and then contemplate a means by which you can accomplish the same thing.

**About the outlines themselves**

Pay attention to the fact that they are all built around making a captivating introduction, building rapport, developing the main message, then having a strong conclusion. All the tricks were selected with those concerns in mind.

**NOTE**

Some of the outlines are over twenty years old. They worked well when I used them back then. They work well now. My style has changed and many of my tricks have changed, but I still follow a similar format when making presentations.
Sample Program #1
Theme: “Who Is Jesus Christ?”

1. Vanishing Cane - Story of a blind man who met Jesus. His life was wonderfully changed. He did not need his cane anymore. (Gone!). This program is about how the power of Jesus Christ can wonderfully change our lives too!

2. Hand Clapping Gag warm-up

3. Vanishing And Reappearing Silk (with thumb tip). Talk about sleight of hand. Explain what “magic” is and is not. Tell them a bit about yourself too.

4. Color Changing Rabbit In A Hat - Comedy/sucker effect. Claim is made that a rabbit changes color. Audience believes they know how it is done. They end up being wrong. Funny ending to trick.

5. Life Is A Puzzle - Prediction effect involving two members of the audience. Presented in game show style so there is plenty of clapping and enthusiasm. Effect concludes with a picture of Jesus and the message that He is the answer to all of life’s important questions.

6. Rainbow Ropes - Three ropes become one rope to illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity and the fact that Jesus is God.

7. Burned And Restored Handkerchief - A handkerchief is burned, yet there is no damage done. This is used to
illustrate the fact that there was no blemish in the life of Christ and clearly makes the point that Jesus never sinned.

8. Wrong Choice Trick - Volunteer from the audience is asked to choose a picture of money instead of a picture of Jesus. The money vanishes and the spectator ends up with nothing. The point is: Choosing Jesus is the best decision to make.

9. Fantastic Frame and Silk Cabby - A vanish and reappearance of three silks that illustrates what we know to be true because Jesus Christ rose from the grave. This centers on the message found in 1 Corinthians chapter fifteen. A clear gospel presentation centered around the truth that Jesus rose from the grave.

10. Prayer Challenge - Audience is asked to bow heads and personally respond to the message.

11. Square Circle Production - When you have made the decision to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior you go from a life empty of spiritual blessing to a fulfilled life and eternal blessing.

Scope of program: Who is Jesus Christ? He is God who came into this world to live a perfect life that He might die and rise again to give us everlasting life. The best decision we can ever make is to give your lives to Him.

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Sample Program #2
Theme: “What Is Sin?”

1. Illusion Of One Rope - Show starts with the question “How many ways are there to heaven?” The rope trick illustrates in a humorous yet clear manner that there is only one way.

2. Raise Hand Warm-up Gag - Originated and described by David Ginn in his book “COMEDY WARM-UPS FOR CHILDREN”.

3. Color Changing Shoelaces - Long shoelace is pulled through the hand and made to change color. The audience believes they know the secret, but are mistaken. This is used to ask the question, “Is the hand quicker than the eye?” and explain what “magic” is and is not.

4. Color Memory Test With Change Bag - Comedy routine using two spectators. Funny business with individual silks that turn into a long streamer.

5. Guilt Is Gone - Comedy/sucker type effect where the word “Guilt” disappears. The audience believes they catch the magician and then are surprised by the final revelation in the routine. Message about Jesus Christ taking away guilt.

6. Heart On A String Trick - Wooden heart on a string first seems to disobey the command of the magician, then finally obeys it. Message about sin being disobedience to God.
7. **Cut And Restored Rope** - Message about sin also being something that separates us from God. Jesus Christ restores us.

8. **Bongo Hat** - This brings a helper on stage. He is given a funny looking hat that keeps growing and growing until it becomes a monster face. Message is that sin is like a monster. When we allow it into our lives it grows and destroys our happiness.

9. **Coffee Vase Production Of A Red Streamer And Butterfly Silk** - The fire in the vase illustrates “the wages of sin “ (Romans chapter six, verse twenty-three). The silk production illustrates how the gift of God brings eternal life.

10. **Prayer Challenge** - Audience is asked to bow heads and personally respond to the message.

11. **Mirror Box Production Of A Rabbit** - . Like the box…sin has nothing good to offer us. A relationship with God changes our destiny and gives us a wonderful life (produce rabbit).

**Scope of the program** - Sin is disobedience. Sin separates us from God. Sin brings destruction. Sin grows in our lives and does much damage. The right and necessary thing to do is turn from sin and to the Savior!
Sample Program #3
Theme: “What Is Salvation?”

1. **Rope To Silk** - A quick transformation effect with some jokes. Statement is made that salvation is all about becoming a new creation.


3. **What’s Next?** - The well-know Spot Card trick that gets laughs, but also is a great way to explain that there is a “trick” to what the magician does. This is used to explain what “magic” is and is not.

4. **I Knew That** - A prediction routine involving a member of the audience. Message is about making the right choice. (Salvation is the right choice!)

5. **Balloon Penetration** - Balloon is stuck with nails, yet is unharmed. Message is that salvation is being delivered from spiritual destruction.

6. **Color Changing Russian Rings** - Message about salvation being a wonderful spiritual change.

7. **Reverse 20th Century Silk effect With Silk Poke Gimmick** - Silk that was tied between two others vanishes and brings the two silks together. Message about salvation being the removal of a barrier between man and God.

8. **Wrist Chopper** - This must be used with discretion. It
illustrates the matter of faith. Putting your trust in the fact that the device will not fail. Message about salvation being a matter of trust in God’s plan.

9. A-B-C Block Trick - The “B” block mysteriously moves from under a cover representing the grave to a box labeled “heaven”. “B” stands for belief. To experience salvation we must be believers.

10. Prayer Challenge - Audience is asked to bow heads and personally respond to the message. They are urged to truly be “believers”.

11. Sword Box Production Of A Rabbit - Sword represents condemnation. Scripture is Romans chapter eight and verse one, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus”. Sword is taken away and rabbit appears. Those who have salvation have escaped condemnation and found true spiritual life.

Scope of the program - Salvation is deliverance from spiritual death. It is to have a changed heart and life. It means there is no more barrier between you and God. It means we are safe because of our faith. Therefore let’s make sure we truly are believers!
Sample Program #4
Theme: “What Helps Christians Grow?”

1. **Barehand Blendo With Green Silks** - Three small green silks (six inch size) become one large silk (eighteen inch size) in the performers hand. (This is done with a thumbtip like the standard thumbtip blendo). This illustrates the concept of growing. Green for growth. Let’s grow stronger in Christ!

2. **Exact Distance Warm-up Gag** - Described in “LAUGH-LINES” book.

3. **Hippity Hop Rabbits** - Classic comedy/sucker gag.

4. **Torn and Restored Napkin** - Used to illustrate “magic” and illusion. What happens is impossible. The magician does things that appear to be impossible, but only God can do miracles.

4. **Linking Ropes** - Uses two spectators from the audience. Lesson about “joining together”. Fellowship is something that helps Christians grow.

5. **Bible Production Box** - Box that looks like a Bible is shown empty as an example of the fact that some do not believe it is the Word Of God. Then a rainbow streamer is produced from it to say it is truly God’s book and filled with wonderful promises. The Bible helps Christians grow.

6. **Silk Vanish and Reappearance In Empty Box** - Story of Peter’s imprisonment. Silk represents Peter. The
church prayed and he ended up at their prayer meeting! (Silk vanishes from paper cone and ends up in box.) Lesson about power of prayer. Prayer helps Christians grow.

7. Daniel And The Lions - A version of “Grandmother’s Necklace” or “Cords Of Phantasia” involving cutouts of lions and Daniel. A child, who plays the part of Daniel, is saved from the lions. Lesson is about obedience and witnessing. Obedience and witnessing helps Christians grow.

8. Strat-O-Spheres - Trick with three balls that keep changing places. Lesson is about priorities. The need to keep Christ as the number one person in our lives. Being faithful to the Lordship of Christ helps Christians grow.

9. Prayer Challenge - Audience asked to bow their heads and recommit their lives to the Lord.

10. Giant Hank Box Silk Production - Doing the things that help us grow in Christ is worth it for there are wonderful blessings for us. They are blessings that the world may not see nor understand, but the blessings are definitely there!

Scope of the program - Christians grow through fellowship, the Bible, prayer, obedience, witnessing, and being faithful to the Lordship of Christ. There are many blessings for those who do these things.
Sample Program #5
Theme: “Why Should Christians Witness?”

1. **Stiff Rope** - Ask the question, “What is the difference between religion and salvation?” With jokes involved, point is made that we can’t ascend to God, He, through Jesus Christ, came down to us. The strange way the rope becomes rigid represents how God made the way for us through Christ.

2. **“If It Wasn’t For You” Warm-up** - From “LAUGH-LINES” book.

3. **Vanishing Coke Bottle** - To remind them that magic is only “illusion” and to “wow” them with a great trick.

4. **Linking Rings** - Involves spectator from the audience. Near the end of the routine a cross pattern is made. This is used to say “tricks are fun, but the most important thing is the message of the cross”. This is followed with an explanation that the theme of the program is about sharing the message of the cross.

5. **Spotlight Trick** - A yellow “spotlight” card vanishes. Message is there is no yellow light or “middle ground” when it comes to eternity. A person is either saved or lost, going to heaven or not going to heaven. We must challenge them to be on the right road.

6. **Sponge Balls To Spectators Hand** - Faith should be shared. (Balls multiply in person’s hand). Routine ends with a growing ball and the message that we should share the message in a big way.
7. **20th Century Silks** - To illustrate the basic ingredients of the gospel. We should witness because the gospel is the greatest message in the universe and it is our privilege to share it!

8. **Happiness Clown Routine** - A spectator helps tell the story of a person finding happiness. Trick involves silks in a change bag that eventually become a giant happy clown picture. Why should we witness? Because people can only find true joy through Christ!

9. **Buddha Tubes Production Of Silks And Then Production Of Alarm Clocks By Way Of A Steal Under The Silks** - Some say the promise of Christ returning is an “empty” promise. (Tubes shown empty). But Jesus is coming again! (Production). The “time” will surely come. (Production of clocks). Why witness? Because Jesus Christ is coming again and the time for witnessing is limited.

10. **Prayer Challenge** - To be a faithful witness. To make sure we do know the Lord.

11. **Sword Basket Illusion** - Why witness? Jesus Christ is the only way people can escape spiritual death and eternal judgment and find life and victory instead!

**Scope of the program** - Why witness? Because people must make a decision (no middle ground), because sharing our faith and seeing it multiply is something we are commanded to do, because it is the only way people can find true joy, because Jesus is coming again, because eternal life and death are at stake!
Sample Program #6
Theme: “The Basic Elements Of The Gospel”

*Note - This is a good routine for an evangelistic presentation at a place where you will be only one night.

1. Silk Routine To Music - About three minutes of magic done to music. Mainly silk tricks. The finish is a silk fountain with a Jesus Silk in the middle.

2. Vanishing Coke Bottle - Strong trick to baffle and impress the audience.

3. Giant Sponge Balls To Pocket Routine - To illustrate sleight of hand and what “magic” is and is not.

4. Linking Rings - Fun with an audience member. A cross design near the end of the routine to explain that “at the cross” we find a forever kind of happiness.

5. Cut And Restored Rope - The first element of the gospel is recognizing the problem of sin. Cutting the rope illustrates the problem of sin and separation for God. Restoring it demonstrates what Christ has done for mankind.

6. Coffee Vase Silk Production - The second element of the gospel is understanding that sin brings judgment. Fire in the vase represents the “wages of sin”. The silk streamer production represents the “gift of God”.

7. Nest Of Boxes - Another key aspect of the gospel is understanding that man must make a response to what
Christ has done. The “Nest Of Boxes” routine involves the vanish of a coin that reappears in an impossible place. It illustrates the fact that you don’t “lose” when you “choose” Christ.

8. Guilt Is Gone - Comedy card trick with a gospel message. A “guilt” card disappears. A “Jesus” card appears in its place. Message is Jesus is the one who removes our guilt and gives us peace and joy.

9. 20th Century Silks - The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ illustrated by a silk that vanishes and reappears tied between two others. The heart of the gospel is that Christ died as predicted in the Scriptures, He was buried, then He returned to life!

10. Prayer Challenge - This is your opportunity to put your trust in the gospel message.

11. Square Circle Production - Jesus Christ came to bring us fulfillment, a reason to live, salvation, and everlasting life. When the box is shown empty it represents how without Christ there is no fulfillment, no real reason to live, no salvation, and certainly no eternal life. Next comes the production, when you make the point that Jesus places within our lives all the things that have to do with joy and victory that never ends.

Scope of the program - The gospel involves understanding that sin separates man from God and brings judgment. God’s solution to the problem of sin is Jesus Christ. His death, burial, and resurrection brings us salvation when we put our faith in Him.
Sample Program #7
Theme: “Who Can Go To Heaven?”

*Note - This is similar to program six, but uses different tricks and a different angle on the message.

1. Barehand Blendo - (Done with a thumbtip and three small silks that blend into an American flag.) Quick trick that states how we find our “spiritual freedom” from sin, guilt, and the power of evil through salvation in Christ.

2. Hamburger And Shake Warm-up - In “LAUGH-LINES” book.

3. Die Box - Done for comedy in the classic style

4. Professor’s Nightmare - Familiar rope trick used to ask and answer the question, “Who can go to heaven?”

5. Bible Way - Trick with eleven volunteers from the audience. Illustrates the way to heaven.

6. Ledger Of Life - A variation on the classic “Magic Coloring Book” effect. In this version sins are listed, then covered by Christ’s blood, then they disappear altogether.

7. Wrong Choice Cards - A spectator picks a card representing choosing the world over Christ. He ends up with nothing. The message is the only way to be an everlasting winner is by trusting Christ.

8. Jesus And The Thieves Feather Plume Trick - Color changing plumes represent the thief on the cross and the
choice he made.

9. **Prayer Challenge** - Have you put your trust in Christ?

10. **Phantom Tube Production And Silk Fountain** - The empty tube is like the empty life. The production and exciting silk fountain convey the truth of how Christ brings blessing to life.

**Scope of the program** - Who can go to heaven? Anyone who trusts Christ; for Jesus is the “way” to heaven. He is the one who died for our sins. We must make a decision for Him. When we do we find everlasting life.
Sample Program #8
Theme: “Some Things To Remember”

*Note - This program is great for ministry in a nursing home or rest home. It encourages while gently challenging people to know Christ.

1. **Music Routine With Silks And Flowers** - Colorful tricks. Silks are produced and placed into the bottom of a dove pan. The dove pan load is a flower production.

2. **Russian Rings** - Used to illustrate “Illusion” and explain what “magic” is and is not.

3. **Catch A Butterfly Silk Routine** - Spectator helps. Change bag is used to “hunt” for a butterfly. First a caterpillar is produced, then a cocoon is created, finally there is a butterfly. Lesson is: Remember God is faithful to bring us through the growth process. (Like being a caterpillar before you become a butterfly).

4. **Soft Soap** - A “sucker” routine with silks and a box of soap to illustrate how forgiveness is a reality. Lesson is: Remember that forgiveness is real.

5. **Blendo Of Silks Using Crystal Silk Cylinder** - Illustrates Romans chapter eight and verse twenty-eight and how “all things work together for good”. Lesson is: Remember how God brings good out of difficult times.

6. **Life Is A Puzzle Effect** - Spectators choose numbers that create a picture of Christ. Lesson is: Remember that Christ is the answer.
7. **Wish Box** - A production box used to illustrate the return of Christ. Empty box suggests attitude some have that the return of Christ is an empty promise. Production suggests that the return is real.

*Note* - This production does not use a prayer challenge. It is designed for a shorter presentation and a circumstance where having a prayer challenge would not be practical.

**Scope of program** - Remember that God is faithful to bring us through the process of life. Remember that forgiveness is real. Remember that all things work together for good. Remember that Christ is the answer. Remember that Jesus is coming again!
Sample Program #9  
Theme: “What Is Forgiveness?”

*Note - This shorter program is appropriate for a situation where you do a short segment in a service where other people are also involved. Someone else will likely do the prayer challenge and wrap up. You are entertaining and illustrating the lesson in an upbeat manner.


2. **What’s Next** - Spot Card routine provides humor and illustrates what “magic” is and is not.

3. **Shadow Rabbit** - Comedy routine with spectators who try to create a rabbit picture with silk. Baffling trick that is great fun.

4. **Cut And Restored Rope** - Forgiveness is being restored to God.

5. **Soft Soap** - “Sucker” aspect to the trick provides comedy, but still tremendously illustrates concept that forgiveness applies to all the sins we have committed.

6. **Ledger Of Life** - Forgiveness is having the record of sin and failure removed.

7. **ABC Blocks** - Forgiveness comes when we “believe”. It is by grace through faith that we can be in heaven.
Scope of the program - It is wonderful to know just how great the forgiveness is that God provides through Christ. He restores us to Himself. He forgives all sin. He removes the record of our sin. He gives us the promise of heaven.
Sample Program #10
Theme: “Foundations For Strength In Life”

*Note - This presentation was made at a Bible camp where most of the young people already knew the Lord. The aim of the program was to motivate them to take advantage of spiritual resources.

1. Applause Flower - This is a routine with a “Wilting Flower”. It stands up to applause and wilts when applause dies away. Basically this is a warm-up bit. It creates enthusiasm because boys and girls compete with one another to see who can clap the loudest and make the flower stand up the best.

2. Linking Ropes - Used to illustrate “magic” and what it is and is not.

3. Catch A Butterfly Silk Routine - Spectator helps in the hunt for a butterfly. This is a change bag and silk trick that involves a sequential production. First there is a caterpillar, then a cocoon, and finally a beautiful butterfly. The theme is that there is a process that leads to beauty at the end. This is compared to the Christian life and the fact that there is a “growth process”.

4. “Bible” version of Magic Coloring Book - Change from no color to color in pictures is likened to how the Bible becomes a blessed book to us when we know the author.

5. Silk Cabby Production - Cabby is called a “prayer closet”. When streamer is produced from it the lesson is
how there is power in the prayer closet and through that power we can reach out and touch the world for God.

6. Chain Link Routine With Box That Looks Like A Church - Power of fellowship. How God wants us to work together. (Individual links of chain become one long chain when placed in the box).

7. Sponge Balls To Spectators Hand - A commitment to sharing our faith is another foundation for strength in life.

8. Phantom Tube Production Of Silks And Silk Fountain - The most important foundation for strength in life is having Jesus Christ come into your heart and having His resurrection power fill your life.

Scope of the program - There is a growth process for the Christian life. We find strength for this process in the Bible, in prayer, in fellowship (church), in sharing our faith, and most of all in Christ Himself who is in our hearts.
Chapter 12: A Word About Fire And Chopper Tricks

Times have changed. Thirty-five years ago, when I began in gospel magic, no one ever questioned the use of fire or “chopper” type tricks.

I now shudder to think about it, but in my very early shows I actually had a stream of fire about two feet long shoot out from my finger tips during the performance. This was accomplished by way of a small pressurized bottle of butane that I had strapped to a belt under my coat. I stuck a length of plastic tubing from a fish aquarium to the nozzle on the butane bottle and then ran the tubing up through my coat and inside the arm of my jacket so it ended at my sleeve. I taped a small cigarette lighter to this end of the tube. To make fire I would reach inside my coat with one hand to push down on the nozzle of the butane bottle and release gas into the aquarium tube. With the other hand I would snap the lighter to create a spark. The gas came out the tube and into the spark whereupon it ignited and created a giant flame.

It is a wonder that I did not hurt myself or someone else with this contraption. Maybe an even greater wonder is the fact that no one ever complained about the effect. Back in those days we could fill Dove Pans with fire, use flash cotton in the Coffee Vase trick, and make fire come from our finger tips and people thought it was neat. Now we might get thrown in jail for such things.

On my own I figured out that my flame thrower setup was dangerous and quit doing it. (Please readers, do not try it. I explained it to illustrate my stupidity, not to suggest you might use the idea). Since then I have watched regulations change and stricter fire codes come
into existence.

Then there was that awful fire in the night club in Rhode Island several years ago where many people died in a horrible manner. The fire was started by a performer who used pyrotechnics in a foolish and dangerous manner. This resulted in concerns and new laws that impacted our entire nation about how fire is used on stage.

Recently I have performed in churches where local fire codes did not allow me to even light the tip of my vanishing candles. I have worked in a number of theaters where no fire of any kind is allowed unless first approved by the Fire Marshall. If a fire effect is approved, there then is the requirement to pay for a local fireman to be present and observe the performance of the effect.

This has led me to take fire effects out of my programs. Now, rather than using a Dove Pan to do “fire to flowers”, I use a skull and crossbones silk in the Dove Pan and do “silk to flowers”. The routine plays just as well. I do the same with the Coffee Vase routine. A skull and crossbones silk is used in place of fire and the message comes across strong and clear.

You may have noticed that in my older programs the Burned and Restored Handkerchief was often used. It is a great trick and I have always liked it. However, nowadays I don’t do it. Instead I use scissors and cut the center out of the handkerchief. The Cut and Restored Handkerchief works just as well.

**It is important for me to say that, as a general rule, I have not taken fire out of my programs to avoid problems with a Fire Marshall, I do it because I want to promote safely and I don’t want to do something that a child might try to duplicate with a disastrous**
result.

In our large illusion show, I still, on rare occasions, may use fire. When I do, I make sure to abide by local fire codes and “jump through the hoops” to get permission for the special fire effects. Also, on rare occasions in a smaller scale show I still might do the Flash String To Silk effect or use a lighter for my Vanishing Candles. When I do so it is with permission and careful consideration of who is in the audience.

I do not approve of the “better to ask forgiveness than beg permission attitude!” This past summer at a conference of the Fellowship Of Christian Magicians, evening programs were being done on a stage where fire was not allowed. The performers were specifically told not to use fire. Several performers ignored this. I actually heard one say, “I will just act like I was not aware of the rule. You know…better to beg forgiveness than ask permission!” He went ahead and used fire in his act. In my opinion his behavior was selfish, disrespectful and dishonest. It definitely was not the Christian way to behave.

In the show he got away with what he did. No one approached afterwards to confront him for violating the rules. They just let it go.

It is true that church leaders and organizers of events are often reluctant to confront people (especially at special events). You may cross paths with performers who smugly tell you they ignore the rules about fire and no one ever says anything.

These performers may not realize that in spite of the fact that no one says anything about it, their disregard of rules hurts their testimony and keeps them from getting invited back for future
performances.

I occasionally produce shows and hire talent for special events. I often help performers get work. No one who disregards fire rules will ever work for me or get a recommendation from me.

With “chopper” tricks the situation is similar, but not as severe. When I started in magic “chopper” tricks were standard fare for magicians. As political correctness has become a greater concern and because of violence in schools and new laws about weapons and in particular about blades in public gatherings; audiences have become much more sensitive to head choppers, arm choppers, wrist choppers and such...especially when they are done with a child from the audience.

For a while I quit doing “chopper” tricks altogether. Now I am doing them again, but with a very different approach than what I used in the past and with much more sensitivity to the audience and their concerns. I do not use the bloody towel gag. I do not present the prop as a punishment tool or death device. Instead I take the approach of the trick being a “not so scientific” experiment where we will see if solid can go through solid.
Chapter 13: More Sample Programs

The next ten programs have less explanation with them. They are presented as skeleton outlines. Their value is to help you get started in your thinking about the development of a presentation. You will need to flesh them out with your own ideas and routines.

Most of the outlines come from the early days of my performing career. I still turn to them when needing to put a show together for a special situation, but I no longer use them as they are. They would work as they are, but I am not the same person I was twenty years ago so adjustments must be made for my new style and the tricks I prefer at this stage of life.

In other words; the outlines are still helpful to me and I believe looking them over will be helpful to you. They are definitely “good food for the gospel magician’s thoughts”.

*Note* - You will notice that even though I present it by way of different questions and statements, the salvation theme is one that I work with again and again. The reason for this is the bulk of my work is in the category of evangelism. I typically am brought in under the idea that people will be attracted to my kind of program who might not normally come to church. The goal is to create a good experience for these people wherein they also hear the gospel.

Not all gospel magicians travel like I do and not all are employed for the same purpose as I. Some do many programs for the same church or for the same local ministry programs. Therefore their programs will need to deal with themes beyond the central message of
salvation; such as growth, obedience, giving, creation, character building, etc. If I was doing more programs about such themes I would still take the approach presented in this book. A key idea would be chosen and individual tricks would be used to develop concepts that all connect to the key idea.
Sample Program #11
Theme: “What Is Salvation?”

1. **Appearing Cane (Silk To Cane)** - Happens fast to impress and capture attention.

2. **What’s Next?** - Fun. Explains “magic”.


4. **Switch Can Silks** - Stained silks become clean. Salvation is forgiveness and cleansing.

5. **Color Changing Silk Routine (Palmo gimmick. Silks change when passed through hand.)** - Salvation is a change to new life.

6. **Wrong Choice Cards** - Salvation is a personal decision.

7. **Dove Production In Empty Cage** - Salvation is Christ coming in.
Sample Program #12
Theme: “What Is Salvation?”

*Note - Same theme as program eleven. Different tricks and presentation.

1. Vanishing Cane -(Blind man who met Christ…no longer needed his walking stick.)

2. Die Box - Classic comedy routine

3. Illusion Of One Rope - Explains “illusion” and “magic”.

4. Change Bag Silks - Spectator puts silks in bag. They change. Salvation is a change of heart.

5. Burned And Restored Handkerchief - Salvation is being “justified”. (Just as if it was never burned - today I would do the Cut And Restored version instead).

6. ABC Blocks - Salvation comes when we ‘believe”

7. Phantom Tube Silk Production - Salvation is Jesus Christ coming in!
Sample Program #13

Theme: “Some Important Things To Remember About Living The Christian Life”


2. Linking Ropes - To explain “magic”

3. Sponge Balls To Spectator’s Hand With Growing Ball - Remember to share your faith.

4. Silk Vanish From Hand To Appear In Small Drawer Box - Remember to pray. Silk is like Peter, delivered from prison to arrive at the prayer meeting.

5. Chain Link In Church Box - Remember to Fellowship. Need to link together with other believers.

6. Balloon Penetration - Remember to wear the “armor of God” for Satan does want to ruin us.

7. Agree With All Of Scripture Card Match Trick - Uses five helpers. Remember to read and obey God’s Word.

8. Strat-O-Spheres - Remember to keep Christ in the “top spot” in your life.

9. Production Of Clocks - Remember the “times” and fact that Jesus Christ is coming again.
Sample Program #14
Theme: “Why Share Your Faith?”

1. Perpetual Sponge Ball Production (No spectator used for this. The balls keep multiplying in the performer’s own hands.) - Today we will be talking about how our faith should be multiplied.

2. Vanishing Ketchup Bottle (Norm Nielson) - Comedy and great trick.

3. Palmo Silk Routine - Explain “magic”.


5. Cut and Restored Rope - Share because man is separated from God.

6. Dove Pan To Flowers - Share because there are only two options for eternity…blessing or everlasting punishment.

7. 20th Century Silks Illustration Of Death, Burial, And Resurrection Of Christ - This is the gospel we share!

8. Wish Box Production Of Silks - Return of Christ is not “wishful” thinking. He is coming again. We do not have “forever” in this world. We need to share while we can.
Sample Program #15
Theme: “The Good News!”

1. Thumbtip Production And Vanish Of Silks - Impresses the audience and used to explain what “magic” is. I am there as an illusionist and I have come with good news!

2. Linking Ring Routine - Along with telling the news, we are going to have some fun! (Routine done mainly for fun).

3. Torn And Restored Newspaper - In a world of bad news God brings good news…He can restore that which has been broken and ruined by sin!

4. God-Sin-Man Block Release Effect - A big part of the good news is the barrier between God and man can be removed!

5. Ledger Of Life - More good news is the record of sin can be erased because we can be completely forgiven!

6. Nest Of Boxes - Even more good news…when we give our lives to God we always come out the winners!

7. Jumbo Drawer Box Production Of Rabbit - Even more good news…for the Christian the future is not empty of hope…it rather is filled with exciting promise!
Sample Program #16
Theme: “Salvation Is…”

*Note - This program was developed for a Bible Hour time at a camp. It was to be illustrated teaching of a doctrinal type lesson.

1. Direction Arrow Effect - The “right” choice is to give your heart to Jesus Christ. In this lesson we will consider a list of things that are true for those who do trust Christ. We will finish the statement, “Salvation is…”

2. Rope To Silk - Salvation is a transformation! (II Cor. 5:17)

3. Spelling Bee Trick Where The Word Various Becomes Saviour - Salvation is only by Jesus Christ! (John 14:6)

4. Small Phantom Tube Production Of Silks - Salvation is abundant life! (John 10:10)

5. Cut And Restored Rope - Salvation is restoration! (Eph. 2:1-6)

6. Linking Loops (Performed with Switch Can and hair loops) - Salvation is reconciliation! (Col. 1:20-21)

7. Caterpillar To Butterfly Effect With Palmo - Salvation is regeneration (John 3:3-7)

8. Balloon Penetration - Salvation is deliverance from
spiritual death. (Col. 1:13)

9. Wrong Choice Cards - *Salvation is* worth more than all the world can offer. (Mark 8:36)

10. ABC Blocks - *Salvation is* obtained by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. (Eph. 2:8-9)
Sample Program #17
Theme: “Making Life Beautiful”

*Note - This program was used for a mother-daughter banquet. A good Scripture to use with this program is Proverbs chapter thirty-one, verses ten through thirty-one.

1. Music Routine - Silk magic with silk fountain finish.

2. Pompom Stick - Humor and to explain magic.


5. Rainbow Ropes (Also known as Patriotic Ropes. Three ropes become one rope.) - Keeping Christ in the center of our relationships brings beauty into life.

6. Cut And Restored Handkerchief - Understanding the truth of “grace” brings beauty into life.

7. Strat-O-Spheres - Keeping priorities right brings beauty into life.

8. Genii Tube Production of Silks And Streamer - Focusing on the character of the “inner person” is where true beauty if found.
Sample Program #18
Theme: “To Have Abundant Life…”

1. Direction Arrow - Go the “right way” and make the “right choice”

2. Thumbtip vanish and production of silks - Explain what “magic” is and is not.

3. Linking Rings - Fun. Cross figure with rings a reminder that abundant life begins at the cross.

4. Soft Soap Routine - One step to abundant life is getting rid of guilt!

5. Happiness Clown Routine - With spectator and change bag. A sad clown silks becomes a happy clown silk. Another step to abundant life is giving yourself to God!

6. Cube On Block Release Effect - Another step to abundant life is grasping the truth of victory in Jesus.

7. 20th Century Silks - Another step to abundant life is gaining a clear understanding of the gospel message.

8. Buddha Tubes (Oriental Production Tubes) - Yet another step to abundant life is going forward with God. (Believing He has great things for you in the future. Trust Him and move forward into His will for your life).

*Notice in the “abundant life” routine the words beginning with “g”. Getting, giving, grasping, gaining,
going. These words help people remember the progression of the message. When working with children I have them repeat the words aloud. Along with aiding their memory of my main points, it also helps keep their attention.

So after a few tricks I might pause and ask, “Who knows the first “G” word? Let’s say it together!” I then will ask “Who can tells us the second “G” word?” and so on.

Apart from having words that all begin with the same letter, I do like to ask children to repeat points I make over the course of a program. I do not do this in every show, but I do it in many shows. Several times during a presentation I may pause and say, “Let’s review what we have learned so far. Remember, our theme is: Who Is Jesus! See if you can finish this sentences. Jesus is …?” They are to say, “Jesus is God”. I have them make the statement out loud. This involvement of the children by way of verbalizing the truths that they hear seems to be a good teaching technique.
Sample Program #19
Theme: “Why Is It Great To Be A Christian?”

1. Direction Arrow - Christians have decided to let Christ direct their lives.


3. Duke Dye Version - Spectators try to remember colors. Application is a Christian who is someone who can please God

4. Professor’s Nightmare - A Christian is someone who knows he or she can be mightily used of God. (The equal ropes remind us that God can use all of us in wonderful ways.)

5. Balloon Penetration - A Christian is someone who is protected by God’s grace.

6. Silken Choice Prediction Effect - A Christian is someone who is confident of the love of God and God’s knowledge of his or her daily needs and problems.

7. Botania Flower Production - A Christian is one who can have the most wonderful and beautiful life possible in this world…and then there is everlasting life in heaven!
Sample Program #20
Theme: “Lies Satan Loves To Tell”

1. Russian Rings - Can you trust what you see?

2. Boomerangs - Explanation of “illusion” and that things are not always what they seem to be. Introduction to theme of “Lies Satan Loves To Tell”.

3. Agree With All Of Scripture Card Match Routine - To avoid Satan’s lies, agree with the Scripture.

4. Production Of Devil Head Scarf From Drawer Box - Lie #1. He wants us to believe he does not exist.

5. Illusion Of One Rope - Lie #2. He wants us to believe that all roads lead to heaven.

6. White Silks To Stained Silks - Lie #3. He wants us to believe sin does not really hurt anything.

7. Jesus Lives Paper Tear - Lie #4. He wants us to believe Jesus was just another teacher.

98. Square Circle Production - Lie #5. He wants us to believe that the Christian life is not worth living.

*Note - Other lies could be used such as the lie that the Bible is not the Word of God or the lie that sharing one’s faith is not important or the lie that there is no eternal judgment for those who reject Christ.
Chapter 14: Recent Sample Programs

As mentioned in the introduction to this book; before this present publication which is titled, “Anatomy Of A Gospel Magic Show”, there was a publication titled, “Making The Point With Gospel Magic. This present book as an update and addition to that original publication.

The sample programs listed so far are basically what was published years ago with some corrections and changes. I am still using the old program ideas in a variety of ways. However, I do have many new tricks that did not exist in my “magic closet” back then and I have grown and changed as a performer.

Therefore, In the process of rewriting I have switched some new tricks into the old programs and made a few adjustments to the outlines themselves. In doing this it occurred to me that readers might be curious about my newer routines. How do my programs look today?

On following pages you will find samples of recent programs along with the date when they were presented and the place where they were presented. You will notice I am still following the same basic format of performance as I did in the past. The main differences between many years ago and today is I do much more with music, I do not do tricks with animals, and I have a variety of new props.

Of course, physically I am different on stage. My hairstyle and costuming has changed dramatically. (My body has changed too!) I trust my stage presence and showmanship are much improved.

*Note - The reason I no longer use livestock is travel conditions. I still believe producing a rabbit is much
appreciated by an audience and I know there are many wonderful tricks that can be done with doves. If you are able to return from shows to your own home and sleep in your own bed at night, it is probably wise to use animals in your show.

If you are sleeping in motel rooms and spending long days in a vehicle; animals become a problem. Even if you enjoy having them with you; keeping them safe and properly cared for can be difficult.

For the past ten years or so we have done quite a bit of international work. It is not worth the hassle and sometimes impossible to take animals overseas or across national boundaries. For us it does not make sense to work out feature tricks with animals and then not be able to use those tricks because the animals have to be left behind when we “hit the road”.

What About Animals In A Gospel Magic Show?

I recommend using animals in your show if most of your work is local or within a short driving distance.

I do not recommend using animals if you plan to travel a lot and especially if you hope to do work overseas.

If you do use animals, care for them properly and be aware that some communities actually have rules and laws about how “show animals” must be treated.
Sample Program #21
Theme: “Keep On Serving The Lord”

*Note* - This program was for a “worker appreciation banquet” at Grove City Church Of The Nazarene in Columbus, Ohio. Date was December 14, 2008.


2. *Vanishing Coke Bottle* - (Yes, I still use this effect and it still “wows” the audience).

3. *Pompom Stick* - For humor and to explain what “magic” is and is not.

4. *Linking Rings* - Audience participation. Humor. Cross figure with rings used to remind the audience that eternal joy is the most important joy.

5. *RYBW Ropes* - I did not have this trick twenty years ago or it would be listed often in the older sample routines. It involves four ropes. One is red, one is yellow, one is black, one is white. They mysteriously blend into one rope. Message is about God’s love for everyone whether they be red, yellow, black, or white. It worked as a reminder to workers that it is the love of God that motivates us!

6. *Blooming Bouquet* - Flowers are picked from a bouquet and then they magically grow back. Theme is
giving of yourself and knowing God gives back to you. Christian workers can never “out-give” God.

7. Genii Tube Production Of Silks To Silk Fountain And Huge God Is Love Banner - Without Christ the world has no hope. As workers we are bringing hope…and what a wonderful message to share…that God is Love!

*Note - This was a short presentation (about 30 minutes) that fit into a banquet situation where several other things were also part of the program.

Scope of the program - We share the message of the cross and are motivated by God’s love, by the blessings we find in giving and sharing, and by the knowledge that the world desperately needs the truth we have to share!
Sample Program #22  
Theme: “Why God Sent Jesus?”

*Note - This program also was done at Grove City Church Of The Nazarene. The same day we did the worker appreciation banquet, we also did the Sunday morning children’s ministry. We had about thirty-five minutes. Did two back to back show for the kids. Date was December 14, 2008

1. Simple Silk Act To Music - Vanishes, color changes, and a silk fountain. Fun way to start a program for kids.

2. Russian Rings - Used to explain “magic”.

3. Rising Wand - I call this the “Jumping Wand Of Fu Ling Yu”. It is a comedy bit that further emphasizes that my tricks are only tricks. It is God alone who does miracles.

4. Clap Hands Warm-up - It is a great warm-up gag that works as well today as it did thirty years ago!

5. Sponge Balls To Pocket - For fun and to further emphasize that my tricks involve sleight of hand.

6. Reason For The Season - This is a giant trick done with eleven volunteers and eleven pictures. It is the same as my “Bible Way” effect. This version is themed to make the point that “Jesus is the reason for the season”.

7. Bible Production Box - The Bible has many promises. These are not “empty” promises. God keeps His word.
The promises He made about sending His son all came true. (Rainbow streamer production from box illustrates the true promise).

8. Massal Tube Blendo Into Jesus Silk - The “Massal Tube” is decorated with lettering that says, “Isaiah 9:6”. The promise from Isaiah about God sending Christ is explained as silks are produced. These silks go back into the tube and finally a Jesus silk is produced. God sent His son to be “Wonderful, counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, and prince of peace”.

9. Wrong Choice Cards - God send His Son so we can have Him in our lives. We must not make the wrong choice and leave Him out of our lives. Especially at Christmas we must remember that more important than money and presents is a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

10. Jesus And The Thieves Feather Plume Trick - Here is an example of a man who made the right choice about Jesus Christ.

11. 20th Century Jesus Silk Routine With Crystal Silk Cylinder - God sent Jesus to live a perfect life, die for our sins, then rise again so He could forgive us and save us.

*Note - The children’s pastor followed this with a prayer challenge and his own way of closing the service.
Sample Program #23
Theme: “We Learn Much From The Bible”

*Note - This is short program. It was done in our local church for the Sunday morning children’s ministry. Our responsibility was to give a 20 minute lesson. Place was Gumstand Baptist Church. Date was November 30, 2008.

1. Simple Silk Act To Music - Vanishes, color changes, and a silk fountain. This was fun for the kids…and for me!

2. Sponge Balls To Pocket - Used to explain sleight of hand and “magic”.

3. Agree With All Of Scripture - A card match trick with five volunteers. The kids mysteriously match up statements from the Bible.

4. Bible Production Box - The Bible is not an “empty” box. It is full of wonderful promises.

5. Jesus And The Thieves Feather Plume Routine - A story we read in the Bible. How a thief was forgiven and went to heaven. We have the same opportunity to trust Christ.

Scope of the program - A simple reminder that the Bible is God’s Word, it brings blessing to our lives, and it gives us true stories that show us how to go to heaven
Sample Program #24
Theme: “Jesus Is The Way”

*Note - This was a thirty minute presentation that took place as part of a Sunday morning service at First Baptist Church in Tyler, Texas on November 16, 2008. It filled what usually would have been the sermon portion of the service.

1. Simple Silk Act - Vanishes, color changes, productions, silk fountain with “God Is Love” silk ending.

2. Linking Rings - Audience member helps. Fun and message about the cross.

3. “If It Wasn’t For You” Warm-up - From “LAUGH-LINES” book.

4. Bible Way Trick - Eleven children from the audience assist in a prediction type effect that illustrates that Jesus Christ is the “way” to heaven.

5. Cut And Restored Rope - Jesus is the “way” to recover from the separation from God caused by sin.

6. Wrong Choice Card Trick - We must make the right choice because Jesus is the only way to experience eternal life and day by day blessing.

7. Jesus And The Thieves Feather Plumes - Story of thief who learned that Jesus is the “way” and found salvation.
8. 20th Century Jesus Silks With Crystal Silk Cylinder - Death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ shows He is the true way to heaven. Have we put our trust in Him?

Scope of the program - The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is the one way to heaven. He is the way to recover from the separation from God caused by sin. He is the way to eternal life and a life worth living so make the right choice about Him. Remember the story of the thief on the cross and how He realized that Jesus is the way to heaven. The death burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ gives ultimate proof that Jesus is the way of salvation.

Obviously, the message was centered around the word “the way”. It was the common thread that gave continuity to the overall presentation.

*Note - The pastor did the prayer challenge and closed the service. The congregation was wonderfully positive in their compliments about the program. Immediately after the service the pastor talked with us about when we might be able to come back again.

As well, the church was enthusiastic about the fact that they had a record attendance on this Sunday. They felt that the gospel magic presentation had much to do with bringing in such a large crowd.
The Bigger Show

At this stage in our career we often do large programs featuring major illusions. On the next few pages you will see two versions of the same show. One was an hour in length. The other was an hour and a half.

This show is not a standard “gospel magic” presentation in that I do not develop a theme in the same way I would for a Bible school or church service. In this situation I see the show as mainly about attracting people to a place where they can hear the plan of salvation. Therefore the show is heavy on entertainment and the main message comes in near the end.
Sample #25.
Theme: “How To Be Happy Forever”


2. **Martinka Chair Illusion** - A big chair mysteriously turns upside down.

3. **Sword Cabinet** - Mary goes into a box that is then penetrated by sixteen swords. She comes out just fine. No talking with this routine, just music.

4. “**Thumbbody**” Warm-up - In “**LAUGH-LINE**” book.

5. **Pompom Stick** - Comedy and to explain “magic”.

6. **Comedy With Change Bag and Streamer** - Uses two members of the audience. Fun with silks that become a giant streamer.


8. **Body Slicer** - Big illusion involving a blade and an audience member.

9. **Sleight Of Hand Routine With Silk** - Different than the silk tricks done at the start of the show. No talking. Music background. Ends with production of gorgeous six
foot butterfly silk.

10. **Linking Rings** - Involves audience member. Introduces theme that “forever happiness starts at the cross”.

11. **Guilt Is Gone** - Comedy card trick where a “guilt” card vanishes while “peace” and “joy” cards remain.

12. **Cross Illusion** - A boy from the audience is tied to a cross to represent the thief on the cross. He is released in an astonishing manner. Illustrates what Faith in Christ did for the thief.

13. **Jesus And The Thieves Feather Plumes** - Further explains the story of the thief on the cross.


15. **Prayer Challenge** - Opportunity to pray and receive Christ.

16. **Giant ABC Blocks** - “B” is for “Believers”. They are the ones who will be in heaven!
Sample #26.
Theme: “How To Be Happy Forever”

1. Show opens with music routine. Canes, Silks, Snaps Silks, Tubes

2. Head Twister Illusion

3. Mutilated Parasol - Done with a member of the audience. Lots of funny business.

4. Vanishing Coke Bottle


6. Pompom Stick - Comedy and explanation of “magic”.

7. Comedy With Change Bag and Streamer - Uses two members of the audience. Fun with silks that become a giant streamer.

8. Sword Cabinet - Done to music. No talking.


10. Linking Rings - Fun with audience member. Introduces theme of “Forever happiness”.

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11. Sleight Of Hand Routine With Silk - Different than the silk tricks done at the start of the show. No talking. Music background. Ends with production of beautiful six foot square butterfly silk.

BREAK - Offering and announcements

12. “Clap Hands” Warm-up - Used to gain attention to start part two of the show.

13. Cut And Restored Rope - Done for fun. No message.


15. Giant Mental Match Illusion - With child from audience. Big prop. Key idea illustrated by the routine is that of making a right choice.

16. Guilt Is Gone - Comedy card trick where a “guilt” card vanishes while “peace” and “joy” cards remain.

17. Cross Illusion - A boy from the audience is tied to a cross to represent the thief on the cross. He is released in an astonishing manner. Illustrates what Faith in Christ did for the thief.

18. Jesus And The Thieves Feather Plumes - Further explains the story of the thief on the cross.

19. 20th Century Jesus Silks With Crystal Silk Cylinder - Full explanation of the gospel. A clear and powerful
illustration of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

20. **Prayer Challenge** - Opportunity to pray and receive Christ.

21. **Giant ABC Blocks** - “B” is for “Believers”. They are the ones who will be in heaven!

*Note* - This entire show was done by just Mary and I. No assistants. The larger tricks were Head Twister, Sword Cabinet, Martinka Chair, Mental Match, Cross Illusion, and Giant ABC Blocks. Normally the “Body Slicer’ would also have been in the show, but in this circumstance it did not fit.

Actually this longer version of our “big show” has about the same number of big tricks as does our shorter version. The extra length comes by way of additional audience participation routines and more smaller effects.

Our bigger shows also feature costume changes and lighting effects that add to the “bigness” of the presentation. As well we have a large setup of backdrops which adds to the sense that this is a “large stage production”.

The Grand Illusion Show

We do have a “grand illusion” type show for big stage and theater venues. This show goes beyond the scope of a gospel magic program in that it involves extra assistants, huge equipment that must be trucked in, and is presented with a “show business feel” that is quite different from what we would use in regular church situations.

Essentially it is our standard secular entertainment show for theatrical venues with a portion near the end where I share testimony. It is an effective evangelistic tool. I love the “grand” kind of performance. However, since it is different from what we are trying to cover within the theme of this book, we will not describe that show here.

It is sufficient to say it involves fancy costumes, music, girls getting in and out of boxes, and much more. Some of the illusions used are: Phantom Cage, Spiker, Sword Basket, Saturn Levitation, Assistant’s Revenge, Through The Looking Glass, and the Canvas Covered Box.
Sample #27.
Theme: “Be A Christian!”

1. **Simple Silk Act** - Fun silk tricks to musical background.

2. **Vanishing Coke Bottle** - To “wow” them!


4. **Mutilated Parasol** - Done with a volunteer from the audience. Lots of fun and funny business.

5. **Silk To Egg** - To explain what “magic” is and is not.

6. **Bible Way** - Uses eleven children from the audience. Prediction type routine that makes it clear the way to be in heaven and the way to *be a Christian* is through Jesus Christ.

7. **Cut And Restored Rope** - Illustrates the fact that *to be a Christian* we must experience forgiveness.

8. **Massal Tube Transformed Routine** - A tube is used to change a caterpillar picture silk into a butterfly picture silk then a skull and crossbones picture silk into a head of Christ picture silk. Ends with the production of a thirty-three foot long streamer. Message is that *to be a*
Christian is to be a new creation…one who is transformed!

**Break** - Offering and announcements

**9. Linking Rings** - Fun. Upbeat presentation. A cross figure with the rings is used to remind the audience of the theme and purpose of the program.

**10. Guilt Is Gone** - Comedy trick with giant cards. The word “guilt” vanishes. Peace and joy remain. *To be a Christian is to have your guilt gone…and to have peace and joy that remain!*

**11. Cross Illusion** - A boy from the audience is tied to a cross to represent the thief on the cross. He is released in an astonishing manner. Illustrates what Faith in Christ did for the thief.

**12. 20th Century Silks With Crystal Silk Cylinder** - Illustration of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. *To be a Christian is to be one who believes the gospel and who has believed on Jesus Christ.*

**Prayer Challenge** - Opportunity to pray and receive Christ right where you sit.

**13. Giant ABC Blocks** - Don’t forget, *To be a Christian is to be one who has the assurance of heaven!* (“B” block for believers…the ones who will be in heaven.)
Sample #28.
Theme: “What Is So Great About Being A Christian?”
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. February 11, 2008. Sunday morning children’s ministry program

1. Kid Show Silk Act - Appearing Cane, Snap Silks, Color Changing Streamer, Silk Fountain with Jesus ending.

2. Color Changing Rabbit In A Hat - Comedy trick. The end of the trick leads into explain what is an “illusionist”.

3. What’s Next - Spot card trick to explain that I am an “illusionist”. This means I do tricks, only God can do miracles!

4. Life Is A Puzzle - Prediction effect involving spectators and lots of audience involvement. It ends with the statement that Jesus is the answer to the great questions of life.

This was followed by a direct statement that the theme of the program is “What is so great about being a Christian?”

5. Cut And Restored Rope - It is great to be a Christian because we know we are restored to God!

6. Soft Soap Trick (Dirty silks become clean) - It is great to be a Christian because we know our sins have been forgiven!
7. Cartoon Silks (A production of picture silks that are completed by the child’s face looking over the top of them. Done in a change bag.) - *It is great to be a Christian because we have joy, strength, grace, and the opportunity for a spiritually fruitful life!*

8. Guilt is Gone - This comedy card trick is used to say, *It is great to be a Christian because we have peace and joy, but our guilt is gone!*

9. Cross Illusion - How do we become a Christian? By the same kind of faith that was possessed by the thief on the cross!

10. Wish Box - This production box is shown empty then it becomes filled with beautiful things. For this program I called it a "*Christian Toy Box*". The message was that some people think there is nothing fun about being a Christian. Such people do not understand what true joy is about! The production reminds us that *it is great to be a Christian because we have joy that never ends and our future is not one that contains no hope...rather it is one that contains more blessings than we can imagine!*
Chapter 15: Final Words And It Should Go Without Saying

In reflecting on how my programs today compare to what I did twenty or more years ago I mainly become aware of how my props and equipment have changed.

It is hard to believe that there ever was a time when I did not do the Silk Fountain, did not have the RYBW ropes, and knew nothing about tricks like Bible Way and Agree With All Of Scripture. It is hard to believe that there ever was a time when I did not do a silk act, did not own a Palmo, and did not know how to manipulate a Hank Ball.

But it is true. For many years I did not have the skills I have now and did not possess the tools I have now. Nevertheless, I did many programs and believe I was used by God to make a difference in many lives.

To conclusion to draw from this is **IT IS NOT ABOUT THE EQUIPMENT.** I am grateful for what I am able to do today and believe our ministry is stronger than it was before, however I know that what was true many years in the past is yet the same today. **IT IS ABOUT DOING THE BEST WE CAN WITH WHATEVER IT IS THAT WE HAVE. IT IS ABOUT UNDERSTANDING THAT THE ONLY THING THAT REALLY MATTERS IS...GOD WORKING THROUGH US!**

With that conclusion in mind, here is what I wrote nearly twenty years ago when “Making The Point With Gospel Magic” was first published.

**It Should Go Without Saying**

It should go without saying that no special technique can
ever replace spiritual power in ministry. It should be absolutely obvious that we need God working in us and through our gospel magic. It should be perfectly clear that before the development of a particular skill, our desire as Christians should be the development of our personal relationship with God.

Yes, it should go without saying. But I’m afraid that it needs to be said. I’m concerned that some who call themselves “gospel magicians” seem to be merely using the church platform as an excuse to do a show. I’m troubled that many of the so called gospel magic presentations I have seen in recent years were weak in message and spiritual impact.

It seems there is a danger to which many in our ranks have fallen prey. It is the danger of putting more confidence in our tools than in the One who uses them and us.

- Could it be that we are spending more time studying magic books than we are studying the Word Of God, which is sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews chapter four and verse twelve)?

- Could it be that we are spending more time in practice of our Linking Rings than in the practice of prayer (James chapter five and verse sixteen)?

- Could it be that we are working on our own speech and patter but listening little to the voice of God ( 1 Corinthians chapter four verse twenty)?

- Could it be that we are learning more and more about showmanship while continuing to be ignorant of the
power of the Spirit of God (Ephesians chapter five and verse eighteen)?

It is my prayer that we are not. Let’s always keep in mind what the apostle Paul said about ministry, “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds” (II Corinthians chapter ten and verse four).

This book is meant to be practical. It deals with the actual details and techniques involved in giving a message through gospel magic. But its practical emphasis is not intended to suggest that reliance upon God is not necessary. To the contrary, attending to one’s spiritual life is the most important factor in making a dynamic proclamation of truth for the Glory of God.

How do we stay completely attuned to God? The fundamentals of spiritual growth and strength have not changed since Jesus Christ ascended into heaven. In simple form, they are as follows:

(1) Reading and learning the truth of the Word Of God
(2) Speaking with God through prayer
(3) Fellowship with God’s people and exposure to the ministry of their spiritual gifts
(4) Witnessing of God’s truth to others
(5) Times of worship and praise
(6) Maintaining proper priorities (See Matthew chapter six and verse thirty-three).

Of course, each of these points is based on the assumption that the individual already has the assurance of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. How is your walk with God? Please deal with that crucial question before you go further in studying how to do gospel magic.
And, one final point: If you are married, remember the teaching of 1 Peter chapter three; verse seven. Not only is one’s relationship with God important for serving in spiritual power, one’s relationship with his or her mate is also vital. In your enthusiasm for ministry, be careful to maintain balance between your family and your outreach work.

That is what I wrote nearly twenty years ago. It is still true and I still believe it.

**I conclude these thoughts with a word about our family.** For thirty five years my wife, Mary, has stood by me and supported me in our ministry. When our children were young, she could not join me on stage. Her life was too busy with the responsibilities of being a wife and mother. As our children grew and our responsibilities changed, she joined me on stage. For the past fifteen years I have rarely done a show without her. She has become a terrific performer in her own right.

I was thrilled when M-U-M, the monthly magazine for the *Society Of American Magicians*, listed her among the top ten female assistants in our time. Her name was right there with Charlotte Pendragon, Pam Thompson, Carol Roy, Gay Blackstone, Jan Jones, and four others.

Magic tricks have been part of our married life from the very beginning, but I do not believe they have ever been in the wrong place on our priority list. I enjoy magic immensely, but I love Mary far more…and enjoy being with her more than I enjoy anything else I do.

I also love my children much more than magic. One of my great treasures in life is the fact that all of our children are living for the Lord. All four of them married
wonderful Christians, all of them are involved in church, and they all are very positive about magic. Even though they spent a lot of time when growing up being hauled across the country to help out in our illusion show, they still are interested in magic and supportive of our career.

Rebecca and her husband, Jeff, own Lock Family Magic which is a mail order business that provides props to magicians around the world. They have a strong line of gospel magic props and specialize in items that Mary and I have been able to bring to the market.

Christina and her husband, Mark, (who is a full time plumber), work in our Montana Wonder Theater summer shows selling pop and popcorn. Christina sometimes sings in our shows. Their three children all work as assistants in our summer illusion shows and Christmas show.

David and his wife Teesha are full time performers and stay very busy as “Christian illusionists”. I may be prejudiced, but I know I am not the only one who would say they have a wonderful show with a powerful testimony that is impacting many lives for the kingdom of God.

Jonathan and his wife, Kelly, are busy with their six children. A main part of Jon’s business is editing and producing DVDs for magicians. He works with many of the “name performers” in the business. He also has a printing business and helps magicians, clowns, and gospel workers with a variety of publications.

It means more than I can describe to know that my children love the Lord and to know that our unusual kind of “magical life” has brought them blessings.
About Duane Laflin

* Member of the Inner Magic Circle With Gold Star
* Chaplain of the International Brotherhood Of Magicians.
* President of the International Fellowship Of Christian Magicians for four years.
* Performed on the palace stage, lectured, and emceed numerous times at the “Magic Castle” in Hollywood, California.
* Emceed the finals of the Society Of American Magicians international stage competition ten years.
* Emceed the finals of the international stage competition for the combined convention of the International Brotherhood Of Magicians and Society Of American Magicians in 2008. Also performed at that convention.
* Chaplain and “Magi-Minister” for Abbott’s Get-Together in Colon, Michigan, for the past sixteen years.
* Performed at the “Blackpool Convention Of Magicians” which is the largest magic convention in the world.
* Performed and lectured for the Professional Magician’s Association in Tokyo, Japan.
* Performed as part of the “Stars Of Magic” show in Singapore with Fukai, Tommy Wonder, the Pendragons, Johnny and Pam Thompson, Lawrence and Pricilla Khong.
* Duane and his wife, Mary, have performed on five continents, in many countries of the world and in forty-seven of the fifty states. (Maine, Vermont, and Hawaii left to go!)

www.christianillusionist.com
www.lockfamilymagic.com