

BASICS

- Stick to the script (use the original passion narratives, plot, action, characters, dialogue etc. and you can't go wrong.)
- There are timelines available online such as this one by Bible Gateway: <https://www.biblegateway.com/blog/2011/04/holy-week-timeline-visualization/> But the best thing is to get to know the stories and chronology yourself.
- Aside from the key scenes which everyone includes, try to choose additional scenes that suit your situation (location/cast)
- Focus on a few key characters (helps the audience, and you as you write)

4 TOOLS TO HELP YOU WRITE YOUR PASSION PLAY

- Research
- Reflect
- Re-write
- Reveal

1. RESEARCH

Every good script starts with good research. We've talked briefly about researching the timeline and events of the Passion story for yourself. You can also research the time and the place and get to know Jerusalem a bit better. But the most important research involves character – because this is how we create a connection with the audience.

Exercise 1

- **Discuss/ take notes on everything you know about either of these two:**
 - Peter/Mary Magdalene OR Pilate/Judas
- **Questions to consider:**

How old roughly? How are they viewed by society/position in society. Personality? Family or cultural background? Involvement in Passion story.

Notes:

2. **REFLECT**

Once we've researched our story and characters it helps to sit down and spend some time in these places and with these people in our imagination.

Exercise 2

- **Imagine meeting the character on Good Friday. Either before the crucifixion or after it.**
- **Take five minutes and imagine that this character is someone you are very close – a work colleague, a close friend, relative or husband or wife.**
- **Imagine meeting them and discussing what has happened or what is about to happen. Close your eyes if it helps.**

Think about how you feel about what they are telling you – are you angry, shocked, disturbed, or do you sympathise with them? Think about where you are having this conversation, the time of the day, the location, the atmosphere, the smells and sounds in the air. Think about why you are meeting them – is it a routine meeting such as breakfast, or is it a professional meeting. Think about what you might say to them, how you might react, and what they are doing and saying.

Notes:

Exercise 3

Write down the scene you imagined. Use a simple script format. You can use both sides of the sheet to write on.

Example script format...

SCENE 1 – The place, The time of day (Morning/Afternoon/Evening/Night)

(Set the scene – what do you see in your mind as the setting of the scene?)

CHARACTER 1:

CHARACTER 2:

CHARACTER 1:

(Add an action if you want to e.g. - Character 1 falls to the ground)

3. RE-WRITE

- What you are doing when you write a passion play is rewriting someone else's work. We are taking sections from the gospel which were written for other people to read, and rewriting them in a different format, a play format for people to watch and listen to.
- It's an important job - most of us respect the source material for its theology and history but we want to create an entertaining play that works for the setting and the group of actors we've got and which also connects with a modern audience.

Our next exercise is to work on how to rewrite a very short scene from the passion story. We'll look at the first passage as an example to start with.

- Peter's promise - Matthew 26:31-39
- Jesus prays in the garden of Gethsemane - Matthew 26:36-42
- Judas betrays Jesus - Mark 14:10-11
- Mary Magdalene in the Garden – John 20 11-17

Exercise 4

Rewrite the scene from the passion story in a script format. If there is no dialogue you might need to create dialogue (Judas passage). If the dialogue is all one sided, you might need to add some additional lines (Gethsemane). You might want to add in some dialogue to set the scene – especially if you are not using a previous scene.

Start by creating the heading e.g.:

SCENE 7 – Gethsemane, Night

4. REVEAL

As far as you can, use the plot of the original story for the basis of your action. But it's a fast paced drama, and there are times when it can work well to have a pause in the action for something a bit slower-paced and thoughtful. We can do this through monologue, where a single character speaks directly to the audience. A monologue brings a deeper insight into a character, in a way that will connect with the audience. They can reveal the character's true feelings and insights into something dramatic that has just happened. We don't know these historical characters so we can't write an accurate account of their feelings: but if we use the first two tools of Research and Reflection then we can have a good shot at it.

Exercise 5

- **Choose any character from the previous scene.**
- **Connect your monologue to the short scene you have just written so that it follows on naturally from the scene.**
- **You don't need to repeat anything that's just happened in the scene – the audience has just seen it all, so you can move straight onto how the character is feeling about what just happened.**
- **You could try to connect what has just happened, to something else that we know about the character; another story that in some way connects to this moment e.g. if it is Peter's monologue, Peter walking on the water, or the transfiguration. Try to connect the past moment to the present. As well as trying to make a link to the character's past, you can make a link to the future – how does the character think this moment is going to impact them going forward?**

MONOLOGUE: