

# Pilgrim's Progress

## Play Reading

This play reading has been performed as a puppet show, by children of Upper Primary age. The play reading is based on the Bible Visuals story version for children, 1959, USA.

We didn't have an elaborate puppet theatre, which made it easier to transport to the performance venue. We simply used two ladders with a board stretched between them. The board was covered with a bed-spread. The board was set high enough so that the children, (puppeteers) could sit behind on chairs.



All characters were made by the children using the paper mâché – balloon-head glove puppet technique. The Narrator, (not a puppet), stood on the side in front of the make-shift puppet theatre.

We arranged for recorded instrumental music to be played at the beginning of each scene.

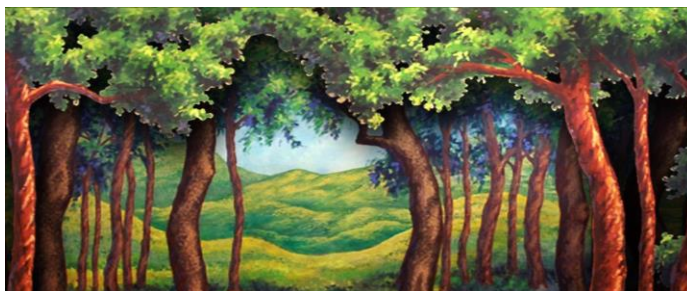
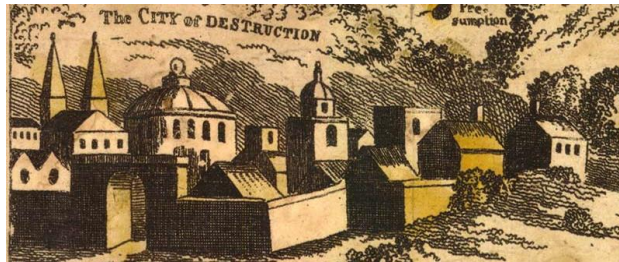
Here are some pictures of how we made the puppets. It's important to NOT blow the balloon up too much. Keep it the size of the head you require.



## The background scenery

The children made different backgrounds (paintings) for each scene in the play. Children can use their own imagination to interpret the type of scene. We used long pieces of paper that stretched the full length of the board erected between the ladders. It was the job of certain children to hold up the paintings for the duration of the scene. (Two different children per scene to hold, so that their arms don't become too tired!)

Examples:



**The production:** We recorded the voices beforehand and played the recording for the performance, so that the puppeteers could focus on working the puppets. When reading parts, explain to the children that they do not read aloud the instructions in italics that explain what the puppets are doing. To show different scenes, a puppet can hold up signs, e.g. Scene 1: The City of Destruction. Music can be added to create atmosphere.

## Scenes, props and characters

### Complete cast:

*Puppets:* Pilgrim, Evangelist, Friends (2 or 3), Mr Good-will, Princess, Hopeful, Apollyon, Giant Despair, Ignorance, Angels (2 or 3), Narrator (*not a puppet*). Also needed: a separate puppet to hold up the signs to show scene changes.

### **Scene 1: The City of Destruction** (Scenery = City of Destruction)

*Puppets:* Pilgrim, Evangelist, Friends (2 or 3) Plus narrator

*Props:* Bible (Make a small one out of cardboard or use a match box)

**Scene 2: Inside the gate** (Scenery = the path ahead, fields and trees, a wooden cross, the Palace Beautiful (small) in the distance, setting sun)

*Puppets:* Pilgrim, Mr Good-will plus Narrator

*Props:* Paper darts

**Scene 3: The armoury room** (Scenery = inside a castle - stone brick walls, suits of armour hanging from the walls, including belt, breastplate, shoes, shield, helmet, sword)

*Puppets:* Princess, Pilgrim

*Props:* card saying "Praying, always watching"

**Scene 4: On the path again.** (Background scenery shows green grass, flowers, trees, stones and a fence; sign saying "By-path meadow.")

*Puppets:* Pilgrim, Apollyon, Hopeful

*Props:* Pilgrim is now dressed in armour, as given in Scene 3. He carries a sword, (tied to his costume) with writing on it: "The Word of God".

**Scene 5: Over the fence** (Scenery: green grass with flowers, and fence with some boards leaning against it.)

*Puppets:* Pilgrim, Hopeful, Giant Despair (*Note: Giant needs a bigger puppet head than the others.*)

**Scene 6: The Dungeon** Scenery: Grey stone brick wall, with a large wooden door and large key hole.

*Puppets:* Pilgrim, Hopeful, Giant Despair, Plus Narrator

*Props:* Large key with words written on it: "The promise of God"

**Scene 7: The end in sight** Scenery: the path now with no stones. Green fields and flowers. Celestial City in the distance. River flowing in front of Celestial City, Fence in view.

*Puppets:* Pilgrim, Hopeful, Ignorance, Angels

# Pilgrim's Progress

## Scene 1: The City of Destruction

### **Narrator:**

Pilgrim lived in the City of Destruction. In this city people did many wicked things.

*(Action scene: short scene showing Pilgrim and his friends fighting, stealing etc. Friends move to the background.)*

Pilgrim enjoyed his way of life. He was not sorry for the things he did, but a deep feeling of unhappiness started to grow in his heart.

*(Pilgrim reads from the Bible.)*

One day he found an old book called 'The Bible'. He blew the dust off it and started to read. He realized that unless he changed his ways and was sorry for his wicked thoughts and actions, he would one day be destroyed, along with all those who lived in the City of Destruction.

*(Pilgrim briefly exits and comes back wearing a 'burden'.)*

Day after day, as he read the Bible, Pilgrim also realized that he had a heavy burden on his back.

*(Evangelist enters walking slowly, preaching to people.)*

One day a man by the name of Evangelist came to the city of Destruction. He had been sent by the Good King who lived in the Celestial City. He told the unhappy people in the City of Destruction that they could come and live in the Celestial City where they would be happy forever. Then Evangelist saw Pilgrim who was looking very sad.

*(Friends exit)*

**Evangelist:** "Hello. What's your name?"

**Pilgrim:** My name is Pilgrim.

**Evangelist:** Why are you so sad?

**Pilgrim:** I have been reading in this book that everyone who does wrong things will one day be destroyed. I have this heavy burden on my back too and I don't know how to get rid of it.

**Evangelist:** Let me show you another part in the Bible. It says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.”

**Pilgrim:** I *do* believe in God and I *do* believe in Jesus. But my burden is still there. I can feel it on my back.

**Evangelist:** I can see that you do not really understand what it means to *believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ. Now stand to your feet Pilgrim, and look over there. Do you see that gate off in the distance?

**Pilgrim:** No, I can’t see a gate.

**Evangelist:** Look harder Pilgrim. It’s the gate of Decision. You must pass through the gate of decision before you can get rid of your burden. Inside the gate stands a cross. To truly believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you must come to the cross, truly believing that Jesus died for you. Can you see the gate Pilgrim?

**Pilgrim:** No Evangelist, I can’t. I’m afraid I’ll *never* enter the gate and get rid of my burden.

*(Pilgrim cries.)*

**Evangelist:** Don’t give up hope Pilgrim. Perhaps you can see the light that shines over the Gate of Decision.

*(Evangelist points.)*

**Pilgrim:** Yes, Evangelist, I do see a light. I do! I do! Thank you, Evangelist.

*(Pilgrim and Evangelist travel out of the city towards the Gate of Decision. Friends re-enter and laugh at Pilgrim)*

**Friends:** “What are you doing Pilgrim?” ... “Aren’t we good enough for you?” ...  
*(Pilgrim keeps walking and doesn’t look back.)*

## **Scene 2: Inside the gate**

**Narrator:**

Finally, when Pilgrim thought he could carry his burden no longer, he came to the gate. Over the gate was a sign: “Knock and it shall be opened to you.” Pilgrim saw a light shining out from the other side of the gate. It was the light which had guided him. Its beams seemed to spell out: “Seek and you shall find”. Immediately the gate was opened and a hand reached out, drawing him quickly inside the gate.

*(Noises: Ping! THUD! Ping! THUD! Ping! THUD!)*

**Pilgrim:** Why did you draw me inside so quickly? And what are those noises I hear outside the gate? And please sir, who are you?

**Mr Good-will:** My name is Mr Good-will. I am a servant of the Good King. My work is to help those who travel to the Celestial City. The noises that you heard were the darts fired at you by the Good King's enemy, Satan. The 'ping' was the sound of the darts made as they hit the ground. Satan hates the Good King and does all he can to make pilgrims return to the City of Destruction. Would you like to know what the darts are called?

**Pilgrim:** Oh, yes sir, I would indeed!

*(Mr Good-will reaches outside and gets a dart.)*

**Mr Good-will:** "This one reads: "Wait a while, there is no hurry."

*(Mr Good-will gives the dart to Pilgrim and goes out for another.)*

This one reads: "No one else is doing it. Everyone will laugh at you."

There are many more darts which Satan throws to keep people from entering the Gate of Decision.

**Pilgrim:** Thankyou Mr Good-will. But see, I still have my heavy burden of sin. Evangelist said that I would get rid of it when I got inside this gate.

**Mr Good-will:** Look this way Pilgrim.

**Pilgrim:** It's an old wooden cross. I didn't see that before.

**Mr Good-will:** The story is in this book: The Good King has a Son. In Heaven the Son was very rich, but He came to Earth as a baby. When He grew to be a man, He was nailed to a cross like the one before you now.

**Pilgrim:** But why did He have to die?

**Mr Good-will:** It was for you Pilgrim. It was for you, me and for the whole world. Unless the Lord Jesus Christ took the punishment for the things we do wrong, we could never be forgiven, and we would never enter the Celestial City. He took your place Pilgrim. You can ask the Lord Jesus to forgive you, and take your burden. You make a choice Pilgrim, to be a follower of the Son.

**Pilgrim:** Lord Jesus, I truly believe that you died for me. I ask you to take away my burden of sin and I choose to be your follower.

*(The burden is loosened from Pilgrim's back and rolls away.)*

Oh! My burden has gone! Thankyou Good King for sending your Son to die upon the cross for me.

**Mr Good-will:** (*Shakes Pilgrim's hand*) Remember, you are still a Pilgrim. You are still travelling to the Celestial City, but you are now a Christian pilgrim. You may use the name Christians instead of Pilgrim if you like.

**Pilgrim:** Oh yes. From now on I will call myself Christian.

**Mr Good-will:** It may be a long journey to the Celestial City, some enter when they are quite young. Others have to wait until they are older. Anyway Pilgrim, you must first stop at the Palace Beautiful. You will see it when you take the next turn in the path.

**Pilgrim:** But why must I stop there?

**Mr Good-will:** Because the enemy who tried to hinder you from entering the Gate of Decision will now try to keep you from travelling on the narrow path, but don't worry. He can never force you back through this gate and back to the City of Destruction. The Good King knows you cannot stand against the Wicked Prince alone. He has more friends waiting for you in the Palace Beautiful. They are waiting to help you and will give you exactly the Wicked Prince and his followers. Be on your way now. You have enough time to reach the Palace Beautiful before dark.

**Narrator:** Pilgrim travelled along the path more quickly now. And then, just as the sun was setting Christian saw it – the Palace Beautiful! As he got closer, he heard singing. As he paused to listen, he saw that the gate to the Palace Beautiful was open. Then he noticed a man standing guard, moving his hands as if to say, “come closer”. The man questioned Pilgrim because he wanted to make sure that Pilgrim was a Christian and had been sent by the Mr Good-will. He then invited Pilgrim inside. He was given a good meal and a bed for the night. Then the next morning he was taken to a special room.

### **Scene 3: The Armoury Room**

**Princess:** This is the armoury room, Pilgrim. I'm sure one of these suits will be your size.

*(Princess points to the armour on the background scene. Pilgrim turns and looks at it.)*

The Good King wants His Christian Pilgrims to wear the armour He provides for them. Every Christian must fight many battles you know, against the Wicked Prince. Here is a belt, a breastplate, shoes which will never wear out, a shield to hold in one hand, a helmet for your head and a sword to hold in the other hand.

There is one more weapon that you must know about. It is called PRAYING, ALWAYS WATCHING.

*(Princess gives Pilgrim a card showing these words.)*

This is a powerful weapon which must be locked inside your heart forever, ready to be used in an instant.

### **Scene 4: On the path again**

*(Background scenery shows green grass, flowers, trees, stones and a fence; sign saying "By-path meadow.")*

*(Pilgrim is now wearing armour. He is walking along. A monster comes up behind Pilgrim and goes in front of him trying to block the path.)*

**Apollyon:** Roar!!

**Pilgrim:** Who are you sir? Step aside please and allow me to pass.

**Apollyon:** Roar! Step aside indeed! I am the great Apollyon. You once belonged to me, and even though you now belong to the King who lives in the Celestial City, you will obey me. I hate that King. Do you think that shiny new armour can protect you against me? Ha ha! I have a little job for you to do for me – perhaps more than one!

**Pilgrim:** Oh, what did I have locked in my heart? Oh yes – the weapon of prayer. "Dear God, please help me!"

*(Pilgrim picks up his sword which has written on it: "The Word of God".)*

**Pilgrim:** I will NOT do the wrong thing and you cannot make me.

**Apollyon:** Roar!



*(Apollyon starts throwing darts against Pilgrim's shield. Pilgrim takes his sword and thrusts it into Apollyon who stumbles off stage wounded. Pilgrim continues to walk along the path.)*

**Pilgrim:** That battle with Apollyon has left me feeling so weak and weary. I'm afraid I shall never be able to travel the long way to the Celestial City.

*(Hopeful comes up behind Pilgrim. Pilgrim stops and turns around.)*

**Hopeful:** Do not give up Pilgrim. I could not help hearing what you said. I am Hopeful, another pilgrim like you. May I walk with you?

**Pilgrim:** Indeed, you may. I need a friend such as you to give me hope. Let's travel together.

**Hopeful:** This really is a lovely path. Look at these beautiful flowers ...

*(They turn and look at the background scenery.)*

**Pilgrim:** and look at these shady green trees.

**Hopeful:** There are a few stones about though, which makes it hard on your feet.

**Pilgrim:** Yes. My feet are getting rather sore, and I'm feeling so tired. Look, there's a fence. I wonder what's on the other side.

*(They look at the fence.)*

**Hopeful:** I can see another path on the other side. It runs in the same direction as the one we are on, and it's covered with soft green grass. I do not see any stones.

**Pilgrim:** Why don't we walk on that one instead? Why should we travel to the Celestial City on a stony path if we can get there on a path that is smooth and pleasant?

**Hopeful:** But the sign says "By-path meadow". I do not believe the Good King will be pleased if we walk there. We may get into trouble.

**Pilgrim:** But I'm tired of this stony way. I want it to be easy. Come on Hopeful. Let's climb over the fence.

## Scene 5: Over the fence

*(Sounds of wind and rain – make the wind sound with voice using ‘sh’ sound and rain with rice shaker -rice in a plastic bottle.)*

**Pilgrim:** Oh no, it’s starting to rain.

**Hopeful:** Yes, it’s getting heavier. I wonder if there’s a place where we can shelter. Look! There are some boards against the fence. Let’s climb under those.

*(Pilgrim and Hopeful fall asleep. The rain stops. Pilgrim and Hopeful are snoring.)*

**Giant:** *(Heavy footsteps are heard.)*

**Pilgrim:** Hopeful, wake up! What’s that noise?

**Giant:** What are you doing in my meadow?

**Pilgrim:** We are Christian pilgrims on our way to the Celestial City. But if you don’t want us to walk here, we can jump back over the fence.

**Hopeful:** Yes, we’ll do that right away!

**Giant:** Oh no you don’t. I am Giant despair. Any Christian pilgrim who is foolish enough to walk in my meadow is thrown into Doubting Castle.

*(Giant Despair grabs them both and pushes them ahead of him.)*

## Scene 6: The Dungeon

**Pilgrim:** *(crying)* Oh Hopeful, surely *you* are not going to give in to despair. Without your help I may as well be dead. I am very sorry I did not take your advice about By-path Meadow. But please do not fail me now.

**Hopeful:** Pilgrim, have you ever heard the story in the Bible about the people of Israel who God saved from their enemy by parting the Red Sea? The waves parted and the people walked right through the middle of the sea on dry land. When they had reached the other side safely the waves came back together and the enemies following them were drowned.

**Pilgrim:** Is that story true?

**Hopeful:** Yes, Pilgrim. Everything in the Bible is true. And if God could do that for the people of Israel, surely He can rescue us. He is the same God. Let’s have hope and trust in Him.

**Narrator:** For many days the pilgrims sat in the terrible dungeon. They grew weaker each day. They tried to trust God but even Hopeful almost gave up hope, until one day Pilgrim found something ...

**Pilgrim:** Hopeful, look! Look! All this time I've been carrying inside my clothing a key that was given to me for such a time as this. I had completely forgotten about it until now. The key is called "THE PROMISE OF GOD">

**Hopeful:** Then let us use it Christian, quickly! I remember now the word of God that says, "Even though I walk in the midst of trouble, God will protect me."

**Pilgrim:** (*turning the key*). It fits the lock Hopeful. Yes, it's turning!

**Hopeful:** Be quiet or Giant Despair will hear us! (*Creak, creak as the door opens.*)

**Pilgrim:** Come on Hopeful, Run!

(*Pilgrim and Hopeful exit. Giant Despair comes running after them angrily growling*)

**Giant Despair:** "Come back you pilgrims, Grrr!"

## Scene 7: The end in sight

(*Scenery: the path now with no stones. Celestial City in the distance. River flowing in front of Celestial City, Fence in view.*)

**Hopeful:** Quickly Pilgrim, over the fence!

(*Hopeful and Pilgrim enter, panting.*)

**Pilgrim:** It sure is good to be on the right path again. Just look at all those flowers.

**Hopeful:** and look Pilgrim, there are no stones now.

**Pilgrim:** I don't know why we tried to escape the stony way in the first place.

**Hopeful:** That's so true Pilgrim. The Good King has provided more joy along His pathway than can ever be found on any other pathway.

(*Enter Ignorance, ahead of Pilgrim and Hopeful. He walks along.*)

**Pilgrim:** Look Hopeful. There is someone ahead of us walking slowly. Let's see if he would like company.

**Pilgrim:** (*calling to the stranger*) Hello there! You seem to be going to the Celestial City as we are. May we walk with you? What is your name?

**Ignorance:** (stops and turns to face Pilgrim and Hopeful) My name is Ignorance. I travel slowly hoping at last to reach the Celestial City. If you are in a hurry you had better go on ahead.

**Hopeful:** Did you come through the Gate of Decision and bow at the cross to have your sins forgiven?

**Ignorance:** Don't be foolish. You don't have to have your sins forgiven to get inside the Celestial City. I have not been a sinner anyway. I have been a good person all my life. I came upon this path a long way ahead of the gate. But I will be able to enter the Celestial City just as you do. You'll see. All that is necessary is to do the best you can. And I have lived a better life than most.

**Hopeful:** Well we will walk with you but I really don't think we can help you.

**Pilgrim:** Look! I can see the Celestial City in the distance. And look – here is a sign that says, "Wait". I wonder what that means.

**Hopeful:** It means that we have to wait here until we are called. I guess we'd better rest here.

*(They sit down but Ignorance goes on ahead.)*

**Ignorance:** Good-bye Christian! Goodbye Hopeful! I'm going on. They wouldn't dare turn such a good person away!

*(Ignorance walks a little way then disappears off stage. Pilgrim and Hopeful look over the edge of the stage.)*

**Pilgrim:** Oh no! He's fallen over the edge of the cliff!

**Hopeful:** His goodness has not earned him the right to enter Heaven.

**Angel:** The Good King has sent for you both, Pilgrim and Hopeful. Come this way.

**Pilgrim:** Do we have to cross the river? It looks deep!

**Angel:** Don't worry. You will go through safely. Do not look at the angry waves. Keep your eyes on the other shore.

**Pilgrim:** Brrr. It's cold!

**Hopeful:** Look up Pilgrim! Keep your eyes on the city! *(Soft music begins to play)*

**Angels:** Welcome Pilgrim! Welcome Hopeful! Rejoice because your names are written in the Book of Life.