

# Prop Dropping

Props have two major definitions for the purpose of this discussion. One, they are set decorations for actors. Desks, lamps, wigs, etc. Two, they are scaffolds which support buildings temporarily until they are no longer needed.

Jesus used props all the time to tell a story. Sometimes it was something small like sheep or a dish. At other times it was something gigantic like a storm at sea, or a person who was brought back to life. As vital as each moment was in Jesus' life on earth, it was almost always used to tell the story of faith, and to show others that he was God.

Sometimes we have the props we need right in front of us, and never see them. The Bible in a sense is a prop that must never be taken away, for it shows us eternal life and tells us about Jesus. We must know that it is much more than a prop. It is the means to find divinity, to connect with God, and to find out how to live as a Christian.

“I watched a couple of really bad directors work,” James Cameron writes, “and I saw how they completely botched it up and missed the visual opportunities of the scene when we had put things in front of them as opportunities. Set pieces, props and so on.”

We must never miss the opportunities that are right in front of us to tell the true story of Jesus to others. Look around and see the trees and clouds and planets and every life situation as an illustration, or prop, which teaches us about God. They are all around us as a gift of God.

Sometimes props are a means to the end we want to accomplish. John Wayne, the great actor said “I was ashamed to admit I was hipped to the idea of acting. That's why I started in with the props.” He saw that if he helped build sets and help others in the business of acting, that one day he would really be an actor himself!

We must begin with letting other things prop us up, worldly things like books and the mind and the attention of others, and graduate to only God working

in us. We must not depend on the things of the world to save us. They are only temporary, and will soon fade or be taken away.

We must become actors who are real, who are on stage with the audience out there to see the message. Knowing that things are often fake or don't work on stage is a part of being the actor. We must make people believe they are real, and see how they fit into the telling of the story.

Nia Vardalos, a Canadian actress who made movies, my favorite being "My Life in Ruins", writes, "When I used to do musical theatre, my dad refused to come backstage. He never wanted to see the props up close or the sets up close. He didn't want to see the magic."

The difference for Christians is that God wants us to see the magic. Or, in his terms, the miracle. He wants us to know how the Nation of Israel crossed the Red Sea on dry land. He wants us to see the miracles of his son Jesus, including the greatest one, his resurrection from the dead.

Emily Dickenson wrote a poem called "The Props assist the House". She began with the props or scaffolding used to construct a house. It goes like this.

The Props assist the House  
Until the House is built  
And then the Props withdraw  
And adequate, erect,  
The House support itself  
And cease to recollect  
The Augur and the Carpenter –  
Just such a retrospect  
Hath the perfected Life –  
A Past of Plank and Nail  
And slowness – then the scaffolds drop  
Affirming it a Soul –

Just as a house often needs scaffolding for its construction, the soul is nurtured and lifted by many factors. People tell us about eternity. We read the scriptures. We see life and death and love and forgiveness in action.

But it is only everything else is stripped away and the soul stands on its own that it becomes what it was created to be. At the end of our lives the scaffolding, or prop, of the body is gone, and the soul remains.

But we do not have to wait until then. Do not forever live your life of faith on training wheels, depending on technology and props to ride free in faith.

Set out with risk and adventure and drop your props like a paralytic who no longer needs his crutches because Christ has made him walk. Instead of talking about being a Christian, actually live like one. When we perfect the art of prop dropping, God is truly able to work life in us and others.