



Written by
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“Create In Me A Clean Heart” A Choral Reading of Psalm 51

Scripture: Psalm 51: 1-4a, 7-12, 16-17

Dramatic Category: Choral Reading

What is “Choral Reading”?

Choral Reading is “literature in vocal dimension,” which means that multiple voices interpret literature, thus giving it dimension that a single voice-oral interpretation cannot give.

NOTE:

Please consult the “Choral Reading Guidelines” that follow this reading. There, you will find helpful hints to maximize this beautiful art form that uses the syncopated reading of scripture to communicate the truth of God’s Word.

Topic: A plea to be purified and filled with the presence of God

Performance Time: 2 minutes

Number of Readers: 6 readers (3 men (M), 3 women (F))

Suggested Configuration:

1 (F) 2 (M) 3 (F) 4 (M) 5 (M) 6 (F)

Background Music:

“Create In Me A Clean Heart.” or a song that invites God to indwell and purify the believer.
Music is played down and under throughout.

Sound Needs: Six standing microphones. The readers must have their hands free.

Lighting Notes: Even light across the group of readers

Props:

Small black notebooks in which readers keep their scripts.

(The notebooks are held waist-high, in the left hand, leaving the right hand free for gestures that “physicalize” the meaning of the words.)

Costume Suggestions: Black and white, with the addition of one other color, shared by all readers

Music: Begin the background music while the readers get into place.

The Script:

2: Be gracious to me, Oh God,

5: according to Thy loving kindness;

Women: According to the greatness of Thy compassion,

Men: blot out my transgressions.

1: Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,

6: And cleanse me from my sin.

2: For I know my transgressions.

5: And my sin is ever before me.

Men: Against Thee,

Women: Thee only,

4: I have sinned,
And done what is evil in Thy sight.

3: Purify me with hyssop,

Men: and I shall be clean;

5: Wash me,

Women: and I shall be whiter than snow.

4: Make me to hear joy and gladness.

1, 6: Let the bones, which Thou hast broken rejoice.

2: Hide Thy face from my sins.

3, 4: And blot out all my iniquities.

All: Create in me a clean heart, O God,

1: And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

2: Do not cast me away from Thy presence,

3: And do not take Thy Holy Spirit from me.

4: Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation,

5: And sustain me with a willing spirit.

6: For thou doest not delight in sacrifice,

All: otherwise, I would give it;

1: Thou art not pleased with burnt offering.

6: The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;

2, 5: A broken

3, 4: and a contrite heart,

All: Oh God,

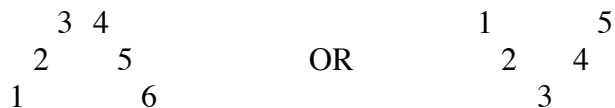
4: Thou wilt not despise.

Music: *REPRISE "Create In Me A Clean Heart" with the congregation joining in.*

The End

Choral Reading Guidelines

1. Select literature that is **lyrical** such as: songs, poems, stories with repetitious dialogue, odes, or ballads.
2. Analyze the literature to determine the **theme**. Divide it into phrases that deserve more emphatic treatment, such as a single voice for effect or all voices for effect.
3. Assign each member of the choral reading team a **number**.
4. **Divide the literature up by phrases** and decide which number or numbers will read which lines.
5. Create **“phonal”** (dominant/deeper voices) and **“anti-phonal”** (softer/higher voices) effects by assigning lines to voices that come from opposite places on the team. These voices will create the same relationship as “melody” has with “harmony” in music. This keeps the audience entertained.
6. **Choreograph** the arrangement of the readers, for example:



7. Assign **gestures** to various members of the team to emphasize the lines they will read.
8. **Costume** the readers for effect if it is appropriate. Generally, readers wear black and white. It is very effective to dress the ladies in floor-length black skirts and white blouses, and the men in black slacks, white shirts, and a colored tie. Sometimes, the addition of one other color is appropriate as long as all readers use the same additional color. This uniform effect helps tie the visual image together to create the illusion of this being “one” reading with multiple voices.
9. **Props** are used sparingly if it would add to the effect of the reading. The only constant prop used is the small black notebook in which each reader keeps his/her script. It is held at waist-height in the left hand, leaving the right hand free for gestures.
10. **Rehearse** the reading over and over so that the readers are **syncopated** and there is no interruption or hesitation in the **vocal unison**.