

SIGNING THE PAPERS

by Charlie Jones

GENRE: Drama

SYNOPSIS: Christa and Matt are in the waiting room of their lawyer's office, waiting to sign their divorce papers. In this poignant sketch, we see the turmoil caused by divorce and the raw pain for Matt, Christa and their kids. This sketch is a good sermon-starter on marriage or a good discussion-starter on healing after divorce.

TIME: Over 5 minutes

CAST BREAKDOWN: 2

TOPIC: Divorce, Marriage, Communication

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Malachi 2:15-17, Romans 5:9-11

CHURCH YEAR SEASON: Any

SUGGESTED USE: Worship service, Bible study for engaged couples or married couples

CHARACTERS:

Christa ~ Matt's wife; they are in the throes of a divorce

Matt ~ Christa's husband; not ready to accept the divorce as final

PROPS: None

COSTUMES: Matt wears a suit; Christa is dressed nicely but casually

SOUND: 2 wireless mics

LIGHTING: General stage

SETTING: The reception area outside a divorce attorney's office

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DIRECTOR'S TIP:

In directing *Signing the Papers*, there are two very important things to remember. The first is do not play the anger. The second is you must trust one another. It would be very easy for your actors to perform this piece on a surface level. At first glance, all we see is the anger of the characters exploding off the page. What you, as the director, must do is help your actors go deeper. Explore the characters' personal histories. Have your actors improvise their courtship, their first date, the first time they ever met. Have them play out the first argument this couple ever had. There are several wonderful areas you can explore within the script. Have your actors improvise a scene in which Christa tells Matt she wants to go back to school. Have the actor playing Matt improvise the scene where he talks to the cereal boxes and the scene where he loses his job.

Have your actors play the scene two ways. The first time through, tell them to play it as if they hate each other. The second time, have them play it as if they are very much in love. Have them talk about the dynamics of both. How did they feel about themselves? How did they feel about the other person? What did they want? Was it different both times?

Be careful with both Matt's and Christa's monologues at the end of the sketch. Even the best of actors can sometimes become unconsciously indulgent when delivering an especially emotional monologue. This happens when your actors "play emotions." Have them simply tell the truth of the character in these monologues.

This can be an exciting and challenging sketch for both the director and the actors. You must all work together to create the reality of the moment, one that is full of love, hurt, disappointment, loss, confusion, doubt and yes, anger. If the director and actors trust one another, this will be a very powerful sketch and workshop tool.

CHRISTA is seated outside the lawyer's office early in the morning. MATT ENTERS. The conversation starts as a stilted bunch of niceties but soon degenerates.

CHRISTA: Oh ...hello ...

MATT: Hi. *(There is silence.)* Why are you waiting in the hallway?

CHRISTA: Oh, they're not open yet.

MATT: *(He tries to open door DC; it's locked.)* I wish I could keep lawyers' hours. Silence.

CHRISTA: You on your way to work?