

Magic:

A Lack-Lustre Performance?

By Barney Kinard

We seem to have a willingness to try a magical effect that is new, without a whole lot of practice or input before being willing to courageously try it in public. Or we might work on the effect, but not much effort given to developing the message that goes with it. So, in a way, the audience becomes our laboratory or “our way” of field-testing the effect/message. All of a sudden we get this new idea, and at the last minute, we add this clever adaptation to our effect, before we have ever tried it before. Sometimes it works! Sometimes, it does not! When it does, we experience a moment of what we might consider “success.” But I know it does not always work out that way.

This is not just a problem for the beginner, but for the novice and the most experienced, as well. For the most experienced, we view this as *tweaking* with what we know well. For the novice it seems more like a way of *barrowing or adapting* someone else’s effort or idea. For the beginner it appears *premature*, that is they might not know they can do that. At any rate, this lack-luster process is like “magic shoes” without enough polish.

I think it is very courageous to just get up in front of any audience. However, it is a mild form of presumption to think that without, either practice or preparation, one can justify a performance that is not quite ready or polished for demonstration. It just feels like it is “thrown together,” and we know when it is. Maybe, it is well conceived, maybe even creative, but not well executed and certainly not well articulated. We must be better magi-craftsmen than that.

Speaking for myself, I actually know when I am doing this, when it happens, I feel the pull to just try it, anyway. At those times when I yield to this temptation, I have actually benefited from this test run. It seems to provide me some “fertile fodder” for future refinement (and possibly another try elsewhere). However, I have wondered if the audience got a message that I would really prefer they did not get by my feeble effort. It is just too easy to botch it up, I think. However, for me, this becomes the “fast

track” for building my repertoire. I find I am always working on something new, kind of “trying it out” to see how it goes. I seem to take some strength from this initial effort. Maybe, it is unjustified and unwarranted. But then, I refine it with the next opportunity. I justify this “lab work” by learning ways to make this “trial run” better next time. However, when I am doing this, I walk away knowing just exactly what I did. I practiced on them. It was not ready for “prime time.”

Rather, we should do what we have refined and perform what we have mastered. It would be better to do what works and not disclose something extra in the process, until it is more than half baked, ready for public consumption, especially gospel-message magic. A poorly prepared message or an effect poorly done can render the other *null*, or at least *void*, having no serious entertainment value or any lasting message impact. It could be memorable for all the wrong reasons.

There is a time and place for practice, but the actual ministry setting should not be the preferred place. This is one of the reasons I have come to enjoy my relationship with the Fellowship of Christian Magicians. There I find the comfort of being able to work on new material with a classroom atmosphere. We are all there to learn from the oldest to the youngest. I need this forum to “hone my skills” and learn from the suggestions of others, but it requires my willingness to humble myself to get their input. I have a hard time doing for adults what I really prefer performing for children. But I need the adult input to succeed. It matters!

Our message is too important. We need to make a clear statement for the Lord; a studied approach is the best antidote. Rehearsing adaptations and refinements will put some polish to the effect. Ultimately, our message is about Him and our method is a statement about our craft. Mastering both is how we add the *luster* to our gospel presentation.

This is a message that I need to aspire to in my preparation and performance.

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