

# Drama Ministry®

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## WAR ON THE FAMILY

by John Cosper

**GENRE:** Comedy

**SYNOPSIS:** Two parents discuss the world's assault on the family unit, oblivious to the fact that their own family is completely dysfunctional due to their lack of attention to their kids.

**TIME:** Under 5 minutes

**CAST BREAKDOWN:** 4

**TOPIC:** Parenting, Family

**SCRIPTURE REFERENCE:** Ephesians 6:4

**CHURCH YEAR SEASON:** Any

**SUGGESTED USE:** Sermon Starter, Illustration

**CHARACTERS:**

STEVE and JUDY – Christian parents

KIM – their teenage daughter

LITTLE STEVE – their 10-year-old son

**PROPS:** Kitchen table and chairs, newspaper, breakfast foods, ball, glove

**COSTUMES:** Typical Saturday attire for a middle-class family of four

**SOUND:** Four wireless microphones; sound effect of a baby crying.

**LIGHTING:** General stage

**SETTING:** A nice kitchen

### Drama Ministry

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### Director's Tip:

**OVER THE TOP:** Steve and Judy can both afford to be played over the top, so encourage your actors to make strong choices and go for the throat. A good rule of thumb in acting is to force your character to have strong feelings about absolutely everything. In other words, don't allow Steve to just be irritated by something—make him **OUTRAGED**. Don't let Judy be disappointed—make her **DESPAIRING**. Tell your actors to not worry about overdoing it—proper direction and the lines of dialogue themselves will keep the scene in the realm of reality—but choose strong points of view about their topics of discussion and really stick with them.

**KEEPING IT MOVING:** The age-old principle of effective comedy is to keep it driving forward with uninterrupted sound. Steve and Judy's children keep interrupting their discussion about the moral decline of society—for maximum comedic effect, let those entrances and exits merge smoothly with the parents' dialogue to create one steady, unbroken flow of speech. This may be difficult depending on the placement of onstage doors, but even if the kids have to walk a small distance before reaching Steve and Judy, they can begin their lines as soon as they're visible, maintaining the momentum of the scene.

**BLOCKING:** It's tempting to view blocking as fairly random, as if it really doesn't matter whether Steve is at stage right or left, Judy is downstage or upstage, the pair are seated or standing, etc. But be not deceived: all blocking is not created equal! Stage pictures matter, and the placement of actors can dramatically affect what idea gets communicated to your audience. Blocking should tell the story of the scene so effectively that the basic theme of the sketch could still be followed even if there were no dialogue. The rises and falls of the action should be reflected in the movements of the actors, and to test yourself, you may consider bringing in a third party to watch the scene with no sound, and see if they can tell you (at least roughly) what the scene is about.

**PROPS:** Steve walks in with a newspaper, which then gets divided up as the scene evolves. Take care that this prop is a help and not a hindrance—a newspaper can be a cumbersome and noisy distraction if not used well, but it can also be a great tool to emphasize a point or draw focus from one actor to another. Rehearse with the newspaper as it will actually be used on stage, and watch for moments to use it most effectively.

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*The setting is a family kitchen. JUDY is drinking coffee and nibbling a bagel when STEVE walks in with the paper.*

**STEVE:** You'll never guess what I just heard. Troy and Nancy? They're getting a divorce.

**JUDY:** What?