

# SIGNS OF OUR TIMES

*by Mary Ann Smith*



**CHRISTIAN**PUBLISHERS

---

# Copyright Notice

---

**CAUTION:** Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this Work is subject to a royalty. This Work is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention.

**RIGHTS RESERVED:** All rights to this Work are strictly reserved, including professional and amateur stage performance rights. Also reserved are: motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, information and storage retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

**PERFORMANCE RIGHTS AND ROYALTY PAYMENTS:** All amateur and stock performance rights to this Work are controlled exclusively by Christian Publishers. No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this play without securing license and royalty arrangements in advance from Christian Publishers. Questions concerning other rights should be addressed to Christian Publishers. Royalty fees are subject to change without notice. Professional and stock fees will be set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. Any licensing requests and inquiries relating to amateur and stock (professional) performance rights should be addressed to Christian Publishers.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid, whether the play is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged.

**AUTHOR CREDIT:** All groups or individuals receiving permission to produce this play must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production of this play. The author's billing must appear directly below the title on a separate line where no other written matter appears. The name of the author(s) must be at least 50% as large as the title of the play. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s).

**PUBLISHER CREDIT:** Whenever this play is produced, all programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice: *Produced by special arrangement with Christian Publishers.*

**COPYING:** Any unauthorized copying of this Work or excerpts from this Work is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this Work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Christian Publishers.

# Signs of Our Times

A Lenten Series

by Mary Ann Smith

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

**Woman**

**Man**

**Violence**

**Covet**

**Cold, Hard**

**Fear**

**Sign of the Cross**

## **SUMMARY**

A drama of five parts. They may be combined as a single event or as five acts done in weekly installments — during Lent, for example. Theme — The cross amid the signs of our times.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

### Props

Two chairs

Two newspapers

One small Bible

A cross at the altar (such as an acolyte cross)

A pot (perhaps with dry ice in it)

A basket, full of odds and ends, “necessities,” “things”

A stone

Small blanket

Artist’s paintbrush

Small (i.e. 10”) wooden cross on the altar for Week 5

### Set

Each week you’ll need two chairs for the Man and Woman. On Week 5, you’ll need a table and four chairs.

### Songs

A couple suggestions are listed at the end of each script — one hymn and one contemporary song. Please choose that which suits your worship style preference, or feel free to substitute songs of your choosing.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. The Violence Sign
2. The Covet Sign
3. The Cold, Hard Sign
4. The Fear Sign
5. The Sign of the Cross

## The Violence Sign

### Week 1

1  
2  
3 *(MAN and WOMAN read newspapers [scripts may be taped*  
4 *to the newspapers]. WOMAN has a Bible on her lap. They*  
5 *glance through the papers for ten seconds or more.)*

6 **WOMAN:** *(Lowers newspaper.)* Well, just listen to this: A young  
7 man has been accused of killing his own brother ...  
8 something about jealousy.

9 **MAN:** I saw something like that in yesterday's paper. Don't  
10 you wonder how anyone could take a life, let alone  
11 someone in your own family?

12 **WOMAN:** It seems that one brother felt the other was  
13 getting too much attention while he was getting all the  
14 criticism.

15 **MAN:** Something like that could build up inside a person.  
16 What page is that on? I can't seem to find it in today's  
17 *Tribune. (Leafs through the paper.)*

18 **WOMAN:** *(Holds up the Bible.)* Oh, you won't find it there. I  
19 read it in the book of Genesis ... about Cain and Abel.

20 **MAN:** Really? It certainly sounded like today's news! Every  
21 day seems to have its horror story. Do you think things  
22 are any different today than they were in Bible times?  
23 In spite of all our progress, we're still potential Herods  
24 or Jezebels at heart.

25 **WOMAN:** I know what you mean. Just pick up any paper,  
26 and page one screams personal or international  
27 conflict. When I think of the signs of our times, it's  
28 depressing.

29 **MAN:** Yes, take violence, for example ... *(VIOLENCE enters*  
30 *with "sign" — a pot.)*

31 **VIOLENCE:** Oh, you want to take *me* for example! *(Walks*  
32 *toward WOMAN and MAN.)* You might as well take me;  
33 I've been around for a long time. This sign I carry  
34 *(Holds up pot)* boils over constantly with hate and  
35 revenge.

1           You know, violence could have started with Cain and  
 2           Abel. Cain could have worked out his jealousy in  
 3           another way. He could have asked God to help him  
 4           overcome those feelings. He could have talked it out  
 5           with Abel ... but he chose murder in a field. What a  
 6           way to get even.

7           Violence continues all through the Old Testament,  
 8           from personal vendettas to wars. Even in the New  
 9           Testament, John the Baptist, Stephen, or Jesus could  
 10          not avoid their tragic ends. There were many good,  
 11          law-abiding people in those days, of course, but as  
 12          usual, it's the violent actions that get more of our  
 13          attention. It's no different today.

14       **WOMAN:** It's so discouraging to think about this. Why do  
 15          we have to have wars and refugees and Holocausts?

16       **VIOLENCE:** Well, it seems to be part of human nature to  
 17          explode its anger in forms of abuse, retaliation, murder,  
 18          and war. When power, greed, or fear grow out of  
 19          bounds, violence flourishes.

20       **MAN:** Why does it seem so much worse today?

21       **VIOLENCE:** It's really no worse. Pain and terror in the past  
 22          were just as traumatic as now. But now there are more  
 23          people, more nations, and more ways of killing, and  
 24          through television we can all be there ... watching from  
 25          the comfort of our own homes.

26       **WOMAN:** It makes me sad to think of (*Use names of countries*  
 27          *and situations appropriate at the time*) Palestine, Iraq, and  
 28          African nations that have been turned into wastelands;  
 29          people who used to live side by side turned into  
 30          enemies by distorted leaders.

31       **SIGN OF THE CROSS:** (*Rises from a seat behind the altar.*  
 32          *Holds cross and stands beside the altar cross.*) It makes me  
 33          sad, too ... the waste of lives that were meant to reflect  
 34          God's love. I'm the Sign of the Cross, and I come to  
 35          represent the man who came to save lives and to show



1           the way of peace. Christ stands for the healing of  
2           relationships and the inner peace that can turn the  
3           energy of violence into constructive living.

4           As long as the thirst for violence is encouraged,  
5           violence will be a sign of your times.

6   **MAN:** But isn't it idealistic to think it could be any  
7           different?

8   **SIGN OF THE CROSS:** Idealistic — because the world has  
9           never totally tried it. But, individually, Christ continues  
10          to tell us to bind up wounds, feed the hungry, care for  
11          the poor, love our neighbors, heal the sick, turn the  
12          other cheek, speak peace to stormy spirits, and go after  
13          the causes of violence. *(Pause)* It's all in your focus.  
14          Christ offers peace.

15

16   **SUGGESTED SONGS:** Hymn — “Where Restless Crowds  
17          Are Thronging” or contemporary song — “You Are My  
18          All in All” by Dennis Jernigan, CCLI# 825356.  
19          *(VIOLENCE exits with sign.)*

20

21

22

23

## The Covet Sign

24

### Week 2

25

26          *(MAN and WOMAN sit reading newspapers, lowering them*  
27          *as they begin to speak.)*

28   **WOMAN:** You really have to look hard to find anything  
29          cheerful in today's paper. Whatever happened to good  
30          news?

31   **MAN:** I don't know. Just yesterday I read about this young  
32          couple who had it all — just the best of everything —  
33          and every bit of it was given to them ... free! But that  
34          wasn't quite enough for this couple. “One more thing,”  
35          they said. So they took a chance they couldn't resist,

- 1           and that decision cost them everything.
- 2   **WOMAN:** Sad story, but I guess they asked for it. What  
3           “thing” could have possibly bankrupted them so?
- 4   **MAN:** Oh, it wasn’t a thing, exactly, but more the wanting  
5           of something they didn’t need — giving in to that  
6           unquenchable desire for more.
- 7   **WOMAN:** Sounds a lot like today’s idea: “Get everything you  
8           want; charge cards are forever!”
- 9   **MAN:** Well, Adam and Eve — this couple I’ve been talking  
10           about — didn’t need charge cards, but a “little more”  
11           would have put them on an equal standing with God.  
12           By giving in to a selfish desire, they lost their unique  
13           relationship with him.
- 14   **WOMAN:** Wait a minute ... We were talking about things a  
15           minute ago. What’s wrong with having things?
- 16   **COVET:** (*Enters with sign — a basket of things.*) That’s what I’d  
17           like to know! (*Walks toward MAN and WOMAN.*) My  
18           whole sign is based on more; wanting more than I need,  
19           coveting, hoarding, greed — you name it. My sign is as  
20           alive and well now as it was in Bible times. My basket  
21           (*Holds it up*) is full of whatever your heart desires — no  
22           limit. None of the items here are bad in themselves.  
23           Indulging in something once in a while isn’t harmful.  
24           But — when my basket becomes the Master and  
25           demands more and more to satisfy its ravenous  
26           appetite, then getting becomes a way of life — and  
27           success and happiness begin to depend on possessions.
- 28   **MAN:** But how do we know when enough is enough?
- 29   **COVET:** When the things in your life begin to cause  
30           hardship. When things blind you to the needs of others,  
31           it’s time to take an inventory and appreciate what you  
32           already have.
- 33   **WOMAN:** But are “things” the only items in your basket?
- 34   **COVET:** Oh, no. Unfortunately, a person can be greedy for  
35           another person — slavery was a vivid example of this:

1           someone, body and soul. There was even one Old  
2           Testament king who planned the death of a man just to  
3           get the woman he wanted. I'm sorry to say, Violence  
4           and I are often related. Two signs of your times making  
5           too many headlines.

6   **MAN:** Possessions — people — does anything else belong to  
7           your sign?

8   **COVET:** Power. There is nothing more dangerous than a  
9           taste for power. In its rightful place, power is needed  
10          to run governments, maintain law and order, and keep  
11          an economy moving. But, like a demon, self-centered  
12          power can devour persons and nations if it is allowed  
13          to take over. History is a panorama of power-hungry  
14          people: the Romans, Napoleon, Hitler, Saddam Hussein,  
15          and too many others. When domination is the driving  
16          force, people suffer.

17 **SIGN OF THE CROSS:** (*Enters with cross and stands by the*  
18 *altar cross.*) But, wait! It doesn't have to be that way! As  
19          the Sign of the Cross, I can tell you that the man I  
20          represent can set you free from the cravings for things  
21          or people or power. Freedom based on love and  
22          responsibility can release you from selfish obsession,  
23          freeing up necessities for the have-nots of the world —  
24          lifting fellow humans from degradation and violence  
25          and channeling power toward peace. The Ten  
26          Commandments are quite specific about coveting.  
27          Christ simply says, "Where is your treasure?"

28 **WOMAN:** What treasure will there be if we don't accumulate  
29          anything?

30 **SIGN OF THE CROSS:** Possessions, people, and powers all  
31          pass away. The only real and lasting treasure is a  
32          wholesome relationship with God — not for what you'll  
33          get out of it, but for what you'll receive — letting him  
34          fill your life with the priceless gifts of love, joy, peace,  
35          patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness,

1           and — most importantly — self-control.

2   **MAN:** A one-on-one relationship?

3   **SIGN OF THE CROSS:** No ... it doesn't stop there. God's  
4           love is contagious. People around you catch his love  
5           through you.

6           If you must covet anything, covet this love of God.  
7           It's immune to the "moth and rust" that affect earthly  
8           treasures, and once you recognize it and share it, it  
9           cannot be stolen or taken away.

10

11 **SUGGESTED SONGS:** Hymn — "Where Cross the Crowded  
12           Ways of Life" or contemporary song — "Open the Eyes  
13           of My Heart" by Paul Baloche, CCLI# 2298355. (*SIGN  
14           OF THE CROSS exits.*)

15

16

17

18   **The Cold, Hard Sign**

19   **Week 3**

20

21           (*MAN and WOMAN sit, glancing through newspapers.*)

22 **WOMAN:** Did you see the weather report for tomorrow?

23 **MAN:** Sure did. Sounds as if we're going to have a rerun of  
24           January zeros. Makes me shiver just to think about it.

25 **WOMAN:** (*Thoughtful pause*) You know, looking through this  
26           paper, I'm beginning to realize it isn't just a low  
27           temperature that can send chills through a person. It's  
28           these stories about how hard and indifferent people can  
29           be ... cold-hearted might be a better term. So often, a  
30           bad situation wouldn't have happened in the first place  
31           if there had been respect and regard for another  
32           human being.

33 **MAN:** That reminds me of something I read recently where  
34           a young woman was attacked and robbed on her way  
35           home from working late. People hurrying to work that

1 morning saw her lying by the curb and passed by with  
 2 words like “Hmpf ... serves her right, spending the  
 3 night in that bar,” or “Don’t get involved. You never  
 4 know what they’ll do.” Some people tried not to look.

5 **WOMAN:** Sounds to me like a setting for the Good  
 6 Samaritan. But there’s an example of the “coldness”  
 7 that has moved in on our society ... a “frost” that leaves  
 8 people immune to the needs and feelings of others.

9 **COLD, HARD:** (*Enters with sign — stone.*) And you think this  
 10 has never happened before? (*Walks toward WOMAN and*  
 11 *MAN.*) This cold stone (*Holds up stone*) is my sign of the  
 12 times. It represents attitudes that have excluded, shut  
 13 out, and discriminated against others for centuries ...  
 14 just ask any race or ethnic group that feels superior.  
 15 It’s a carelessness that keeps a person high, dry, and  
 16 cold ... above unwanted involvement. Remember Cain’s  
 17 comment about Abel? Can you hear the sneer in his  
 18 reply, “Am I my brother’s keeper? (Genesis 4:9) So, my  
 19 brother is dead. What can I do about it?”

20 **MAN:** Is cynicism part of your sign, too?

21 **COLD, HARD:** Oh, yes ... the art of criticizing everything  
 22 and doing nothing about anything. Just another way of  
 23 keeping aloof by tearing others down. From mild  
 24 indifference to hostile discrimination, did you notice  
 25 that all these attitudes lack a basic respect for fellow  
 26 human beings? “I’m OK, you’re not.”

27 **WOMAN:** Can you imagine the dent we could make in child  
 28 abuse, robbery, and sexual assault if we all exercised  
 29 respect? Even drugs couldn’t compete with a healthy  
 30 self-respect.

31 **MAN:** Good thoughts, but ... cold? Hard as a stone? How do  
 32 we start to thaw this “ice” or wear down this “stone”?

33 **SIGN OF THE CROSS:** (*Appears from behind the altar with*  
 34 *cross.*) You can start by taking to heart the words of the  
 35 man I represent ... Jesus Christ. When they hung him on

1           that cross, it seemed as if stone-cold spirits had won.  
2           After all, how could anything good or lasting come out  
3           of Nazareth? The Pharisees did their best to belittle him.  
4           Pilate dismissed him as a common criminal. He was in  
5           their way ... their frozen, solid way. But, in the end, he  
6           walked right over them!

7   **WOMAN:** So ... what about our times? Is there any hope?

8   **SIGN OF THE CROSS:** *(Stands by the altar and talks to WOMAN*  
9           *and MAN.)* Have you ever watched a spring thaw? Drop  
10          by drop, an icicle reacts to the warmth of the sun and  
11          sheds its solid form. When the warmth of God's love is  
12          allowed to penetrate a cold heart, there is a change for  
13          the better.

14 **MAN:** And what about the stone?

15 **SIGN OF THE CROSS:** Have you ever stood on the rim of a  
16          canyon and marveled at the effect of water on the rocks  
17          below? Slowly but surely, the flow wears down the  
18          resistance of those rocks. *(Pause)* Christ once offered  
19          “living water” to a woman hardened by life. She changed  
20          ... and so can anyone exposed to this water long enough.  
21          Indifference and intolerance simply wear away.

22 **WOMAN:** I think I understand now. It's the value we place  
23          on others and ourselves that determines the  
24          “temperature” of our lives ... warm or cold.

25 **SIGN OF THE CROSS:** God tried to make that very clear in  
26          the Ten Commandments. If you were to reduce the Ten  
27          Commandments to a single ingredient, it could be  
28          respect: respect for God, for his Son, and for each other.  
29          Respect, honor, love: three versions of the same idea,  
30          *(Pause)* three antidotes for a cold heart.

31

32 **SUGGESTED SONGS:** Hymn — “Hope of the World.”  
33          Contemporary song — “Here I Am to Worship” by Tim  
34          Hughes, CCLI# 3266032. *(SIGN OF THE CROSS leaves with*  
35          *sign.)*

## The Fear Sign

## Week 4

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35

*(MAN and WOMAN sit reading their newspapers.)*

**WOMAN:** Well, Mark, *(Or substitute MAN's real name)* here we go again. How we do love the thrill of the chase ... and the capture. The more sensational, the better the bottom line. Makes me wonder why we need TV programs like *24*, *C.S.I.*, and *Law and Order*. *(Current shows of a similar nature may be substituted.)*

**MAN:** You're right. We ought to "get real" and read the headlines and watch the news. That ought to be enough thrill and suspense for anyone!

**WOMAN:** I guess the difference is fear: If it's a TV show, we can watch terrible happenings and not feel a thing — no pain, no terror. We have a hunch the actors will go home after the show. But the *real* dramas that people act out day by day are frightening. On the news, sometimes the "actors" never get to go home.

**MAN:** Yeah. No wonder we keep buying more locks for our doors and more sophisticated security systems. Sometimes you wonder ... are "they" locked out, or are we locked in?

**WOMAN:** Fear is a tragic sign of our times. But in Moses' time, how would *you* have liked to grab a quick lunch, gather up the family and a few belongings, and head out into the night for "nowhere"? Imagine the fear those Israelites in Egypt must have felt! Who was this Moses? They didn't know him personally. Could they trust him? Could he keep them from starvation and protect them from lions in the desert? Sure, they were being worked to death in Egypt, but at least they had food and a roof over their heads. Desert and wilderness ahead and a deceitful Pharaoh behind ... I think I would have said "No." Too many uncertainties ... too many things to go wrong.

1     **FEAR:** (*Enters wearing sign — a small blanket fastened around*  
2     *the shoulders.*) Sometimes we have no choice in the  
3     matter. I'm that sign of fear you've been talking about.  
4     I try to hide the fears and confusion I live with day by  
5     day, but this blanket I'm wearing never seems to cover  
6     them all. Fear of violence, of aging, of crime, of  
7     loneliness ... even the fear of failing — whether it's the  
8     people of Exodus, rival tribes in Africa, victims of  
9     terrorism, or gang warfare; (*Current situations may be*  
10    *substituted*) anywhere in the world at any given time,  
11    people have been trying to escape fear.

12    **MAN:** What about that confusion you spoke of?

13    **FEAR:** There is great confusion in the world today: Why are  
14    things happening so fast that I can't keep up? Are  
15    yesterday's morals really obsolete? How can children  
16    and adults mature if there are no boundaries?

17    **WOMAN:** Don't you ever get discouraged in the face of it  
18    all?

19    **FEAR:** I can get very pessimistic at times. You combine that  
20    with fear, and it's a no-win game. Remember how  
21    Elijah's fear of Jezebel's death threat drove him into the  
22    wilderness with the wish of dying there ... on his own  
23    ... a refugee who thought he had failed God ... a man,  
24    giving up?

25    **MAN:** Is that how it ended for him?

26    **SIGN OF THE CROSS:** (*Enters with cross and stands by the*  
27    *altar cross.*) I can answer that. God restored Elijah's  
28    strength with food and, in a quiet, intimate voice of  
29    hope, God restored Elijah's determination to go on.

30         I am the Sign of the Cross. The man I represent once  
31    calmed a storm at sea to stabilize the faith of his  
32    followers. He can do the same for your storms of fear  
33    and anxiety.

34    **WOMAN:** There are so many leaders pointing out their ways  
35    to security. How do we know which leader is the right



1           one to follow?

2   **SIGN OF THE CROSS:** What if you thought you had found  
3           the perfect leader, and then, after months of following  
4           him and taking in every word he said, what if,  
5           suddenly, the carpet was pulled right out from under  
6           him and all of you, his followers? He's now a crucified  
7           criminal, and you're without a leader. Can you imagine  
8           that kind of confusion?

9   **MAN:** How could anyone handle confusion like that?

10 **SIGN OF THE CROSS:** Two men on their way to Emmaus  
11           were shocked by it all. One minute their leader had  
12           been a hero in the streets ... the next, he was dead.  
13           Only as they listened to the still, calm voice of the one  
14           walking beside them and then blessing their bread, did  
15           their cloud of despair lift. That's how Christ fills the  
16           hollows of your life — by being there, one way or  
17           another.

18           When those Israelites set out from Egypt, the pillar  
19           of God's presence was with them, day and night. When  
20           the disciples huddled in the aftermath of crucifixion,  
21           Christ came and touched their fears with new  
22           assurance.

23 **WOMAN:** But what about death? It's the greatest  
24           uncertainty of all.

25 **SIGN OF THE CROSS:** By the very cross he died on ... by  
26           the very tomb he deserted, Christ gave us the best  
27           reason why we needn't fear death. His message is that  
28           God doesn't do things halfway. Take a good look at  
29           nature the next time you doubt this: the orderliness of  
30           sunrise and sunset, the timing of migrations, winter-  
31           death and spring-life. God plans it all.

32 **MAN:** *(Rising suddenly, looking around)* Pam! *(Or substitute*  
33           *WOMAN's name.)* Did you feel that?

34 **WOMAN:** *(Rising)* What is it, Mark? *(Or substitute MAN's*  
35           *name.)*



*Thank you for reading this free excerpt from:*

*SIGNS OF OUR TIMES*

*by Mary Ann Smith.*

*For performance rights and/or a complete copy of the script,  
please contact us at:*

CHRISTIAN PUBLISHERS

P.O. Box 248 - Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406

Toll Free: 1-844-841-6387 - Fax (319) 368-8011

[customerservice@christianpub.com](mailto:customerservice@christianpub.com)