

KEEPING IT REAL

by Linda J. Allen



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KEEPING IT REAL

By Linda S. Allen

KEEPING IT REAL

An Advent Candlelighting Collection

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SYNOPSIS: Cast members at play rehearsals struggle to reconcile the romanticized notions of Christmas with the reality—from greeting cards depicting the holy family aglow in ethereal light with what Jesus ‘ birth really means for us today.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2-6 female, 3-8 male, 3-11 either)

First Sunday of Advent: Real Hope

DIRECTOR (f/m) (16 lines)
 PAT (f/m) (9 lines)
 ALAN (m) (11 lines)
 NARRATOR (f/m) (10 lines)
 NEIL (m) (9 lines)

Second Sunday of Advent: Real Peace

DIRECTOR (f/m) (12 lines)
 PAT (f/m) (10 lines)
 ALAN (m) (12 lines)
 NARRATOR (f/m) (12 lines)
 NEIL (m) (15 lines)
 MEG (f) (10 lines)
 HOPE (f) (7 lines)

Third Sunday of Advent: Real Joy

NARRATOR (f/m) (13 lines)
 MEG (f) (16 lines)
 PAT (f/m) (12 lines)
 ALAN (m) (14 lines)
 HOPE (f) (12 lines)

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Fourth Sunday of Advent: Real Love... Now What?

NARRATOR (f/m) (9 lines)
 MEG (f) (7 lines)
 PAT (f/m) (7 lines)
 ALAN (m) (7 lines)
 HOPE (f) (8 lines)
 DIRECTOR (f/m) (12 lines)
 NEIL (m) (7 lines)
 DAVID (m) (14 lines)

DURATION: 4 scenes, 8-10 minutes each

PRODUCTION NOTES

This series of short sketches follow a church drama group through three rehearsals and the moments before they go on stage for the annual Christmas pageant. They are normal church-going folks. They make mistakes, get irritated with each other, and even steal! (Well, actually the hay stolen from the Methodist nativity scene was supposed to be only borrowed, and most likely would be returned.) As Alan states, “I’d say the Lord uses *iffy* circumstances and colorful people to do his work all the time. Otherwise, not much would get done.”

We struggle, as the cast members struggle, with the familiar—maybe all too familiar—stories about the night Jesus was born. Perhaps we hold dear romanticized notions of his birth from oil paintings rich in color, the Holy Family aglow in ethereal light. Greeting cards depict the scenes with soft, blurry tints. Baby Jesus is cute. The manger appears homey and warm. Mary looks on, smiling in perfect attire. And we all feel warm and fuzzy inside, and full of hope, peace, joy, and love. Don’t we? At least, that’s what we’re *supposed* to feel. The cast members ponder the real story (*A prostitute is part of Jesus lineage?*), their real feeling’s (*Maybe we aren’t feeling peaceful. Maybe we’re busy and distracted and there’s a lot going on in our lives. And not all of it’s good.*), and what Christ’s birth really means to each of us. “When the twinkling lights go dark . . . and reality sets in.”

The Director and Narrator wear all black. The angels, shepherds, and Joseph wear black under the costumes. Our players had lots of fun with their lopsided halos, too big angel dresses, and shepherds and Joseph “unable to find” all the appropriate items for their outfits. Alan carries the only prop, a shepherd’s staff. No set is required. The cast members simply stand. The cast varies from sketch to sketch. Our teenage boy was only available for the final Sunday. And that worked. Most kids are busier than adults, and we were lucky to get him for one Sunday.

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Real Hope

First Sunday of Advent

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Luke 1:26-38; Luke 1:52; Matthew 1:1-16; Psalm 130:5.6

SYNOPSIS: The cast of the annual Christmas pageant meet for their first rehearsal and discover Gabriel's message to Mary brings hope to all who want to be part of God's story.

COSTUMES: All wear black except Neil, who is dressed in a rather pitiful angel costume.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 male, 3 either)

DIRECTOR (f/m) (16 lines)

PAT (f/m) (9 lines)

ALAN (m) (11 lines)

NARRATOR (f/m) (10 lines)

NEIL (m) (9 lines)



AT START: The Advent wreath is set up, but none of the candles are lit. DIRECTOR, PAT, ALAN, and NARRATOR take places. NEIL enters on cue.

DIRECTOR: I'm glad at least some of you could meet for the initial reading of this year's Christmas play.

NARRATOR: Where's the teenager we have playing Mary?

DIRECTOR: She has a soccer game.

PAT: And Joseph?

DIRECTOR: Piano lesson.

ALAN: And Gabriel?

PAT: He's coming. He's trying to get into his costume.

NARRATOR: We're supposed to have costumes on for the first rehearsal? No one told me.

- 1 **DIRECTOR:** You are the narrator for the pageant. You won't wear
2 a costume.
- 3 **PAT:** Our Gabriel wanted to make sure his would fit.
4
- 5 *NEIL enters. He is dressed in an ill-fitting angel outfit with a halo on*
6 *his head.*
7
- 8 **NEIL:** Did I get my halo on straight?
- 9 **NARRATOR:** *(In disbelief.)* This is our Gabriel?
- 10 **ALAN:** Gabriel was an imposing angel. You cast *him* as Gabriel?
- 11 **NEIL:** Hey! That's not very nice.
- 12 **DIRECTOR:** *(To ALAN.)* Do you want the part? Do you want to
13 trade your shepherd's staff for a halo?
- 14 **ALAN:** Noooo.
- 15 **DIRECTOR:** If you want to direct the play, have at it. I have plenty
16 of other things I could be doing.
- 17 **ALAN:** *(Backing down.)* It's just that... he's kind of an aged Gabriel.
- 18 **NEIL:** *(Defensive.)* I think I look pretty good to be thousands of
19 years old!
- 20 **NARRATOR:** *(To NEIL.)* Well, at least when you tell Mary to "Fear
21 not!" it will make sense. You'd scare the plum pudding out of me!
- 22 **DIRECTOR:** OK, OK. We need to get started. As we begin the
23 season of Advent, our focus in this first scene is *hope*. The
24 pastor is using the Scripture about the angel Gabriel—
- 25 **NEIL:** Me!
- 26 **DIRECTOR:** Coming to Mary to announce she would be the mother
27 to the Son of the Most High. His name would be Jesus, and he
28 would be given the throne of David.
- 29 **PAT:** And Mary was poor and just a kid—a teenager.
- 30 **DIRECTOR:** Can you imagine God putting that kind of
31 responsibility on her?
- 32 **NEIL:** And she took it on!
- 33 **ALAN:** In the Bible, Mary's Magnificat—her song of praise—says,
34 "He has torn princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly"
35 *(Luke 1:52).*
- 36 **DIRECTOR:** Jesus came to the most vulnerable—as the most
37 vulnerable himself.
- 38 **NARRATOR:** Like the shepherds. They were humble folks too.

1 **PAT:** Poor shepherds. They certainly needed hope. They were
2 lowly, insignificant people.

3 **ALAN:** All of them were under the oppression of Roman rule. It
4 would be like having foreign tanks rolling up and down the
5 streets of America. (*Shudders.*) Chilling.

6 **DIRECTOR:** And they were under religious oppression too. Rules,
7 regulations, often corrupt religious leaders. They must have
8 clung to hope for something better.

9 **NEIL:** Maybe when everything is hunky-dory, people don't think
10 much about hope.

11 **ALAN:** True. When shadows are longest in my life, that's when
12 hope shines the most.

13 **PAT:** And isn't that faith in a way? Can you separate the two—faith
14 and hope?

15 **NARRATOR:** When things are going well for me, I just take it all
16 for granted. I'm thankful! And feeling strong! But I connect hope
17 with being in a lonely, sad place. When I'm the most
18 vulnerable... when I'm feeling childlike... lost, with no place to
19 turn.

20 **DIRECTOR:** So Gabriel comes to Mary to announce the birth of
21 this amazing baby.

22 **PAT:** But Jesus didn't get rid of Roman rule.

23 **ALAN:** What message did Jesus have when he started his
24 ministry? Rise up against the Romans? Throw out the corrupt
25 religious leaders? No. It was *repent!*

26 **NARRATOR:** That must've been hard to hear. They wanted the
27 bad guys to be thumped, but instead they were told to repent.

28 **NEIL:** So where is the hope in the story?

29 **DIRECTOR:** Hope lights up all of the gospels and the letters of the
30 New Testament. The vulnerable were under Roman rule. Plus
31 they were persecuted and oppressed by religious leaders. But
32 their testimony remained one of faith and hope. Even Jesus'
33 lineage listed in Matthew is a witness to that. There are four
34 women mentioned as part of Jesus' ancestors. That's unheard
35 of in a paternalistic culture! And the women were not all saints:
36 Tamar—a woman with very shady dealings in her past. Rahab
37 from Jericho—a memorable woman of ill-repute. Ruth, a
38 penniless, ostracized Moabite. And Bathsheba, whose infamous

1 behavior led to the murder of her husband and death of her
2 firstborn. All used by God in a great stream of unexpected hope.
3 **ALAN:** I'm trying to get this straight. A call to repentance and
4 salvation and hope were all in the person of Christ as an infant
5 in a manger.
6 **NARRATOR:** His message that came to the lowly . . .
7 **DIRECTOR:** And the high. Don't forget—the exalted got the same
8 message!
9 **NARRATOR:** The message was *repent*. (*Beat.*) Become different.
10 **PAT:** They must've been confused by that.
11 **NEIL:** *I'm* confused by that.
12 **NARRATOR:** God took poor, sinful, insignificant people . . . a
13 young woman, a carpenter, uneducated shepherds, women with
14 dicey pasts.
15 **ALAN:** And people crushed by poverty and oppression . . .
16 **DIRECTOR:** And called them just as they were, in the situations
17 they were already in...
18 **PAT:** To be part of God's great story.
19 **NEIL:** And there is hope for us?
20 **DIRECTOR:** Just as we are, where we are . . . to be part of the
21 story.
22 **ALAN:** (*Lights first candle representing hope.*) The psalmist wrote,
23 "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope.
24 My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the
25 morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning" (*Psalms*
26 *130:5-6*). Amen.

THE END

Real Peace

Second Sunday of Advent

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Luke 2:1-14 NKJV

SYNOPSIS: As the cast rehearses the angels' announcement to the shepherds, total discord is the order of the day until they begin to ponder the angels' message of peace and goodwill.

COSTUMES: DIRECTOR and NARRATOR wear black. NEIL, MEG, and HOPE wear ragtag angel costumes. ALAN and PAT wear black clothes under parts of shepherd costumes. ALAN has a shepherd's staff.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 female, 2 male, 3 either)

DIRECTOR (f/m) (12 lines)

PAT (f/m) (10 lines)

ALAN (m) (12 lines)

NARRATOR (f/m) (12 lines)

NEIL (m) (15 lines)

MEG (f) (10 lines)

HOPE (f) (7 lines)



- 1 **AT START:** *ALL take places. DIRECTOR is at Center Stage.*
- 2 *ANGELS are Stage Right. SHEPHERDS stand Stage Left.*
- 3 *NARRATOR is at the podium.*
- 4
- 5 **NEIL:** I know I'm supposed to be part of the heavenly host, but I'm
- 6 not singing this time!
- 7 **ALAN:** Noooo problem.
- 8 **PAT:** People are still talking about what happened last Easter.
- 9 **MEG:** Yeah, we won't make *that* mistake again!
- 10 **ALAN:** Handel was spinning in his grave
- 11 **NEIL:** I didn't think my solo was that bad.
- 12 **HOPE:** The "Hallelujah" chorus will never be the same.

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- 1 **NARRATOR:** *We'll never be the same.*
- 2 **NEIL:** *(Defensively.)* People loved it! They left the church in high
3 spirits. Full of joy and goodwill.
- 4 **DIRECTOR:** Because they were laughing and slapping their knees.
5 When the pastor said he wanted a memorable Easter service,
6 the one we gave him was *not* what he had in mind. We'll leave
7 the singing to the choir that actually rehearsed.
- 8 **NARRATOR:** *And can carry a tune.*
- 9 **HOPE:** *(To DIRECTOR.)* Have you decided who gets the biggest
10 angel part? I've been practicing the lines. I'm ready!
- 11 **NEIL:** I was Gabriel last week. Wouldn't Gabriel make the
12 announcement to the shepherds? Shouldn't I get the part?
- 13 **MEG:** *(With a real attitude)* The Bible doesn't say Gabriel was the
14 angel in *this* story. And besides, on all the Christmas cards, the
15 angels were young and pretty. Like me.
- 16 **NEIL:** Like you? You're not bad looking, I give you that. But young?
- 17 **MEG:** Young-er. There were no A.A.R.P. angels in any of the
18 Christmas card pictures.
- 19 **NARRATOR:** I thought you angels were just supposed to act it out.
20 Since I'm the narrator, I tell the story.
- 21 **DIRECTOR:** Look. Let's just get on with the rehearsal. Shepherds,
22 is this the best you can do for your costumes?
- 23 **PAT:** He took the only shepherd's staff.
- 24 **ALAN:** Some kid broke the other one over another kid's head last
25 year in vacation Bible school. We don't have time to make a new
26 one.
- 27 **PAT:** But why did *you* take the only one?
- 28 **ALAN:** How many women shepherds do you know?
- 29 **DIRECTOR:** All right! You do realize this week of Advent is about
30 peace. Peace! We're celebrating and contemplating Christ
31 coming as the Prince of Peace . . . about the angels announcing
32 Jesus' birth and peace and goodwill to all people.
- 33 **HOPE:** *(To NARRATOR.)* See? It was the angels who announced
34 it. Not a narrator! There was no narrator in the Christmas story.
- 35 **NARRATOR:** There may not have been a narrator in Bible times,
36 but there's one now. Moi!
- 37 **DIRECTOR:** Let's just read the script and work on that. OK?
38 Enough of the jealousy and hurt feelings. Narrator, begin please.

1

2 *NARRATOR reads the following in a monotone voice, with no*
3 *dramatic pauses whatsoever. During this terrible reading, other*
4 *CHARACTERS except NEIL may be reacting with eye rolls or looks*
5 *of disbelief.*

6

7 **NARRATOR:** There were in the same country shepherds living out
8 in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold,
9 an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord
10 shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel
11 said to them—

12 **NEIL:** So is this where I come in?

13 **DIRECTOR:** I've divided the script up among the three of you.

14 **HOPE:** But that's not how the Bible tells it.

15 **DIRECTOR:** I'm certain there have been many liberties taken over
16 the years on the way the Bible story is told. Just read the part.

17 **MEG:** *(Over the top. Big hand gestures.)* Do not be afraid!

18 **PAT:** *(Dramtically, acting the part.)* Oh, look, fellow shepherd!
19 Angels!

20 **ALAN:** *(Also with fake, overdone drama.)* I am sore afraid!

21 **NARRATOR:** Hold it! That's not in the script.

22 **PAT:** *(Sort of a childlike "So there!")* The director said liberties can
23 be taken with the story.

24 **DIRECTOR:** *(Sighing.)* Just *look* sore afraid. Fall to the ground if
25 you want to.

26 **ALAN:** *(Looking at PAT.)* We don't want to.

27 **MEG:** *(Big sigh.)* For behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy
28 which will be to all people.

29 **HOPE:** For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior,
30 who is Christ the Lord.

31 **MEG:** And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped
32 in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.

33 **NARRATOR:** And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude
34 of the heavenly host praising God and saying...

35 **NEIL:** Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill
36 toward men!

- 1 **ALAN:** Wait a minute. That's not what the angel says in my Bible.
2 It says something like "to men of good will." That's kind of
3 different.
- 4 **DIRECTOR:** We're using the King James Version. It's the
5 traditional one.
- 6 **PAT:** But what is it really supposed to be? Is it to men of goodwill
7 or goodwill to men?
- 8 **NEIL:** I thought baby Jesus just *gave* us peace and goodwill.
- 9 **MEG:** And we don't have to do anything to get it? Peace and
10 goodwill just fall on us like rain?
- 11 **NARRATOR:** We *do* believe in grace. Isn't that part of it?
- 12 **DIRECTOR:** Unfortunately, I haven't noticed peace and goodwill
13 raining down on us this morning.
- 14 **HOPE:** Maybe we aren't feeling peaceful. Maybe we're busy and
15 distracted, and (*Serious tone.*) there's a lot going on in our lives.
16 And not all of it's good.
- 17 **NARRATOR:** But maybe that's when we need God's peace the
18 most.
- 19 **NEIL:** I'm still stuck on the goodwill part.
- 20 **PAT:** That's because you're still trying to find it. How can you have
21 peace and goodwill on earth when you're at war with Marvin
22 Jenkins next door?
- 23 **NEIL:** Because he never returned my drill bit set he borrowed two
24 years ago. I guess he thinks it was a gift.
- 25 **MEG:** Sounds like to me it's the gift that keeps on giving. He has
26 the tools and you're still carrying around bad feelings
- 27 **DIRECTOR:** Grudges do get heavy.
- 28 **NEIL:** What am I supposed to do? Give him a hug?
- 29 **ALAN:** Uh-oh.
- 30 **NARRATOR:** Uh-oh what?
- 31 **ALAN:** I just remembered something. (*Beat.*) *I'm* the one who's
32 had your drill bit set for two years.
- 33 **NEIL:** What?!
- 34 **ALAN:** That's right. I mentioned I needed one, and you told me I
35 could use yours and to get it from Marvin Jenkins. And I did.
36 Guess I just forgot I had it.
- 37 **NEIL:** So I've been mad at Marvin Jenkins for two years and I
38 should've been mad at *you*?

1 **DIRECTOR:** (*Sighing and then, to NARRATOR.*) Narrator,
2 continue please!
3 **NARRATOR:** (*Trying to soldier on.*) So it was, when the angels had
4 gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to
5 one another...
6 **PAT:** Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come
7 to pass...
8 **ALAN:** Which the Lord has made known to us.
9 **MEG:** (*Beat.*) Wow. Those shepherds got to see baby Jesus for
10 real. You know when you stop to think about it, *really* think about
11 it... this is a powerful, amazing story.
12 **HOPE:** Can you imagine our lives *without* the Christ child?
13 **PAT:** Without Jesus and his teachings?
14 **NARRATOR:** Without the Sermon on the Mount?
15 **MEG:** Without God's love?
16 **ALAN:** Without grace and forgiveness? (*Beat, then to NEIL.*) Hey,
17 buddy, sorry about the drill bit set.
18 **NEIL:** Aw, that's OK. You can have it. I never used it anyway. I
19 guess I owe Marvin Jenkins an apology.
20 **PAT:** Why? He didn't know you were mad at him. You were the
21 one stewing over something that didn't happen. Over something
22 you didn't even want!
23 **NEIL:** Maybe I need to be a shepherd and get some peace and
24 goodwill.
25 **DIRECTOR:** (*Thoughtful.*) Be a shepherd. (*Beat.*) God's gift of
26 peace and goodwill is offered to all of us. We don't have to work
27 for it. The shepherds didn't. They merely received it. And they
28 were changed forever. And we too can receive the Christ child
29 into our hearts. We can all be shepherds in the Christmas story.
30 (*Lights second candle, the Candle of Peace.*)

THE END

Real Joy

Third Sunday of Advent

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Luke 2: 16-20 NKJ; Deuteronomy

16:13-15 NIV

SYNOPSIS: As cast members gather to rehearse, they consider the problem of “joy” in the midst of seasonal trappings versus the real joy people find in a Spirit-filled life with God.

COSTUMES: MEG and HOPE are in their angel outfits. PAT and ALAN are in their partial shepherd costumes. ALAN carries a shepherd staff. NARRATOR wears all black.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 female, 1 male, 2 either)

NARRATOR (f/m) (13 lines)

MEG (f) (16 lines)

PAT (f/m) (12 lines)

ALAN (m) (14 lines)

HOPE (f) (12 lines)



- 1 **AT START:** MEG, HOPE, PAT, and ALAN take places On-stage.
- 2 NARRATOR stands at the podium.
- 3
- 4 **MEG:** Where's our director for pageant rehearsal?
- 5 **NARRATOR:** She phoned and told me she had last-minute stuff to
- 6 do before Christmas.
- 7 **MEG:** What about us? Doesn't she think we've got last-minute stuff
- 8 to do? (*Beat. Looks around.*) Where's the old guy playing
- 9 Gabriel?
- 10 **PAT:** Home taking a nap.
- 11 **MEG:** Must be nice, napping in the middle of the day. You've got
- 12 to be a toddler or older than dirt to get by with that.
- 13 **ALAN:** I nap.

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- 1 **MEG:** (*Make several syllables out of the word.*) Right. You old
2 people get all the breaks .
3 **HOPE:** Oh, yeah, like broken hips, broken ankles—
4 **PAT:** Broken dreams—
5 **HOPE:** Broken relationships—
6 **ALAN:** Yeah! Even my car is broken down.
7 **MEG:** I mean... *discounts* on everything. All you have to do is whip
8 out some old person card and show it to the woman at the cash
9 register and voila'! You get a break. I've watched you guys. You
10 just wiggle your arthritic fingers or point to your sagging jawlines,
11 and they give you free coffee and ten percent off of everything
12 else.
13 **PAT:** I like senior Tuesdays at the department stores.
14 **NARRATOR:** Me too! Twenty percent off on top of—
15 **MEG:** I rest my case! Are there any "normal people" special
16 discount days? Noooo.
17 **NARRATOR:** Look on the bright side... in a few years you too can
18 be in the same enviable condition we old people are in. And your
19 great reward for surviving decades will be free coffee at a fast
20 food restaurant.
21 **MEG:** I'm sorry. I didn't mean to go on a rant. It's just that my head
22 is spinning. I have so much on my list of things to do. And before
23 I do my own Christmas stuff, I'm serving meals at the homeless
24 shelter and baking cookies for the choir kids. Plus (*Gesture with*
25 *your costume.*) be an angel in the Christmas pageant.
26 **PAT:** Well, maybe after rehearsal, we can all get some Christmas
27 stuff done. I haven't even bought my cards yet.
28 **NARRATOR:** (*She can be very annoying at times.*) My cards are
29 mailed. Wallace and I wrote our special Christmas message
30 together. He addressed the envelopes and mailed them. I got
31 the tree up and decorated. He and I have been sitting by the fire
32 in our matching pajamas every evening, sipping mulled cider,
33 listening to Christmas music, and just basking in the warmth and
34 glow of the season.
35 **HOPE:** (*Total disbelief.*) Really! Men don't do that. What flying
36 saucer did Wallace get out of?

- 1 **MEG:** Exactly. I do the charity work, shopping, cooking, wrapping,
2 and decorating. And Harvey lies on the couch watching football
3 and war movies. Then he complains when we visit his folks
4 because he has to load the car.
- 5 **ALAN:** Well, I'm the exception to the rule!
- 6 **MEG:** You clean and cook?
- 7 **ALAN:** No.
- 8 **PAT:** You shop and wrap?
- 9 **ALAN:** No.
- 10 **NARRATOR:** You decorate the tree and hang the holly?
- 11 **ALAN:** I do my part for the Lord at Christmas!
- 12 **NARRATOR:** Like what? Volunteer for the food pantry?
- 13 **ALAN:** I climb up on the roof and strap down the seven foot tall
14 lighted Santa. I've got it on a timer surrounded by multi-color
15 marquee lights. I do it every year!
- 16 **HOPE:** And that's what you're doing for the Lord?
- 17 **ALAN:** It's the Christmas season. Isn't Jesus the one we're doing
18 all this for? We're bringing Christmas joy to everyone? We're
19 showing our light to the world. Anybody driving by my house can
20 tell I love the Lord!
- 21 **HOPE:** That seems a little...
- 22 **ALAN:** A little what?
- 23 **HOPE:** Like you're missing the point.
- 24 **NARRATOR:** Wait a minute. There's nothing wrong with putting
25 Santa on his roof. And having pretty lights. I love that sort of
26 thing.
- 27 **MEG:** God wants us to be happy and joyful. He doesn't want us to
28 be all grumpy and down in the mouth. There are parties in the
29 Bible. I read about one in Deuteronomy and...
- 30 **PAT:** Deuteronomy? Nobody reads Deuteronomy on purpose.
- 31 **MEG:** I didn't read it on purpose. I was looking for a coupon I stuck
32 in my Bible. And then I ended up reading about this big party.
- 33 **PAT:** I guarantee you it had nothing to do with the Christmas story.
- 34 **MEG:** Not exactly, but it does tell about the Festival of Tabernacles.
35 "Be joyful at your festival... for the Lord your God will bless you
36 in all your harvest and in the work of your hands and your joy will
37 be complete." Sounds like to me God wants us to party and be
38 thankful and joyful.

1 **NARRATOR:** Of course God wants us to enjoy our food and happy
2 times and family and friends. Isn't that the abundant life Jesus
3 talked about?

4 **PAT:** I'm not sure. It's a little confusing to me. Is an abundant life
5 just about parties and decorations and happy times?

6 **HOPE:** I hope not. *(Pause here and let it sink in that the tone is*
7 *changing. ALL look at HOPE.)* Some of us don't have that.

8 **PAT:** What are you talking about?

9 **HOPE:** My life doesn't feel very abundant right now. And I know
10 plenty of people who feel the same way.

11 **MEG:** But it's Christmas! We're supposed to be feeling joy!

12 **HOPE:** It doesn't matter what I'm *supposed* to feel. I'm telling you
13 the way I feel. Our family has suffered some heavy losses this
14 year. When we get together for Christmas dinner, there will be
15 an empty chair. We'll never be the same.

16 **NARRATOR:** Oh, I'm so sorry. I didn't realize.

17 **ALAN:** *(This is difficult to talk about.)* You know... things have been
18 a little tough at our house. We've had some serious financial
19 blows. Believe me, that plastic Santa and the lights strung on the
20 roof and the decorated tree—that's the extent of our Christmas
21 this year. We've explained to the kids and grandkids that things
22 are going to be different. We'll gather for a nice dinner, but no
23 presents from us.

24 **PAT:** In the Christmas story, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds
25 were poorer than any of us. But the story isn't about parties. It's
26 not about a promise that no one will get sick or hurt or die or be
27 disappointed or feel sad. It's about Jesus coming into the world.
28 And they were joyful.

29 **MEG:** Maybe we should look at the story again. We haven't even
30 rehearsed yet.

31 **NARRATOR:** I've been practicing the narrator part at home. I'm
32 waaay better than the last time we rehearsed.

33 **ALAN:** My friend, you had nowhere to go but up.

34 **HOPE:** Go for it, Narrator.

35 **NARRATOR:** *(Much better reading than the last Sunday's.)* So it
36 was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven,
37 that the shepherds said to one another...



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