

THIS PRESENT CONFUSION

by Glen Ellington



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A comic take on gifts we don't deserve

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SYNOPSIS: Hilarious misunderstandings abound as a brother and sister contemplate the presents under the tree. The smug sister, convinced she's earned her gifts by the deeds she perfunctorily performed throughout the year, cites Bible verses of dubious origin as "proof." The younger brother puzzles over it all—until the siblings unwrap and read a book which explains that Jesus' birth and subsequent gift of salvation is not earned, but freely given. Presents the gospel in an honest but not heavy-handed manner. Adult actors play the pajama-clad little kids for added fun. Its short length is ideal for combining with music or other short dramas for a variety-type show during the Christmas season. Utterly charming!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 female, 1 male)

GIRL (f) Eight-year-old big sister. *(69 lines)*

BOY (m) Five-year-old little brother. *(68 lines)*

DURATION: 12 minutes

PRODUCTION NOTES

CASTING: Although *This Present Confusion* features child characters, the parts should be enacted by young adults.

COSTUMES: Girl and Boy should both wear pajamas (Boy could have feet in his).

SET: A decorated Christmas tree should be placed at Center Stage.

PROPS: Place a few oversized packages with Christmas wrap and bows under the tree. A large book should be wrapped as one of the presents.

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SCRIPTURE: All Scripture is taken from or based on the King James Version.

PREMIERE PRODUCTION: Presented by The WordPlayers at Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church in Knoxville, TN, with Alli Acuff and Michael Brown.

1 **AT START:** *The stage is empty except for a Christmas tree with*
2 *presents underneath.*

3
4 **GIRL:** *(Entering.)* Oh goody, all those presents are for me, just me!
5 *(To audience.)* That's right, people, I said they're mine, so get
6 your mitts off! *(She crosses to look at them.)* I mean, why
7 shouldn't they be mine? Who else does so much for so many
8 people so that everyone will think she's wonderful? *(Beat.)* Well,
9 I *am* wonderful. Everyone says so. So I deserve all of them.
10 *(Looks at audience.)* So there!

11 **BOY:** *(Enters and dashes to tree.)* Oh wow, presents!

12 **GIRL:** Hold on there, buster! These are all mine, so just back off if
13 you know what's good for you!

14 **BOY:** All yours? How do you figure that?

15 **GIRL:** That's simple, bud— *(Aside.)* and so are you. Christmas is
16 about giving, right?

17 **BOY:** Well...

18 **GIRL:** Well nothing, jack. I spend all year giving my time to other
19 people, so once a year I deserve to get stuff for me. *(To*
20 *audience.)* To be honest, I really don't like doing the things I do,
21 but hey—it looks good on the old permanent record. Know what
22 I mean? *(Looks to heaven.)*

23 **BOY:** But if Christmas is a time for giving, what about me? Don't I
24 get something too?

25 **GIRL:** Well, of course you do, sweetie. You get to give to me, and
26 that's in the Bible.

27 **BOY:** It is? Where?

28 **GIRL:** In Acts 20:35, Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to
29 receive." So you get blessed and I get all this stuff!

30 **BOY:** But I don't want to be blessed. I just want stuff!

31 **GIRL:** But the question is, do you deserve it? Well, do you? Huh?
32 Do you?

33 **BOY:** I dunno. I never thought about it before. I've always gotten
34 stuff for Christmas, so I guess I just thought I should.

35 **GIRL:** You better read the contract, chucko.

36 **BOY:** Contract? What contract?

37 **GIRL:** *(To audience.)* He just doesn't get it. *The* contract. You
38 know, the big one with a capital B. The Bible?

- 1 **BOY:** Why do you call the Bible a contract?
- 2 **GIRL:** Because that's what it is, right? I mean, here's this big book
3 written by a lot of old guys a long time ago, and in it, God gives
4 us rules to follow so we can do the right thing and get stuff for
5 us.
- 6 **BOY:** Is that what the Bible says? I dunno...
- 7 **GIRL:** I can quote you chapter and verse, brainiac. How about this?
8 "Follow these rules and I will give you stuff." Second Barnacles
9 3:10.
- 10 **BOY:** Second what?
- 11 **GIRL:** Or listen to what the prophet Meomiah said in chapter 78,
12 verse 12: "If you do the good stuff, you'll get the good stuff."
- 13 **BOY:** Meomiah? Now, I don't think that—
- 14 **GIRL:** All right, how about this quote from the book of Levitations:
15 "You shall work one year, and then shall you get the good stuff."
- 16 **BOY:** Levitations?
- 17 **GIRL:** Look it up, Einstein. It's in the Old Testament between
18 Second Monocles and Makabuck.
- 19 **BOY:** What? Now, I don't—
- 20 **GIRL:** So you doubt me, do you? All right, I'll give you one more.
21 First Spaniel 3:47: "Work at all times, and you will get stuff."
- 22 **BOY:** First what?
- 23 **GIRL:** I'll bet you never even read the Bible, did you?
- 24 **BOY:** Well, I thought I did, but—
- 25 **GIRL:** All right, here's one last verse for you. Eczema 12:14: "If you
26 don't deserve it, you don't get it." Got it?
- 27 **BOY:** Well, I guess so. You mean God rewards us for doing things
28 for people?
- 29 **GIRL:** Bingo, Sherlock. You solved the case. Want a cookie?
- 30 **BOY:** So God is all about us doing things for people just so we can
31 get stuff at Christmas?
- 32 **GIRL:** No, cupcake, that's just the first part of it. This isn't just a
33 short-term contract, his is the big one. The one that's bigger than
34 all of them. Eternity!
- 35 **BOY:** What do you mean?
- 36 **GIRL:** I'll go slow so you can get this, all right? Here's how it works.
37 God is up in heaven with these two big books, right? I mean,
38 these books are like ten miles long and a thousand feet high.

- 1 **BOY:** God must be really big if he has books like that!
- 2 **GIRL:** He's the biggest there is. Inside these books are everybody's
3 name that has ever lived. In one book he writes down all the
4 good things you did, and in the other he writes down all the bad
5 stuff. Then he feeds the information into a big computer, and
6 presto! You know what side you're on.
- 7 **BOY:** What side of what?
- 8 **GIRL:** What side of the scale, silly. If you have more good stuff than
9 bad, then you get to go to heaven.
- 10 **BOY:** And if you don't?
- 11 **GIRL:** (*Quietly.*) Then you have to go to the other place. The one
12 we don't speak of.
- 13 **BOY:** Oh, you mean—
- 14 **GIRL:** Shhh! Some people don't think it's a real place, but I know it
15 is because my third grade teacher Mrs. Kronkmeister is already
16 there.
- 17 **BOY:** She is? How do you know?
- 18 **GIRL:** Because I heard Daddy say that he'd see her there first
19 before he would come to another parent-teacher conference.
- 20 **BOY:** You mean that God is like a big bookkeeper, just keeping
21 track of how good and bad we are?
- 22 **GIRL:** By George, I think he's got it!
- 23 **BOY:** But what if we have just one more bad thing than good thing?
24 Does that mean we have to go to—
- 25 **GIRL:** Don't say it. But yes, that's true.
- 26 **BOY:** How do we know what the scale looks like? I mean, can we
27 know how we stand with God? Like how close we are to the
28 edge?
- 29 **GIRL:** That's the problem. There's no way to know. And that's why
30 I spend all year doing things for other people so I can build up a
31 lot of credits on the good side.
- 32 **BOY:** What sort of things do you do?
- 33 **GIRL:** Well, let's see. I visit old people at the nursing home once a
34 month. The smell is really awful, but they all tell me what a
35 wonderful child I am, and they say, "God bless you." And I'm
36 thinking, "Oh yeah, gonna be a good Christmas this year!"
- 37 **BOY:** But if you don't like going, why do it?

- 1 **GIRL:** Are you not listening? God blesses us because we go places
2 we don't like, to do things we don't like, for people we don't like.
3 **BOY:** What if you liked to do it? Would it still count?
4 **GIRL:** Look, Junior—you gotta see the whole picture here. God
5 says he loves people, but in the end, all that matters is that the
6 balance sheet adds up for us. The more we hate doing it, the
7 more points we get.
8 **BOY:** Sounds so... mean.
9 **GIRL:** Strictly business, kid. That's all it is. You know, squid pro
10 crow.
11 **BOY:** What?
12 **GIRL:** That's Greek, kiddo. It means you do this and he does that.
13 **BOY:** Does what?
14 **GIRL:** Blesses you with stuff. Now we're back to where you came
15 in, so why not take this opportunity to exit and leave me alone
16 with all of my stuff?
17 **BOY:** All right. I guess you're right. (*Starts to exit.*) But what if it's
18 not enough?
19 **GIRL:** What do you mean?
20 **BOY:** I mean, what if you do everything right and it still isn't
21 enough?
22 **GIRL:** Not enough? It has to be enough. It just has to be!
23 **BOY:** But what if it isn't? What if you spend your whole life doing
24 things for other people just so you get points on the good side,
25 and in the end, it still isn't enough?
26 **GIRL:** How could it not be? I mean, look at all I do. Besides the
27 nursing home there's reading to the blind, doing my chores at
28 home, and sitting still in church. What about all that stuff?
29 **BOY:** What if your bad stuff counts more bad than your good stuff
30 counts good?
31 **GIRL:** But that wouldn't be fair. No, it just can't be that way. I've
32 been counting on this for a long time. I'd never do all those things
33 if I thought it wouldn't get me to heaven. I mean, what's the
34 point?
35 **BOY:** Exactly. What *is* the point?
36 **GIRL:** I don't know. I mean, I never thought about it before. It just
37 seemed obvious to me that the good stuff would outweigh the
38 bad, but now I don't know. What'll I do now?

- 1 **BOY:** I don't know. (*Beat.*) Well, since this might be the last time to
2 make it work, why don't you open your presents? I mean, you
3 did earn them and all.
- 4 **GIRL:** No, I couldn't. I mean, they just don't seem that important
5 anymore.
- 6 **BOY:** Hey, I just wondered *what if* it isn't enough. That doesn't
7 mean that's the way it is. Maybe it works like you said.
- 8 **GIRL:** No, I can't enjoy them now.
- 9 **BOY:** Sorry I mentioned it. (*A beat, then brightens.*) I have an idea.
10 Why don't I open one? Then if you think you deserve it, you can
11 have it. If you don't, then it's mine.
- 12 **GIRL:** Well, I guess that's all right. Go ahead.
- 13 **BOY:** I'll start with this one. Feels kinda heavy. (*Opens it.*) Hey, it's
14 a book!
- 15 **GIRL:** I earned a book?
- 16 **BOY:** Yeah. Let's see what it is. Hey, look at this: *Why We*
17 *Celebrate Christmas.*
- 18 **GIRL:** Angels and shepherds, right? Winter wonderland? All the TV
19 specials?
- 20 **BOY:** No, it looks different than that. It's got really cool pictures and
21 everything. (*They look.*) Hey, let's read some of it.
- 22 **GIRL:** You go ahead. My heart's not really into it.
- 23 **BOY:** We'll read it together. You take a sentence and then I will.
24 Come on, it can't hurt.
- 25 **GIRL:** OK. (*Opens book.*) You start.
- 26 **BOY:** (*Reading.*) God created people to be perfect like he was.
- 27 **GIRL:** Hey, I remember this from Sunday school. That's not
28 Christmas.
- 29 **BOY:** Looks like this book starts a long time before Christmas. Go
30 on, your turn.
- 31 **GIRL:** OK, but the shepherds better be there pretty soon.
32 (*Reading.*) Adam and Eve disobeyed God, and sin came into the
33 world.
- 34 **BOY:** (*Reading.*) And for thousands of years God watched as his
35 people kept breaking his rules, and it made him very sad.
- 36 **GIRL:** You know, I never thought of God feeling sad. I mean, he's
37 got everything. What's there to be sad about?

- 1 **BOY:** He was sad because he loved people, but they kept doing
2 things he told them not to do.
- 3 **GIRL:** OK, there's those rules again. Like I said, he *is* keeping
4 score.
- 5 **BOY:** Just read, will you?
- 6 **GIRL:** All right. (*Reading.*) Since people had sinned, there was no
7 way they could ever be good enough to go to heaven on their
8 own. (*Beat, then to BOY.*) You were right. No matter what we
9 do, it's never enough.
- 10 **BOY:** (*Reading.*) So God sent his son into the world and called him
11 Jesus, because he would save people from their sins.
- 12 **GIRL:** But how is he going to do that?
- 13 **BOY:** Go ahead—read on.
- 14 **GIRL:** OK, OK. (*Reading.*) And Jesus went around doing good, and
15 everybody loved him. (*To BOY.*) What's that got to do with sin?
- 16 **BOY:** Patience, grasshopper. (*Reading.*) But some bad men had
17 him arrested, and he was killed.
- 18 **GIRL:** Gosh, that's awful! They killed him because he was so good.
19 That's not right at all.
- 20 **BOY:** Just read already!
- 21 **GIRL:** (*Reading.*) But on the third day he rose up from the dead,
22 and now he is in heaven with God the Father. (*To BOY.*) Hey,
23 wait a minute—I've heard of this. That's Easter, not Christmas.
- 24 **BOY:** Yeah, but without Christmas, you couldn't have Easter.
- 25 **GIRL:** No Easter? No chocolate bunnies and Marshmallow Peeps?
- 26 **BOY:** No, that's not really Easter. (*Revelation.*) And expecting God
27 to bless you for doing stuff you don't like must not really be
28 Christmas.
- 29 **GIRL:** But what about sin?
- 30 **BOY:** What sin?
- 31 **GIRL:** Your sin. (*Slowly*) My sin. How did Jesus dying take care of
32 that?
- 33 **BOY:** It says here that Jesus took our sins on himself when he died
34 on the cross. And in exchange, he gives us life with him.
- 35 **GIRL:** You mean like exchanging presents?
- 36 **BOY:** Yeah, I guess that's right. Look—here's a Scripture from the
37 book.
- 38 **GIRL:** The book?



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