

Yes Lord

The Original Stageplay



Cleveland O. McLeish

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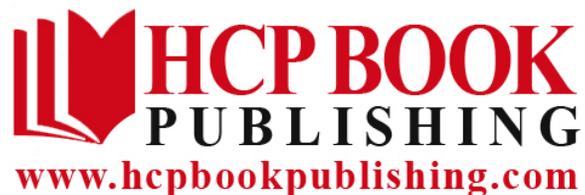


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Characters

PASTOR LEROY JOHNSON – Mid 30's, male role - A young intern Pastor who is given a church in a garrison community to pastor

VANESSA JOHNSON – Mid 30's, female role – Leroy's wife and mother to Prim & Julie. She is in no way supportive of her husband's first job

PRIM – Leroy & Vanessa's daughter. Very assertive and idolizes her father

JULIE – Leroy & Vanessa's younger daughter. All the innocence of a child

KAY – 25-year-old gang leader. His only weakness is his daughter Kaynisha

RAY – Gang member

JAY – Gang member

CALVIN – Youth director, married to Nicole

DOREEN – Church treasurer

SOPHIA – Church Secretary

KAYNISHA– Kay's young daughter

NICOLE- Calvin's wife

Setting

The stage is split in two. SL (Stage Left) is an apartment, SR (Stage Right) is inside and outside a Church.

The Story

The Bible Belt Way Tabernacle Congregational Fellowship AME of North Sacramento Church of God has been without a pastor for three years. It is a small church in a bad neighborhood, a very bad neighborhood, and no pastor in his right mind would take on such a church.

The mother church has devised a plan to get a pastor down there. Find one fresh out of school and keep him in the dark. In other words, don't let him have any idea what he is walking into. Pastor Leroy Johnson is assigned the church.

He is robbed and beaten on the first day, and he finds only three members still faithful to the church, each having their own story. Pastor Leroy also has his hands full at home with a wife who wants him to quit pasturing this church and being a pastor, so he can spend more time with his two daughters.

Play Details

Length: 45 Minutes

Cast: 5 Males, 7 Females, Plus Extras

Audience: Teens & Adults

Genre: Contemporary Drama

THE SCRIPT



SCENE 1

LIGHTS UP

SETTING: Apartment.

Pastor Leroy Johnson is getting ready to leave for church.

His wife is behind him bickering him as usual.

VANESSA: You still haven't answered my question. When are we moving?

LEROY: Baby, we just moved here yesterday.

VANESSA: So what? There's no rule that says you can't move out the day after you moved in.

LEROY: What's your problem?

VANESSA: Oh, where do I begin? You know sometimes I really don't think you listen when I talk.

LEROY: I try, but you say too much.

Pause.

VANESSA: That's very insulting.

LEROY: You always said I should speak the truth.

Leroy reaches for his wife, she pulls away. He backs up and continues getting ready.

VANESSA: When are we leaving?

LEROY: We're back to that again?

VANESSA: You don't expect to raise our daughters in this ghetto? They are already a handful.

LEROY: It's not a ghetto.

VANESSA: Weren't you paying attention?

LEROY: Are you coming to church with me or not?

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VANESSA: I don't even know where the church is. I am in no mood for a long walk.

LEROY: So, I'm going alone?

VANESSA: I am not leaving this house. I don't want to get shot, and the girl's are not leaving either. I don't want them to get raped.

LEROY: No one is gonna get shot or raped.

VANESSA: How do you know that?

LEROY: Because --- this is a pg-13 rated play.

Pause.

VANESSA: You have jokes, huh?

Pause.

LEROY: Baby, listen to how quiet this place is.

Pause.

On the outside two men are arguing and pointing in each others face.

LEROY: This is a very peaceful place, I can tell.

One of the men pulls a knife, and the other one takes off.

The one with the knife chases after him, through the exit.

LEROY: I have never seen any incident on the news about this place. I know it don't look all that, but we can do this.

VANESSA: I don't like it here, Leroy. We have two daughters, think about them. You want them walking through this kinda neighborhood to go to school?

LEROY: Baby, we finally have a home.

VANESSA: I don't like it. And besides, they just gave you this house so could take this job.

LEROY: Even so, we have a home.

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VANESSA: I don't like it. I think they were very hasty in handling all this, have you ever thought about that. Why were they so willing to find you a place to stay?

LEROY: I don't know, but I can't question God's choices for me.

VANESSA: You really believe God wanted you to be here?

LEROY: Yes, I really do.

Pause.

VANESSA: When you told me that we would be spending Christmas in our own house, I was so excited. I was happy, Leroy. But now I'm scared. *(a beat)* There is so much that you can do, why'd you choose to be a pastor?

LEROY: Nothing else has any true value for me.

VANESSA: Do what you have to do. Just know I won't be happy as long as this is where we live.

LEROY: Van ---

VANESSA: No. No more talking. I'm gonna go check on the girls.

Vanessa exits.

Leroy fixes his tie and puts on his jacket.

LEROY: Nobody told me, that the road would be easy, but I don't believe you brought me this far, to leave me.

Leroy takes up his Bible.

He looks for a piece of paper in the Bible, and finds it.

LEROY: Now, to go find my church.

Leroy steps out and walks Stage Right. He looks at the sign which reads Norwood Terrace.

LEROY: Norwood Terrace, great. So, South Norwood Terrace should just be a few blocks from here.

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*He starts to walk stage right. Of course, the audience already knows where South Norwood Terrace is.
Leroy exits the stage.*

A beat.

He backs up and looks at the sign he just passed. He looks at the piece of paper in his hand and then up at the building standing right next to his apartment, being separated only by an alley running up the middle.

LEROY: You have got to be kidding me. *(Calling loudly)* Vanessa.

Vanessa comes out.

VANESSA: What is it?

LEROY: I think I have some good news and some bad news.

VANESSA: What's the good news?

LEROY: We don't have to walk far to go to church.

VANESSA: What's the bad news?

LEROY: We live next door to the church.

Pause.

VANESSA: I am still not going.

Vanessa goes back inside.

Name of church is: *Bible Belt Way Tabernacle Congregational Fellowship AME of North Sacramento*

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE 2

LIGHTS UP

SETTING: Church

Sophia, the church Secretary, is present, and she is having a mimed conversation with Doreen, the Church Treasurer.

Pastor Leroy Johnson enters, and the women stop talking and stare.

LEROY: Good morning. Praise the Lord.

SOPHIA: You must be the new pastor.

LEROY: It's that obvious.

SOPHIA: Yeaah.

Leroy shakes their hands.

SOPHIA: I am Sophia, the Church Secretary and this is Doreen, your Treasurer.

LEROY: I am Leroy, the new Pastor. Happy to meet you.

DOREEN: So, just need to clarify something. Are you on drugs?

LEROY: No *(surprised by the question)*.

SOPHIA: And you are in your right mind?

LEROY: Yes. I don't understand the relevance of your question.

SOPHIA: You are here. You actually took this job.

DOREEN: Which means you're either high, insane or extremely brave.

SOPHIA: And considering that we ruled out the first two, welcome to the Bible Belt Way Tabernacle Congregational Fellowship AME of North Sacramento Church of God, thou fearless one.

LEROY: Aw, the what?

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SOPHIA: You will get it eventually.

LEROY: Okay. It's not so bad here.

SOPHIA: I assume you haven't met Kay, Ray or Jay.

LEROY: Who are they?

DOREEN: Dear Pastor, you cannot live here and not know, but we don't have to tell you because you will find out.

SOPHIA: And I hope you can run, really fast!

Pause.

LEROY: Okay then.

SOPHIA (*now smiling*) So Pastor. Are you ready to have church?

LEROY: Well, I don't mind waiting till everyone gets here, if that's okay with you.

DOREEN: Yeah. That's fine.

Enter Calvin.

CALVIN: Good morning.

LEROY: Good morning brother.

SOPHIA: Now can we start church.

LEROY: Why are you so hasty? Let's just sit tight till all the members are here.

DOREEN: All the members are here.

LEROY: What? I mean, excuse me.

SOPHIA: This is it. I am the secretary, Doreen is the treasurer and Calvin here is the Youth Director, and we are the Bible Belt Way Tabernacle Congregational Fellowship AME of North Sacramento Church of God.

Pause.

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LEROY (*starts to laugh*): Okay. I must say you have an excellent sense of humor.

CALVIN: What she said is true.

LEROY: Is not.

DOREEN: Is too.

Pause.

LEROY: Okay, nice to meet you Calvin. Are you married? Do you have any children?

CALVIN: Yes, I am married, but no children.

LEROY: And you are the Youth director?

CALVIN: Yes.

LEROY: So, where is your wife?

CALVIN: She hates it here. She actually goes to another church. Where's yours?

LEROY: Uhm!

Pause.

LEROY: And this is the church? Three members?

EVERYONE: Yes!

Pause.

Leroy sinks into a seat.

SOPHIA: I knew something was up.

DOREEN: What are you talking about?

SOPHIA: Isn't it obvious? Our dear new pastor had no idea what he was saying yes to. Did you?

LEROY: No, I didn't.

DOREEN: Makes sense. It's the only way anyone in his right mind would take this job.

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CALVIN: Are we gonna have church?

Before anyone can respond, Kay is standing in the church.

Ray and Jay are not too far behind.

Doreen signals Sophia and they grab Calvin, and they suddenly go missing.

KAY: Well whadoyouknow. The rumors are true.

RAY: New face in town.

JAY: Can I hurt this one? Please?

KAY: Relax, let me handle this.

Walks over to Leroy.

KAY: Are you afraid, man?

LEROY: Fear not he who can kill the body but he who can kill both body and soul.

KAY: Nice. I like a pastor man who can stand on his own two feet.

LEROY: What do you want?

KAY: I want to make sure you know who is in charge here.

LEROY: God is in charge.

KAY: You think God can protect you from us?

LEROY: You can't touch me, unless He gives you permission to.

KAY: Oh, really?

They attack Leroy and beat him to the ground.

They search him and take his wallet. They look through it at some pictures.

RAY: Nice family.

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JAY: Can I hurt them?

KAY: Relax. I am a family man, you know that. I respect a man's family. *(takes money from the wallet and throws the wallet at Leroy)* We'll drop by later for dinner. Say hi to the wife and kids, you know.

RAY: Nice meeting you, pastor man.

They exit as quickly as they came. Calvin re-enters the room. He looks a little shaken up and very concerned for Leroy.

CALVIN: Are you all right, Pastor? I am sorry to run out on you like that, but they gave me a beating once, and it kept me in the hospital for a few days. No reason to have both of us beat up.

Calvin helps Pastor to his feet.

LEROY: No problem Calvin, I understand. Thanks for helping me up. You know Calvin, with God on your side, you have nothing to fear. He will take care of our enemies, and in a way we least expect. God got this.

CALVIN: Yeah, we just need to continue to pray.

Calvin walks Leroy home.

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE 3

LIGHTS UP

SETTING: Apartment

Vanessa is dressing Leroy's wounds.

Julie & Prim are also there.

VANESSA: When are we moving?

LEROY: Can you ask me something else, please?

VANESSA: Okay. When are you gonna give up pasturing?

Pause.

LEROY: Okay, you don't ask any more questions.

PRIM: Daddy, what happened?

VANESSA: Daddy got beaten up by some gang members. Brother Calvin helped him home.

LEROY: They were lost souls.

JULIE: Did you beat them back up too, Daddy.

LEROY: No sweetheart. The Bible teaches us to live peaceably with all men, remember? To always turn the other cheek.

Vanessa applies some dressing to Leroy's bruises, and it hurts.

LEROY: Ohh! Can you please be gentle?

VANESSA: You want to do it yourself?

LEROY: Are you going to spend the rest of your life giving me all this attitude?

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VANESSA: I am uncomfortable. What do you expect?

LEROY: A little support would be nice.

VANESSA: Don't expect too much of me right now. I really am not in the mood.

LEROY: Where is all this coming from?

VANESSA: Honey, I want to say this so even you can understand. We --- cannot --- live here.

LEROY: You haven't even given this a chance.

VANESSA: Would you like me to?

LEROY: Why not?

VANESSA: For one, my husband was robbed, beaten, bruised and left to die, in a church building. Can you understand the words that are coming out of my mouth?

LEROY: Okay, fine. So where we going to go, huh? We are broke.

VANESSA: Because of you.

LEROY: What?

VANESSA: You used up all our savings to do that stupid Pastoral course.

Vanessa catches herself before she says anything else she might regret later.

LEROY: Thank you very much, Vanessa.

VANESSA: I didn't mean that.

LEROY: I think you did.

VANESSA: I --- need to use the bathroom.

PRIM: Be careful mom, there was a rat in there this morning.

VANESSA: What --- God --- I hate this place.

Vanessa quickly exits.

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The scene remains quiet for a while.

PRIM: You okay, Dad?

LEROY: Yeah, sorry you guys had to witness that.

PRIM: It's okay.

LEROY: How's school?

JULIE: I don't think my teacher likes me.

LEROY: Why not?

JULIE: She's always picking on me in class.

LEROY: I can come down to the school on Monday and talk to her.

JULIE: You would? Thanks, Dad.

Pause.

LEROY: Prim?

PRIM: I'm gonna go see if Mom is okay.

Prim gets up to exit.

LEROY: Is it that bad?

PRIM: I don't want to talk about it, Dad.

Prim exits.

Julie comes to sit beside Leroy.

JULIE: Can I come to church with you now, Daddy?

LEROY: That's not a good idea, baby. It's not safe.

JULIE: I'm not afraid.

Leroy stops to think about his daughter's words.

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LEROY: You are not afraid?

JULIE: Nope.

LEROY *(suddenly gets a revelation)* Unless we become as little children, we cannot enter God's kingdom. Wow, thank you, Julie.

JULIE: What did I do?

LEROY: You just gave me my next sermon.

Pause.

JULIE: I don't know what you're talking about.

LEROY: It's okay. *(hugs his little girl, painfully)*

Prim comes back out.

PRIM: Dad, did you realize that Christmas is just two weeks from today?

LEROY: Oh, yeah. I didn't even remember that.

PRIM: That is what I miss the most about Chicago. There were lights and decorations everywhere. It was just hard to forget that Christmas was coming.

LEROY: That's true.

PRIM: I have some decorations and stuff. Is it okay if I decorated our house? Inside that is?

Leroy thinks for a moment.

LEROY: Why just the inside? Let's decorate the neighborhood.

PRIM: What?

LEROY: People forget because there is nothing to remind them. Let that be our gift to this community, the gift of Christmas.

PRIM: I don't think mom's gonna like that idea, and you should be resting.

LEROY: No time for rest. I must be about my Master's business.

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Leroy painfully gets up and exits.

LIGHTS FADE

SCENE 4

LIGHTS UP

SETTING: Church & Apartment

There are decorations everywhere and Leroy, Prim, and Julie are busy decorating.

Sophia enters with Doreen not far behind.

SOPHIA: What's going on?

LEROY: It's Christmas. This is a part of what we do at Christmas.

DOREEN: You are kidding, right?

LEROY: Come on and help us. You might enjoy this.

SOPHIA: I thought you would be packed and leaving by now.

DOREEN: You sure you are okay?

LEROY: I'm sore, but I'm fine. Are you just going to stand there or are you coming to help?

DOREEN: I'm just gonna stand here sounds good.

Sophia nudged her.

They consider but only for a moment. They start to help.

Vanessa comes out, she doesn't see the girls. She goes outside.

VANESSA: Prim, Julie, get inside here now.

PRIM: But mom, I want to help dad.

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JULIE: Me too.

VANESSA: I don't want to hear it. Inside, NOW!

They reluctantly go inside.

VANESSA: (to Leroy) You can put yourself in danger, but I will not allow you to put our daughters in danger.

Vanessa exits to the apartment.

SOPHIA: Trouble at home?

LEROY: Nothing I can't handle.

DOREEN: She looks scared, very scared.

LEROY: She is.

SOPHIA: Two things you learn as a resident here, and they are very important. If you understand these two simple rules, you can survive.

LEROY: Okay. What are they?

SOPHIA: When you hear gunshots fall flat on the ground and stay there for a good hour before you move.

LEROY: What's the second one?

SOPHIA: Run when you see Kay, Ray and Jay, but only if they are together. Wolves are strongest in packs. Separate them, and they become vulnerable.

Pause.

LEROY: Sounds like good advice.

SOPHIA: You can't go wrong if you follow those two rules.

LEROY: So, what's your story? Why'd you stick around when everyone left?

SOPHIA: Let's just say, I made a promise I couldn't break.

LEROY: You mean a covenant.

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SOPHIA: Yeah. God did a miracle for me back in the days. I promised Him I would serve Him forever if He did, and He did, so here I am.

LEROY: And you, Doreen?

DOREEN: I was born and raised here. I try to stay where I'm needed most.

SOPHIA: She's being modest. Her parents grew up in this church.

LEROY: Where are they now?

DOREEN: Passed away. They were killed in a crossfire just a few blocks from here.

LEROY: Oh, I'm sorry.

SOPHIA: We've all pretty much lost someone or the other to violence.

LEROY: How about Calvin?

SOPHIA: He was left as an orphan when he was 16. His father left when he was a young boy and got himself killed shortly after in a mugging. His mother was killed in a car accident. But he did good for himself.

LEROY: Why does his wife not come to church?

DOREEN: Fear. She never leaves the house.

LEROY: I thought he said she was going to another church.

DOREEN: He is just being modest.

LEROY: At least she allows him to leave.

SOPHIA: Allows? She has tried everything because of her fear, but she knows in her heart he feels obligated to the church because he knows the Lord has been with him to get through the pain he suffered. He now works at the Center for troubled and orphan youths. He is doing a wonderful thing and has saved many young lives.

LEROY: Thank God for his commitment. What is the story behind Kay, Ray and Jay?

DOREEN: Ray and Jay are followers of Kay. Both have no one, so they stick to Kay. I know if Kay changed his ways, he may save the lives of those two children.

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SOPHIA: Kay's parents are also gone to glory. Kay is a father. He has a daughter?

Pause.

LEROY: Really? What kind of an example is he to his daughter?

SOPHIA: I know, it is scary, but I do know he loves her dearly.

LEROY: Where is the child's mother?

DOREEN: She died a few years after the baby was born.

The stage suddenly goes silent.

Far stage left Kay, and his two cronies are standing.

Leroy turns to see them and by the time he looks back, Sophia and Doreen are missing. He considers for a moment, but decides to stay.

KAY: I don't even know what to say.

Pause. They walk over to Leroy.

KAY: You have exceeded my expectations, preacher man.

LEROY: This is not necessary.

KAY: It's very necessary. We don't like nobody coming up in our turf trying to take over.

LEROY: I'm just trying to be a good pastor.

KAY: Here?

LEROY: Yeah, especially here. You all need Jesus.

KAY: Jesus don't belong in the ghetto.

LEROY: He died for everybody, even you. He died so you can have a choice between life and death.

KAY: Sounds good in theory, preacher man but for me and my crew this is it. It don't get any better, and it don't get any worse.

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LEROY: Even this is a choice. You have a choice, Kay, to do right or to do wrong.

RAY: Hey, Kay, why you making conversations with this man?

JAY: Yeah, when do we get to beat the mess out of him again?

KAY: Chill you'll, I got this.

LEROY: You know, you can beat me or even kill me, but you can't touch my soul.

KAY: Yeah, but a man like you don't just think about himself. Have you considered your wife and kids?

Pause.

RAY: We see your girls when they go to school and when they come back. As a matter of fact, we have already met Prim.

LEROY: I declare in the name of Jesus that you can't touch them. Jesus gave His life for the church, His bride and all that dwell within, don't think that I won't give my life for mine.

KAY: It's all good. I give you credit for standing up to us, but if you're gonna stay here, you gonna have to pay your dues.

LEROY: What dues?

RAY: Rent!

JAY: Tax!

KAY: The whole nine yards. Twenty thousand for this month should cover it.

LEROY: Twenty thousand dollars?

KAY: Ya heard right. Most of it is for protection. The rest should cover all this mess you putting up over my neighborhood.

LEROY: Protection from what?

KAY: Us!

Jay and Ray laughs.

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KAY: To keep in line with the season, seeing you already decorated the neighborhood, payment is due on Christmas day.

LEROY: I don't owe anybody anything. Jesus paid all my debts.

Kay grabs Leroy by his collar and pulls him close.

KAY: On Christmas Day, make sure ya got our money, else it will take a miracle to stop me from killing you.

Kay releases Leroy, and exits with Ray and Jay following close behind.

A beat.

Sophia and Doreen suddenly reappear.

SOPHIA: Did you forget the rules?

LEROY: No. I just don't want to spend my life running.

DOREEN: You better run now. Your whole family is in danger.

LEROY: I believe in God's protection. I believe He gives His angels charge over us.

SOPHIA: I believe those three gave you a fine whopping the other day.

DOREEN: I believe they ain't afraid to kill you all.

SOPHIA: You need to understand what you are up against.

Pause.

LEROY: No. They need to understand what they are up against. As long as I have God on my side, no weapon formed against me shall prosper. If I die on Christmas day, it will not be for nothing. I also need for you two ladies to have more faith. You have got to stop running every time they appear. You give them more power than they deserve when you show fear. Fear not, says the Lord. Trust in Him ladies, trust in Him.

Leroy exits to his apartment.

SOPHIA: I like this pastor.

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DOREEN: Yeah, but he ain't gonna live to see next year, so don't get attached.

SOPHIA: Doreen! Didn't you just hear what the Pastor said? We do have to start trusting Jesus. If we keep running, we are not doing ourselves any good. And as leaders in this church, we must lead by example.

Doreen: Yes, you are right. Calvin showed that example the night the Pastor was beat up. He stayed and helped him home. We do need to trust in our Lord more.

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE 5

LIGHTS UP

SETTING: Church

Leroy is on the outside distributing free lunches to everyone that passes.

There is a sign above the church that reads "Free Lunch – Paid for by the Blood Of Jesus"

There is also a "Merry Christmas" sign, and a "Jesus is the Reason for the Season" sign.

Vanessa is inside the apartment apparently worrying.

Prim comes out and watches her for a bit before saying anything.

PRIM: Mom, are you crying? Please don't cry. I know this is hard for you. But it is hard for daddy too. This means so much to him.

VANESSA (*wiping her tears*) No baby, I am okay. I am sitting here praying and asking God for a solution. I know this is difficult, but sometimes parents don't agree. I know what he is doing means so much to him, but I am afraid. This is Christmas time, and we should be preparing to celebrate this wonderful time of the year, yet, I feel, I don't know, just afraid for your dad and for us.

Pause.

PRIM: You must not be afraid, mom. I believe God would not have us here for Dad to fail. You know, Dad needs you as much as we need him, but you are going to have to trust Him, God that is. There is a reason why we are here, in this neighborhood. It is like the city of lost hope. I talked to some kids at school, and they could care less that it is Christmas time. There is no joy. Daddy is trying to bring that back, and we need to help him, mom.

Vanessa considers this.

Vanessa: Is it that bad, Prim? It is one thing when adults are feeling afraid and lost, but the children, they should know that there is something special about this season and who it is all about.

PRIM: Dad needs all of us, but he really needs to know you are with him. We need to support his efforts to get the message out in the community, to help bring Christmas to the people in

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this neighborhood. It is like the song, "Go tell it on the Mountain." Think of this as dad's mountain.

Vanessa: I remember how your grandmother use to sing that song. One verse stands out to me: "He made me a watchman upon a city wall, and if I am Christian, I am the least of all."

Vanessa hugs Prim.

VANESSA: Thank you, Prim. You are growing up to be quite a smart young lady. Go check on your sister.

PRIM: Okay, I will, and thanks mom for listening to me.

Prim exit.

Vanessa fixes her face and comes outside.

She watches her husband give away lunch boxes to a few passers-by.

VANESSA: Leroy, you should come in a get something to eat.

LEROY: I'm fine, honey.

VANESSA: Please, you haven't eaten in two days, and I am worried about you.

LEROY: I am on a fasting, dear. I am praying and fasting because I believe in what I am doing. I need you to believe with me; I need you as my wife to support me. Sometimes it gets dangerous. Paul endured more, even prison. Who am I not to trust that God has placed me here for a reason? This is the season of Jesus' birth. We cannot run now and not do what needs to be done. The people in this community need to know that Jesus is here for them too. I am Paul; I am that messenger.

Pause.

VANESSA: I don't know if I can do this, Leroy, I am so afraid. I talked to Prim just now. She is her father's daughter. She told me that at her school, the children have no joy for the season.

Someone passes and collects a lunch.

LEROY: You said I do.

VANESSA: What?

Yes Lord by Cleveland O. McLeish

LEROY: In sickness and health, for better or worse.

Pause.

LEROY: Look, you are always talking about leaving me and moving back with your mother. Maybe you should take the girls and go.

VANESSA: I'm not leaving you, Leroy.

Vanessa seems a little stronger now. She moves closer to her husband, and they embrace. Leroy extends her out a bit, in a loving way.

LEROY: I don't want anything to happen to you guys. I couldn't forgive myself. But I do need you; I need my family.

VANESSA: I know that. But like you said, Leroy, for better or worse. Besides, you were not the only one God sent to deliver the message to this community, He sent me, Julie and Prim too.

Prim and Julie also come outside.

PRIM: We want to help, dad. We are in this together to spread the wonderful news of our Lord and Savior. This is His birthday, and we need to celebrate! We need to tell this community what it is all about.

JULIE: Yeah. I want to help, and I am going to invite some of my school friends. It is time we make it feel like Christmas.

The family hugs as one.

Sophia and Doreen and also Calvin have arrived.

SOPHIA: Hey, you started without us?

LEROY: I didn't know you would come.

DOREEN: Are you kidding? And there's free food?

CALVIN: This is a great idea, Pastor. I could not miss this event.

SOPHIA: You are a man with vision, I must say.

A little girl comes onstage and is greeted by Julie with a box of lunch. (Instant friendship as children naturally are)

Yes Lord by Cleveland O. McLeish

JULIE: Hi, I'm Julie.

KAYNISHA: I'm Kaynisha.

Julie hands her the lunch.

KAYNISHA: Thank you.

JULIE: No problem. That's my dad over there. He's the pastor of this church, and we live over there.

KAYNISHA: Can I come over sometime?

JULIE: Anytime.

KAYS VOICE: Kaynisha!

KAYNISHA: Here I am Dad.

Kay enters.

Leroy looks at Sophia and Doreen. They are still there.

SOPHIA: Wolves in a pack!

LEROY: Right.

KAY *(to Kaynisha re: lunch)* Give it back.

KAYNISHA: No, and you can't make me. *(sticks out her tongue and runs off)*

Kay isn't quite pleased.

LEROY: Your daughter looks just like you.

KAY: I don't want any of you giving her anything. Understand?

JULIE: You must be Kay.

KAY: So what?

JULIE: Isn't that a girl's name?

Yes Lord by Cleveland O. McLeish

KAY: Watch your mouth kid. I got a gun.

JULIE: I got Jesus.

Pause.

Kay turns and leaves.

Calvin high fives Julie.

LEROY: That went well.

SOPHIA: Yeah, actually it did. But he may just go round up his crew and come back.

LEROY: No. God is building a fence around us. I see it in my spirit.

SOPHIA: Yeah well, if you see a car speeding up that road, you'll better be prepared to run for your lives.

Leroy gives her a stern look.

SOPHIA: Okay! Okay! Old habits are hard to change. God is working on me!

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE 6

LIGHTS UP

SETTING: Apartment

Christmas Eve.

The family is gathered not very far from a decorated but unlit tree.

A table is set for a special Christmas Eve dinner. The family is dressed up.

They remain in silence for a bit.

Leroy looks a little sad, sitting in front of the unlit tree. His family gathers around him.

LEROY: I think we should open our presents now.

VANESSA: No, it's Christmas Eve, and besides, I prepared the Christmas Eve dinner this year to start the celebration. The girls helped, and we had a fun time doing it.

LEROY: Yeah, but tomorrow isn't promised to us.

VANESSA: We will open them on Christmas day, just like we always do.

Pause.

VANESSA: Are you afraid, Leroy?

LEROY: I'm afraid for my family and this community. Kay is an unhappy man, and that makes him dangerous.

VANESSA: What about that fence you see God building around us? What about the hope you wanted to share?

Pause.

VANESSA: Everything's going to be fine, baby.

LEROY: I think maybe the tables have turned. It was you in the beginning, now it is me.

Yes Lord by Cleveland O. McLeish

VANESSA: God has answered my prayers and given me new found strength and hope. I know why we are here. You are Paul, remember?

LEROY: I'm ready to move. *(Pause, Leroy smiles and stands up next to his wife)* Okay, I do hear what you are saying. The devil is trying to steal my joy. But I am not going to let him. Tonight we celebrate. Thanks for the dinner, my ladies.

Vanessa smiles. The girls hug their father.

PRIM: I think we can light the tree now. Dad, can you read some of the Christmas Story to us tonight?

JULIE: Yeah dad, please? I love that story and the way you tell it every year.

LEROY: We will pray first as a family, and then I will tell the story.

They hold hands. Leroy says a short prayer and starts reading from the Bible the Christmas story.

LEROY: Tomorrow we celebrate the miracle of our Savior's birth. Today we celebrate our own miracle. God has already answered our prayers.

Kay appears offstage carrying an unconscious Kaynisha in his hands.

He first goes into the church, but no one is there. He has no choice but to go into Leroy's house.

KAY: Help me! She's not breathing.

Quickly, the family moves.

They take Kaynisha and put her on the sofa.

They check her pulse and listen for her breathing.

LEROY: What happened?

KAY: I don't know. She was complaining about a belly ache; the next thing I knew, she was unconscious.

LEROY: We have to get her to a hospital.

KAY: No. Her mother died before we could get her to a hospital. She will die. It's too far away.

Yes Lord by Cleveland O. McLeish

Pause.

LEROY: Then, there is only one thing we can do.

They gather around her to pray.

LIGHTS FADE

SCENE 7

LIGHTS UP

SETTING: Apartment

Christmas morning. The tree is still lit.

Kaynisha is sitting, watching her father sleep.

Kay finally wakes up.

He sees Kaynisha staring at him. She goes over to him and hugs him.

KAY: Hey, kiddo.

KAYNISHA: Hello, daddy.

KAY: How you doing?

KAYNISHA: Good morning and Merry Christmas.

Pause.

KAY: It's Christmas Day?

Leroy enters.

LEROY: Yes it is.

Pause.

LEROY: We have an early morning service at the church in two hours. Just enough time to have a family breakfast.

KAY: We have to go.

LEROY: Not before you eat.

Pause.

Julie comes out to get Kaynisha.

Yes Lord by Cleveland O. McLeish

JULIE: Good morning everyone, Merry Christmas!

KAYNISHA: Good morning to you Julie and Merry Christmas!

They hold hands and exit.

KAY: We really need to go.

LEROY: Are you afraid to talk to me?

KAY: I ain't afraid of nothing.

LEROY: Then why are you running? What are you hiding from? You use violence as a cover. To control people around you and this allows you to feel big and bad. You have two kids that follow you around. Instead of teaching them the right thing, you are leading them down a path that one day may kill them.

Pause.

LEROY: Kaynisha is Gods gift to you this Christmas, Kay. God is sending you a message that He is here and waiting for you to make a choice. He loves you.

KAY: Why would God give me anything? When I was a little boy, I remember my parents taking me to church. I was baptized, and I remember my parents praying for change. Then one day, they were gone, leaving me alone. I ended up living with a family who didn't want me. I was beaten almost nightly by my uncle. I got angry, man. Real angry, and I swore I would give it back when I could. God left me!

LEROY: God did not leave you, Kay, you left Him. You stopped believing in Him, but He has been with you all this time. Waiting for you to see Him.

KAY: Man, you don't know that. I've killed people. I have hurt people. I have made everybody's life a living hell. God don't care about people like me.

LEROY: Actually, He does. When He gave His life, He wasn't thinking about me who is already saved. He was thinking about you. You are the reason He died, the reason He came, so you can have a better life.

KAY: I don't believe that.

LEROY: Then, let's get practical. Do you think I was born a pastor?

KAY: Yeah.

LEROY: No. I had a role model in life, my father. He was just like you, but he never made it to his 30th birthday. I was nine years old, and I witnessed two men empty their gun into his chest. From that point, I decided I would be the complete opposite of who he was.

KAY: People like us don't have a choice. I had to find a way to survive. I had to use whatever means that was available to me. If I had a choice, if He was there for me, why did He not show me?

LEROY: You only think you don't have a choice. And He did show you, Kay. He gave you a life, Kaynisha. Someone for you to protect and care for. He blessed you with that little girl. God does that. He uses people to help us see the right way. But, unless you want your little girl to be just like you, you better turn around and walk a different road. That road should lead you to Jesus.

Pause.

LEROY: I am not trying to force you to join a church. I just want you to think about a few things, including bringing your daughter to church. Don't give her what my father gave me. She needs you, Kay, and you need Jesus in your life to help you get over the pain and disappointment. He wants to encourage you and give you hope. That is what this season is all about. His birth is the reason for the season. Through Him all things are possible.

Calvin enters the scene. He has been in the back listening to Leroy and Kay.

Both men turn around and nod at Calvin

CALVIN: I didn't mean to eavesdrop. Vanessa told me you were in here. I hope you don't mind. But I have to say this to you, Kay. You are not the only person who has felt disappointment and rejection. My parents were killed when I was young. I felt alone. I didn't know who to trust. But you know what? We do have choices. We can go on the bad road or take the good road. I choose to travel the good road. I made that choice. One day, I was walking the streets, and I heard singing coming from the church. The very church you assaulted the pastor in. It drew me in, and I knew once I stepped through the door it was the kind of life I wanted to live. I thank God every day for those voices, and He has been with me every day and in every way. We serve a God of a second chance.

Kay suddenly breaks down in tears.

Leroy puts a reassuring hand on his shoulders.

LIGHTS FADE

SCENE 8

LIGHTS UP

SETTING: Church

Vanessa, Prim, Julie, Sophia, and Doreen are standing on the outside singing Christmas Carols.

Leroy is standing at the church entrance greeting people as they come.

Calvin enters holding hands with his wife.

CALVIN: Everyone. This is my wife, Nicole.

JULIE, PRIM, SOPHIA, PRIM AND DOREEN TOGETHER: Merry Christmas!

Pastor Leroy holds her hand.

LEROY: It's very nice to have you, Nicole.

Nicole moves more lovingly into Calvin and smiles.

NICOLE: Yes, Calvin insists that I come meet you. I am happy to see you making some impact on this community. Thank you for all you have done.

LEROY: I'm only an instrument in God's hand.

NICOLE: Not only an instrument, Pastor, you are a blessing. This is the first time since I have lived here that I have seen the streets decorated. It reminded me of when I was a little girl and all the Christmases from the past. It reminded me of the birth of Christ. It is still in me, and I thank you for that. Calvin didn't have to push too hard this morning; I was waiting for him to ask me. I thank God he never stopped asking. *(She smiles at her husband)*

Nicole hugs the Pastor. They enter the church.

Kay appears, and he looks a little different, a little less thuggish. He's holding hands with Kaynisha. Kaynisha quickly releases his hand and runs over to join Julie.

LEROY: You came?

KAY: Yeah. Kaynisha insisted, and I do know it was a miracle that saved my little girl. I know it was the grace of God.

Yes Lord by Cleveland O. McLeish

Pause.

LEROY: Jesus is your friend, and He loves you. He will be with you every step of the way. You are taking the first step now.

KAY: Yeah. One day at a time. With His help, I know I will make it.

Ray and Jay are close behind.

LEROY: Nice to see you both join us. It is a new beginning for everyone.

Ray and Jay looked startled.

RAY: I thought you would not want us to come. I was tired of that way of life; I am ready for something new. I want to go to college!

JAY: Yes, me too. I want to be a nurse and help people. I always did, but I was too afraid to say anything, so I acted tough.

LEROY: *(Jokingly, but serious)* Well the baptism pool is waiting on you two.

Ray and Jay look at each other puzzled, but shrug their shoulders and head in the church.

Pause.

The others also go into the church as they continue to sing carols.

They go into the church with Leroy behind them. Vanessa is beside him. He stops and turns around. He looks up to the sky and raises his hands in praise. He reaches out for his wife's hand, and together they go in.

They begin lighting individual candles.

LEROY: Today is a day the Lord has made, rejoice and be glad in it. Today is a special day, one that holds a wonderful message. On this day a Baby was born to save us from sin so that we can live eternally through Him. That Baby is Jesus.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK