

A Shepherd's Surrender

A Candle Star Christmas Production

by
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(Formerly released as *Both Ends of the Staff*.)

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Candle Star Press
www.michelleisenhoff.com

A Note to Directors:

Thank you for choosing to use a Candle Star Christmas Production in your church or school. My purpose in writing each play was to create a pageant that even small groups could produce simply. (They have all been produced in my own church of 200 people.) But stronger still was my desire to immerse viewers in a powerful story that left no question about the true meaning of Christmas. Christ's coming to dwell with man is only part of a whole gospel message, which is clearly presented in each script. My hope is that this play will help you spread that message in your community this holiday season.

Merry Christmas and break a leg! And to Jesus Christ be all the glory.

Shell Isenhoff

Find additional
Candle Star Christmas Productions
on my website:

www.michelleisenhoff.com

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Summary

Three shepherds return home following their annual delivery of sheep to the temple for Passover. Samuel is skeptical that the newly crucified Jesus was really the Messiah. He has some very personal reasons for not following Christ. A visit from the resurrected Savior, however, finally convinces him of the truth.

Length

Candle Star Christmas Productions are designed to run between 45 minutes to an hour when music is included at scene breaks.

Cast of Characters

Main Characters

Narrator

Samuel: A Jewish shepherd and grandfather

Jacob: Samuel's young grandson

Marcus: A Roman jack of all trades currently in Samuel's employ

Jesus

Nonspeaking Parts

Mary and baby

Joseph

2-3 shepherds (optional)

Samuel's wife and baby

Roman soldier

2 backstage screamers

Sheep (optional)

Stage Setup

This play requires very little setup, as most scenes take place in the grazing fields. Simply arrange the necessary props on the floor. A rocking chair should be set off to one side (or brought out during the preceding break) for the flashback in scene four. A colored light can be set up to shine on the chair and signify that it's a memory.

Prop List

Campfire (ring of rocks/tissue paper)
3 blankets
At least 1 shepherd's staff
Bread or bowls
Rocking chair
Manger
Soldier armor, cape, and sword

Music Recommendations

At the end of most scenes, an option break for music is inserted. This is left wide open on purpose, because the organizations that produce this play will have vastly different musical talents available. They may even choose to skip some or all of these opportunities. However, music offers a great distraction while switching scenes, and it provides a whole additional platform for worship. Here is a list of suggestions to fill these opportunities:

Songs sung by children's Sunday school classes or school classrooms

Vocal solos or groups performed by children or adults

Instrumental solos performed by school children or adults

Brief piano interludes

Congregational singing

Traditional carols provide simple, recognizable tunes for instrumentals. Vocal arrangements might consist of carols as well, or be drawn from the variety of contemporary music available. Congregational singing provides an opportunity for the audience to become involved.

Both Ends of the Staff

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Scene One

The three shepherds are walking across stage on their way home from Jerusalem. A costumed child may be employed to tag along as the hurt lamb.

Samuel: Well, Grandson, you are now a true businessman. You delivered your first flock of sheep to the temple for Passover and sold every one but the yearling with the cut leg. You did well.

Jacob: It was a long week, Grandfather.

Samuel: Hmm, yes. A most peculiar holiday. But we're on our way home now. Try not to think about it anymore.

Jacob: But Grandfather, I can't just put away a memory like I would set aside my staff. The man I thought would be our king just died, along with our hope for a Messiah. How can I forget that?

Samuel: Messiah. Hmph! Jesus of Nazareth was *not* our Messiah.

Marcus: I wouldn't write him off so quickly, Samuel. He fit many prophecies.

Samuel: (Looking Marcus up and down with disgust) And on matters of the Jewish Messiah, I should take the word of a Roman dressed in a shepherd costume? Marcus, tell me again why my grandson hired you.

Marcus: (Shrugging lightly) I got tired of practicing law.

Samuel: A lawyer! Oh, heaven help us. He's a lawyer!

Optional break for music.

Scene Two

All eating around a fire.

Samuel: Lawyer or not, Marcus, I must say this meal is delicious.

Marcus: Thank you, Samuel. I worked for five years in the kitchen of an Ethiopian official and picked up a few tricks.

Jacob: I want to hear about the prophecies you spoke of, Marcus.

Marcus: Ah, yes, the prophecies. I only remember a few of them, mind you, but there are sections of scripture that could have been written last year.

Jacob: Like what?

Marcus: Well, Isaiah says, “Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer and the tongue of the dumb will shout for joy.”

Jacob: That’s just how it was! I saw Jesus heal people with my own eyes.

Marcus: “I will open my mouth in a parable. I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and know.”

Jacob: Grandfather, are you listening to this?

Marcus: “On the other side of Jordan, Galilee...the people who walk in darkness will see a great light...”

Jacob: Grandfather?

Samuel: (Spoken with finality) He's dead, Jacob. He was no Messiah. I saw him die.

Marcus: Hmmm. Yes, dead. "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

Samuel: (Skeptically) How is it that a Roman lawyer slash cook can quote so much scripture?

Marcus: I lived next door to a quarrelsome old scribe for years, and of course I had to study the scrolls to debate him.

Samuel: I've heard enough already. Grandson, I think you should mind your sheep. His leg doesn't seem to be healing.

Marcus: Let me take a look at it, son.

Samuel: (Sourly) Are you a veterinarian as well?

Marcus: (Laughing) Good heavens no! I kept passing out during surgery.

Optional break for music.

Scene Three

All lying around the fire on their beds.

Jacob: Grandfather, why are you so skeptical of Jesus?

Samuel: I don't want to talk about it.

Jacob: But he was one of us, born in our town—in Bethlehem. Surely you must remember the census and the crowds. You lived there. Did you see him as a baby?

Samuel: (Shaking his head) One baby among so many, so long ago?

Jacob: But you must remember something.

Samuel: I remember many things that I don't care to talk about.

Marcus: Ah... (With a shrewd look) Samuel, how old are you?

Samuel: Fifty-eight, why?

Marcus: (With understanding) "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachael is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more."

Marcus and Jacob roll over and go to sleep for the remainder of the program.

Optional break for music.

