

LIGHT IN THE FIELDS

By Dan Neidermyer

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Charles Spurgeon first started preaching at age 16 in small English countryside cottages, carrying a lamp to light his way over fields. Soon the teenage preacher was invited to give a sermon in London. He was asked to “stay on” and for the next thirty years he preached to hundreds of thousands and built one of London’s largest tabernacles even to this day. Now, more than a century later, the sermons of Charles Haddon Spurgeon continue to be spiritually meaningful. The life of this preaching giant is recreated here, and even portions of several of his sermons are included.

The incidents and events depicted within “Light in the Fields” are true and based on actual incidents and events in the life, work, and ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. The characters and dialogue surrounding these incidents and events are, however, the product of dramatic “imagining.” The sermons preached by Spurgeon within the play are the actual words and sermons he himself preached from his own pulpit. Acknowledgment of such is found within the script.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(12 M, 5 F, with 10 roles that could be played by M or F, plus extras, doubling and tripling possible, very flexible.)

***SPURGEON** - A teenager, 16-19

***SPURGEON** - A mature adult, Around 30

WIDDY - A peasant farmer

SIMONELLA - Widdy's wife

CLIVE - Friend and student of Spurgeon at school in Cambridge

PEASANT WOMAN - An individual spiritually touched by young Spurgeon's preaching

BROWN - Not friendly To Spurgeon

PREACHER - An elderly, wizened individual at first quite critical, then most encouraging of young Spurgeon

NEWSBOY - Youth hawking newspapers

GARETH - Supporter of Spurgeon

GLYNETH - Another

DEACON 1 - Very critical deacon at New Park Street Chapel

DEACON 2 - Another

PARISHIONER 1 - A member of New Park Street Chapel

PARISHIONER 2 - Another

READER - A reader of Scripture

INDIVIDUAL 1 - Issues invitation To Spurgeon to preach at another church

INDIVIDUALS 2 – 6 - Additional

ROLAND - Country villager

MANFRED - Another

SYBIL - Another

EUGENIA - Another

THE MISSUS - Stuart Lamberth's widow

***NOTE:** Much of the action of the play takes place during Spurgeon's teenage and young adult years. The role of Charles Spurgeon could be played by one actor, made to look younger or older, or two individuals as listed within the script.

TIME/PLACE

All the action of the play takes place in and around Cambridge and London, England, during the mid-19th century.

SYNOPSIS

Scene 1: Rural countryside surrounding Cambridge. A warm spring evening, 1850.

Scene 2: School in Cambridge, the next morning.

Scene 3: Small chapel at Waterbeach, 1853.

Scene 4: Pulpit at New Park Street Chapel, London, Sunday morning, December 11, 1853.

Scene 5: Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens, London, Sunday morning, October 17, 1855.

Scene 6: New Park Street Chapel, London, a week or so later.

Scene 7: Outside the home of Stuart Lamberth's widow, London, late October, 1855.

Scene 8: Spurgeon's study, London, June, 1856.

Scene 9: Pulpit of New Park Street Chapel, London, June, 1856.

Scene 10: Throughout London, March, 1861-Winter, 1892.

Scene 11: Metropolitan Tabernacle, London, Sunday morning, October 16, 1864. (*NOTE: SCENE 11 is optional.*)

STAGING AND THE SET

“Light in the Fields” was written to be performed in any size, any type staging facility. Thus, a sanctuary, fellowship hall, or any other similar kind of staging facility available is most acceptable. Each scene is given a “specific” location as a means of identifying a time in Spurgeon’s life and ministry. These locations can be suggested by a chair, a pulpit, or other stage prop.

The play’s action is written in such a way so that aisles within a sanctuary can be utilized as locations for scenes. Action within a specific scene is often occurring within several “sections of the staging area,” simultaneously. This can easily be accomplished by placing several individuals in the center aisle while blocking other individuals in the front of the staging facility with several additional actors delivering their lines in the rear of the staging facility, truly “surrounding your audience.” This can make for an exciting theatre experience for audiences. All members of the audience can sing the final hymn, the doxology, thus participating in a “Spurgeon church service.”

PROPS

Lantern

Pulpit

Envelope and letter

A paper listing Spurgeon’s preaching schedule

Gift of money

Holy Bible

COSTUMES

All characters are everyday mid-19th-century Londoners or English peasant villagers. Their clothing should be quite simple and poor-to-middling. Women would wear full (floor-length) dresses or skirts with plain bodices. Men would wear straight pants, often dark, with plain shirts, perhaps a vest. Hairstyles — like the clothing — would be appropriate for the period, more conservative than severe, and may be as simple or as elaborate as desired.

SOUND EFFECTS

Though optional, several sound effects might enhance the scene's ambiance. In scene one the sounds of crickets on a late spring night.

NOTE: Charles Spurgeon was a preacher, sharing much of his work and ministry within a church setting. Throughout the action of the play, Spurgeon is often seen behind his pulpit, exhorting his audience from the Scriptures. Appropriate music presented by a choir or musicians could complement Spurgeon's preaching and enhance the production. Suggestions when to utilize music is inserted within the script.

End of Freeview

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