

Rhema: Words to Live By

by Jae Campbell

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DEDICATION

To Gwendolyn J. for her inspiration, prayers, and reminding me that words give life.

STORY OF THE PLAY

This dramatic presentation highlights the power of the spoken words of Jesus and the spoken promises of God. It uses the eloquence of figurative language and poetry to recreate the monumental events that capture Jesus' last days on earth. Incorporating dramatic movement and hymns, an ensemble cast will take you full circle on a journey from when the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt to the Last Supper, a Passover celebration gone wrong. The imagery depicting the horrific death of Jesus will come to life, and in the final scene you will be reminded of His life's purpose and the charge given to us through the Holy Spirit. The audience, knowing the Holy Spirit has come, will feel compelled to draw near to God and step into their calling. This show is presented with few props, no set changes, and constant action. Jesus is never visible in the production; only His voice is heard, causing viewers to turn their hearts and their ears to hear. Run time: 30-35 minutes.

PREMIERE PERFORMANCE

The show premiered on April 1, 2018 at Agape Faith Church in Clemmons, NC with the following cast:

Narrators 1 - 8: Christina Stanley, Victoria Narvaez, Stacy Nichole, Daniel Narvaez, Alyssa Odom, Kimberly Wood, Symone Griffin, Justyn Jones.

Ensemble: Vee Vanover, Sylvia Griffin, Jania Transou, Arien Price, Giancarlo Blandino, Shannon Matthews, Eden Price. Voice of Jesus was pre-recorded and performed by Sherrod Wood.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Ensemble cast of 18 - 23)

NARRATORS 1 - 8: Poets, singers, storytellers, and visionaries that use their voices to create an atmosphere that recreates the happenings of Jesus' life from many perspectives. In the production, they serve as Israelites, Disciples, and followers of Jesus.

ENSEMBLE (5-10): Serve as Israelites, disciples, followers of Jesus, and God's people of today.

PREACHER: Encourages people to come testify.

OLD ISRAELITE: Gives a testimony of how God freed him.

WOMAN ISRAELITE: Gives a testimony of how God freed her.

VOICE OF JESUS: Voiceover. This should be a masculine, yet gentle voice. It should not be a voice of an actor in the production.

INTRODUCTION / ENDING VOICEOVER: Should be the same actor's voice. Select someone who can sound like a television announcer or reporter.

NOTE TO THE DIRECTOR

All actors will serve as ensemble, but select your best speakers and most expressive actors to be narrators. When they are not speaking as a narrator, they are part of the ensemble. The ensemble is often referred to as Israelites and disciples in stage directions, as the same actors will play those roles as well. There should be no more than twelve hooded figures, representing the twelve disciples.

Feel free to use repetition of lines, choral readings, and other forms of figurative language. In the original production actors were directed to change their pitch, tone, volume, and tempo to add expression to the delivery of lines.

COSTUMES, SET, & PROPS

In the original production the actors all wore matching bright shirts. There are three quick costume changes, but all of this happens backstage, so the performance is continuous.

There is no set for most of the production. In one scene a table is added to the stage to represent the Last Supper setting. It can be adorned with a table cloth, basket of bread, and a glass of wine, or left bare.

Traditional Hebrew garments	Woman's shawl
Hooded Disciple sweatshirts	Table cloth
Preacher's black robe	Basket of bread
Cane	Wine glass

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The following is suggested music; however, you can select pieces that are more fitting to your audience and band/orchestra's musical abilities. Song lyrics are listed at the end of the script.

Song 1: This song should be sung acapella and speaks to the oppression the Israelites felt in Egypt. A negro spiritual would work well here, such as *Hold On (Keep Your Hand on the Plow)*.

Song 2: This is an up-tempo song that should allow for testimonies woven within. The song should be celebratory, and speak to the Egyptians' freedom, and victory over Pharaoh. It should be a song of praise and thanksgiving. The spiritual hymn *The Lord Has Done Great Things For Us*, or any hymn that speaks about rejoicing in God, being happy, or freedom, would work. Be sure to avoid songs that mention Jesus, as Jesus was not on the scene during Moses' time.

Song 3: This song is a conversation between Jesus and God the Father. He is committing to die on the cross, while His disciples are asleep. The spiritual hymn *Thy Will Be Done* will work well. During instrumental parts of the song, Jesus is heard praying. In the original production this was all pre-recorded; however, it can be done live.

Song 4: This song should be sung acapella, and the lyrics should address Jesus' death on the cross, but more importantly His resurrection. The spiritual hymn *He Arose* works well.

Song 5: This song is a song of rejoicing and should mention the Holy Spirit. The spiritual hymn *Doxology* would work here, and can be sung acapella or with music.

Scene 1: Introduction

(AT RISE: In darkness NARRATORS 5 - 8 enter the stage, as a VOICE is heard saying the following...)

INTRODUCTION VOICEOVER: Rhema, the spoken word of God. It's more than just what He said. It is the word God spoke to the Israelites that gave them resilience and peace to live another day. It is the word that Jesus spoke to His disciples and followers that gave them direction in establishing churches and spreading the gospel. Rhema, the spoken word of God is the word of God for our lives that was written in the bible. You see, before it was written, it was spoken. It's what we live by. That's why it's so much more than a book on a mantle or an app on a phone. It's a guiding light, it's a sword, it produces life in a dark situation. Only when, only when, it's spoken! When it's spoken to you, when it's spoken by you, your spirit man listens, the atmosphere responds. All the creating that was done in Genesis, the heavens, the earth, day, night, even the creation of man. God didn't go out and manually create these things. He spoke. He spoke and so it was. And that's the key to living by God's word. It's speaking and listening. So today, we want you to put away your cell phones, and other electronic devices. Open your ears, both spiritual and natural, and listen, listen with the intent to receive God's Rhema, His spoken word, because they are words to live by.

(The LIGHTS come up on NARRATORS 5 - 8 as they say their lines. They are all positioned DS, and spaced SL to SR.)

NARRATOR 5: And the *word* became flesh and dwelt among them

NARRATOR 6: But before the *word* became flesh and dwelt among them

NARRATOR 7: It was spoken!

ENSEMBLE: *(Spoken from offstage.)* Spoken!

NARRATOR 8: The spoken word of God.

ENSEMBLE: Spoken!

NARRATOR 5 - 8: Spoken to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

ENSEMBLE: Spoken!

NARRATOR 5 and 6: And Jacob, renamed Israel, gave us
the twelve tribes of Israel.

ENSEMBLE: Spoken!

NARRATOR 7 and 8: The twelve tribes of Israel, God's
chosen people

ENSEMBLE: Spoken!

NARRATOR 5 - 8: God continued to speak

NARRATOR 7 and 8: And God's spoken word, Rhema!

ENSEMBLE: Rhema!

NARRATOR 5 and 6: Became life, hope, peace

NARRATOR 5 - 8: It became

ENSEMBLE: Rhema, words to live by!

*(BLACKOUT in darkness NARRATORS 5 - 8 join
ensemble as they enter.)*

Scene 2

(In darkness the ENSEMBLE begins singing and entering the stage. SONG 1 is sung a capella. LIGHTS slowly come up to reveal enslaved Israelites working to build a monument to Pharaoh. They pantomime movement such as chopping, digging, hammering, etc. As they work they continue to sing. Once Song 1 has ended, all actors continue pantomiming, while NARRATORS 1 - 4 step forward and begin speaking.)

NARRATOR 1:

During Moses' time there was a Pharaoh in the land
He was mean and evil.

ENSEMBLE: Mean and evil!

NARRATOR 2: Never following God's plan.

He put God's people in slavery, made them work without
pay.

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