

WHY CHRISTMAS?

By Elinor Brown

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STORY OF THE PLAY

An old man, puzzled about Christianity and the purpose of Christmas, sets out to learn about it by looking in on four different families ... all of whom call themselves Christians. The play stresses the influence our actions each day may have over the lives of others, as well as the real meaning of Christmas. New lyrics to three traditional carols, "It Came Upon A Midnight Clear," "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," and "O Little Town of Bethlehem," help bring home the message. This drama is for the entire Sunday school, requiring adults, young people, and children.

SETTING

SCENE 1: Living room of the Jones family.

SCENE 2: Living room of the Miller family.

SCENE 3: Living room of the Smith family.

SCENE 4: Living room of the Peterson family.

TIME: Christmas Eve

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Speaking parts)

THE OLD MAN: An elderly man, puzzled about Christianity.

MR. and MRS. JONES: A quarrelsome church family.

JUNIOR and MARIE JONES: Their children, 8 to 12 years old.

MR. and MRS. MILLER: A selfish church family.

BILLY and NANCY MILLER: Their children, 6 to 10 years old.

MRS. SMITH: A "too-busy" church member.

PEGGY, LORRAINE, and DORIS SMITH: Her teen-age children.

MR. and MRS. PETERSON: Newcomers to the town.

JACK and BETTY PETERSON: Their children, 13 to 16 years old.

(For the manger scene)

MARY and JOSEPH

SHEPHERDS: Two or more.

THREE WISE MEN

(A doll may be used to represent the CHRIST CHILD.)

COSTUMES

The OLD MAN should be dressed rather shabbily for the outdoors. The rest of the cast may wear present-day clothes suitable for persons of their age. Clothing should not be elaborate, but typical of the average family. The people appearing in the Nativity scene should wear Biblical costumes, and ideas for them could be obtained by referring to any illustrated Bible or Bible dictionary.

PROPS

The same basic props may be used for each scene and with a little shifting of the furniture, four different living rooms may be represented. There should be a Christmas tree and various Christmas decorations. The last scene will require one corner or the back of the stage to be curtained off so that the Nativity can be set up and the curtain drawn at the proper time. The Nativity scene may be as simple or as elaborate as you wish.

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SCENE 1

(Before CURTAIN: The OLD MAN steps out in front of the curtain, SL, or may make an entrance from the back of the room if more convenient. He walks slowly and stooped, and speaks with a quiver in his voice.)

OLD MAN: So this is Christmas Eve! I've seen many Christmas Eves come and go, and I am still wondering why we have such an occasion. Oh, yes, I've heard about a Baby that was born on that night many years ago. They called Him the Christ. But I've never been able to understand why His birth meant any more than that of many other babies. I've heard people talk about letting Christ live in their hearts. They tell you how wonderful it is to know Him, but it sounds like a fairy tale to me. It seems to me, if Jesus is as wonderful as they claim and has really done so much for them, we ought to be able to see a difference in their lives. Come with me tonight while I look in on a few homes where they call themselves Christians, and I'll show you what I mean. *(HE walks to CS and peeks through the opening of the curtain.)* This is where the Jones family lives. They go to church every Sunday. They have often asked me to go with them, but I always manage to find an excuse for not going. I don't want to tell them bluntly that I don't see any reason for going since it doesn't seem to do them any good! We'll just stand here by the window and see what happens.

(CURTAIN rises while the OLD MAN takes his place in front of the curtain at SL. MRS. JONES is hurriedly finishing putting a hem in a dress. Several gifts may be placed on the table waiting to be wrapped while wrapped gifts are under the tree. Floor is cluttered with wrapping paper so as to present an untidy appearance. Newspaper should be on one of the tables. Mrs. Jones is very upset ... her appearance quite disorderly. Enter MR. JONES, neatly dressed.)

MR. JONES: *(In a critical voice.)* Mary, aren't you ready to go yet?

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MRS. JONES: Now don't bother me! I'm hurrying as fast as I can!

MR. JONES: But we'll be late for the Christmas program!

MRS. JONES: I can't help it if we are! If you had as much to do as I have, you wouldn't be ready either. I have to finish this dress before I can wear it, and those gifts have to be wrapped for the program. It seems to me they could have asked someone else to do it.

MR. JONES: (*Disgusted.*) Is it necessary to hem that dress tonight?

MRS. JONES: (*Screeching.*) Of course it's necessary. Do you think I'd be doing it if it weren't? If you were a little more help, I wouldn't have so much to do!

MR. JONES: (*Picks up one of the unwrapped packages.*) Well, how do you want this wrapped?

MRS. JONES: (*Sarcastically.*) Oh, never mind. I'm finished with this now (*Holds up dress to examine it.*) and I'll wrap them. You wouldn't do it the way it should be done anyway.

MR. JONES: (*Irritated.*) I never can do anything to suit you, so I don't see why you started this in the first place. (*Sits in chair, picks up newspaper on the table nearby, and begins reading it with much rattling of the paper to show his annoyance.* MRS. JONES begins wrapping a package, stopping to glare at him frequently.)

(*Enter JUNIOR with dirty hands and his shirt unbuttoned at the neck.*)

JUNIOR: Ma, do I have to wear a tie?

MRS. JONES: Of course, you have to wear a tie! How many times do I have to tell you that you always wear a tie to church?

JUNIOR: Aw, I don't like ties, and besides I can't find mine.

MRS. JONES: If you'd learn to take care of your clothes, you'd be able to find them! (*Takes both of HIS hands, looking first at the nails and then at the palms.*) And look at your hands! You never washed them!

JUNIOR: I did too!

MRS. JONES: Don't talk back to me, Junior! You get right

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upstairs and wash again, and be quick about it! (*JUNIOR hesitates and SHE yells at him, stamping her foot.*) HURRY UP!

(*JUNIOR exits. MRS. JONES continues wrapping the gift when MARIE'S voice is heard offstage.*)

MARIE: (*Whining.*) Quit it! Ma, make Junior quit.

JUNIOR: Sissy! Tattle-tale!

MRS. JONES: Junior, what are you doing now?

JUNIOR: (*Sullenly.*) I ain't doin' nothin'.

MARIE: He is too! He's splashing water at me!

MRS. JONES: (*Exasperated, turns to MR. JONES who has been pointedly ignoring the entire proceedings.*) Henry, would it be disturbing you too much to get your nose out of that newspaper long enough to settle those two? I don't know what's gotten into those children. All they do is fight. (*MR. JONES throws his newspaper down angrily, glares at MRS. JONES and exits. Mrs. Jones continues wrapping the gifts in great agitation. CURTAIN.*)

OLD MAN: (*Shaking HIS head and walking across to the opposite side of the stage.*) And all their parents do is fight! I don't understand all this talk about letting Christ come into your heart and change your life. If this is the result, I certainly wouldn't want Him in my heart.

(*During the change of scenery, a SOLOIST sings the following words to the tune of "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear."*)

HAVE YOU BEEN GUILTY OF DOING THIS
AND CAUSE SOMEONE TO STRAY
AWAY FROM CHRIST'S REDEEMING LOVE
BACK TO A LIFE SO GREY?
IF THEY'VE SEEN QUARRELING IN YOUR LIFE
WHICH CAUSED THEM TO BE LOST,
THEN LISTEN, FRIEND, WHATE'ER YOU DO

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