Nativity Activity

By Matthew Wilson

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DEDICATION

In memory of Grandma Wilson, who loved laughter.

STORY

Some church plays seem to indicate that if you become a Christian you'll never have trouble again. Not true! We still have struggles.

Here's a play that takes an honest look at what a Christian family goes through around Christmas these days. Mark Nelson, an "Everyman" husband and father, has scheduled his family to participate in a live nativity, just to have them together for one night without distractions to focus on Christ and remind everyone else to focus on Him, too.

But it's tough! Grandpa wants to voice his strong opinions, wife Susan is desperate to finish shopping, and daughter Jen can't be disconnected from her friends! When son Kenny, er, make that Kenneth now, arrives straight from college with a whole lot of religious doubt he never had before, the family is shocked. Unfortunately there's not much time to discuss anything because an atheist and other protesters are suddenly picketing the manger display and a TV crew is ready to film it.

This comedy is the perfect way to take a look at our doubts and flaws, but ultimately the play is about finding strength in Christ and celebrating His birth. And that's a message both Christians and non-Christians will understand.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

4 m, 4 w, 4 flexible, extras

SHEPHERD: Small role. Can double as Cameraman.

MARK NELSON: An "Everyman" husband and father.

SUSAN NELSON: His wife, desperate to finish her gift list.

JEN: Their 10-year-old daughter. Like totally connected.

GRANDPA NELSON: Has strong vocal opinions.

KAREN JEAN: Atheist who objects to manger display.

KENNY: The Nelson's son, home from college.

CAMERAMAN: Can double as the Shepherd.

REPORTER: Does on-scene interviews.

LAWYER: *(Flexible role)* Represents both sides.

PROTESTORS 1-3: *(Flexible roles)* Each has a line or two.

ADDITIONAL PROTESTORS: *(Flexible roles)*

SETTING

Current day. A nativity with the standard stable with a hay trough for baby Jesus. It happens to be set up on public school grounds.

COSTUMES

All the characters wear modern day clothes. The Shepherd is already wearing his Biblical costume but the other cloaks and headdresses for Mark, Grandpa and Kenny are in the Magi's gift box along with the costumes for Susan and Jen. In addition, the Shepherd should have a cell phone and Jen should have all kinds of small electronic gear to show how wired she is—cell phones, BlackBerries, iPods, Game Boys, etc. Some of the Protestors appear later in costume: one in Muslim clothing, one in Orthodox Jewish clothing, and one in patriotic red, white, and blue clothing and carrying an American flag.

Scene 1

(LIGHTS up on a nativity set. A standard stable with a hay trough for baby Jesus. A lone SHEPHERD stands around, apparently doing nothing. Suddenly a cell phone RINGS. The shepherd looks around. The audience should get uncomfortable, wondering if this is part of the show or if somebody forgot to turn off their phone. Checking to make sure no one's looking, the Shepherd reaches into his cloak and answers his phone.)

SHEPHERD: *(Talking quietly.)* Hey, let me call you back. I'm being a shepherd for this show at church ... What?! No, it's not *The Lion King*. I said shepherd, not leopard ... Look, I'm not supposed to use my cell. It spoils the effect ... Cause shepherds wouldn't have this technology. *(Growing frustrated.)* It doesn't matter if they can track sheep using a GPS system now. They didn't have that in Biblical times.

(HE sees a family approaching from the opposite end of the stage. This is the Nelsons - MARK and SUSAN with their 10-year-old daughter JEN, and GRANDPA FRANK NELSON. They are all dressed in modern day clothing.)

SHEPHERD: *(Cont'd.)* Someone's coming. I gotta go. *(Louder, falsely hearty.)* Talk to you later, Pastor Fred. *(To the family.)* Hi, you must be the Nelsons.

MARK: We sure are. *(Looking at the set.)* Wow, this is amazing! The committee must have put a lot of time and work into this set. I'm so happy we can have a chance to participate in this great thing our church is doing. Aren't you, honey?

SUSAN: Spending the night at a live nativity display three days before Christmas when I haven't finished my shopping. What a great idea. *(SHE tries to smile, but clearly she is worried about losing the time.)*

SHEPHERD: Well, my shift is over. There's Bible clothes for you inside the gifts of the Magi.

(MARK opens the Magi gift box and starts distributing clothes. The SHEPHERD starts to leave, but SUSAN grabs him before he gets offstage.)

SUSAN: Wait, could you stop by the mall for me? I just need a few things...
MARK: I'm sure he's busy, honey. *(To the Shepherd.)* Thanks, anyway.

(The SHEPHERD leaves before they try to recruit him for something else.)

JEN: So what are we doing here, Dad?
MARK: We are recreating the night Jesus was born. When people come by on the street or the sidewalk, they'll be reminded what Christmas is all about.
JEN: Do I have lines to say?
MARK: No. We're just supposed to stand here and look like the people from the Christmas story.
GRANDPA: I wish we could talk. I'd like to give everyone that passes a piece of my mind.
MARK: We know you would, Dad. That's why the church was very specific about being quiet.
JEN: Well, I'm glad we don't have to talk. I was worried this was going to be like a church play.
MARK: Oh no. I wouldn't dare sign us up for one of those.
SUSAN: Why did you sign us up for this, honey?
MARK: Because with everything going on around Christmas, I think we need a night without distractions. A night that's focused on Christ. And we'll be reminding everyone else to focus on Him, too.
SUSAN: Do you think, in return, they could do some shopping for me?
MARK: Susan, you have to stop worrying about the shopping. We'll have time for that later.

SUSAN: Yeah, after Christmas. That's the next time I have a free night.
JEN: You should shop online, Mom. You could be done in half an hour. We could do it right now on my iPhone.

(JEN holds up the iPhone. SUSAN walks over to look, excited about the possibility.)

MARK: Again, that's not why we're here.

(HE holds out his hand. JEN surrenders the iPhone.)

MARK: *(Cont'd.)* Thank you. Now let's get dressed.

(HE hands outfits to all of them. THEY start pulling the cloaks and smocks on over their clothes. Jen pulls Susan aside, so Mark can't hear.)

JEN: *(Stage whisper.)* That one was a decoy. I knew Dad would take it away. Here's the real one.

(SHE shows her the iPhone, hidden in her jacket. SUSAN takes it and, looking over her shoulder to make sure MARK isn't watching, starts surfing the net.)

JEN: If you hurry you can get a few before he finishes putting on his costume.

(Across the way, MARK is struggling to figure out how to properly wrap the cloak around him. Nearby, GRANDPA has already managed to put his costume on. He watches Mark curiously. Finally, Mark thinks he has it figured out.)

MARK: How do I look, Dad?
GRANDPA: Like Mary.

(Unwittingly, MARK has put on a woman's headdress. GRANDPA takes it off him and hands him a men's headband.)

End of Freeview

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