

Christmas for the Family

A Christmas Eve Play by Brian T. Whitaker, Whitaker Writings

Summary

It's Christmas Eve, modern day. Sarah wants to make this a perfect Christmas, but from the very first scene we witness her angry and rebellious teenage daughter (Megan), her workaholic husband (Tom), and her college-aged son (Ryan) who won't be coming home for Christmas. Sarah's hopes for a perfect Christmas are dashed, and over the course of the evening we learn that Sarah's perfectionistic drive comes because she was battling cancer the previous Christmas and was too sick to enjoy much. Eventually, Sarah surrenders her heart back to the Lord.

Meanwhile, we see Megan's anger and bitterness expressed toward every member of her family, including her younger sister Katie. Over the course of the evening, and with the help of her older brother (who comes home after all) encouragement, Megan discovers that her anger and bitterness have been toward God, Whom she blames for giving her mother cancer. Through talks with Ryan and Sarah, Megan softens, and eventually turns to the Lord for salvation.

The play ends with a fun family celebration of Christmas morning, complete with the reading of the Christmas story from Luke 2:1-20. There is new hope for this family because of Jesus.

This play should be followed by a gospel message that clarifies how members of the audience can surrender their lives to Jesus.

Running time: Approx. 45 minutes, not counting gospel presentation.

This was originally designed to be part of a Christmas Eve service that included worship and a time of candlelight carols (these elements are not included in this script).

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Christmas for the Family

Brian T. Whitaker

Characters:

Sarah – Mother, age 45; meticulous and perfectionistic; Christian

Tom – Father, age 45; workaholic; disengaged from family

Ryan – son, age 20; in college; laid back personality

Megan – daughter, age 16; rebellious, bitter, defiant at first, then has major changes

Katie – daughter, age 13; strong faith in Christ

Costumes (see Director's Notes for more details on costumes):

In the beginning, Sarah is dressed in a pretty, Christmas-oriented, dress outfit—the image of a perfect wife and mother

Tom is in a smart business suit—first shirt has an obvious coffee stain down the front, which he changes after the first scene

Ryan is dressed in typical college kid attire—blue jeans, tee shirt or sweatshirt, maybe a baseball cap

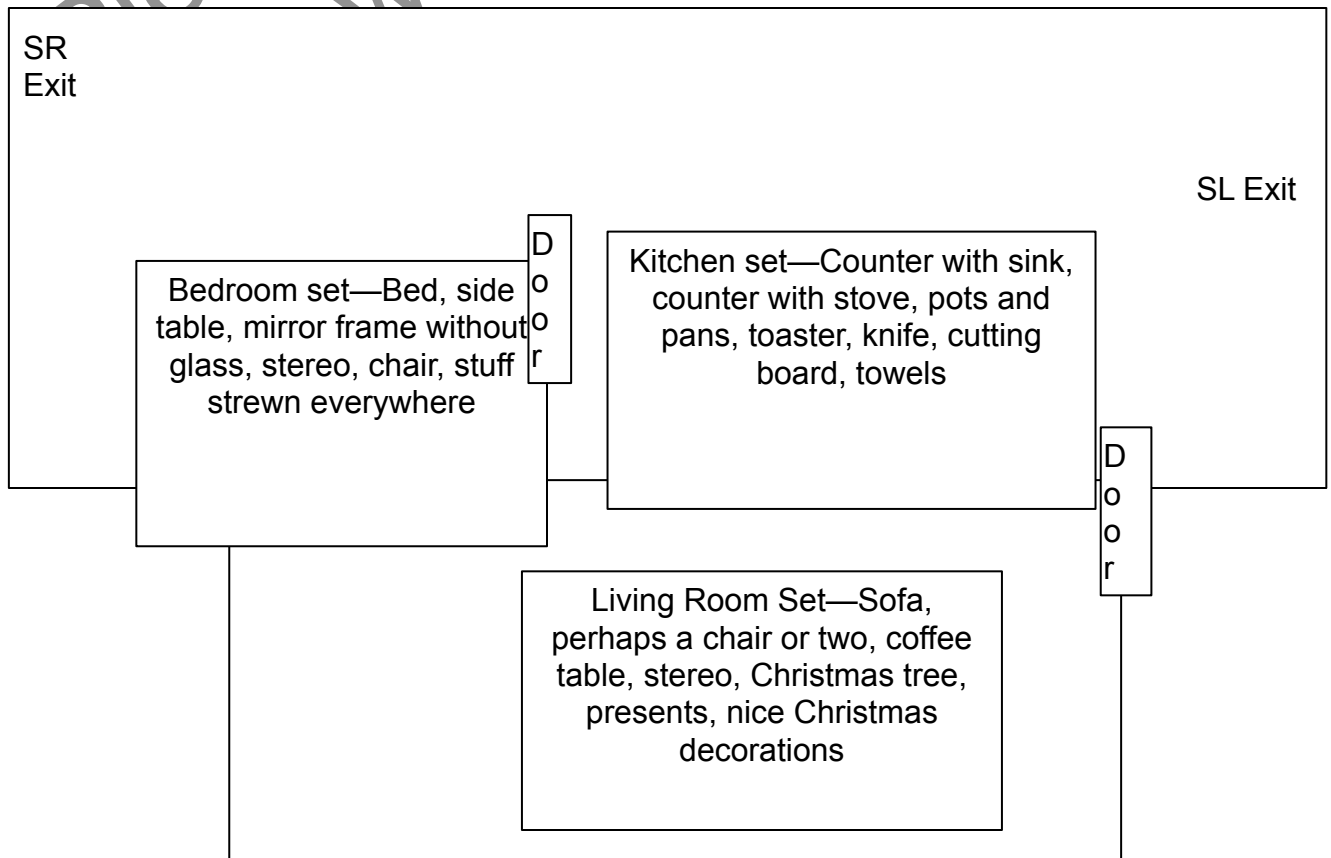
Megan is in clothes that speak her rebellious attitude—she is not dressed inappropriately for church-stage standards (should still be modest), but lots of black, gothic-looking stuff, with black press-on nails or black fingernail polish, teased-up black hair (wig?), heavy makeup, etc.

Katie is dressed in clothing appropriate for a 13-year-old

Premise:

It's Christmas Eve, modern day. Sarah hopes for a perfect Christmas celebration with her husband and three children. However, this family is far from perfect, and her plans unravel quickly. In the aftermath, Sarah reaches out to the Lord for help. Through God's grace, good things begin to happen in the family, culminating in the salvation of her rebellious teenage daughter.

Stage Setup:



Scene 1

Lights up on Living Room.

Muffled heavy rock music is in the background. Something from Demon Hunter or a similar Christian band will work as well as anything from the world. Megan is in her room, putting final touches on her goth appearance, dancing to the music.

Sarah is meticulously decorating the living room for Christmas. Immaculate tree, nice decorations on coffee table. She smooths out the Christmas quilt on the sofa and straightens the knick knacks on the coffee table. She looks around with a satisfied "everything is just perfect" expression on her face.

Megan turns off the music and walks into the Living Room, heading for the Door.

Sarah: *(To Megan)* Where do you think you're going young lady?

Megan: *(disrespectfully)* Mom, I'm just going to hang out with my friends.

Sarah: *(whining a little)* But Megan, it's Christmas Eve. You know we have plans. Your dad's coming home early. Your brother's getting back from college. This is supposed to be a special family night.

Megan: *(scoffs)* Family night? You mean, like, where we all play Monopoly and pretend we're having fun? You've gotta be kidding me.

Sarah: Megan! What kind of attitude is that?

Megan: Who cares? I'm outta here.

*Megan walks toward the door and starts to close it behind her.
Sarah rushes toward the door to catch it while it's still open.*

Sarah: *(shouting after her)* Be back for dinner in two hours!

Megan: *(disrespectfully)* Yeah, whatever!

Sarah closes the door, leans against it, slowly draws in her breath, and tries to recompose herself. She shakes her head, starts some Christmas music on the stereo, and returns to her perfect-looking Living Room to straighten some more.

Tom enters through the door in a hurry. He throws his keys on the counter. He has a suit and tie on, but a clearly-seen coffee stain down the front of his shirt. He takes off his suit coat and drapes it over the chair. He walks in and walks past Sarah without noticing her.

Sarah: (*cheerfully, hugging Tom*) Tom, you're home early. What a nice surprise for Christmas!

Tom: Uh...well...I'm actually just here to change my shirt. Sorry, honey, I had five employees call in sick, and now I have to stay until the store closes at midnight.

Sarah: (*disappointed, almost scolding*) Tom, how could you?! I've been working on a special dinner all day—all week in fact!

Tom: (*not quite sincerely*) I'm sorry, honey, but I have to impress the district manager with my sales this year. I missed last Christmas season altogether, and just about lost my job over it. I just can't let them down this year.

Phone rings in Living Room

Tom: (*turns toward phone*) I'll get it—it's probably the store. (*Picks up phone*) Hello?...Oh, hi!...Not gonna make it?...Are you sure?...Okay, see ya this weekend. Bye. (*Hangs up*)

Tom starts out of the room again in a hurry to change his shirt.

Sarah: Who was that, Tom?

Tom: Oh...that was Ryan.

Sarah: What?! You didn't let him talk to his mother?

Tom: Well, he just called to tell us that he's not coming home tonight.

Tom nonchalantly starts to leave the room.

Sarah: What?! Why not?!

Tom stops dead in his tracks and turns around.

Tom: Nick and a couple guys found a great deal on a ski package that they couldn't pass up. Ryan said he'd come home this weekend.

Sarah: (*incredulous*) Oh, so Ryan's not even going to be here for Christmas?!

Tom: (*clueless*) Sarah, he's spending some time with his friends. He'll be here this weekend. What's a couple more days?

Sarah: Tom, how could he...how could *you* not care about all I have planned for tonight and tomorrow? This is *Christmas!* This is supposed to be a special family time. And now you're working until who-knows-when, Ryan's not coming home, and I don't even know where Megan went or when she'll be back.

Megan enters through door, all huffy, with a cell phone in her hand, and slams the door.

Megan: *(snide tone)* Mom, I'm home. I wanted to spend time with Brittany but her dad won't let her because of their family plans. Now I'm stuck here. *(glares at Sarah)* I hope you're happy!

Megan doesn't wait for a response, huffs through the room, goes into bedroom, shuts door, and turns on heavy rock music that drowns out the Christmas music. Tom and Sarah just stare at her with dumbfounded looks on their faces.

Sarah: *(Still staring in the direction of Megan's room, then looking away)* Well, that just makes this night perfect, doesn't it?

Sarah rolls her eyes, sighs, and walks to the kitchen.

Husband shrugs and walks off Stage Right.

Lights out.

Scene 4

Lights up in Bedroom.

Music is blaring. Katie holds the basket of laundry in her hands. She knocks on the door, but at first Megan can't hear her. Katie keeps knocking and eventually shouts Megan's name.

Katie: Megan!...Megan!...MEGAN!!!

Megan jumps up from the bed, turns off the music with a huffy attitude, and opens the door.

Megan: What do you want?

Katie is a little stunned. She walks into the room tentatively.

Katie: *(stammering)* Here's your laundry.

Megan: *(bitter, sarcastic)* OK—so drop it and get out of my room.

*Megan plops back down on the bed.
Katie puts the laundry down, hesitates a moment, then blurts out her question.*

Katie: Why are you always so mad?

Megan: That's none of your business, and this isn't your room. Get lost.

Katie: *(tearing up a little)* Megan I...I just...

Megan: *(impatiently, baby talking back to her)* You just what?

Katie: *(throwing caution to the wind)* What happened to you? We used to have so much fun together, remember? Rollerblading, bikes, games, and movies—together. But now we don't do anything. *(hesitates)* ...I feel like I've lost my big sister.

Megan: *(Jumps back up, goes to the mirror, applies black lipstick, rats hair)* What are you talking about?

Katie: *(even more confidently now)* You act like you can't stand to be around me. And I'm not the only one. You're treating everyone the same way. *(She grabs Megan's brush to get her attention)* You're rude to Mom, you ignore Dad, and you even hollered at Ryan the last time he was home.

Megan: *(loses control a bit)* Who do you think you are?! You're too little to understand. Why don't you go...*(fumbles a little for words)*...play with your dolls or something? *She jumps back on the bed and pulls out a portable CD player and puts on the headphones to drown Katie out.*

Scene 7

Katie knocks quietly on the door.

Katie: Ryan, are you in here?

Ryan: Sure, Kate—just talking to Meg.

Long five-second pause. Katie hesitates to cross the doorway into Megan's room. Ryan looks back and forth between sisters.

Megan: *(gently, almost a little apologetically)* Yeah, you can come in. I won't bite your head off if you promise not to annoy me.

Katie enters, but still looks a little tentative, cowering against the wall. She slowly grabs a chair from against the wall and pulls it close to the bed, so Ryan is positioned between the two girls.

Ryan: Wow, you guys are tense. You used to be so close. What's up with that? *(There's silence from the two girls, so Ryan changes tone, now slightly mischievous)* C'mon, you two, it's Christmas. Don't you remember how much fun we used to have together at Christmas time? All the pranks we used to play...like swapping the name tags on the gifts, or my personal favorite, dropping pine boughs down your jammies.

Katie: I hated it when you did that! You were always picking on me.

Ryan: *(shrugs)* It was Megan's idea.

Megan: *(hitting Ryan gently)* Was not! Besides, if I remember correctly, you were the mastermind behind a lot of pranks on Mom and Dad.

Ryan: Yeah, like the Christmas morning we found Dad sound asleep on the couch, and we covered him in tinsel and tied ribbons all over him.

Megan: *(laughs aloud)* It took him hours to get out of that one! Or the year we set Mom and Dad's alarm clock three hours ahead so they'd be up early to open presents.

Ryan: Classic!

Katie: *(laughing along)* I remember the Christmas we tried to sneak into the kitchen and surprise Mom and Dad with breakfast. But I dropped a whole carton of eggs and you *(pointing at Ryan)* burned the waffles.

Megan: Mom and Dad woke up to the smoke alarm.

Ryan: Oh, man...what a mess!! *(all laugh)*

Megan: Oh...remember the year I snuck down the stairs at four in the morning. Mom and Dad were sure there was a burglar in the house, but then they caught me under the Christmas tree, trying to open all of my gifts with scissors and tape them back up again.

Katie: Yeah, Mom reminds me every year not to try that. You guys had all the fun and I can't get away with anything! *(Flashes a playful smile at both of them)*

Ryan: I remember times together as a family, reading the Christmas story from the Bible, or gathering around the piano to sing Christmas Carols. I remember the Christmas pageants at church...

Megan: *(interrupting)* ...like when you were a wise man...you laid your gift down at the manger, and then picked it back up and took it with you!

Ryan: *(laughing)* Yeah, they never let me be a wise man again!

Katie: I miss doing things together as a family. Like the year we went Christmas Caroling around the neighborhood. Or the year we served in the soup kitchen downtown.

Megan: We used to have fun as a family, before Mom got cancer.... *All three suddenly get quiet*

Ryan: *(a little more serious, to Megan)* It's not too late, Sis. You really need to talk to Mom.

Megan: *(thoughtfully)* Maybe you're right.

Scene 9

Lights up in Bedroom.

Megan is by herself, looking in the mirror.

Megan: *(to her reflection in the mirror)* Look at you! I can't stand you anymore!

She collapses on the bed in tears. She looks up to the ceiling.

Megan: *(Fumbling for words throughout this section)* God? Can you hear me? I mean...I sure hope you can. I really need Your help, here. I guess I'm a real mess. Well...You already know that anyway. Mom says You know everything, even what I think and feel. So I guess You know how horrible I feel right now. I can't stand who I've become. I feel so lost...so alone. And I don't want to be this way anymore. *(slowly, definitively)* I'm tired of all of this junk!

Mom says You can love anyone...no matter what. I sure hope that's true, because I can be pretty hard to love. But then You know that, too.

Megan softens a little as she continues to pray

God, I want the kind of peace I saw in Mom while she had cancer. I want the kind of peace that Katie has even when I'm mean to her. You know, as much as I get mad at my sister, I'm jealous of her joy. Can I have that too, God? Can You give me joy like that?

Mom says that peace and joy come from a relationship with You. At church they say that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, and all we need to do is accept Him. Is it really that easy?

God, can You please help me? Can You really change me? I don't want to keep doing what I've been doing. I don't want to be angry anymore. I don't want to be so mean to people.

Jesus, if all Mom says is true, I want to have a relationship with You. Please forgive me for all of the awful stuff I've been doing, and please help me to change. Please come into my life, Jesus, and help me change.

As she prays this last line, she begins fumbling with her necklace/jewelry, and after she finishes she continues to sit on her bed and ponder things, then she gets up to look in the mirror. She looks at herself for a few seconds in silence. Then she removes her boots and all of the gothic jewelry. She lets down her hair a bit. She begins to show how much she likes these changes as she makes them. She removes the fake black fingernails (or wipes off the black nail polish). With some makeup-removal wipes, she works off the caked-on makeup. She starts to put the things in her dresser drawer, but then thinks twice and instead throws them in her garbage can.

The lights slowly fade out in the Bedroom and fade up in the Living Room, where Sarah is still sitting on the sofa, praying.

After Megan finishes adjusting her appearance, she slowly opens the door to her room and sees Sarah on the sofa. Megan stands shyly, then approaches Sarah slowly and quietly. She sits down on the sofa next to Sarah and snuggles up to her. Sarah immediately notices the changes in her daughter and guesses what has happened. She hugs Megan tightly as they cry tears of forgiveness and joy.

Lights out in the Living Room.

Sarah and Megan quietly exit SL.

As the scene changes, celebratory Christmas music, such as “Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree,” may be played in the background

Director's Notes

This play is designed to be done in a church setting with children present. As such, special care needs to be taken in the music that is played as well as the costume Megan wears. Here are a few thoughts about these matters, plus several others that might aid the director of this production.

The pictures you see here are from the presentation we did at my home church.

Music

The "heavy rock music" that plays in the beginning can still be Christian. We used music from Demon Hunter. Alternatively, perhaps something instrumental by someone like Yngwie Malmsteen might be used. The music is not the focus, but at the same time, it's integral to the plot, and we don't want the music choice to be problematic for the audience. The music is an important element to show Megan's rebellion as well as her attempts to withdraw from the family.

Costuming

Megan's costume needs to be carefully constructed to be modest but very gothic in nature. Perhaps a black wig or two might be purchased at Halloween time. Black fingernails, black lipstick, and very heavy, pale makeup should be used. At our church the actress had leggings on under a long gothic black skirt, gloves, gaudy jewelry, etc. Thought will want to be given to items that are relatively easy to remove quickly for the transition between Scene 9 and Scene 10 (see next paragraph).

The transition to the final scene is a little tricky, but do-able. Ryan and Katie are able to change during Scenes 8 and 9, and Tom can change just about anytime. Megan and Sarah have to make the quickest changes to get ready for Scene 10, but the dialogue at the beginning of the scene, plus the fact that Megan has taken off some of the makeup and jewelry at the end of Scene 9, should allow enough time for the transition.

Set

The diagram on the front gives the layout we found most helpful.

Kitchen: we used some scrap cabinet and counter materials from a local contractor. We added microwave, toaster, pots and pans, trays for the final scene, coffee pot, etc.

Living Room: At least a couch is needed, plus a coffee table, Christmas tree with presents, etc.

Bedroom: We used fake walls/backdrop pieces with a door/doorframe integrated into them. We had a G-rated rock poster on the wall. We had a bed, dresser, stand-alone mirror frame with the glass removed, chair or stool for Katie in Scene 7, several pillows on the bed that Megan could hug or throw, etc.

Props

There are a number of props throughout the script, and more may be added to suit your production.

Sounds

A sound effect will be needed for the ringing telephone. In addition to music for Megan, there will need to be selections of background Christmas music, including "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day" and "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree." It is easiest to run all of these from a CD or MP3 player at the sound board.