SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

by Mark & Karla Jensen
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Sphere of Influence

A Lenten collection

by Mark and Karla Jensen
TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. O Master, Let Me Walk with You
2. The Perfect P.R. Guy
3. Working the System
4. A Son of Thunder
5. A Leader Willing to Serve
PRODUCTION NOTES

The action throughout each weekly drama based on passages from the gospels of Matthew and John moves from a lead narrator telling of his or her relationship to Jesus and the same narrator actually becoming part of the story that is being told. Small scenes take shape, occurring behind or beside the narrator while leads weave in and out of action. Voices help forward the narration but also become characters within scenes, moving quickly from one person to the next. This allows the congregation to experience the story of the Passion from a variety of viewpoints. Voices should dress simply in black so they may easily change from character to character. Movement is directed somewhat but may be more or less as decided by the director.

Each week a person comes to life with his or her own personal snapshot of the relationship between Jesus and him/herself. How did the two meet? What were their personal stories of influence? How did their relationship grow or change? The weekly drama begins with a monologue of the character that morphs into scenes where Jesus and his circle of influence overlap to create the Passion Story on a personal level for those who witnessed firsthand how Jesus lived and died.

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Week 1

O Master, Let Me Walk with You

_The Story of Peter based on John 13:1-11_

Cast: Peter, Jesus, Voices 1, 2, and 3 as narrator, disciples, and other biblical characters (should wear sandals)

Props and Set: Fishing net, two team hats, bag of food, a Bible, a towel, basin and pitcher for water, several chairs, cloak for Jesus.

_(PETER is at Center Stage.)_

PETER: If someone asked you how many people you knew, what would you say? A dozen? A hundred people? Five hundred? Well, we all have our inner circle of friends, but we also maintain a circle of family, acquaintances, and colleagues. In the business world, we call that our sphere of influence. Personally, I can’t say I have a large sphere of influence. I’m a plain, simple man; a fisherman. I spend every day with the same few men, on a boat, under the sky.

The only person I can think of around here whose realm of influence is that tremendous is Jesus. (JESUS enters from Off-Stage with VOICES as followers.) Jesus’ sphere of influence reached in all directions as preacher, teacher, rabbi, and friend. (JESUS chooses a high spot while VOICES listen around him. He doesn’t actually speak words, just gestures as if preaching.) He spent time with us, his followers, getting to know us from the inside out.

JESUS: (Approaches PETER and draws him Downstage, arm around him as pals.) What’s your favorite fish, Peter? Where’s your all-time favorite getaway? What time of the day do you most enjoy praying, Peter? What in nature brings you closest to God, friend? (JESUS returns to other followers.)

PETER: (Talking to congregation again) He couldn’t settle for us just being his followers. Never. He wanted our relationship with him to be as close as brothers. And we were. Well, Jesus’ influence wasn’t reserved only for his
disciples. (JESUS leaves the crowd. VOICES regroup to become another crowd.) He influenced his family and drew crowds with his message of love. “Blessed are those who are poor,” Jesus preached. “Blessed are those who mourn, and who are sick, pure in heart, who work for peace, and who are persecuted.”

JESUS: For the kingdom of heaven belongs to them, and they shall see God.

PETER: They saw God, all right. There in Jesus’ face, in his words, in his eyes, and in his touch. Being a former carpenter, one could say that people came out of the woodwork to hear the lilt in his voice, (PETER approaches JESUS and demonstrates touching his robe) to simply touch his robes, brush his shoulder, or peer into his face. His fame spread throughout the region. (PETER joins VOICE 1, as Andrew, picking up a fishing net.)

VOICE 1: (As a narrator) Walking along the Sea of Galilee, Jesus saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, with Andrew, fishing with a net.

JESUS: Come with me, and I will teach you to be fishers of men.

PETER: (To congregation) That’s how the Messiah and I met over a fishing net, along the water. I was captivated by his preaching, his insights, by his influence of others. He taught us the law, about controlling anger, and against adultery and divorce.

VOICE 2: Jesus taught us about love for our enemies (Holds up opposing team caps), charity, (Food pantry bag) and prayer (A Bible).

VOICE 3: Jesus preached and told parables about judging others, riches in heaven, and forgiveness. (Props are selected to represent each of these, if director chooses.)

PETER: But what astounded me and many others like me the most was Jesus’ abilities. Jesus healed people, raised the dead, (A few VOICES act out Jesus raising Lazarus) and cast out demons. (Talking to the congregation) You’ve probably all heard the story of Jesus and me walking on water together.
VOICE 1: (Looks out into congregation.) Who is that walking on the water?

JESUS: (From within congregation) Don’t be afraid. It’s me, Jesus.

PETER: If that’s you, Lord, let me walk to you on the water.

JESUS: Come …

PETER: (Begins to step out toward congregation.) So I step out, only to be frightened by the wind and waves. I sank like the rock Jesus named me. (Returns to Center Stage.) I didn’t always react this way. Other times, I was more certain of myself. Once our Lord asked who people said he was. We told him. (JESUS moves from within congregation back to stage, VOICES gather around him, acting out following scene.)

VOICE 2: Some say he’s John the Baptist.

VOICE 3: Some say Elijah or Jeremiah, or some other prophet.

PETER: Then Jesus said, “But who do you say that I am?” You could have heard a pin drop. We weren’t ready for the trick question. I finally spoke up and said, “You are the Messiah; the Son of the Living God.”

JESUS: (Moves away from other VOICES.) This answer has not been given to you by people, Simon, but by God. I am going to call you Peter, “The Rock,” and on you I will build my church.

PETER: Of course it would only take a few moments for me to put my foot in my mouth.

JESUS: The Son of Man will be persecuted, arrested, tried, and executed, and in three days rise again.

PETER: Lord, may that never come to pass.

JESUS: (With passion) Get behind me, Satan, for you’re on the side of people and not of God.

PETER: On the night that Jesus would be arrested, he ate his final meal with us. What was so strange about our gathering that night was that our master removed his outer garment, put a towel around his waist, then poured some water into a wash basin. (JESUS prepares to wash feet, grabs towel. Several chairs are lined across stage, with PETER on the end.)

ALL: (Together) And he began to wash his disciples’ feet.
DISCIPLES remove sandals as JESUS moves from one to the
next, as if washing feet.

PETER: (Standing before JESUS) When he came to me, I asked
him, “Are you going to wash my feet, Lord?”

JESUS: You do not understand now what I am doing, but you
will understand later.

PETER: Never at any time will you wash my feet.

JESUS: If I do not wash your feet, you will no longer be my
disciple.

PETER: Lord, do not wash only my feet, then! Wash my hands
and head as well. (He sits.)

VOICE 1: Jesus then explained that anyone who has taken a
bath is completely clean and does not have to wash
himself, except for his feet.

VOICE 2: “All of you are clean,” Jesus declared.

VOICE 3: All, except one. (Chairs are removed from stage.)

PETER: After Jesus washed our feet, he put his outer garment
back on and returned to his place at the table. (Someone
helps JESUS with his robe.)

JESUS: Do you understand what I’ve just done for you? You
call me teacher and Lord and it is right that you do so,
because that is what I am.

PETER: “You then should wash one another’s feet,” Jesus
continued, “so that you will do just what I have done for
you.”

ALL: (Together) He wanted us to be servants.

PETER: Little did we know that this would be his last lecture
to us.

VOICE 1: We thought, “There he goes again.”

VOICE 2: When Jesus begins his rule over Israel, this servant
stuff will all be forgotten, because we’ll be sitting in
places of honor, and others will serve us.

PETER: I made so many mistakes that night — the worst of
which was denying that I even knew him. (Scene plays out
while PETER is talking.) After Jesus’ arrest that night, I sat
outside the courtyard while the Sanhedrin questioned
Jesus.

VOICE 2: (Group of VOICES acts as if they are warming hands by a

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fire. VOICE 2 leaves group and heads towards PETER.) Hey, you there! You were with Jesus of Nazareth.

VOICE 3: She was a servant girl, making accusations.

PETER: “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” I shouted.

VOICE 1: Then another servant girl said something similar to the men there.

VOICE 3: He was with Jesus of Nazareth. I know it.

PETER: “I swear I don’t know that man,” I said again, more forcefully this time.

VOICE 2: A third time, some men came to Peter and said, “Of course you are one of them. After all, the way you speak gives you away.”

PETER: I swear I am telling the truth! May God punish me if I am not. I do not know the man! (Runs across stage, away from accusers.)

VOICE 1: Then Peter remembered Jesus’ words,

JESUS: Before the rooster crows, you will say three times that you do not know me.

PETER: (To congregation) Then I went out and wept bitterly. How could I do this? How could I deny my Lord? After all that time with him ... After it seemed that I would be the rock of his church, I had failed. (PETER stumbles around stage.) ... How could I have any sphere of influence left? Have you ever felt like I did? I wanted so much to do the right thing. I wanted to be the person that Jesus wanted me to be, yet I failed miserably. Have you ever felt that way? (Gets closer to congregation and interacts with them.) My comfort came in knowing that even though I had let him down, he forgave me. Somehow after that night, I knew that he still loved me. (Heads toward cross.) And when Jesus rose from the dead, when he rose, I knew that the deep hurt I had caused would not stand in the way of being sent forth to be his witness in the world. Have you ever felt this kind of forgiveness? (Moves to Center Stage.) Have you felt this kind of motivation to live your life for Christ? Have you? I wonder if anyone truly knows how much of an impact his life had on the world. (Pauses, then leaves stage.)
Week 2
The Perfect P.R. Guy
Story of Judas based on Matthew 26:20-25, 36-46

Characters: Judas, Voices 1, 2, and 3 as temple-goers, Communion partakers, disciples, and betrayal characters
Props: Sunglasses, whip of chords, Bible, pen, baseball hat, bowl, Communion elements, money bag and change.

(JUDAS stands at Center Stage.)

JUDAS: If someone asked you how many people you knew, what would you say? A dozen? A hundred people? Five hundred? Well, we all have our own inner circle of friends, but we also maintain a circle of family, acquaintances, and colleagues. In the business world, we call that our sphere of influence. Personally, I've been known to run in a couple of very different circles. (Moves far Stage Left.) On the one hand, since I am a disciple, I was given one of the choicest of assignments in a very influential growing ministry. Jesus was our rising star. He was going places, and I wanted to make sure I got in on the action. (Moves far Stage Right.) On the other hand, I respected my heritage as a devout Jew, and realized that it wouldn't help Jesus any to offend them. If Jesus wished to make his claim of being Messiah, he would certainly need their support. I was the perfect liaison between these two influential groups.

VOICE 1: (Approaches from behind JUDAS.) Do you know what a liaison is?

VOICE 2: (Enters from opposite direction of VOICE 1.) Isn't that something like a bridge?

JUDAS: Exactly. I felt like I could be the perfect P.R. guy for Jesus. I could easily put him in touch with the religious leaders who would be willing to swing their sphere of influence to the people, so that Jesus could take his rightful place in his kingdom. I tried to be flexible with these separate groups, working both sides of the fence occasionally. I'd tell them all the good things about Jesus.
I could — at least the things that fit their agenda.

VOICE 3: (Entering and invading JUDAS's personal space) Judas, why do people flock to see Jesus?

VOICE 1: (In his face) Exactly where does Jesus’ authority come from?

VOICE 2: (Also crowding JUDAS) We’ve heard that some of his teachings are new. Does this man not give credence to the law?

JUDAS: Jesus didn’t come to change the law, guys. Chill out. It’s OK. (Back to congregation, stepping away from VOICES) So what if I left off that last part, about Jesus coming to fulfill the law. That would have given them cause for concern and confused them. My position would be compromised, had I let too much out of the bag. Somehow, the chief priests always had their spies, (VOICES are lurking around stage, looking suspicious) so I was careful. (Smug) Yet they had no one as close as I to Jesus. I was the inside man. (Sunglasses propped on top of JUDAS’s head are moved to the bridge of his nose.) They were all skeptical of his authority and growing sphere of influence. He got too popular too fast. (Moving, taking sunglasses off now) Of course, Jesus didn’t do anything to help himself when he went into the temple with a whip of chords and chased all the money changers out.

VOICE 1: (Scene occurs Stage Left) It is written, “My house will be a house of prayer. But you have made it a den of robbers.”

VOICE 2: Then he entered the temple area and began driving out those who were selling. (All VOICES act out scene.)

VOICE 3: The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him.

VOICE 2: Because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

JUDAS: (Returns to Center Stage, addressing congregation) You should try to do damage control after an incident like this. Even the best spin doctor couldn’t fix the harm he had done to all that great P.R. we built.

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VOICE 1: (Shows a Bible and a pen.) Let’s have Jesus sign autographs at a bookstore.

VOICE 2: (Holds baseball cap over heart.) How about have Jesus sing the National anthem at a ball game?

VOICE 3: How about taking an anger management class and uploading a public apology on the Web? (VOICES disperse.)

JUDAS: After a while, when I feared my usefulness was evaporating, I went to the chief priests and asked, “What will you give me if I hand Jesus over to you?”

VOICE 1: (Counting coins) Here, son. How about this? Here’s thirty silver coins for your ... efforts. (Throws a bag of coins to JUDAS, who catches it.)

JUDAS: My thought was that Jesus could finally have a chance to show his true colors, tell them who he really was in the grand scheme of things. Plus, I’d make a little money along the way. It would be a perfect win-win situation. How was I to know that Jesus would say nothing in his defense? Public speaking had never been a problem before with Jesus, even to his enemies.

VOICE 2: (Stage Right) From that moment, Judas looked for a way to betray his master and hand him over ...

VOICE 3: Wait a minute. Let’s revise that a bit. “Betray” is such a harsh word for the public to hear. Why don’t we suggest that Judas looked for an opportunity where Jesus could affirm his ministry?

JUDAS: (VOICES gather Center Stage around Communion table.) Soon Jesus invited us to dinner with him. Turns out it would be the night of his arrest. While we reclined at the table to eat, Jesus said,

VOICE 1: I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me; one who is eating with me.

VOICE 2: His disciples were all saddened by this accusation and we all began to say to Jesus ...

ALL: (One at a time, overlapping) Surely not I!

VOICE 1: The one who dips the bread into the bowl with me will betray me. (JESUS and JUDAS reach for a bowl at the same time and gaze at each other.)

JUDAS: Because I didn’t see what I was doing as a betrayal

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but as a P.R. tactic, I said, “Surely not I, Rabbi?”

VOICE 3: Jesus answered,

VOICE 1: “Yes, it is you.”

JUDAS: Looking back, Jesus still allowed me to sit at the table with the other disciples and himself. He took bread and gave thanks and said,

VOICE 1: Take and eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. (VOICES act out Communion scene.)

VOICE 2: Then he took the cup, gave thanks and said,

VOICE 1: Take and drink. This cup is the new covenant of my blood, which is poured out for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

JUDAS: Then the other disciples accompanied Jesus to the Mount of Olives. (VOICES leave Center Stage and head down center aisle.) Instead, I retreated to find the chief priests.

Many thought that I went to pay the bill for our meal, since I kept the treasury. We found Jesus and the other disciples in the garden. I had informed the guards to arrest the one that I would kiss. I knew that if it was dark, it could be difficult to distinguish faces. That was our agreement.

VOICE 3: (VOICES stand mid sanctuary side by side with JESUS, all facing front of sanctuary from the back.) When Jesus saw Judas and the chief priests arriving in the garden, he said,

VOICE 1: Look, the hour is near and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go. Here comes my betrayer.

JUDAS: Jesus totally misconstrued what I intended to accomplish that night. (JUDAS leaves Center Stage and heads down center aisle toward VOICES.) I approached Jesus and said, “Greetings Rabbi,” and kissed him. (He does.) I never dreamed that kiss would lead to his death. (JUDAS stays while VOICES morph into soldiers who arrest JESUS and bring him to Center Stage.) They came to the decision the following day to put Jesus to death. I was astonished. This is certainly not what I wanted. (JUDAS walks up center aisle toward front now.) I instantly felt my sphere of
influence evaporating, the very thing I hoped to avoid in the first place. When I saw that Jesus was condemned, remorse seized me. I tried to return the thirty pieces of silver. (He approaches the group of VOICES.) I have sinned, men, for I have betrayed innocent blood. (Tries to return money bag.)

VOICE 2: (Holds up money bag.) What is that to us?
VOICE 3: That’s your responsibility. You chose your actions for your own gain.
VOICE 2: (Grabs money bag and tosses it back to JUDAS.) Be on your way, Judas, and don’t bother us again. (VOICES exit.)
JUDAS: So, there it was. (JUDAS approaches congregation again.) I had lost the connection that I once had with the religious leaders. At the same time, I also forfeited my relationship with Jesus and all the other disciples. They would all see me as nothing more than a traitor. Suddenly I realized there was no P.R. stunt to pull me out of these ashes.
VOICE 1: (VOICES return, back in JUDAS’ face) So what are you going to do, Judas?
VOICE 2: You’re all by yourself, Judas. (VOICES surround him, rotating, intimidating him.)
VOICE 3: Your sphere of influence has vanished.
VOICE 2: What’s left, Judas? What’s left?
VOICE 3: There’s only one thing to do now, Judas. (JUDAS rushes toward back of sanctuary or balcony.)
JUDAS: (From balcony) You don’t have the kind of remorse I have unless you are truly ashamed about what you have done to someone you care about. Jesus wasn’t just an innocent man, he was my master, my friend and God’s messiah. And I turned him over for money. I guess it just goes to show that all the money and possessions in the world pale in comparison to having a relationship with God’s son. (Sniffing, near weeping) I had the chance and blew it. Today, many of us believe, like I did, that if we have enough money or possessions, we’ll have a happy life, but what we really want is to have a relationship with God and be in community with others ...
influence each other and be influenced by others. Have you ever felt like you were beyond forgiveness? My biggest mistake was in not realizing that even my atrocity could be forgiven. Even though Jesus knew I'd betray him, he still broke bread with me at the meal. How could I be so blind to his unfailing forgiveness? How could I not see it?

Week 3

Working the System

_Story of Pontius Pilate based on John 18:28-19:42_

**Cast:** Pilate, Voices 1, 2, and 3 as religious leaders and soldiers, Jesus

**Props and Set:** A purple cloth, throne or chair for Pilate.

**Pilate:** (Enters moving up center aisle toward front.) If someone asked you how many people you knew, what would you say? A dozen? A hundred people? Five hundred? Well, we all have our own inner circle of friends, but we also maintain a circle of family, acquaintances, and colleagues. In the business world, we call that our sphere of influence.

Not to brag, but I know everyone that's someone. Unfortunately, I also know those who are the dregs of society who come before me for judgment. (Uses grand gestures as he moves across stage.)

Yes, Palestine during my reign happened to be one of the ugliest places for a governor to be stationed. (VOICES enter and move about, as if a city bustles behind him.) It wasn't the crown jewel of the Roman Empire. In fact, it was a downright ugly place to live. There were always groups trying to start the latest uprising. (VOICES enact a fistfight breaking out.) With that in mind, those who craved my attention and company were not always the sincere, upstanding citizens they claimed to be. These folks were second rate, leaching off my authority for their gain. (Pilate waves away people he wishes to ignore.) After all, who

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would want to be in a place like this, where turmoil and unrest were a daily occurrence? But I needed these associates to keep order in the government. Like the winning Super Bowl quarterback, people always wanted something from me.

VOICE 1: Then the Jews led Jesus to the palace of the Roman Governor. (JESUS is led by two VOICES acting as soldiers toward PILATE Stage Right.)

PILATE: I first met Jesus on a sunny Friday morning. We had just dealt with an insurrectionist named Barabbas. I thought perhaps today I might receive a break from the constant turmoil, but Passover always seemed to bring out the troublemakers for those of us who tried to keep order.

VOICE 2: The Jews wanted to eat the Passover meal, so they could not enter the palace with their prisoner. They would be declared unclean, so they asked Pilate to come out to them.

PILATE: When I emerged into the courtyard, I saw a man who appeared quiet, calm, and not rattled. He was not a loudmouth like Barabbas. He was not belligerent and fighting for his freedom. (Approaches JESUS, stands facing him.) “What charges are you bringing against this man?” I asked.

VOICE 3: If he were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you.

PILATE: My initial response was, “Take him yourself and judge him by your own law.” I chose my words carefully. Their response on cue was,

VOICE 1: But we have no right to execute anyone.

PILATE: Even though stonings among the Jewish people were frowned upon by Rome, they often took place without discretion.

VOICE 2: (PILATE moves Stage Left.) So Pilate returned to the palace, waited, then summoned Jesus to interrogate him. (VOICES bring JESUS to him across stage.)

PILATE: Are you the King of the Jews?

VOICE 3: (VOICES surround PILATE, as if they become his
Jesus seems suspicious.

VOICE 2: Suspicious in what way?

VOICE 1: Well, why would Pilate use such a title to accuse this prisoner?

JESUS: Is that your own idea, or did others talk to you about me?

PILATE: (Steps toward JESUS.) Do you think I am a Jew? Your own people and your chief priest handed you over to me. What is it you have done?

VOICE 3: (VOICES gather away from JESUS and PILATE to contemplate the scene.) The chief priest is assigned by the Roman governor. So why is Pilate so surprised that they have condemned Jesus by suggesting he is the King of the Jews?

VOICE 2: This almost seems like Pilate is feigning his own innocence about what is really transpiring here. Certainly he has knowledge.

VOICE 1: Condemning Jesus as King of the Jews would certainly make it easy for Pilate to judge him as a real threat to Rome’s authority.

JESUS: My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now, my kingdom is from another place.

VOICE 2: (Moves across stage, outraged.) He’s calling himself a king!

VOICE 3: Jesus certainly isn’t helping himself with a statement like this.

VOICE 1: How does Jesus expect Pilate to respond to that?

PILATE: You are a king then!

VOICE 3: Now Pilate has him where he wants him. This could be a slam dunk for Pilate.

VOICE 1: Nice knowing you, Jesus. (VOICES 1 and 2 begin to exit.)

VOICE 3: But Jesus surprises Pilate by delivering an unexpected answer. (They wait to hear what JESUS will say.)

JESUS: You are right in saying I am a king.

VOICE 2: Hold the phone! There’s more to this story than we’ve heard thus far.
JESUS: I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.

PILATE: (To congregation) “But what is the truth?” I posed. To prove my point that I was a fair and reasonable governor, I even managed to enter into the courtyard again and speak directly to the Jews. (Moves to opposite side of stage.) I declared to the crowd, “I find no basis for a charge against him.”

VOICE 1: Good thinking, man. Don’t you look like the innocent one now!

VOICE 2: Who would ever accuse Pilate of orchestrating this entire trial? No one!

PILATE: (To congregation) But it is your custom to release one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release the King of the Jews?

VOICE 3: The crowds shouted back at Pilate.

VOICE 2: No, not him.

VOICE 1: Give us Barabbas instead.

VOICE 3: Who on earth chose this crowd, anyway?

VOICE 2: Don’t crowds choose themselves?

VOICE 1: Shhhh! This crowd was chosen by Pilate.

VOICE 3: For one purpose and one purpose only.

ALL: (Together) To convict Jesus.

PILATE: What else was I to do? I didn’t wish to condemn Jesus at that point, so I did the next best thing. I ordered him flogged. (VOICES act out the scene.) My soldiers placed a crown of thorns upon his head and adorned him with a purple robe, (VOICES place a purple cloth on JESUS) the color of a king.

VOICE 2: Jesus apparently influenced many people and many crowds, just like this one.

VOICE 1: But now, with this crown of thorns and purple robe and blood running from his wounds — who will he influence now?

ALL: (Together) No one!

PILATE: Look, I am bringing Jesus out to you, to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him. As soon as
the chief priests and other officials saw Jesus, they shouted, “Crucify him. Crucify him!” But I answered again, “You take him and crucify him. I find no basis for a charge against him.” And then I said it again even louder a third time, quite convincingly.

VOICE 3: But the Jews insisted.

VOICE 2: But we have a law. According to that law, Jesus must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.

PILATE: When I heard this uttered from the Jews, I felt like my reaction should be one of fear, if I was going to play my role well in this drama. I asked Jesus, “Where do you come from?” But Jesus gave me no answer.

VOICE 1: (VOICES surround PILATE again.) And you believe that?

VOICE 2: Who does he think he is?

PILATE: Do you refuse to speak to me? (Whispers to JESUS.) Don’t you realize I have the power to either free you or crucify you?

VOICE 3: (VOICES surround JESUS.) Come on, Jesus. Don’t just stand there silently. Say something!


VOICE 1: Can’t you say anything?

JESUS: You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore, the one who handed me over to you is guilty of the greater sin.

PILATE: (Leaves JESUS.) I did my best, people, to try to set Jesus free, but inside, I knew what their response would be. And the crowd did not disappoint me.

VOICE 2: If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.

VOICE 1: When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out (VOICES act out scene) and sat down on the judge’s seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement. (PILATE sits overlooking congregation.)

PILATE: Here is your king. I wanted to show the crowd that this is what we do to people who claim to be a king when they are not.

VOICE 3: But the crowd was predictable and shouted, “Take

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him away. Take him away.”

ALL: (Together) Crucify him.

PILATE: Shall I crucify your king?

ALL: (Together) We have no king but Caesar.

VOICE 1: (Stage whispers in PILATE’s ear.) A curious response from Jews who hate Rome, don’t you think?

VOICE 3: When did they all become such law-abiding citizens?

VOICE 2: One palm greases another.

PILATE: (Stands from his chair.) I was given the ultimatum, so I handed Jesus over to be crucified. Because I had my own sphere of influence within the crowd that day, I removed the home field advantage that Jesus and his followers may have been hoping for. Jesus became a condemned criminal then, no longer a king with power of any kind. I worked the system to my advantage. Being a leader means knowing how to get things done. I knew exactly how to hang Jesus from a cross without much effort. The events simply had to be orchestrated appropriately, that's all.

Much of what I do as a governor requires me to work within the system that's available to me. Working closely with religious leaders, those who live in Palestine, are all a part of the system. Ultimately, Jesus was a threat to Rome. For three years we kept an eye on him, and as we watched, it was clear that something had to be done about him. Jesus’ ministry outside the city wasn’t much of an issue until it started to infiltrate Jerusalem.

I can only think Jesus’ intentions in coming to Jerusalem were to take over the government and declare his kingship once and for all. Just think what might have happened if we didn’t stop his ministry. (Sits.) It might have grown into something that could have transformed the entire world. What could be more important than government and the rule of Rome? Jesus will be a distant memory, but Rome will endure forever. At least that’s the way I saw it that day. (Pause) Correct me if I’m wrong, won’t you?
Week 4

A Son of Thunder

John’s story based on Mark 1:14-20 and John 19:25-27

Cast: John, Voices 1, 2, and 3 as brothers, Transfiguration characters, and a pilot

Props and Set: Fishing poles, fishing nets, headphone or headset with microphone, ladder, a larger cross.

JOHN: (Stands at Center Stage among his nets and fishing poles.)

JOHN: If someone asked you how many people you knew, what would you say? A dozen? A hundred people? Five hundred? Well, we all have our own inner circle of friends, but we also maintain a circle of family, acquaintances, and colleagues. In the business world, we call that our sphere of influence. (Picks up net, begins to straighten gear.) In fishing terms, we call that our crewmates, our backup when we need extra bodies and muscle to bring in the catch for the day. My brother James and I joined Jesus’ ministry awhile back. We were preparing our nets to go out and fish one typical day. We were with our dad, Zebedee, and his hired men. When Jesus called us to become his disciples, we dropped any preparations we were making (Drops equipment and moves across stage) and instead prepared to embark on an entirely different kind of fishing mission. Jesus taught us how to fish for people.

My sphere of influence increased tenfold when we met Jesus. (Walks close to congregation, waving at people or shaking hands.) I met people from all walks of life I never knew existed. Both my brother James and I instantly felt a connection with a couple other brothers, Peter and Andrew. (Two VOICES enter and become brothers, walking across stage. JOHN returns to stage beside them.) Strangely, their stories were similar to ours. They too had been fishermen, but Jesus’ influence compelled us all to stop fishing and walk alongside him — not as a bodyguard, but like a friend. The more we got to know Jesus, the
more we wished to devote ourselves to him and his
ministry.

Peter, James, and I appeared with Jesus during many
pivotal points in Jesus’ transforming ministry. We stood
beside him on a high mountain. (VOICE 3 enters and joins
the others as they stand on a stool or ladder, as if overlooking a
valley.)

VOICE 1: There we saw Jesus transfigured before us.
VOICE 2: Don’t look now, but Jesus’ clothes are a dazzling
white.
VOICE 3: Where did he find Clorox way up here?
VOICE 1: That’s not bleach, my friend. It’s something entirely
holy.
VOICE 2: Who is that? There, standing with him. They look
familiar.
VOICE 3: Have these guys been surfing on HighSchool
Classmates.com?
VOICE 1: Their robes are outdated and their hairstyles look a
little off. Who are these guys?

JOHN: (Three VOICES turn into next characters, with the option of
slipping on different robes to represent a different person.) Elijah
and Moses appeared beside Jesus and spoke with him as
if they were lifelong friends. Jesus did look as white as a
dove’s breast. We could barely lift our gaze from this trio,
but Peter being Peter interrupted their conversation
with a suggestion. (VOICES move to opposite side of stage as
onlookers.)

VOICE 2: (As Peter) Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us
put up three shelters: one for you, one for Moses, and one
for Elijah.
VOICE 3: Soooo Peter, a mere fisherman, is going to build a
shelter for a carpenter?
VOICE 1: Good luck on that one.
VOICE 2: Is this going to end with a visit to the emergency
room?

JOHN: Then a cloud appeared and enveloped us. A voice came
from the clouds ...

VOICE 2: (With headphone set) Passengers. This is your captain,
speaking from the cockpit. We’re flying into some heavy cloud cover. Please keep your seatbelts fastened and your seats in the upright and locked position with your tables up.

VOICE 3: Clouds sometimes mask or block our view from what we are seeing and hearing.

VOICE 1: This is my son, whom I love. Listen to him.

VOICE 2: That was the voice.

VOICE 3: It sounded like a voice in a dream. Am I sleeping?

JOHN: No, we’re not sleeping. I was there. Peter and James would back me up on this one. (Addressing congregation again) I believe the voice speaking to our small group that day was God. Can you imagine how far reaching our sphere of influence could grow when we began telling people that God spoke to us? It’s like having someone famous endorse a product. Perhaps this is why James and I went to Jesus, asking him to grant us whatever we asked. (Characters shift places again for next scene.)

VOICE 2: (Several chairs Center Stage. VOICE 2 become Jesus.) What do you want me to do for you, friends?

VOICE 1: Front-row seats at a _________ (Insert current popular singer) concert at the Coliseum would be nice, Jesus.

VOICE 3: Season tickets to my favorite team?

VOICE 1: A cabin in the woods and a weekend of fly fishing?

JOHN: But, no. We didn’t ask for any of these things.

VOICE 2: What did you ask for then?

JOHN: We asked to sit at Jesus’ right and left hand when he came into his glory.

VOICE 3: You asked for what?

VOICE 2: Why didn’t you just ask for his mother’s hand in marriage?

VOICE 1: Or a lock of his hair?

JOHN: This was not one of our better moments. We just didn’t understand yet what it meant to be one of his followers.

VOICE 2: How long had you been following Jesus, and you still didn’t understand his message?

JOHN: Long enough to know better.

VOICE 1: So how did Jesus respond?
JOHN: He said, "You don't know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

VOICE 3: Don't tell me ... let me guess. You said —

JOHN: (Embarrassed) Yes!

VOICE 2: You really didn't get it, did you?

JOHN: Jesus then responded by saying, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not mine to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared." When the rest of the disciples heard what we had done, they were indignant.

VOICE 1: Who do you think you are?

VOICE 2: Do you think you are better than us?

VOICE 3: Just looking out for yourselves. That's all you're ever concerned with.

JOHN: Jesus told us that if we wanted to be great, we needed to become servants.

VOICE 2: But servants have no influence. None.

VOICE 1: Nobody pays any attention to servants at all.

VOICE 3: How could a servant influence anyone but his fellow servants?

JOHN: Whoever wants to be first must become a slave of all. He said, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life for a ransom for many." Boy, did that come true. I still remember that Friday, witnessing my master, my teacher, and my friend hanging on a cross between two thieves. (VOICES act out scene.) I was the only disciple brave enough to stand before our Lord, watching him suffer. Peter was too ashamed, having denied Jesus. James had fled with the rest, fearing for their own lives. Something inside of me compelled me to be here for Jesus. I kept hearing in my head and in my heart that same voice we heard at the Transfiguration, only softer and more pleading.

VOICE 2: Near the cross, a small group gathered.

VOICE 1: Jesus’ mother, his mother’s sister, and Mary Magdalene stood with John.

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VOICE 3: When Jesus saw his mother present alongside the
disciple whom he loved, he said to his mother,

VOICE 2: Dear woman, here is your son.

VOICE 1: And to the disciple, Jesus said, “Here is your
mother.” (VOICES freeze.)

JOHN: (To congregation) Yes, I heard Jesus’ words. I saw him
speak them directly to me. This was a command, an
order. I accepted Jesus’ words with love and honor. How
could I disappoint my master? From that moment on, I
took Mary into my home. I never imagined that Jesus’
ministry — our ministry — would end like this. (Steps
closer toward congregation.) I still maintained the mindset
that Jesus was called for greatness here on earth, as were
his followers. It was difficult to see that Jesus’ influence
was cut short that day, even though his disciples clearly
were impacted by his entire life, and now his death. Many
were disillusioned and fell away. (VOICES exit.) They
couldn’t follow a messiah that was dead. A king that died
on a cross is no king. At least that’s the way most of his
followers saw it. I guess I saw something different,
something powerful in the cross that not everyone else
could see. (Stands near a cross somewhere in sanctuary.) When
you look at the cross, shouldn’t it stand for something
more than the demise of Jesus? Shouldn’t it?

Week 5

A Leader Willing to Serve

Story of Jesus based on Matthew 27:45-54

Cast: Jesus, Voices 1, 2, and 3 as disciples, devils, and Nicodemus
story characters

Props and Set: Carpenter’s tools, wood pieces, ladder or stool, a
chalice, stuffed sheep, jar of mustard or mustard seed, watch.

JESUS: (Working with carpentry tools and wood) If someone asked
you how many people you knew, what would you say? A
dozen? A hundred people? Five hundred? Well, we all