

# SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

*by Mark & Karla Jensen*



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# SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

*A Lenten collection*

**by Mark and Karla Jensen**

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## *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

1           **disciples.** (*JESUS leaves the crowd. VOICES regroup to become*  
 2           *another crowd.*) **He influenced his family and drew crowds**  
 3           **with his message of love. “Blessed are those who are**  
 4           **poor,” Jesus preached. “Blessed are those who mourn,**  
 5           **and who are sick, pure in heart, who work for peace, and**  
 6           **who are persecuted.”**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

33           **PETER:** But what astounded me and many others like me the  
 34           most was Jesus’ abilities. Jesus healed people, raised the  
 35           dead, (*A few VOICES act out Jesus raising Lazarus*) and cast  
 36           out demons. (*Talking to the congregation*) You’ve probably  
 37           all heard the story of Jesus and me walking on water  
 38           together.

- 1 VOICE 1: (*Looks out into congregation.*) Who is that walking on  
 2 the water?
- 3 JESUS: (*From within congregation*) Don't be afraid. It's me,  
 4 Jesus.
- 5 PETER: If that's you, Lord, let me walk to you on the water.
- 6 JESUS: Come ...
- 7 PETER: (*Begins to step out toward congregation.*) So I step out,  
 8 only to be frightened by the wind and waves. I sank like  
 9 the rock Jesus named me. (*Returns to Center Stage.*) I didn't  
 10 always react this way. Other times, I was more certain of  
 11 myself. Once our Lord asked who people said he was. We  
 12 told him. (*JESUS moves from within congregation back to*  
 13 *stage, VOICES gather around him, acting out following scene.*)
- 14 VOICE 2: Some say he's John the Baptist.
- 15 VOICE 3: Some say Elijah or Jeremiah, or some other prophet.
- 16 PETER: Then Jesus said, "But who do you say that I am?" You  
 17 could have heard a pin drop. We weren't ready for the  
 18 trick question. I finally spoke up and said, "You are the  
 19 Messiah; the Son of the Living God."
- 20 JESUS: (*Moves away from other VOICES.*) This answer has not  
 21 been given to you by people, Simon, but by God. I am  
 22 going to call you Peter, "The Rock," and on you I will  
 23 build my church.
- 24 PETER: Of course it would only take a few moments for me to  
 25 put my foot in my mouth.
- 26 JESUS: The Son of Man will be persecuted, arrested, tried,  
 27 and executed, and in three days rise again.
- 28 PETER: Lord, may that never come to pass.
- 29 JESUS: (*With passion*) Get behind me, Satan, for you're on the  
 30 side of people and not of God.
- 31 PETER: On the night that Jesus would be arrested, he ate his  
 32 final meal with us. What was so strange about our  
 33 gathering that night was that our master removed his  
 34 outer garment, put a towel around his waist, then poured  
 35 some water into a wash basin. (*JESUS prepares to wash feet,*  
 36 *grabs towel. Several chairs are lined across stage, with PETER*  
 37 *on the end.*)
- 38 ALL: (*Together*) And he began to wash his disciples' feet.

- 1           (*DISCIPLES remove sandals as JESUS moves from one to the*  
2           *next, as if washing feet.*)
- 3   **PETER:** (*Standing before JESUS*) When he came to me, I asked  
4           him, “Are you going to wash my feet, Lord?”
- 5   **JESUS:** You do not understand now what I am doing, but you  
6           will understand later.
- 7   **PETER:** Never at any time will you wash my feet.
- 8   **JESUS:** If I do not wash your feet, you will no longer be my  
9           disciple.
- 10   **PETER:** Lord, do not wash only my feet, then! Wash my hands  
11          and head as well. (*He sits.*)
- 12   **VOICE 1:** Jesus then explained that anyone who has taken a  
13          bath is completely clean and does not have to wash  
14          himself, except for his feet.
- 15   **VOICE 2:** “All of you are clean,” Jesus declared.
- 16   **VOICE 3:** All, except one. (*Chairs are removed from stage.*)
- 17   **PETER:** After Jesus washed our feet, he put his outer garment  
18          back on and returned to his place at the table. (*Someone*  
19          *helps JESUS with his robe.*)
- 20   **JESUS:** Do you understand what I’ve just done for you? You  
21          call me teacher and Lord and it is right that you do so,  
22          because that is what I am.
- 23   **PETER:** “You then should wash one another’s feet,” Jesus  
24          continued, “so that you will do just what I have done for  
25          you.”
- 26   **ALL:** (*Together*) He wanted us to be servants.
- 27   **PETER:** Little did we know that this would be his last lecture  
28          to us.
- 29   **VOICE 1:** We thought, “There he goes again.”
- 30   **VOICE 2:** When Jesus begins his rule over Israel, this servant  
31          stuff will all be forgotten, because we’ll be sitting in  
32          places of honor, and others will serve us.
- 33   **PETER:** I made so many mistakes that night — the worst of  
34          which was denying that I even knew him. (*Scene plays out*  
35          *while PETER is talking.*) After Jesus’ arrest that night, I sat  
36          outside the courtyard while the Sanhedrin questioned  
37          Jesus.
- 38   **VOICE 2:** (*Group of VOICES acts as if they are warming hands by a*

1           *fire. VOICE 2 leaves group and heads towards PETER.)* Hey,  
 2           you there! You were with Jesus of Nazareth.  
 3   **VOICE 3:** She was a servant girl, making accusations.  
 4   **PETER:** “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” I shouted.  
 5   **VOICE 1:** Then another servant girl said something similar to  
 6           the men there.  
 7   **VOICE 3:** He was with Jesus of Nazareth. I know it.  
 8   **PETER:** “I swear I don’t know that man,” I said again, more  
 9           forcefully this time.  
 10   **VOICE 2:** A third time, some men came to Peter and said, “Of  
 11           course you are one of them. After all, the way you speak  
 12           gives you away.”  
 13   **PETER:** I swear I am telling the truth! May God punish me if  
 14           I am not. I do not know the man! (*Runs across stage, away*  
 15           *from accusers.*)  
 16   **VOICE 1:** Then Peter remembered Jesus’ words,  
 17   **JESUS:** Before the rooster crows, you will say three times that  
 18           you do not know me.  
 19   **PETER:** (*To congregation*) Then I went out and wept bitterly.  
 20           How could I do this? How could I deny my Lord? After all  
 21           that time with him ... After it seemed that I would be the  
 22           rock of his church, I had failed. (*PETER stumbles around*  
 23           *stage.*) ... How could I have any sphere of influence left?  
 24           Have you ever felt like I did? I wanted so much to do the  
 25           right thing. I wanted to be the person that Jesus wanted  
 26           me to be, yet I failed miserably. Have you ever felt that  
 27           way? (*Gets closer to congregation and interacts with them.*) My  
 28           comfort came in knowing that even though I had let him  
 29           down, he forgave me. Somehow after that night, I knew  
 30           that he still loved me. (*Heads toward cross.*) And when  
 31           Jesus rose from the dead, when he rose, I knew that the  
 32           deep hurt I had caused would not stand in the way of  
 33           being sent forth to be his witness in the world. Have you  
 34           ever felt this kind of forgiveness? (*Moves to Center Stage.*)  
 35           Have you felt this kind of motivation to live your life for  
 36           Christ? Have you? I wonder if anyone truly knows how  
 37           much of an impact his life had on the world. (*Pauses, then*  
 38           *leaves stage.*)

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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

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- 1 I could — at least the things that fit their agenda.
- 2 VOICE 3: (*Entering and invading JUDAS's personal space*) Judas,  
3 why do people flock to see Jesus?
- 4 VOICE 1: (*In his face*) Exactly where does Jesus' authority  
5 come from?
- 6 VOICE 2: (*Also crowding JUDAS*) We've heard that some of his  
7 teachings are new. Does this man not give credence to  
8 the law?
- 9 JUDAS: Jesus didn't come to change the law, guys. Chill out.  
10 It's OK. (*Back to congregation, stepping away from VOICES*) So  
11 what if I left off that last part, about Jesus coming to  
12 fulfill the law. That would have given them cause for  
13 concern and confused them. My position would be  
14 compromised, had I let too much out of the bag.  
15 Somehow, the chief priests always had their spies,  
16 (*VOICES are lurking around stage, looking suspicious*) so I was  
17 careful. (*Smug*) Yet they had no one as close as I to Jesus.  
18 I was the inside man. (*Sunglasses propped on top of JUDAS's*  
19 *head are moved to the bridge of his nose.*) They were all  
20 skeptical of his authority and growing sphere of  
21 influence. He got too popular too fast. (*Moving, taking*  
22 *sunglasses off now*) Of course, Jesus didn't do anything to  
23 help himself when he went into the temple with a whip of  
24 chords and chased all the money changers out.
- 25 VOICE 1: (*Scene occurs Stage Left*) It is written, "My house will  
26 be a house of prayer. But you have made it a den of  
27 robbers."
- 28 VOICE 2: Then he entered the temple area and began driving  
29 out those who were selling. (*All VOICES act out scene.*)
- 30 VOICE 3: The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard  
31 this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they  
32 feared him.
- 33 VOICE 2: Because the whole crowd was amazed at his  
34 teaching.
- 35 JUDAS: (*Returns to Center Stage, addressing congregation*) You  
36 should try to do damage control after an incident like  
37 this. Even the best spin doctor couldn't fix the harm he  
38 had done to all that great P.R. we built.

- 1 VOICE 1: (*Shows a Bible and a pen.*) Let's have Jesus sign  
2 autographs at a bookstore.
- 3 VOICE 2: (*Holds baseball cap over heart.*) How about have Jesus  
4 sing the National anthem at a ball game?
- 5 VOICE 3: How about taking an anger management class and  
6 uploading a public apology on the Web? (*VOICES disperse.*)
- 7 JUDAS: After a while, when I feared my usefulness was  
8 evaporating, I went to the chief priests and asked, "What  
9 will you give me if I hand Jesus over to you?"
- 10 VOICE 1: (*Counting coins*) Here, son. How about this? Here's  
11 thirty silver coins for your ... efforts. (*Throws a bag of coins*  
12 *to JUDAS, who catches it.*)
- 13 JUDAS: My thought was that Jesus could finally have a  
14 chance to show his true colors, tell them who he really  
15 was in the grand scheme of things. Plus, I'd make a little  
16 money along the way. It would be a perfect win-win  
17 situation. How was I to know that Jesus would say  
18 nothing in his defense? Public speaking had never been a  
19 problem before with Jesus, even to his enemies.
- 20 VOICE 2: (*Stage Right*) From that moment, Judas looked for a  
21 way to betray his master and hand him over ...
- 22 VOICE 3: Wait a minute. Let's revise that a bit. "Betray" is  
23 such a harsh word for the public to hear. Why don't we  
24 suggest that Judas looked for an opportunity where  
25 Jesus could affirm his ministry?
- 26 JUDAS: (*VOICES gather Center Stage around Communion table.*)  
27 Soon Jesus invited us to dinner with him. Turns out it  
28 would be the night of his arrest. While we reclined at the  
29 table to eat, Jesus said,
- 30 VOICE 1: I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me; one  
31 who is eating with me.
- 32 VOICE 2: His disciples were all saddened by this accusation  
33 and we all began to say to Jesus ...
- 34 ALL: (*One at a time, overlapping*) Surely not I!
- 35 VOICE 1: The one who dips the bread into the bowl with me  
36 will betray me. (*JESUS and JUDAS reach for a bowl at the*  
37 *same time and gaze at each other.*)
- 38 JUDAS: Because I didn't see what I was doing as a betrayal

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

2 VOICE 3: Jesus answered,

3 VOICE 1: “Yes, it is you.”

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

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

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

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

13 JUDAS: Then the other disciples accompanied Jesus to the  
14 Mount of Olives. (*VOICES leave Center Stage and head down  
15 center aisle.*) Instead, I retreated to find the chief priests.  
16 Many thought that I went to pay the bill for our meal,  
17 since I kept the treasury. We found Jesus and the other  
18 disciples in the garden. I had informed the guards to  
19 arrest the one that I would kiss. I knew that if it was dark,  
20 it could be difficult to distinguish faces. That was our  
21 agreement.

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

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

29 JUDAS: Jesus totally misconstrued what I intended to  
30 accomplish that night. (*JUDAS leaves Center Stage and  
31 heads down center aisle toward VOICES.*) I approached Jesus  
32 and said, “Greetings Rabbi,” and kissed him. (*He does.*) I  
33 never dreamed that kiss would lead to his death. (*JUDAS  
34 stays while VOICES morph into soldiers who arrest JESUS and  
35 bring him to Center Stage.*) They came to the decision the  
36 following day to put Jesus to death. I was astonished.  
37 This is certainly not what I wanted. (*JUDAS walks up  
38 center aisle toward front now.*) I instantly felt my sphere of

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1 influence evaporating, the very thing I hoped to avoid in  
 2 the first place. When I saw that Jesus was condemned,  
 3 remorse seized me. I tried to return the thirty pieces of  
 4 silver. *(He approaches the group of VOICES.)* I have sinned,  
 5 men, for I have betrayed innocent blood. *(Tries to return*  
 6 *money bag.)*

7 VOICE 2: *(Holds up money bag.)* What is that to us?

8 VOICE 3: That's your responsibility. You chose your actions  
 9 for your own gain.

10 VOICE 2: *(Grabs money bag and tosses it back to JUDAS.)* Be on  
 11 your way, Judas, and don't bother us again. *(VOICES exit.)*

12 JUDAS: So, there it was. *(JUDAS approaches congregation again.)*  
 13 I had lost the connection that I once had with the  
 14 religious leaders. At the same time, I also forfeited my  
 15 relationship with Jesus and all the other disciples. They  
 16 would all see me as nothing more than a traitor.  
 17 Suddenly I realized there was no P.R. stunt to pull me out  
 18 of these ashes.

19 VOICE 1: *(VOICES return, back in JUDAS' face)* So what are you  
 20 going to do, Judas?

21 VOICE 2: You're all by yourself, Judas. *(VOICES surround him,*  
 22 *rotating, intimidating him.)*

23 VOICE 3: Your sphere of influence has vanished.

24 VOICE 2: What's left, Judas? What's left?

25 VOICE 3: There's only one thing to do now, Judas. *(JUDAS*  
 26 *rushes toward back of sanctuary or balcony.)*

27 JUDAS: *(From balcony)* You don't have the kind of remorse I  
 28 have unless you are truly ashamed about what you have  
 29 done to someone you care about. Jesus wasn't just an  
 30 innocent man, he was my master, my friend and God's  
 31 messiah. And I turned him over for money. I guess it just  
 32 goes to show that all the money and possessions in the  
 33 world pale in comparison to having a relationship with  
 34 God's son. *(Sniffing, near weeping)* I had the chance and  
 35 blew it. Today, many of us believe, like I did, that if we  
 36 have enough money or possessions, we'll have a happy  
 37 life, but what we really want is to have a relationship  
 38 with God and be in community with others ... to

1 influence each other and be influenced by others. Have  
 2 you ever felt like you were beyond forgiveness? My  
 3 biggest mistake was in not realizing that even my  
 4 atrocity could be forgiven. Even though Jesus knew I'd  
 5 betray him, he still broke bread with me at the meal. How  
 6 could I be so blind to his unfailing forgiveness? How  
 7 could I not see it?

8

9

10

Week 3

11

**Working the System**

12

*Story of Pontius Pilate based on John 18:28-19:42*

13

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

15

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

16

17 **PILATE:** (*Enters moving up center aisle toward front.*) **If someone**

18

**asked you how many people you knew, what would you**

19

**say? A dozen? A hundred people? Five hundred? Well, we**

20

**all have our own inner circle of friends, but we also**

21

**maintain a circle of family, acquaintances, and**

22

**colleagues. In the business world, we call that our sphere**

23

**of influence.**

24

**Not to brag, but I know everyone that's someone.**

25

**Unfortunately, I also know those who are the dregs of**

26

**society who come before me for judgment. (*Uses grand***

27

***gestures as he moves across stage.*)**

28

**Yes, Palestine during my reign happened to be one of**

29

**the ugliest places for a governor to be stationed. (*VOICES***

30

***enter and move about, as if a city bustles behind him.*) It wasn't**

31

**the crown jewel of the Roman Empire. In fact, it was a**

32

**downright ugly place to live. There were always groups**

33

**trying to start the latest uprising. (*VOICES enact a fistfight***

34

***breaking out.*) With that in mind, those who craved my**

35

**attention and company were not always the sincere,**

36

**upstanding citizens they claimed to be. These folks were**

37

**second rate, leaching off my authority for their gain.**

38

**(*PILATE waves away people he wishes to ignore.*) After all, who**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

37 **PILATE:** Are you the King of the Jews?

38 **VOICE 3:** (*VOICES surround PILATE, as if they become his*

- 1           *conscience.*) Jesus seems suspicious.
- 2 **VOICE 2:** Suspicious in what way?
- 3 **VOICE 1:** Well, why would Pilate use such a title to accuse this
- 4           prisoner?
- 5 **JESUS:** Is that your own idea, or did others talk to you about
- 6           me?
- 7 **PILATE:** (*Steps toward JESUS.*) Do you think I am a Jew? Your
- 8           own people and your chief priest handed you over to me.
- 9           What is it you have done?
- 10 **VOICE 3:** (*VOICES gather away from JESUS and PILATE to*
- 11           *contemplate the scene.*) The chief priest is assigned by the
- 12           Roman governor. So why is Pilate so surprised that they
- 13           have condemned Jesus by suggesting he is the King of the
- 14           Jews?
- 15 **VOICE 2:** This almost seems like Pilate is feigning his own
- 16           innocence about what is really transpiring here.
- 17           Certainly he has knowledge.
- 18 **VOICE 1:** Condemning Jesus as King of the Jews would
- 19           certainly make it easy for Pilate to judge him as a real
- 20           threat to Rome's authority.
- 21 **JESUS:** My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my
- 22           servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews.
- 23           But now, my kingdom is from another place.
- 24 **VOICE 2:** (*Moves across stage, outraged.*) He's calling himself a
- 25           king!
- 26 **VOICE 3:** Jesus certainly isn't helping himself with a
- 27           statement like this.
- 28 **VOICE 1:** How does Jesus expect Pilate to respond to that?
- 29 **PILATE:** You are a king then!
- 30 **VOICE 3:** Now Pilate has him where he wants him.
- 31 **VOICE 2:** This could be a slam dunk for Pilate.
- 32 **VOICE 1:** Nice knowing you, Jesus. (*VOICES 1 and 2 begin to*
- 33           *exit.*)
- 34 **VOICE 3:** But Jesus surprises Pilate by delivering an
- 35           unexpected answer. (*They wait to hear what JESUS will say.*)
- 36 **JESUS:** You are right in saying I am a king.
- 37 **VOICE 2:** Hold the phone! There's more to this story than
- 38           we've heard thus far.

- 1     **JESUS:** I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for  
2           this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.  
3           Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.
- 4     **PILATE:** *(To congregation)* “But what is the truth?” I posed. To  
5           prove my point that I was a fair and reasonable governor,  
6           I even managed to enter into the courtyard again and  
7           speak directly to the Jews. *(Moves to opposite side of stage.)* I  
8           declared to the crowd, “I find no basis for a charge  
9           against him.”
- 10    **VOICE 1:** Good thinking, man. Don’t you look like the  
11           innocent one now!
- 12    **VOICE 2:** Who would ever accuse Pilate of orchestrating this  
13           entire trial? No one!
- 14    **PILATE:** *(To congregation)* But it is your custom to release one  
15           prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to  
16           release the King of the Jews?
- 17    **VOICE 3:** The crowds shouted back at Pilate.
- 18    **VOICE 2:** No, not him.
- 19    **VOICE 1:** Give us Barabbas instead.
- 20    **VOICE 3:** Who on earth chose this crowd, anyway?
- 21    **VOICE 2:** Don’t crowds choose themselves?
- 22    **VOICE 1:** Shhhh! This crowd was chosen by Pilate.
- 23    **VOICE 3:** For one purpose and one purpose only.
- 24    **ALL:** *(Together)* To convict Jesus.
- 25    **PILATE:** What else was I to do? I didn’t wish to condemn  
26           Jesus at that point, so I did the next best thing. I ordered  
27           him flogged. *(VOICES act out the scene.)* My soldiers placed  
28           a crown of thorns upon his head and adorned him with a  
29           purple robe, *(VOICES place a purple cloth on JESUS)* the  
30           color of a king.
- 31    **VOICE 2:** Jesus apparently influenced many people and many  
32           crowds, just like this one.
- 33    **VOICE 1:** But now, with this crown of thorns and purple robe  
34           and blood running from his wounds — who will he  
35           influence now?
- 36    **ALL:** *(Together)* No one!
- 37    **PILATE:** Look, I am bringing Jesus out to you, to let you know  
38           that I find no basis for a charge against him. As soon as

1 the chief priests and other officials saw Jesus, they  
 2 shouted, “Crucify him. Crucify him!” But I answered  
 3 again, “You take him and crucify him. I find no basis for  
 4 a charge against him.” And then I said it again even  
 5 louder a third time, quite convincingly.

6 VOICE 3: But the Jews insisted.

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

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

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

15 VOICE 2: Who does he think he is?

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

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

21 VOICE 2: Say something, man. Defend yourself.

22 VOICE 1: Can’t you say anything?

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

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

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

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

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

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

1           him away. Take him away.”

2   **ALL:** *(Together)* Crucify him.

3   **PILATE:** Shall I crucify your king?

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

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

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

8   **VOICE 2:** One palm greases another.

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

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

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

38

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

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1 more we wished to devote ourselves to him and his  
2 ministry.

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

8 **VOICE 1:** There we saw Jesus transfigured before us.

9 **VOICE 2:** Don't look now, but Jesus' clothes are a dazzling  
10 white.

11 **VOICE 3:** Where did he find Clorox way up here?

12 **VOICE 1:** That's not bleach, my friend. It's something entirely  
13 holy.

14 **VOICE 2:** Who is that? There, standing with him. They look  
15 familiar.

16 **VOICE 3:** Have these guys been surfing on HighSchool  
17 Classmates.com?

18 **VOICE 1:** Their robes are outdated and their hairstyles look a  
19 little off. Who are these guys?

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

28 **VOICE 2:** (*As Peter*) Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us  
29 put up three shelters: one for you, one for Moses, and one  
30 for Elijah.

31 **VOICE 3:** Soooo Peter, a mere fisherman, is going to build a  
32 shelter for a carpenter?

33 **VOICE 1:** Good luck on that one.

34 **VOICE 2:** Is this going to end with a visit to the emergency  
35 room?

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

38 **VOICE 2:** (*With headphone set*) Passengers. This is your captain,

1 speaking from the cockpit. We're flying into some heavy  
 2 cloud cover. Please keep your seatbelts fastened and  
 3 your seats in the upright and locked position with your  
 4 tables up.

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

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

8 VOICE 2: That was the voice.

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

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

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

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

23 VOICE 3: Season tickets to my favorite team?

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

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

26 VOICE 2: What did you ask for then?

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

29 VOICE 3: You asked for what?

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

32 VOICE 1: Or a lock of his hair?

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

35 VOICE 2: How long had you been following Jesus, and you  
 36 *still* didn't understand his message?

37 JOHN: Long enough to know better.

38 VOICE 1: So how did Jesus respond?

1 JOHN: He said, “You don’t know what you are asking. Can  
2 you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism  
3 I am baptized with?”

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

5 JOHN: (*Embarrassed*) Yes!

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

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

13 VOICE 1: Who do you think you are?

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

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

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

19 VOICE 2: But servants have no influence. None.

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

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

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

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

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

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

3 VOICE 2: Dear woman, here is your son.

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

6 JOHN: (*To congregation*) Yes, I heard Jesus’ words. I saw him  
7 speak them directly to me. This was a command, an  
8 order. I accepted Jesus’ words with love and honor. How  
9 could I disappoint my master? From that moment on, I  
10 took Mary into my home. I never imagined that Jesus’  
11 ministry — *our* ministry — would end like this. (*Steps*  
12 *closer toward congregation.*) I still maintained the mindset  
13 that Jesus was called for greatness here on earth, as were  
14 his followers. It was difficult to see that Jesus’ influence  
15 was cut short that day, even though his disciples clearly  
16 were impacted by his entire life, and now his death. Many  
17 were disillusioned and fell away. (*VOICES exit.*) They  
18 couldn’t follow a messiah that was dead. A king that died  
19 on a cross is no king. At least that’s the way most of his  
20 followers saw it. I guess I saw something different,  
21 something powerful in the cross that not everyone else  
22 could see. (*Stands near a cross somewhere in sanctuary.*) When  
23 you look at the cross, shouldn’t it stand for something  
24 more than the demise of Jesus? Shouldn’t it?  
25  
26

27 Week 5

28 A Leader Willing to Serve

29 *Story of Jesus based on Matthew 27:45-54*

30

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

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

35

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



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