

# MEET THE BEST

*by Jacqueline Sharer Robertson*



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# **Meet the Best**

A Lenten series

by Jacqueline Sharer Robertson

## *CAST OF CHARACTERS*

**Starling Bright** — Polished and likeable talk show hostess  
(Could be played by male as Bright Starling.)

**TC** — Stands for The Cross, a large, wooden cross “wearing” dark sunglasses; sincere and engaging personality (Actor is Off-Stage, speaking into microphone.)

**A1, A2, and A3** — Audience members that will be “chosen” to ask questions in the final sketch (Q & A); they may be recruited prior to that performance.

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## ***PRODUCTION NOTES***

This series of short three- to five-minute dramas is appropriate for the weeks of Lent or any occasion in which a congregation wishes to focus on how Christ's redemption offers forgiveness, transformation, and purpose. This comic but intensely human look at Christianity's central symbol will remind seeking hearts that what you see is not always what you get when God is doing the giving.

**Props:** The main prop is TC. Use a wooden cross approximately six feet tall. You will also need a Bible for Starling. If desired, you may have a construction-paper cross made by a child with glitter and glue.

**Staging:** You are welcome to add touches suggesting a TV studio, but all you really need are two chairs. The cross should be leaning against or on one of them; the other is for Starling. Starling enters and exits each segment as if going on and off the stage during commercial breaks, interacting with the audience/congregation as this is done (greeting them, shaking hands, waving, etc.). Someone should start the applause for Starling's entrances, and Starling should start applause for TC at appropriate times. During the last sketch (the Q & A session), Starling can either hand off a microphone to the audience members with the questions or invite them to come up to a standing microphone placed among the audience/congregation.

**Costumes:** Starling should wear professional attire, such as a suit. Only the sunglasses are needed for TC since the actor voicing his part is Off-Stage. We used a regular-sized pair of black sunglasses and people could see them clearly. I suppose it would depend upon both the size of the cross and the size of the sanctuary/seating area, but you don't want it to look silly. People should be able to relate to parts of the cross' story, and going too far over the top might make it lose its credibility.

## Part 1

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(A wooden cross — TC — leans against one of the chairs. The actor playing TC is speaking into a microphone Off-Stage. STARLING walks out waving and blowing kisses to the “audience” before taking her seat.)

STARLING: Good morning, everyone — you look faaaabulous! I’m Starling Bright, and this is another episode of *Meet the Best*. I have to tell you, I have introduced some pretty incredible people; that’s what we do here on *Meet the Best*. But today — I’m beside myself. It is truly an honor to be sitting here this morning with such a world-renowned figure. Let’s hear some applause for The Cross! (*Enthusiastically leads clapping.*)

TC: Thank you. And thank you, Starling. It’s a pleasure to be here with you, and please call me TC.

STARLING: TC it is. I don’t think I’m overstating things by saying you have a lot of admirers in our studio audience this morning. (*To audience*) Am I right? (*Again leading applause*)

TC: Well, I must say this is a gracious reception. You know, that’s not always been the case, Starling. I was once feared — hated, even.

STARLING: Say it isn’t so, TC!

TC: Unfortunately, it’s the truth. They stood me up and people cringed. I represented torture and execution. It wasn’t me, of course; it was the way I was used for hundreds of years in a number of cultures before Jesus was even born. Then, when the Roman Empire controlled so many countries and peoples, the military felt that fear was the best way to keep people in line. Those who were crucified on a cross would be left up there for days, just daring the people who passed by on the roads to put one toe out of line. I’m glad you didn’t know me then, Starling.

STARLING: Oh, TC — I can’t imagine what you must have felt, having to, well — bear that cross.

TC: It was definitely a dark point for me, but I think it’s



1 was. I had stopped caring about what I was doing  
2 because I didn't think things could ever change. I didn't  
3 look into the faces of those who were condemned. I just  
4 did what was expected of me and, though I didn't think  
5 about it at the time, I hated myself for it.

6 STARLING: Oh, TC, how awful. It sounds as if you — excuse  
7 the expression — just *crossed* yourself off the list. But  
8 that's obviously not the end of the story.

9 TC: No, Starling, you're right. God had other plans for me.  
10 The day I met Jesus, I could tell something was  
11 different. The air was full of tension — you could just  
12 feel the disappointment. This was no ordinary criminal.  
13 And when the soldiers brought him to me, something  
14 made me look him in the eyes, and that's all it took.  
15 Even though he could barely support my weight, I felt  
16 like I was floating.

17 STARLING: Did the crucifixions stop with Jesus?

18 TC: Unfortunately, the Roman government didn't outlaw  
19 the practice until the fourth century. I was different  
20 from that day on, however. I started to see the criminals  
21 as people, and I began to pray for their redemption,  
22 even as followers of Jesus started to look at me with  
23 new eyes.

24 STARLING: Wow — what a testimony. Isn't that right,  
25 friends? (*Applause*) You've done it again, TC. Before the  
26 break, you pointed out that we as the church are a sign  
27 of hope in Christ, just like you. And now you are  
28 reminding us that looking for the possibilities in other  
29 people, rather than their faults, might help others see  
30 us in a better light. You are a great teacher, TC — has  
31 anyone ever told you that?

32 TC: Well, I hope I can help. Jesus really wants to turn  
33 people's lives around, and if I can play a small role in  
34 that, then I'm going to keep doing what I'm doing.

35 STARLING: Spoken like the hero you are! I know we've  
36 gotten sidetracked because his story's so fascinating,  
37 but when we come back, we'll give TC a chance to tell  
38 us about his book. Stay tuned for more of *The Cross* on

1 **Meet the Best.** (*Leads applause, then waves as she heads*  
2 *Off-Stage.*)

3

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**Part 3**

5 (*The actor for TC is Off-Stage. The wooden cross leans against*  
6 *a chair.*)

7 **STARLING:** (*Greeting her fans, she sits, then addresses the*  
8 *camera.*) Hello, friends! We're back on **Meet the Best**, and  
9 I'm Starling Bright. Now, I have to admit to you all that  
10 my mind is reeling. I've been so inspired by our guest  
11 star today — The Cross. I know I'm certainly not the  
12 only one who has been inspired by you, TC; I know  
13 that's part of your mission. But I didn't expect to learn  
14 so much in the short time we've been together. Don't  
15 you all agree? (*Encourages applause.*)

16 **TC:** Thank you again. I'm just trying to share some of the  
17 incredible things that have happened to me.

18 **STARLING:** And incredible is certainly the word for them.  
19 TC, even though we'd love to hear more about your  
20 experiences, I promised I'd give you time to tell us  
21 about your book.

22 **TC:** Well, I don't think I can call it *my* book without calling  
23 it *your* book, too. It does tell of when I met Jesus, and  
24 how his crucifixion was like no other. It also reveals  
25 why he died and rose again — who it was all for. If you  
26 don't mind, I'll recite a passage that might ring a bell.  
27 (*Clears his throat.*) "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in  
28 the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that  
29 *everyone* who believes in him may have eternal life"  
30 (*John 3:14, emphasis added.*)

31 **STARLING:** That does sound familiar. Keep going, TC.

32 **TC:** (*Repeating John 3:16*) "For God so loved the world that he  
33 gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him  
34 shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not  
35 send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but  
36 to save the world through him." How many of you  
37 recognize that? (*Applause*)

38 **STARLING:** Very sneaky, TC. (*Holds up Bible.*) This book isn't

1 new, though it is new every time we read it.

2 TC: Exactly, Starling. God constantly tells us things we need  
3 to hear when we read the Bible, and sometimes our  
4 experiences help us discover something we've missed —  
5 even in well-known passages like John 3:14-17. For  
6 instance, since I know all about condemnation and  
7 punishment, I think it's a shame that people usually  
8 stop reading after verse sixteen. People came to see me  
9 differently precisely because "God did not send his Son  
10 into the world to condemn the world, but to save the  
11 world through him" (John 3:17).

12 STARLING: Wait a minute — I think I see where you're  
13 going with this. Just let me know if we end up at *cross*  
14 purposes. Even though Jesus was condemned on a  
15 cross, he rose and made a way for people to be  
16 spiritually saved from his fate. He was condemned on  
17 the cross so no one else had to be. So that released you  
18 from having to represent condemnation.

19 TC: Well said, Starling, and that message is in the first part  
20 of the passage, too. It refers to when the image of a  
21 snake — usually considered evil, like me — was actually  
22 put on a stick at God's command and lifted up by Moses  
23 so people who were being bitten by poisonous snakes  
24 could look at it and be saved. You can read the whole  
25 story in Numbers, chapter 21. God has got that whole  
26 "transforming bad things into good" routine down pat.  
27 The Bible is full of examples.

28 STARLING: Hmmmm — that sure makes me want to pick up  
29 my old Bible again. What about you, folks? Maybe you  
30 can dig yours out once this program is over, but don't  
31 move yet. We still have more to come as we talk with  
32 The Cross, here on *Meet the Best*. Don't go away.

33

#### 34 Part 4

35 *(The actor voicing TC is Off-Stage. The wooden cross leans*  
36 *against a chair.)*

37 STARLING: *(Walks out waving and blowing kisses to the*  
38 *"audience" before taking her seat.)* Well, I hope you had a

1 good stretch during the break, because you won't want  
2 to miss a minute of this unforgettable discussion with  
3 today's special guest — The Cross! I'm Starling Bright,  
4 and welcome back to *Meet the Best*. TC, you certainly  
5 made a case for taking another look at “the greatest  
6 book ever written” a few minutes ago. Do you have any  
7 advice for our friends out there who may not know  
8 where to start?

9 TC: Well, I could point you to the gospels — Matthew, Mark,  
10 Luke, and John — but some might think I'm just trying  
11 to get attention.

12 STARLING: Oh — not you, TC!

13 TC: But seriously — it doesn't matter where you start. The  
14 important thing is that you make a regular practice of  
15 reading it and discussing it with other Christians so  
16 you understand God's larger plan of salvation. It all  
17 began at the beginning (that's what Genesis means, by  
18 the way), and it won't be complete until Jesus comes  
19 again and ushers in a whole new heaven and earth.

20 STARLING: I know I'm looking forward to that day. Come  
21 on, TC — you've got an “in” with Jesus. Can you give us  
22 a hint as to when that day will finally get here?

23 TC: Sorry, Starling. Even Jesus said it wasn't for him to  
24 know, so that means I don't have any more information  
25 than you do. The Bible does tell us it will be incredible,  
26 though.

27 STARLING: Yes, it does. I'll bet you can't wait to *cross over*!  
28 Sorry, TC — I couldn't resist.

29 TC: That's OK — I know starlings can't help chirping.

30 STARLING: (*Laughs.*) I guess he can give as good as he gets!  
31 Isn't our guest amazing, folks? We have been so  
32 impressed with your story, your insight, and your  
33 humor, TC. But before I let you go, can you tell us where  
34 you're headed next?

35 TC: I'm glad you asked, Starling. God makes sure I pop up in  
36 all kinds of places to remind people of Jesus — what  
37 he's done for them and what he wants to continue doing  
38 in them.

1 STARLING: Hmmmm — I'm not quite sure what you mean  
2 by that. Tell us more.

3 TC: When Jesus said he wanted people to “take up their  
4 cross and follow” him, he was speaking of a whole new  
5 way of life. It won't be easy — it wasn't for me, either.  
6 But it will take them in the right direction, doing the  
7 things God intended for them — things that continue  
8 what Jesus started. Every person has a special role to  
9 play in his ministry, and if I can keep reminding people  
10 of that, then I'm doing my job.

11 STARLING: Well — there you have it, friends. Let's give our  
12 special guest a big round of applause to thank him for  
13 being with us today!

14 TC: You're too kind. It's been a pleasure.

15 STARLING: I have a special treat for those of you in our  
16 studio audience. TC has graciously agreed to answer  
17 some of your questions, and we'll televise it for those of  
18 you at home. So, stick around for an extra Q and A  
19 session, here on *Meet the Best!*

20

21

### Part 5 (Q & A)

22 *(The actor for TC is Off-Stage. The wooden cross leans against*  
23 *a chair. STARLING walks among the studio audience so they*  
24 *can ask their questions. Audience members with questions are*  
25 *designated by A1, A2, and A3. Arrange for a few others to raise*  
26 *their hands as if they, too, have questions.)*

27 STARLING: *(To audience)* Here's the moment you've all been  
28 waiting for, friends. This is when you get a chance to  
29 “meet the best,” and rarely does “best” describe a guest  
30 so well: The Cross, ladies and gentlemen! *(Recaps for the*  
31 *camera.)* I'm Starling Bright, and this is *Meet the Best*.  
32 This is the time when our studio audience has the  
33 chance to ask questions of our special guest The Cross,  
34 or TC, as he likes to be called. I'll now turn things over  
35 to our friends in the audience. Who would like to be the  
36 first to address TC? *(She chooses A1 and gets A1 a*  
37 *microphone.)* Why don't you begin?

38 A1: *(Stands.)* Oh, oooh. oh mv gosh. I can't believe I get a

- 1 chance to speak to you. I feel so honored!
- 2 TC: Well, it's a pleasure to meet you. What would you like to  
3 know?
- 4 A1: What? Oh — my question. I almost forgot. I'm so nervous!  
5 Um, well, I guess I'm just curious about how you change  
6 your appearance. I mean, the big wooden cross and  
7 sunglasses, it's a great look. But we all know this isn't  
8 the exact cross on which Jesus died. There are crosses  
9 in jewelry, in stained glass, even on the computer. I  
10 mean, I guess what I'm asking is — are you always *you*  
11 every time I see a cross?
- 12 TC: You know, that's a great question. It shows why people  
13 have a hard time believing in what they can't see or  
14 what doesn't seem to make sense. I'll do my best to try  
15 and explain, but let me ask you something. Do you  
16 believe that Jesus actually lives in the hearts of all who  
17 invite him in?
- 18 A1: Uh, well — I guess he couldn't, not really, but he still  
19 does, doesn't he? (*A1 sits.*)
- 20 TC: Exactly. I'm sort of like that. When I mean something  
21 special to the one looking at me, when I represent  
22 Jesus, then I am alive as God meant for me to be, no  
23 matter what I look like. I think my favorite form is  
24 when I'm made of construction paper, (*STARLING may*  
25 *display sample*) with glue dripping off and glitter and  
26 tissue paper covering me with more enthusiasm than  
27 art. I may look like a mess, but I'm a source of loving  
28 pride to the child who is glorifying Jesus by creating  
29 me. Now, there are obviously people who wear or use  
30 crosses in ways that do not glorify Jesus, just as crosses  
31 once meant death instead of life. But when someone  
32 isn't looking for the redemption I represent, they aren't  
33 looking at me.
- 34 STARLING: As usual, TC, you've *crossed* the line between  
35 our heads and our hearts. I guess our faith requires  
36 some of both. Now, who else has a question for TC?  
37 (*Chooses A2.*)
- 38 A2: (*Stands.*) Hi. What I want to know is why Jesus' form is

1 hanging on some crosses, but on others, he's not there.  
 2 Is one kind of cross more sacred than the other? (A2  
 3 sits.)

4 TC: The crucifix that shows Jesus on the cross reminds  
 5 people in certain religious traditions of Jesus' sacrifice  
 6 for them — an important thing to remember. But the  
 7 story didn't stop there, did it?

8 STARLING: Just like Good Friday wasn't the end of the  
 9 story, right TC?

10 TC: That's right. Jesus' body was no longer in the tomb on  
 11 Easter Sunday. When I hold the dying form of Christ, I  
 12 tell of his death wiping out your sin, and when I appear  
 13 without him, I remind you of the new and eternal life he  
 14 makes possible. Both types of crosses are important for  
 15 that reason.

16 STARLING: I must say, TC, you can wear anything and  
 17 make it look good. We're almost out of time, folks, but I  
 18 think we can take one more question. (*Indicates A3.*) How  
 19 about you?

20 A3: (*Stands.*) I don't really have a question. I just want to  
 21 thank you, TC, for being willing to be used, and  
 22 sometimes even misused, so that people like me will  
 23 remember how much God loves us, and also how we are  
 24 supposed to show Jesus to others. I tend to get nervous  
 25 about sharing my faith. I'm afraid people will laugh or  
 26 be offended, but seeing how you don't give up — well, it  
 27 makes me want to try harder. (*A3 sits.*)

28 TC: Good for you! I can't say that I don't have second  
 29 thoughts now and then, but when I remember all Jesus  
 30 has done for me, it makes me determined to go on. So,  
 31 that's my advice, friends. Remember all Jesus has done  
 32 for you, and your faith will conquer your fear. You will  
 33 want to live your lives for him.

34 STARLING: Well, I certainly can't top that. Let's thank TC  
 35 one more time for joining us on his *cross-country* tour  
 36 to share his story, which has become our story, too.  
 37 Thanks so much, TC, for joining us here on this  
 38 unforgettable episode of *Meet the Best*. I'm Starling



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