

The Christians Audition Packet

Who?

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Please contact sadie.lee@yale.edu with any questions

What?

What is it that draws people to religion? Is there room for individuals and spirituality in organized religion? Can you separate the religion from the institution and the demands of capitalism?

When Pastor Paul announces in a radical sermon that there is no Hell, tensions in the church reach a breaking point. Associate Pastor Joshua clashes with Paul and leaves the church to start his own congregation. As the church begins to fracture and lose members, Paul struggles to keep his integrity and spirituality intact with pressure from the board, the community, and his wife to renounce his sermon.

When and Where?

Auditions: October 2nd, 4:00-9:00

Location: LC 318

Callbacks: TBA

Rehearsals: October-February

Shows: February 1-3, 2024

Time Commitment

We want this to be a low-stress, fun, and efficient process for everyone.

Rehearsals will run approximately 2-3 hours a week, though the role of Paul will likely require slightly longer rehearsals (3-4 hours per week). Rehearsal time will increase as we approach tech week. Performers are expected to be available for all of tech week (January 28-31) and shows (February 1-3).

As this show has a lot of monologues, we expect you to set aside time on your own to memorize your lines early in the rehearsal process.

Character Descriptions

Paul/Pastor: Thoughtful, with a strong sense of ethics. Sometimes this makes him miss what's right in front of him.

Elizabeth/Wife: Opinionated and protective. Loves Paul, but doesn't always see eye-to-eye with him.

Joshua/Associate Pastor: Zealous, needs to believe he is doing the right thing. Feels like Christianity saved him.

Jay/Elder: Cautious and conflict-averse. Speaks for the Church Board and prioritizes the institution.

Jenny/Congregant: Beaten down but hopeful. Church is a refuge for her and she worries about it changing.

Audition Expectations

Please familiarize yourself with one or two of the audition sides below. No need to memorize! We may ask you to read sides you didn't prepare to hear you read a different character. You may be given notes and asked to re-do a side—this is nothing to worry about! We want to see you try different interpretations of the characters and get a sense of how you take notes.

For sides with more than one character, a reader will be present in the room to read the other characters' lines.

Auditions will be 10 minute time slots. Please try to arrive a few minutes before your slot time to check in and pick up copies of your sides if you need them.

Auditions will be held in person. If you require any sort of accommodations (video audition, etc.) please reach out to sadie.lee@yale.edu and we will be more than happy to figure something out.

PAUL

PAUL: Where are we?

We are here, today, a day of celebration, a day of freedom ...

... because 20 years ago this church was nothing more than a storefront church, 10, 15 people.

Then for the next couple of years every Sunday,

20, 30 people

and then 50,

and then 100, and 100 that seemed big-- then 500.

We had to move ourselves into a bigger space, a local gymnasium. But when 500 turns to three times that, then we started holding three services every Sunday: one at nine, one at 10:30, and one at noon,

and then we grew to twice that, and then we just couldn't fit. So,

we built this, this sanctuary,

built it from the ground up.

And how ever much we thought it was going to cost, it cost that and many times over.

And we were in way over our heads.

That

was 10 years ago,

10 years from today.

And you stayed,

and you paid,

and together we prayed
that someday we would finally free ourselves of debt.

And that someday
is today.
And today is the day that debt is paid.

And ya know, today should be a happy day: We have, it seems, reason to
celebrate.

We have, it seems, reason to think that we are free.

Sorta reminds me of the one about the man who turned 102,
and at his birthday party,
his friend asked him, do you think you'll make it to 103

and he said "of course I will, because statistically speaking, there are very
few people who die between 102 and 103."

But we all know, a lot of people die before that.

And we all know, a lot of churches die before they make it to where we are
but that doesn't mean

we are as free as we think we are. There is a different kind of debt

that we have not yet paid

There is--there is a crack
in the foundation of this church,
and I'm not talking about the building.

ELDER JAY

ELDER: Joshua was very popular, he had a different kind of relationship with the congregation than you, not better, just different, you're so busy running the church, writing your sermons, overseeing all sorts of--I understand that's hard, but that meant Joshua was the one who people came to, who listened, on a daily basis, to their problems.

He was the one that people had a uh uh more personal relationship with--again you're busy, you can't be blamed, but I have to think that carries a certain weight, and people might have a stronger attachment to him than you'd think. I just think that Joshua served a very important function and without him

PASTOR: you think

ELDER: yes

PASTOR: or the board thinks--?

ELDER: I'm just here to let you know their concerns

PASTOR: and I need you to tell the board that there's nothing to be concerned about.

ELDER: we can't afford a schism PASTOR: afford

ELDER: yes

PASTOR: now you're talking about money ELDER: among other things

PASTOR: the church has paid its debt

ELDER: only to incur another?

PASTOR: you and the board worry about the business of the church so that I don't have to.

ELDER: ... well, you say that, Paul, but you have a board, a group of 10 or so people who really like you a lot, and care about you and your ministry,

and your family, and they wouldn't be serving on the board unless they cared about you.

And keep in mind, we're--we're not business-minded, I mean I'm a doctor, I give out flu shots; Jerry, our treasurer, runs a local telemarketing firm, and

we have no prior experience running something on this scale, this church, you understand, it's a massive corporation, and for the past several years while the church was in debt, that was scary, for sure, and in the middle of it all, when Agnes got caught on the church escalator, got her leg all cut up, turns out the board of directors was personally liable, and we had to get lawyers, we're in the position where we do have our necks on the line, in a way that you don't. You understand.

PASTOR: I do

ELDER: But at the same time, we had a congregation that was here every Sunday and was growing, exponentially and so slowly but surely, the place got paid off.

I worry, yes, I do worry, a little, about what happens when you tell a congregation that they don't need to believe--then I have to wonder if that makes them feel like going to church isn't so important.

JENNY

CONGREGANT: When I feel sad and like I'm gonna collapse, it does something for me to walk into this building, there's a spirit in the building that is really something special, like the spirit of God is in this place, and it makes me feel like I can go on one more day.

It's been really great to sit here and listen to the testimonials that church members have delivered in response to your sermon. They said some really beautiful things.

and you know...

I've been thinking a lot about the sermon you preached,

and I think what you said about this church, and the walls of this church, how we've built up walls, how we have cut ourselves off from the world.

And what you said about distance and communication, and what you said about Hell, how the Bible says, in a lot of ways, that there is no Hell,

and that through Christ all are saved, and yes, all of that makes sense.

It makes me really sad that people left the church because of what you preached.

Some of those who left are really close friends of mine.

Those friends--I feel like they look at me differently than they used to look at me.

I call them up, ask them to get coffee with me, and they don't.

They're too busy.

And before they hang up, they say they're praying for me like there was something wrong with me.

PASTOR: ...sorry to hear that, sister Jenny

She nods, almost inaudibly says "thank you, " maybe off mike. Wife might even hand the Congregant a Kleenex. She continues reading.

CONGREGANT: an' it makes me feel judged and bad

and I think this is the thing you were trying to fix with your sermon, but in some ways it made it worse.

I don't know how to respond to them, when they ask me questions that I don't have answers to.

A lot of us are getting asked a lot of the same questions from the people who left and went to the new church that Brother Joshua started.

They point to other Bible verses where it doesn't sound like Hell is just a trash dump.

Like, for example, there's one where Jesus talks about your soul being burned in the thing you're calling a trash dump and it makes me wonder if it's a real trash dump then how does it burn a soul. It's as if you have a choice about how to read it.

And my kid asks me questions, about how what we believe could just so suddenly change. And when he asks me, then I get nervous because I see myself as leading him. I pick the church we go to, and so in a way I'm really responsible for his soul. Our lives are hard enough already, I don't need to be jeopardizing the spiritual well-being of my son.

And then this guy I was seeing, a guy I met last November in singles group, just last week he left and went to Brother Joshua's new church. He's been asking a lot of questions.

I try to defend you when he asks me about it, He says things like well if there's no punishment why should we be good?
And I say, we are good because we know that's right, because if we're just being good because we're scared of getting in trouble, that's not really being good.
And then he says, but if there's no punishment for being a sinner, isn't that a slap in the face to those who are good?
But then I'm like, that's not our problem-- worrying about whether or not other people are getting punished.

ELIZABETH

WIFE: Why didn't you tell me earlier that you were going to deliver that sermon?
Why didn't you tell me that you were going to forcibly
change
what our church believes?

PASTOR: ...

WIFE: In your sermon you talked like you had been struggling with this message,
tormented,
but you never told me any of that.

PASTOR: I don't normally check my sermons with you

WIFE: And I think it's kind of too bad that you don't.
I think what you did was actually incredibly selfish

PASTOR: selfish?

WIFE: yeah

PASTOR: how???

WIFE: You haven't thought about
how what you're doing affects other people

PASTOR: Everything I'm doing is about other people.

WIFE: What about me? What about our daughter?

PASTOR: what about her

WIFE: you know that most of her classmates go to this church

PASTOR: okay

WIFE: and some of the parents of some of those classmates
talk about you in front of their kids.
And the kids come to school,
tell her that her daddy is going to Hell. Did you know that?

PASTOR: no

WIFE: and she doesn't know what to do, she wants to stand up for you,
but doesn't know how.

PASTOR: How would I have known about that?

WIFE: if you just opened up your eyes and paid attention to the people around you

PASTOR: you hide things from me. All the time you--

WIFE: you never consulted with me,
never told me that you were struggling with something.
that tells me, I'm not on the same level as you. You don't see me as someone
you would talk to about the things you're thinking,
that I'm just the preacher's wife,
that I just sit in the background,
just nod my head,
and support you in every decision you make.
I'm not that kind of preacher's wife

JOSHUA

ASSOCIATE: You make it sound like I want to believe there is a Hell.

PASTOR: I think you're choosing to believe in it ASSOCIATE: choosing

PASTOR: yes

ASSOCIATE: It's not easy for me to believe
in Hell.

PASTOR: Are you sure about that?

ASSOCIATE: I think for you, being a Christian is easy.

PASTOR: no, it's hard, it's really--

ASSOCIATE: Your parents were Christians, your parents' parents--
your grandmother took you to church, everyone wanted to see you saved,
and for you, you had nothing to lose by believing what you believed.
But ya know, I lost everything. My parents--they didn't believe in what I
believe.
I tried. Again and again, I tried to bring them to Jesus,
wanted nothing more,
right up until the end,
I tried.
So that my mother, when she died, I was there in the hospital, standing by
her side,
telling her about Jesus,
telling her what Jesus did for me. I asked her, please please
hear what I have to say, open your heart, just a little.
And she said, "Baby, I don't like how you sound when you preach at me,"
she said, "When you talk Jesus talk, you don't sound like you."

And I said, "That's cuz I'm filled with the spirit." And she said, "No it's just creepy is all."

And there at her side,
while she's all hooked up to machines,
I prayed for her,
And she said to stop,
and if I didn't she'd have the nurse take me away.

I said this is your last chance.

I said, "Mama, listen:
any moment now, you're gonna go,
and when you do,
I will never get to see you again."

I said, "In the coming age, after I have also
left this earth,
if you die a believer
we will be reunited,
and we will live together in eternity."

I said, "Mama, don't you want to see me again? " And she said, "Yes, baby,
yes, baby,
of course, I want nothing more."

And I said,

"Then just say you believe, say it with me
I believe in Jesus, and I believe he died for my sins, say it with me."
and she said

"I would like to say I believe,
but if I did it would be a lie"

I said,

"But maybe that's enough--
Say you believe in the hope that as you say you believe you will believe
and maybe you'll truly believe."

And she said,

"Honey, I am going, I am leaving this earth, and I will not spend my final
breath,

sayin' a damn lie."

and she said, "When I close my eyes, my eyes won't open again."

And when I close these eyes,
I'll see black,

and there will never again be anything but."

And I said please please please.

And she said nothing.

And in a couple of seconds her eyes would close ...

But before her eyes closed and closed for good, there was a moment,

a moment that was terror,

dread,

pain--

our eyes connected, and she saw me seeing her fall,

and at that moment, her hand reached out

and grabbed my wrist, like she was grabbing for help.

It's not easy for me to believe there is a Hell. It doesn't make me feel good to believe there is a Hell.

In fact, it hurts, because I know,

every day,

that I will never see my mother again, and if I do, it will be me, high above

her, looking down,

seeing her suffer,

for the rest of eternity.

An' I wonder sometimes--Pastor Paul--if my Heaven will be a kind of Hell.

PASTOR: ...

ASSOCIATE: so just show me.

PASTOR: ...

ASSOCIATE: Show me. Show me.

Show me that there is no Hell, show me, don't play word games with the

Bible, show me and and

and I'll come back to this church, not as a head

pastor but as your associate and I'll support you and your message, just show
me that what I saw I didn't see
because when my mother died, I did--I saw it--
I saw it, I felt it, I saw first-hand
what Hell looks like
And nothing can take that away from me so that when I look at the Word of
God, all I can see
is the truth that, yes, Hell is there waiting for us.
So what business do I have
preaching the possibility that it doesn't exist. I'd be leading hundreds,
thousands,
into Hell
while setting aside for myself something even worse
for bein' some kinda
false shepherd.