Preachin’ on a Hillside – Preview information

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PREACHIN’ ON A HILLSIDE – Director’s notes

**A note about style:** This is a high-energy, playful, non-realistic, FUN rendering of the Sermon on the Mount. Members of the “congregation” on stage pop up to help tell the stories, taking on various characters at different times. It is much in the style of the old Broadway musical “Godspell”. As with the “Godspell” script, it is written with the intention that each cast will make it their own. Adjust lines, remake characters, add your own funny bits . . . as long as it is in keeping with the truths in the scriptures.

This is a wonderful opportunity to showcase your actors and their unique abilities. This script was written to show off the particular talents of the kids in our cast. For example, we had a girl who used Native American sign language to translate the Lord’s Prayer. Revise such bits accordingly to fit your own cast. For example, if you don’t have jugglers and contortionists, scratch the circus music and bring out a couple of tap dancers, or opera singers.

**Casting:** Names used in the script are actors’ names from the original cast of 36. If fewer actors are used, lines can be redistributed. Characters without names (Pastor, MM-Minister of Music, Old Lady, Seeker, Hiker, Hiker 2, Guide, Rich Girl) need to be consistent with their lines as written.

The teaching lines are currently split between the Pastor and the Minister of Music. If you have a very strong actor for the Pastor, you can give him all the teaching lines and leave the music to the MM.

**Set and props**: The story takes place on a hillside, and this is explained in the script. Not much set is necessary to establish that. However, one of our cast members built a couple of huge “rocks”, solid enough for actors to sit or stand on at two different levels. They added a lot to the look of the production, providing height and levels – and a place to hide things behind.

Many props are used during the show. We made little effort to hide those props – from the very beginning, two actors carried in the tubs holding them and placed them on each side of center stage for actors to pull items from. A few large items were stored behind the rocks.

**Music:** The play can probably be adjusted to be performed without music, but the music adds a lot. Our music was all performed by the actors themselves. Adjust, obviously, to fit the talents and needs of your cast.

“If You’re Happy and You Know It” – accompanied by MM on guitar. This was just a silly song to turn the mood of the on-stage crowd around. The actors made up silly verses with actions (If you’re happy and you know it, be a duck – quack, quack; be a Greek – opa!). They got the audience to sing along, too. The song helps loosen up the audience and prepare them for the tone of the rest of the show.

“You Are the Light of the World” – by Steve Green (from Hide ‘Em in Your Heart). Accompanied by bass guitar and bongos, with other random percussion instruments in crowd (maracas, fish, etc.). We picked the tempo up and altered the melody a bit in spots . . . just to make it not sound like a kiddie song. ☺

“The Lord’s Prayer” – the traditional version. A guitar with violin playing the melody. This was quietly playing in the background during the Lord’s Prayer.

“Seek Ye First” -- Two girls sang as a duet, accompanied by guitar. Flute and violin played descants with the guitar during the Pastor’s lines between the choruses.

“Do To Others” – by Steve Green (also from Hide ‘Em in Your Heart). Accompanied by keyboard (yes, we had a keyboard hidden back in that hillside – no one said this was realism!). We also had a brass trio of trumpet, trombone and sax that played a Dixieland-style interlude between choruses. A handful of dancers did simple choreography to the second verse. This one brought the house down – have fun with it!

Intermission – we had the “worship team” from the fictional congregation play an instrumental song to end the first Act; the actors left the stage while it was playing and the house lights came up. When the song was finished, the musicians left the stage quietly. Act 2 started with the worship team returning to the stage while the house lights are still up and beginning another song (this served as the cue to the audience that the play was beginning again – like flickering the lights). The cast gradually returned to the stage as the song played. When the song was finished, there was applause, the house lights went down, and Act 2 began.

**Misc:** The “one-by-one” bit at the beginning of Act 2: this just serves to review what was covered in Act 1 before starting up again. Each actor gets one phrase. If you have fewer actors, eliminate some of the phrases. This should move very quickly, with actors almost stepping on each other’s lines. End with a cutesy pose, with jazz hands.

**The House on the Rock Rap:** This is actually not quite as complicated as it sounds when described in writing. ☺ But it is VERY fun and very effective when well-rehearsed.

The crowd on stage does the stomp-stomp-clap rhythm through the whole rap (the same rhythm as in Queen’s “We Will Rock You”). The rapper needs to set the pace for this. Let him play with the rhythm of the lines, as long as the words are clear and understood. After each rap stanza, a small group from the crowd on stage steps out to act out something from the storyline and add a percussion sound. The percussion sounds are only made between the rapper’s stanzas – so each new sound can be isolated and heard, and so the rapper is not drowned out. As the rap progresses, we see the two houses being built, with Bud and Jed standing before each, the storm ravaging the houses, and one crashing to the ground.

House building: two groups each mime building a house. Their accompanying sounds are chain saws (vroom!) and hammers (tap-tap-tap). House one: “Vroom! Vroom! Tap-tap-tap.” House two: “Tap-tap-tap. Vroom! Vroom!” By the fourth stanza, the houses are built – the builders stand in place forming the roof, walls, etc. and still making the building percussion sounds.

Rock: a handful of kids sit around a small rock at the edge of the stage (beside the house being built on the rock) with rhythm sticks and tap out a rhythm on the rock. “One, two (rest for three), and-four, one, two, THREE, FOUR.” (Last two beats are sticks hit together.)

Sand: a handful of kids sit at the front edge of the stage, opposite the rock, by the house being built on sand. Their hands swoop around in front of them (like smoothing out sand) as they made the sound: “Shhhhhh – ch –ch – shhhhhh – ch – ch –“

Storm: 4-5 people encircle each built house making storm noises: “Boom! – crash! – (rolling tongues going from high pitch to low, indicating rain falling)”. Be sure, at this point, that you still have some actors left to keep up the stomp-stomp-clap rhythm.

House splat: at the end of a rhythm “stanza”, one of the houses starts to sway, the builders say, “whoa-oa-oa-oa . . . “, rising in pitch, until they fall on the ground – the house crashed. All is silent for a moment (you can have the Jed actor react comically to the falling of his house). Then the rapper starts the rhythm again and finishes the rap.

The rap ends with the whole cast joining in the last stanza as they move into positions for a final pose – on the last word: “ROCK!”.

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. . . . . (p.8)

Andrew: This is awesome, Pastor! Let’s do church like this every week!

All: Yeah! Yeah!

Andrew: (*Tosses Bible*) Forget about Bible study. We’ll just hang out with you and you can tell us what Jesus said. (*Others --yeah*!)

Pastor: Oh, no, no! (*scrambles to get Bible and hand it back to him*) You need to know all this -- and do it -- and teach it to others! Jesus didn’t come to change or take the place of the scriptures. He came to . . . to *finish* them. To complete them! You need to know everything that’s in here.

Andrew: Aw, man . . .

MM: And you can’t rely preachers or teachers to tell you what the Bible says. Some of them are hypocrites and phonies.

Seeker: I know that’s right.

Pastor: In fact, in Jesus’ time, they were called Pharisees. And all those Pharisees (*chooses a Jordan and starts dressing him up as Pharisee*) and teachers who teach you the scriptures, you need to be even more righteous than they are to be in God’s kingdom.

Bekah: What?

Pastor: Because they only talk about what you do on the outside. Jesus wants you to be good on the inside – he’s concerned about your heart.

Pharisee/Jordan: Triple-bypass surgery in 2008. My heart is good.

Brenton: Not that heart, dummy.

Pastor: (*hands pharisee a scroll*) For example, the Pharisees will tell you . . .

Pharisee: Thou shalt not murder!!

Pastor: And yeah, that’s a good thing. But Jesus said, don’t even feel hate for someone.

Faith: Aw, man! Seriously?

Pastor: Seriously.

Faith: Can I just tell them off real quick and get it out of my system?

Pastor: No.

Faith: Can I send them a nasty email?

Pastor: No!

Faith: Can I just call them a peabrain?

All: No!

Pastor: If you’re thinking all those things in your heart, then it’s like you have the heart of a murderer.

Kaylee: Ooo, that’s serious.

Pastor: It is! Your relationships to others are a top priority.

MM: (*pulls up Liz)* For example, let’s say, you’re on your way to church. (*Liz mimes walking*) because you have a gift you want to give God.

Liz: (*searches pockets*) I . . .. I have a Chuck E. Cheese’s token?

MM: Awesome! I love Chuck E. Cheese! So, you get to church, ready to give your gift, (*someone holds out offering plate*) when suddenly, you remember – your buddy Suzy is really mad at you. (*Suzy/Faith pouting at other end of stage*)

Liz: So?

MM: So? Which gift do you think God’ll like better – your Chuck E. Cheese token, or your making peace with Suzy?

Liz: (*hesitant, digs in pockets again*) I got a Tootsie Roll, too . . . ? (*crowd pushes her to Suzy/Faith)*

*[Liz and Suzy/Faith go through elaborate making up scene: Liz pats her head, then pulls her ponytail – crowd tells her to go back and try again; Liz holds out hand to shake, Suzy takes her hand and slaps Liz’s face with it, Liz stomps off – crowd tells her to go back; MM finally puts the girls’ arms around each other and they soften and hug; crowd cheers]*

Pastor: Great job! That’ll make Jesus really happy!

Liz: You want the token now? (*tosses token; crowd scrambles for it*)

Eastin: Ha! It’s mine!

Deborah: Hey! Did you see that? She assaulted me!

Eastin: No, I didn’t!

Deborah: Uh, yeah, you kinda did.

Pastor: So, what are you going to do about it?

Deborah: I’m gonna sue!

Eastin: Oh, puh-leeze!

Pastor: No, no – that’s great! (*they look at him incredulously*) No, I mean, not great for you, but great for my sermon. Cuz, see, if someone’s taking you to court, you need to settle up with them beforehand.

Eastin: I don’t want to settle up with her! She’s a jerk!

Andrew: Well, you were the one who assaulted her.

Eastin: I did not assault her!

Andrew: Yeah, you kinda did.

Pastor: But if you don’t settle matters, she will hand you over to the judge! *(he swings her around to judge*)

Judge/Ryan: Guilty of assault!

Eastin: I didn’t assault her!

Judge: Yeah, you kinda did.

Pastor: And then the judge will hand you over to the bailiff.

Bailiff/Dave: Ah! The kid who assaulted her friend for a Chuck E. Cheese token!

Eastin: I did NOT . . . eh, whatever.

Pastor: And the bailiff will put you in jail. (*bailiff swings her around behind five people using bodies to create a jail around her – they say “clang!”)*

Eastin: (*peeking through “bars”)* No! All I wanted was a Chuck E. Cheese token!

MM: See? Was this worth it? Relationships are important! Even if it means humbling yourself when you don’t want to, or think you should have to, you need to make relationships a priority.

Pastor: Especially THIS relationship: (*points to Pharisee*)

Pharisee: Thou shalt not commit adultery!

Pastor: Right! The Pharisees say don’t take somebody’s wife away from them (*married couple is standing arm in arm; Joel comes and carries wife away*). But Jesus says, don’t even let yourself think about wanting someone else’s wife for your wife -- pay attention to your heart.

Wife stealer/Joel: (*French accent*) But I am paying attention to my heart. And my heart says, “Ooo la la, mon cherie!” (*wife giggles; MM pops him on the head*)

MM: Really?

Wife stealer/Joel: Alright, alright. (*gives her back*)

Pastor: And they tell you that if you get unhappy with your wife . . .

Husband/Micaiah: Unhappy? You better believe I’m unhappy, dude!!

Wife/Bekah: Well, you’re no rose garden either, bucko! (*they start arguing*)

Pastor: Come on, come on -- get your heart right! Dude, this is your wife! This is your husband! Work it all out! (*Couple does elaborate make-up scene – ends with Pastor giving Husband flowers to give Wife; they go off arm in arm; crowd says “aw!”*)

Levi: But, see, here’s the thing. My heart always wants to do the right thing. It’s my *hand* that’s the problem. Yeah, that’s it. See, my hand always gets itself out there and causes trouble (*acts out slapping, etc*.)

MM: Ah! I see. Well, then, I guess you need to cut it off. (*pulls out a saw and prepares to cut off hand*)

Levi: Wait! Wait! Did I say my hand? I meant . . uh . . my eye. Yeah, that’s it. My eye sees stuff and then I want to, you know . . .

Pastor: Oh, I see. So, then, we need to gouge that eye out. (*pulls out a screwdriver*)

Levi: Whoa . . . yeah, I should have seen that coming.

Pastor: So, no eye-gouging? Or hand-chopping?

Levi: No, no! That won’t be necessary!

Pastor: Well, maybe we should cut some other things off . . Like the cable TV?

Levi: Ah . .

MM: (*to Katherine texting*) Or the cell phone minutes?

Katherine: Oh. Sorry! (*quickly puts phone away*)

Pastor: (*to Luke*) Or, perhaps, the Friday nights out with the old college buddies?

Luke: Aw, man….

Pastor: My point is, if there’s something in your life that’s making it tough for you to do the right thing, it’s better to get rid of it.

Luke: But, those Friday nights . . . I mean, they’re a great witnessing opportunity!

Dave: Yep, there’s plenty to witness.

Luke: Oh . . . oh, alright.

Pastor: (*pats him on the back*) Good boy. Now, the Pharisees will tell you . . .