

***The Light of Christmas***  
***Share the Song***

Created by Phil Barfoot  
Arranged by Cliff Duren

Optional Narrative and Dramatic Scripts  
by John Plastow

**Narrative Script**

Pages 2-5

**Dramatic Script**

Pages 6-35

You may make as many copies as you need for your cast.

# THE LIGHT OF CHRISTMAS: SHARE THE SONG

Created by Phil Barfoot  
Arranged by Cliff Duren  
Narration by John R. Plastow

**Song:** “It’s Time for Christmas” (CD cue #1)

Narrator 1 Christmas! The time of year when we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, sent to earth from the Father to give mankind a way to be with God for all time.

Narrator 2 Tonight we celebrate together and lift our praise to the Lord, just as the heavenly host praised Him on that first Christmas night in Bethlehem. Come! Come and join us as we sing...as we pray...as we worship the King of kings and Lord of lords and bear witness to the Light of the World who left His throne in heaven to dwell with us.

N 1 The prophet Isaiah, thousands of years ago, said, “Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you” (Is. 60:1-2).

N 2 Join with us now as we tell the story of the coming of the Light...the coming of the Christ...the coming of Jesus.

**Song:** “Let There Be Light” (CD cue #10)

N 2 Matthew, a disciple of Jesus, restated what had been said by Isaiah when he said, “The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, Light has dawned” (Matt. 4:16).

N 1 We know that this “Light” was Jesus Himself, for we believe His words when He said, “I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness” (John 12:46). But how can we be sure?

N 2 How can we know?

N 1 How can we have such certainty that Jesus is who He said He was?

N 2 One might expect the return of light into a world of darkness to come about more dramatically and triumphantly, but definitely not as humbly as the simple story of Christ's lowly birth in Bethlehem. We understand why some might ask, "Who is the Light? Who is this Jesus? Why did He come in the manner He did?"

N 1 And why did He come at all?"

**Song: "Born That We May Have Life" and Tag (CD cue #18)**

N 1 From the beginning, the spirit of darkness has tried to snuff out the light. Just as a candle is pinched and the flame dies, through the ages the enemy of the light has done everything he could to hide it and convince us that the light for which we seek is no longer with us. But in every case, God has always found a way to provide the light, piercing through the darkness of our lost and lonely world, bringing hope, bringing love, and reminding us that the Light still shines.

**Song: "The Light Still Shines" (CD cue #26)**

N 2 Yes, Jesus is the Light ... and the Light still shines, indeed. This is what our Christmas celebration is all about. This is why we have hope. This is why we can have peace. This is why we are joyful and offer our worship with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength. But even in the midst of our celebration, we must remember why Jesus, the Light of the World, had to come to us in the form of a baby in that manger stall in Bethlehem. We must never ever forget the reason why He came.

**Song: "God So Loved the World" (CD cue #33)**

N 1 The praises of God's people are found all through the Psalms. King David wrote, "The Lord is my light and my salvation .... One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord .... Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord" (Psalm 27:1, 4, 6).

N 2 We sing as David did, for we worship the same living God of all the universe.

N 1 We lift up our praises to Him and He draws close to us.

N2            Though our offering is very small in comparison to His vast kingdom, we approach the throne of God and lay our sacrifice of praise at His feet.

N 1            We gather to worship, and He is here, for He is Emmanuel! He is God with us.

**Song:            “God with Us” (CD cue #38)**

N 2            Though our offering is small, we worship.

N 1            Though it was our disobedience that brought about the darkness, we look to Your light and praise You.

N 2            Though it was our sin that took You to the cross, we fall down and worship at your feet.

**Song:            “O Holy Night!” with “Falling Down on Our Knees” (CD cue #46)**

N 1            “Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem ... having followed a star till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” (Matthew 2:1, 9-11, paraphrase)

N 2            Years later, Jesus would say, “While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light” (John 12:36). Let us do as the wise men did and follow the Light God has given to us.

**Song:            “Wise Men Still Seek Him” (CD cue #53)**

N 1            Our world today still tries to convince us that darkness is all there is ... that the Light of which we sing tonight and which led the wise men does not exist, but we know differently.

N 2            We have seen the Light, and the Light has touched us. The holy presence of God has been revealed through the Light and, as the song says, there is no turning back.

N 1 The Bible tells us: “For you were once in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light .... Awake, you who sleep. Arise from the dead and Christ will give you light” (Eph. 5:8, 14).

N 2 Let us accept the Light as the greatest gift ever given ... the gift from God given to us specifically so that we can live with Him, and for Him.

**OPTION:** Insert a personal testimony here of someone who has had a significant darkness to light life experience.

**Song:** “We Are the Reason” (CD cue #61)

### **INVITATION BY THE PASTOR**

**Song:** “Jesus, Born on This Day” and Tag (CD cue #68)

N 2 The Bible tells us that “...you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...” (1 Peter 2:9).

N 1 Jesus, the Light of the World, came as a baby in Bethlehem’s manger. He walked with us; He gave His life on the cross for us; rising from the grave, He forever defeating the darkness of sin and death.

N 2 And He will return to this earth! He is coming back, and when He does, there will be no need for the sun or the moon to shine, for the glory of God will illuminate all things by the Lamb, who is the Light (Rev 21:22-23, paraphrase).

N 1 “And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it” (Rev 21:24).

N 2 The sun shall no longer go down, nor shall the moon withdraw itself; for the Lord will be our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning shall be ended forever! (Isaiah 60:20, paraphrase)

**Song:** “On That Day” with “One Day” (CD cue #78)

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# **The Light of Christmas**

*Share the Song*

## **Dramatic Script**

**Created by Phil Barfoot**

**Arranged by Cliff Duren**

**Drama Script by John R. Plastow**

### **SETTINGS**

- 1 – Holiday set – Many levels, used for opening and closing songs, and always on stage as a general backdrop.
- 2 – The shopping mall – Moveable set pieces and props which are added to the holiday set to create the mall
- 3 – Home – Moving set pieces and furniture that create both interior and exterior (placed in front of the holiday set.)

### **TIME PERIOD**

The story takes place during the last seven days before Christmas, modern day.

### **THEME**

God loves us unconditionally. We don't have to earn our way to Him; we can come to Him just as we are.

### **SCRIPTURE REFERENCE**

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is a gift of God.” Ephesians 2:8

## **CHARACTERS**

Darlene (DAR)	An over-the-top overachiever and highly perfectionistic mom, particularly about herself. She is a believer, but has put tremendous expectations on herself and transferred them to God, not believing that she is worth loving unless she is perfect.
Mitch (MI)	Darlene's husband, a nice guy who tries to stay out of trouble
Drew (DR)	Mid- to older-elementary age daughter of Darlene and Mitch
Emily (EM)	Teenage daughter of Darlene and Mitch
Snake (SN)	Boyfriend of Emily whose real name is Rodney
Becca (B)	Darlene's sister
Deborah Kelley (D)	A reporter of "feel good" stories and partner of Nick
Nick Tremelo (N)	A reporter of "feel good" stories and partner of Deborah
Chris (C)	A younger to mid-elementary age boy or girl essay writer
Eileen (ER)	A nosy neighbor
Oswald	Non-speaking husband of Eileen, who can never get a word in.
Camera person	Non-speaking, always with the reporters, quirky personality. Actually operates the live camera.

# ***The Perfect Christmas***

***By John R. Plastow***

**OPENING SONG:**

***“It’s Time for Christmas” (CD cue #1)***

**WELCOME BY PASTOR (This is used to change the setting to the mall)**

## **SCENE 1**

**At the mall a week before Christmas**

(The story begins in the mall which is filled with activity and the cast sets the stage for the story with props, characters, and easily recognizable “Christmassy” scenarios of people who are part of the mall’s Christmas shopping scene. Every cast member will be assigned a character and scenario. As shoppers go on with their business, two reporters and a camera operator set up and begin to broadcast. Note: Technology permitting, the camera is live and what is seen on the stage is also seen on the accompanying screens, complete with local news identification. In addition, the screen says “Seven shopping days ‘til Christmas.” If live image magnification is not part of your production, please disregard the references to it throughout the script.)

D            Good afternoon. This is Deborah Kelley, coming to you live from the Heartland Mall, where shoppers are taking full advantage of the “seven days ‘til Christmas” sales. As you can see from the activity all around me, the mall is packed with eager discount-seekers looking for a deal on a gift for a special person on their shopping list. My partner, Nick Tremelo, has a couple of excited shoppers with him now. Nick?

(Camera shot changes to Nick and a group of teen shoppers on the other side of the stage.)

N            Thanks, Deb. I’m here with... (holding mic to shoppers)

EM          Emily.

SN Snake.

N Hi, guys. How's the shopping going?

EM (Very outgoing) Hi, Mom! I'm at the mall buying you a present!

N What are you looking for today?

EM Well, like, my mom really wants a new pair...wait a minute, if I tell you, like, she'll know!

SN (Speaking to the camera) Ignore that, Mrs. H. She didn't buy you anything!

N Nothing at all.

EM Like, nothing! I love you, Mom. See you at home! (They wave into the camera.)

N (Back to the camera—shot back on Nick) Well, it may be a secret, but shoppers like these are here for all of the great sales going on. It's exactly seven days before Christmas, and it's crazy busy out here.

D I'll say. I've never seen so many people. (Nick walks to Deborah and joins in the shot.) Everywhere you look, there are families and friends searching for just the right gift.

N Speaking of gifts, Deb – I got you a present!

D You did?!

N Yep, so I guess the big question is...what did you get me this year?

D Nothing yet. I haven't decided. Have you been naughty or nice?

N (Makes a sound of pain) Hey, I take that very personally! I think I've been very nice this year.

D Well, we'll see what Santa has to say about that! But, you know, Nick, there is someone here in the mall right now who is definitely on the nice list.

N Really?

D She's one of the finalists for the "Perfect Christmas Mom" contest.

N That's right, everyone. We're looking to find the "Perfect Christmas Mom." Starting on Thanksgiving Day, elementary school children from all over the region began submitting essays that answered the question, "Why my mom is the perfect Christmas mom." Over 3000 entries came in, and our panel of judges read every single one of them.

D Some of them were funny, some emotional, some kind of strange, but all of these children were very sincere as they wrote wonderful essays about why their mom should be the "Perfect Christmas Mom"! The judges have narrowed it down to a few finalists, and we'll announce the winner on Christmas Eve right here in the mall following a very special Christmas Celebration, hosted by Nick and me and performed by the Community Church Singers.

N One of the reasons we're here in the mall today is because it just so happens that one of the finalists is here shopping with her family right now. She doesn't know that she's a finalist, nor even that her child wrote an essay, but we thought it would be great to follow her throughout this week to see exactly why she should be crowned the "Perfect Christmas Mom." It sounds like fun, don't you think?

D Absolutely fun, and who knows what we'll find out about her and her family! So, tell us about our finalist.

N Now remember, she doesn't know what we're up to, so don't tell her.

D We won't, I promise.

N LC, show us our finalist. (The screen shows a live shot of Darlene shopping in the mall.) This is Darlene Hampton. She has two daughters, Emily, age 17, and Drew, age 9, who wrote the essay. She is married to Mitch.

(After a few moments, Darlene notices the camera and unceremoniously shoos it away. The shot returns to Deborah and Nick.)

D Very nice. So, there you have it. We'll follow our potential "Perfect Christmas Mom" all week long to see if we can discover what it takes to make a perfect Christmas. You'll want to stay tuned. This is Deborah Kelley ...

N ... and Nick Tremolo, reminding you that you only have seven shopping days left.

BOTH Happy shopping!

(The live camera shot goes out. The three follow Darlene at a distance, always filming. Darlene and Drew are shopping. Drew is a few feet away, loaded down with a ton of packages and shopping bags, far more than someone her size should carry. Darlene holds a notebook and a variety of electronic devices.)

DAR (Talking to herself) All right. What next? With work, school, and family schedules, plus chores, errands, shopping, and holding it all together during the holidays...what's a mom to do? (To Drew) Drew, let me check my lists. We've made it to Sports Authority for cousin Jack, Macy's for Grandma, Penney's for Daddy, Target for your sister, Hallmark, Apple, Swiss Colony... what am I forgetting? Drew? What am I forgetting? (Looking around) Drew? Where are you? Drew?

DR (Mumbles as she is buried under packages) I'm over here.

DAR What?

DR (A little more clearly) Over here.

DAR Drew?

DR (She drops a few of the packages and is exposed.) Here!

DAR Oh, there you are.

DR Is it time for lunch yet?

DAR Soon, dear, soon. We have to stay on schedule. I want to make sure I don't miss out on any of the sales. I'm determined to make this year a perfect Christmas! And when I do, you're going to love me for it.

DR            Could we just put all of this stuff in the car?

DAR          I'm afraid that by the time we go all the way out there and back, I will have missed something and we'll be off schedule. You don't want us to be off schedule, do you? (She doesn't give Drew an opportunity to answer.) Of course, you don't. Anything less than a perfect Christmas would be considered a complete failure. You don't want me to fail at Christmas, do you? (She doesn't give Drew an opportunity to answer.) Of course, you don't.

DR            But...

DAR          Hold on, let me check my lists. (Pulling out her planner) We have most everything done here at the mall, but we still have to stop at Walmart, Safeway, and the drycleaners on the way home. Then I have to make fifteen dozen cookies.

DR            Fifteen dozen cookies?

DAR          For the Christmas Celebration.

DR            But that's still a week away.

DAR          Yes, however, this is when I have scheduled the time to make them.

DR            Won't they get stale?

DAR          Can't help that. Anyway, people eat anything at Christmastime, and I need to make them when I have the time. After that I need to finish the garland, fluff the wreaths, pull out the china, make sure your dad gets all the outdoor lights working, address and mail the Christmas cards, put the finishing touches on the Christmas tree, and of course (she makes a sound of dislike), start wrapping all of the presents.

DR            Don't you like presents?

DAR          I love presents, dear. I just hate wrapping them, and especially trying to get things out of the manufacturer's packaging. It's my least favorite thing about Christmas.

DR            Oh.

DAR I think that's it, but it seems like I'm forgetting something.

DR What about...

DAR (Interrupting) Hmm, there's nothing more on my planner. (She begins pulling devices out of her very large purse as she refers to them.) Let's see, there's nothing more on the iPad, and the list on my Droid is all done.

DR Mom?

DAR The iPhone list is clear, and the back-up Droid is okay. (Her phone begins to ring.)

DR Mom, I think I...

DAR Hard copy from the PC, OK. Laptop is clear.

DR Mom!

DAR I even have this all on a white board. I wonder what I'm forgetting?

(The phone continues to ring, but Darlene doesn't notice it. Drew finds it and looks at the display.)

DAR Oh yeah, I have to get the guest room ready for Grandma. But there is something else...

(Drew holds the phone up for Darlene to see the display.)

DAR That's it—I remember. It's your father! We almost went home without him!

DR That's what I was trying to tell you.

DAR Oh, hi, honey. How's the shopping going?

MI Darlene, I'm dyin' here. I can't shop any longer. I'm catching a ride home with a buddy of mine from the office.

DAR Well, we're just about to leave too. I've just got one more thing to pick up.

MI No problem, but I can't stay any longer. I'll see you at home.

DAR All right. See you in a few minutes.  
(They each hang up).

DAR You're father is heading home. We've got to stop by one more place.

DR Okay.

DAR By the way, have you narrowed your Christmas list down, like I told you?

DR I tried, but it's hard.

DAR Well, you can't have everything.

DR I know, but having to decide between Xbox, Nintendo DS, Wii, and whatever's the newest and most cool...what's a kid to do?

**INSTRUMENTAL REPRISE: *"It's Time for Christmas"***

(Begin at ms. 72 (CD cue #7) and play to end which the set is changed to Home – Interior)

## SCENE 2

### That afternoon at the Hampton family home, mostly inside

(The interior of the set includes a loveseat, Christmas tree, and enough other items to set the scene. The reporters are hiding behind a shrub adjacent to the front door.)

N (Whispering) We're outside the home of one of our "Perfect Christmas Mom" finalists as she makes her way home after a long day of shopping. Did she buy the perfect gifts? Did she make the perfect plans? Will she be able to truly call this Christmas perfect? Will she be crowned the "Perfect Christmas Mom"?

(Just as this line is finished, Darlene and Drew, still carrying all the packages, enter and cross in front of the shrub. The reporters and cameraman duck down. Darlene stops for a second, sensing someone's watching, but then follows Drew into the house. Emily and Snake are sitting close together on the couch.)

D These questions and more will be answered as we continue our undercover operation: "Perfect Christmas Mom."

EM Hi, Mom.

DAR Hi, Em. Hi, Rodney.

SN Hey. (Every time Snake says "hey," there is an accompanying gesture.)

EM His name is Snake now, Mom.

DAR So sorry. Hi, Snake.

SN Hey.

(Darlene gives them a look that causes them to move to opposite ends of the couch.)

DAR (Calling from inside the house) Honey? Are you coming in?

MI (As he enters, the reporters duck down again.) Yes. I'm on my way.

DAR Are you bringing the rest of the packages in?

MI (He does an about face and exits.) Of course, sweetheart! (Reporters pop back up.)

DAR Please hurry. I didn't see her, but I could tell someone was watching me, and I'm sure it was Mrs. Ripcroquette. She is such a pest! She's always putting her nose into our business.

EM I don't think she's a pest, Mom. What's she done?

DAR Oh, she always has a better way to do everything. It doesn't matter how hard I work, she's always criticizing me. She needs to keep her opinions to herself.

DR (Entering with armloads of shopping bags) Mom, where do you want all of this stuff?

DAR Oh, anywhere. Just leave it all out.

DR Really?

DAR I've scheduled this afternoon to wrap it all.

DR Cool.

DAR If we want a perfect Christmas, and we do, you must make a schedule and stay on it. Believe me, you're going to love me this Christmas.

EM You didn't happen to see us on TV, did you?

DAR No, why? Were you on TV? What for?

EM Oh, nothing, just checking.

DAR (Confused) Okay.

SN Looks like you did a gnarly job of Christmas shopping. Way to go, Mrs. H.

DAR Thank you, Rodney... (Emily clears her throat) ...I mean, Snake. Thanks, Snake.

SN Hey.

EM What'd you get me for Christmas, Mom?

DAR I'm not telling.

DR I know! I know!

EM Then I'll just have to tickle you into telling me... (She starts and Drew screams and runs away. Emily settles back down right next to Snake.)

(Mitch enters with a tower of packages, due to which he can hardly get through the door. As he passes by the shrub, the reporters duck down, coming back up after he passes them. He stops and turns, and they go back down. This happens a few times, then Mitch goes into the house.)

MI Here you go.

EM Hi, Daddy.

MI Hi, sweetie. Hello, Rodn—

DAR (Interrupting) Mitch, you remember Snake, don't you?

MI Of course. How could I forget? Hi, Snake. (Mitch gives Snake and Emily a look, and they separate again.)

DAR All right, we have exactly one hour and thirty-seven minutes before we all have to go.

MI, EM, DR Go? Where?

DAR To rehearsal. You don't think the Christmas Celebration is going to just happen, do you? (They all complain.) No complaining allowed. Being in the Celebration will be the perfect way to spend Christmas Eve. Snake, I bet you could even help.

SN Really? Do you think they would let me blow something up or set something on fire?

DAR (Struggling to get the words out) Maybe...not. But I'm sure there is a job you can do.

SN Okay. I'm in.

DAR Great.

SN Hey...

DAR But now we only have an hour and thirty-five minutes, and there is work to be done. If we want a perfect Christmas, and we do, I need your help. (They all mumble "okay.") On the list – clean the house, decorate the tree, make up the guest room, mow the grass, and make fifteen dozen cookies.

DR Can I make the cookies?

DAR All by yourself?

DR Well...

SN No problem, Mrs. H. I'll help her.

DAR Okay. Snake and Drew are on cookie duty. Everybody, let's get to work. We leave in an hour and thirty-four minutes. (Darlene blows her whistle and everyone exits to various places, leaving her alone.)

DAR (Talking to herself) Okay. What do I need to do? Finish the garland, fluff the wreaths, pull out the china, address the Christmas cards. Then, take a shower, cook dinner, get us all to rehearsal... (Sighs), all in an hour and thirty-four minutes. What's a mom to do? (Sighs again) No, I promised myself that this would be the perfect Christmas. I can get it all done. (She sees the stack of packages.) Oh no, I forgot! (Sigh) I sure hope I get to celebrate Christmas too. I mean the real Christmas.

**SONG:**

***"Let There Be Light" (CD cue #10)***

(There is an explosion at the end of the song.)

DR (From offstage) Mom! Snake blew up the cookies!

DAR     What?

SN       (From offstage) Ohh, awesome!

DAR     I guess I'll have to make those tomorrow! (She collapses onto the couch as the music ends and the lights go out.)

## SCENE 3

### A couple days later outside the Hampton home

(The reporters and cameraman are at a distance in an entirely different position than before.)

D Good morning, Heartland! It's only four days before Christmas, and we're still staking out our "Perfect Christmas Mom" candidate. So far she's kept us busy following her all over town.

N I don't know about you, Deb, but I'm exhausted. I can see why she's a candidate for this award. She does everything and goes everywhere! I don't know how she keeps going or holds it all together.

D Well, with Christmas right around the corner, she has to. How many times did we hear her say yesterday, "If we want a perfect Christmas, and we do," this has to be done, or that has to be done.

N But she still didn't get those cookies made, did she? That must be on the list for today.

D Must be. And speaking of being just around the corner, that's exactly where we are today. Ever since that explosion rocked the block two days ago, our producer wants us to keep at a safe distance.

N That's for sure. Deb, with us today I have Darlene Hampton's neighbors. This is Eileen Rip... (can't pronounce her name)

ER Eileen Ripcroquette. And this is my husband, Oswald. (He never gets a chance to speak.) You spell our name R-I-P-C-R-O-Q-U-E-T-T-E. The last E is silent. Some people like to pronounce it Ripcroquet, but they are wrong. Our name goes back nine generations, and has survived countless international unpleasantries and—

D (Interrupting) Thank you, Mrs. Ripcroquette. It's great to have you with us today. I understand you know Darlene Hampton.

ER Know her? Oh heavens, I can tell you everything about her, can't I, Oswald? I can tell you what she makes for dinner and how she treats her children. I can

ER tell you what days she does her laundry, even how often she mops her floors, which I must say is seldom. I can tell you—

N (Interrupting Eileen) Yes, I'm sure you can, but we're interested in your take on Darlene's qualifications to be the "Perfect Christmas Mom."

ER Well, I don't know how she got chosen, because my husband Oswald, here, can tell you that if there is anyone who should be called the "Perfect Christmas Mom," it's definitely not—

D (Interrupting Eileen) So, Mrs. Ripcroquette, am I to understand that you feel that Darlene Hampton may not be our best choice?

ER I don't want anyone to think that Oswald would be anything but absolutely supportive of my very dear friend Darlene Hampton, but just between us girls, he's seen some awfully strange things going on in that house... awfully strange indeed. But for the record, I can only say that we've watched her for a long time and—

D (Interrupting Eileen) You heard it here, ladies and gentleman. Darlene Hampton's neighbors, Eileen and Oswald, are absolutely supportive of Darlene receiving the honor of "Perfect Christmas Mom."

ER That's not what I said! Oswald, tell her that's not what I said. Wait a minute, let me tell you what I really meant to say, or better, you can go on my blog. I talk about the Hamptons there every day. It's ripcroquetteneighbordirt.com. That's— (She begins to spell it out.)

N (Interrupting Eileen) Thank you, Eileen. Hey, Deb, I see some activity down there. LC, can you zoom in? (LC acknowledges.)

D If not, maybe we can get a little closer. We'll just be careful. (Mitch and Snake enter, carrying boxes of lights and a ladder.)

SN I sure do appreciate you letting me come back over here, Mr. H., even after I blew up your wife's cookies and all.

MI No problem. You can give me a hand finishing off the list of chores she gave me to do.

SN Will it be all right with her if I'm around? She was pretty mad.

MI Yeah, I know. You should've seen her yesterday when she went to bake the Christmas pies and discovered that your exploding cookies took out all the circuits to the oven. I suggested that we just buy pies, but—

DAR (Offstage, intensely) We can't buy pies! You want a perfect Christmas, don't you?!

MI Yes, sweetheart. (To Snake) I haven't seen her so upset about pies since I suggested that we use canned pumpkin on Thanksgiving.

DAR (From offstage) Pumpkins come from a garden, not a can!

SN So, how's she gonna make 'em?

MI I put in an emergency call to the appliance repair shop. They'll be here any minute. Hopefully they'll get it fixed quickly and she can make the pies and the cookies. It would just be a good idea to keep a bit of distance from her right now. She's a little edgy.

DAR (From offstage) You want a perfect Christmas, don't you? Of course you do. You're going to love me this Christmas.

MI See what I mean?

SN Got it.

MI In the meantime, let's finish up my lights. How are you with electricity?

SN (Nodding) Awesome!

MI You know, Rodney, I mean Snake, making ends meet, working long hours, getting to all the kids' events, and keeping up with all of life's demands – especially at Christmastime – what's a dad to do?

(They exit as song begins.)

**SONG: “Born That We May Have Life” (CD cue #18)**

# SCENE 4

## A couple of days later at the Hampton home

(As the scene opens, Mitch, Drew, and Emily are lounging in the front room. From offstage, Darlene blows her whistle and the three jump up and into housecleaning action as Darlene crosses from one side of the stage to the other and exits out the front door. The three relax. Darlene stops just short of a full exit and speaks without turning.)

DAR I see you, Mrs Ripcroquette. You don't have to hide. There's nothing for you to spy on. (Eileen and Oswald, who are hiding behind a bush with camouflage outfits and bushy hats on, rise from behind the bush, then exit. Without turning back to the house, Darlene blows another whistle and the housework begins again. After a moment, the scene continues.)

EM Dad, I'm worried about Mom. She's gone way overboard about this "perfect Christmas" thing.

MI Oh, she'll be all right. Just give her some space. Christmas is only two days away now.

EM But she keeps wandering around muttering to herself. This morning, she had fallen asleep on the couch and I tried to take her iPad out of her hand, and she woke up and assumed a position out of Kung Fu Panda! If I hadn't ducked at the right time, she would've taken my head off with a high kick.

MI (Concerned) That's no good.

EM Then she came into the kitchen and I offered to make her some coffee. She said something about needing Pamprin with a Red Bull chaser.

MI (Even more concerned) That's really no good.

EM She seems to think that we're all going to love her based on how perfect she can be, or how perfect Christmas is. What's up with that?

MI Well, I don't think the pressure is coming from us. I hope she knows that we'll love her regardless.

EM Where's it from, then?

MI As long as I've known her, she's put this kind of pressure on herself. I'm not sure where she gets it. Then, of course, her sister is coming to town.

EM Aunt Becca? Why would her coming make Mom like this?

MI Em, I'm sure you've heard your mom call Becca the "perfect sister." She feels inferior to Becca. She's always felt that Becca did everything right and that she did everything wrong. Even when your mom became a Christian, she still felt that she never could live up to the standard set by Becca. In her eyes, Becca is perfect, and that's always been really hard for her.

EM But you would think that her faith would help.

MI It does for some, but others, like your mom, start thinking that they are never good enough, even for God. They live like they constantly have to prove themselves.

EM And Aunt Becca just makes her feel worse?

MI Yeah.

EM I wish I could help Mom know that she's loved by us and God no matter what.

MI Well, keep trying. Maybe someday it'll break through.

(Darlene enters, frazzled and needing sleep, hair and clothes ruffled, and with white flour on her face and hands.)

MI Hi, sweetheart.

EM Hi, Mom.

DR Hi, Mom.

DAR (Triumphantly) The cookies are finally done! I only got a couple of dozen made, but it will have to be enough. As long as no one in the family eats any, we'll be fine.

MI Really?

DAR Don't even think about it! Now I just have to bake six kinds of pies.

MI You know we could just—

DAR (Interrupting) Stop! (Shaking her finger) Noooo.

MI Okay.

DAR I just want everything to be—

MI & EM (Interrupting) We know, perfect.

DAR You want a perfect Christmas, don't you? Of course you do.

(Drew has been standing by the Christmas tree, and she picks up a present and shakes it.)

DR Mom, how come I can't hear anything shaking inside this present?

(Darlene moves quickly to the tree.)

DAR Oh, sweetie, please don't shake that.

(Darlene takes the present and Drew picks up another.)

DR Can I shake this one?

DAR (Takes the present) Not this one, either.

DR (Picking up another) How about this one?

DAR (Takes the present) No. Don't shake any of these!

DR Why not?

DAR Because right now the wrapping is perfect! If we shake them, I might have to rewrap them. (She checks her planner.) And I don't have any time scheduled for that. (Starting to lose it, she turns to the family while guarding the tree.) Nobody touch this tree! (The family stands, stunned and silent.)

MI Put the presents down, sweetheart. (She continues to stand guard.) Kids, why don't we let Mom have a moment?

(They all start backing away.)

DR Dad, what's wrong with Mom?

MI This Christmas has just been a little stressful for your mom.

EM I'll say.

MI She'll be okay as long as nothing...

(Snake enters from the other side of the stage, carrying a plate of cookies.)

SN Hey! Mrs. H., these cookies are awesome. You should make these for Christmas Eve. (Everyone is frozen looking at Snake, then shifts their view to Darlene.) What?

(Darlene slowly and deliberately walks over to Snake and takes the plate of cookies from him. He still has part of a cookie in his hand, and she takes that as well. She walks back over to the tree, holding the cookies and guarding the presents.)

MI Snake, ahh, we were all just leaving. Darlene, why don't you take a nap? (She nods.) We love you, sweetheart.

DR Love you, Mom.

EM Love you.

(The last person to leave is Snake.)

SN Those were really good cookies, Mrs. H. (She snaps a glare at him.) Hey!

(Snake exits and Darlene sits in a moment of silence. She eats a cookie and lies down.)

DAR (Talking to herself) I just want this Christmas to be perfect.

**SONG: "Born That We May Have Life" – Tag (CD cue #25)**

# SCENE 5

## At the mall on Christmas Eve

(The scene begins with Darlene blowing her whistle and making a speech to the family and Snake, who stand at attention.)

DAR All right. It's finally Christmas Eve, and we have a show to do. We've got to get into costume, get to our places and give it our best. I know that I've not been quite myself this week, but that's all behind us now. The pies are made, Snake helped me remake the cookies, all the presents are wrapped, and every single little light bulb on the house is functioning within satisfactory parameters. We are truly ready for the perfect Christmas, and when that happens, I promise you're going to love me. (She pulls out her planner.) According to my schedule, we're here just in time for the opening song, so we'll do the show, and then, if I run, I have exactly enough time to get down to the other end of the mall before the stores close to make my final perfect purchase. Yes, this will be a perfect Christmas Eve. Everyone ready? (They all nod.) All right then.

(She blows her whistle and the family scrambles off. The scene shifts to the reporters at the mall, which is buzzing with activity. The reporters are seen on the screens as well as "Last day to shop. Mall closes in 1 hour!")

N Well, ladies and gentlemen, Christmas Eve is finally here, and we're so excited to be bringing you this live broadcast from the Heartland Mall, where you now have less than one hour to finish your shopping.

D In just a few minutes we will be announcing the winner of the "Perfect Christmas Mom" contest and introducing the elementary school student who wrote the winning essay: "Why My Mom is the Perfect Christmas Mom."

N That's right, Deborah. And here with me now is another of our finalists and her child, who nominated her. Chris will read just a little of her essay.

(Helen Swartz and her child, Chris, are standing next to Nick. As the child reads the essay, Helen reacts accordingly.)

C My mom's name is Helen, and she is the "Perfect Christmas Mom" because she is kind, sweet, generous, and loving, and I know that she loves me. I  
C wouldn't want any other mom to be my mom because I know that she is going to give me all the presents that I asked for this year. I know this because on her computer, she has a copy of the list I gave her with the gifts she's already bought crossed out. The rest have Grandma's name next to them. I love my mom, and like I said, I know that she loves me, but I especially know that she loves Santa Claus, because last year on Christmas Eve, I snuck out of my room and watched Santa putting presents under our tree. When my mom came into the room, she gave Santa a big kiss and I had to run back to my room because they started... (Helen puts her hand over Chris's mouth.)

N (Jumping in) There you go, Deb. Another great finalist.

D Thanks, Nick. Everyone, you'll want to stay tuned, because before we make the big announcement, we are going to be treated to a very special Christmas Celebration and Christmas Eve Worship service featuring the Community Church Singers.

N That's right, Deb. Let's watch. (The screens go off. The family rushes into the mall and everyone goes to their places.)

**SONG:**

***"The Light Still Shines" (CD cue #26)***

D (Note: The reporters serve as the narrators for the presentation.)  
It's Christmas Eve here in Heartland and we're celebrating that Jesus is the Light ... and the Light still shines, indeed. This is what our Christmas celebration is all about. This is why we have hope. This is why we can have peace. This is why we are joyful and offer our worship with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength. But even in the midst of our celebration, we must remember why Jesus, the Light of the World, had to come to us in the form of a baby in that manger stall in Bethlehem. We must never ever forget the reason why He came.

**SONG:**

***"God So Loved the World" (CD cue #33)***

N The praises of God's people are found all through the Psalms. King David wrote, "The Lord is my light and my salvation .... One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord .... Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the Lord" (Psalm 27:1, 4, 6).

D We sing as David did, for we worship the same living God of all the universe.

N We lift up our praises to Him and He draws close to us.

D Though our offering is ever so small in comparison to His vast kingdom, we approach the throne of God and lay our sacrifice of praise at His feet.

N We gather to worship, and He is here. He is Emmanuel; He is with us.

**Song: "God with Us" (CD cue #38)**

N 2 Though our offering is small, we worship.

N 1 Though it was our disobedience that brought about the darkness, we look to Your light and praise You.

N 2 Though it was our sin that took you to the cross, we fall down and lie at your feet.

**Song: "O Holy Night!" with "Falling Down on Our Knees" (CD cue #46)**

N We trust you've been enjoying our Celebration of Christmas here in the Heartland Mall. In just a moment, the cast will be back with more music, and then we'll announce the winner of the "Perfect Christmas Mom" contest. Stay with us.

(The cast disperses and Darlene goes to one side, redoing her makeup, etc. Becca enters.)

B There you are. I've been trying to catch up with you.

DAR Oh, Becca. I didn't know you were here. (They hug.) It's so good to see you.

B Yeah, I got in just a little while ago. I went to the house, then the church, and finally figured out where you were. I caught the last couple of songs. Nice job.

DAR Thanks. I've got one more song to sing, then I'll have just a couple of minutes to run to the other end of the mall before it closes so that I can pick up the one last thing I need

B Can I go and pick it up for you?

DAR I wish! No, the last one I need is for you!

B Oh.

DAR I'll run down there, then I'll have everything I need to make Christmas perfect.

B Perfect? Wow, that's a pretty high standard.

DAR Well, you would know.

B (Nervous laugh) What does that mean?

DAR You do everything perfectly.

B You're kidding, right?

DAR That's how I've always seen it.

B You really believe that?

DAR It's okay, don't get me wrong, but everyone knows that between you and me, you're the perfect sister and I'm...well, less than perfect. I can only try to be more like you. (Laughs, then there's a pause)

B Wow, I sure didn't know you felt that way.

DAR I'm used to it. It's no big deal.

B But you've got it wrong.

DAR How? As far as I can see, you've always done everything right. You have the perfect life.

B No, I don't.

DAR Sure you do.

B Not anymore.

DAR (Realizing this is serious) What?

B I said, not anymore.

DAR What do you mean?

B I wanted to get with you before tonight to let you know that I made the trip by myself.

DAR Where are Bill and the kids?

B Well, let's just say that I haven't been the perfect wife or mom that you thought I was. Bill and I have separated, and the kids decided they'd rather spend Christmas with their dad.

DAR (Shocked) What happened?

B Well, as far as I can figure out, I pushed everyone away.

DAR I don't understand. How did that happen? You love your family.

B Yes, but apparently I also demand a lot from them. I guess my perfectionism finally got to Bill, and the kids just followed him.

DAR (Moving to her) Becca, I am so sorry. I didn't know. I didn't see this coming.

B I wanted everything in our lives to be perfect, but in the end, I'm the one who's not so perfect after all.

DAR Wow. What are you going to do?

B First I'm working on fixing what I can, but I don't know what will happen. I'm trying to hold onto my faith, but even that's hard. I have to keep reminding myself that even though I've failed, God still loves me. I just wish that my family could stand to be around me.

DAR I can relate. I've been driving myself and my family crazy trying to make everything perfect for Christmas.

B Why do we do that?

DAR I have a habit of thinking that if I fall short, everyone, including God, will love me less. To tell you the truth, knowing that you were coming to town made me work even harder because I've always looked up to you and thought you were perfect. I didn't want to let you down.

B That's ironic. It's me who let you down.

DAR How did you let me down?

B By making you feel that you had to be like me. (She thinks for a moment.) Maybe we can help each other.

DAR How?

B Maybe we can keep reminding each other that neither one of us has to be perfect, and that our love for each other is unconditional.

DAR I've always had a hard time with that. I seem to feel that I have to earn love.

B If I'm learning anything through this situation, it's that love isn't something to be earned, from people or from God. In my case, my family shouldn't have to live up to a standard for me to love them.

DAR (Thinking aloud) Nor should mine.

B Isn't that what Christmas is all about? Isn't that the message of all of this? God sent Jesus in order to give us a way to be with Him...not because we're perfect, but exactly because we're not. Yet, He sent his perfect gift to us. What better thing could God do? And He did it exactly for us.

**SONG:**

***“We Are the Reason” (CD cue #61)***

DAR Thank you. If He did all that for me even when I’m not perfect, then I guess I shouldn’t expect everything in my life, or my Christmas to be perfect either. (They hug and the music starts for the next song.) Oh my gosh, I’ve got one more song! I have to go! I’ll see you after the show ends and I’ve finished my shopping. (She rushes off to join the show.)

**SONG:**

***“Wise Men Still Seek Him” (CD cue #53)***

(At the end of the song, Darlene makes a dash across the stage. The reporters come out front.)

DAR Good! I’ve got three minutes! I can make it.

N (To the audience) Did you enjoy the Christmas Celebration? Do you want to hear more? (He encourages the audience to respond.)

DAR No, you don’t! I’ve got to finish my shopping!

N Do you want to hear more?

**SONG:**

***“Wise Men Still Seek Him” – Reprise***

(Begin the instrumental at ms. 63 (CD cue #58) and reprise vocal at ms.82)

(The song kicks back in and Darlene is pulled into her spot for the reprise. The moment the song is over, she darts down the center aisle. A countdown clock appears on the screen with “Mall closing in 10 seconds” written on it.

D Let’s count it down. (Nick, Deborah and the cast count down to zero.)

N This year’s Christmas shopping is over: the mall is closed!

(The cast cheers. Darlene is in the center of the aisle.)

DAR Noooooooooo! (She moves to the front center of the floor and sits on the steps with her face in her hands, sobbing comically.)

D Well, ladies and gentlemen, with the end of the Christmas Celebration and the mall closing, there is only one thing left for us to do.

N That's right, Deborah. It's time to announce the winner of the "Perfect Christmas Mom" contest.

(There is an audible sob from Darlene.)

D Our "Perfect Christmas Mom" is the one that we've been following all week, and let me tell you, if there is anyone more deserving than this mom, I'd love to meet her.

(There is another audible sob from Darlene.)

N I've asked the family to come and help present the award. (Mitch, Emily, and Drew go to center.) You'll remember that we asked elementary school children from all over to write an essay saying why their mom is the perfect Christmas mom. Here is our essay winner to read just a little from her essay.

(Drew steps forward and reads. Throughout, Darlene sobs, increasing in volume and intensity as it goes along.)

DR This is why I believe that my mom is the "Perfect Christmas Mom" -- We all know that Christmas is a time which can be busy and full of stress, but through it all, my mom is always patient, relaxed, and self controlled. She never gets flustered or loses her temper as she handles everything that needs to get done. She wraps the presents, makes the cookies, decorates the house, and does everything she can to guarantee her family enjoys this special time of the year. She is always loving, kind, and gentle to each of us in the family, plus she welcomes our friends and neighbors to celebrate with us, even my sister's boyfriend, Snake, or our nosey neighbor, Mrs. Ripcroquette. When I grow up, I want to be just like my mom at Christmastime. I want to give my family the same wonderful memories that I have. There is no question that she is just the most perfect mom there could ever be at Christmastime, or all year long (big sob from Darlene).

D Thank you Drew, Ladies and gentlemen, let me introduce this year's "Perfect Christmas Mom"... Darlene Hampton!

(Cheering. Darlene lowers her hands in disbelief and turns to look at the stage.)

N           That's right, Darlene. It's you! Come on up. Everyone, this is her daughter Drew, the one who wrote the winning essay.

(Darlene joins her family on stage and is crowned. The crowd quiets.)

D           Congratulations, Darlene. Do you have anything you'd like to say?

(Darlene shakes her head "no.")

N           Are you sure?

(Darlene again shakes her head.)

ER          I'll speak for you, Darlene!

(Eileen starts to rush the stage, but Darlene gestures "NO" to Eileen, then goes to Nick.)

N           Darlene Hampton...the winner of the "Perfect Christmas Mom" contest...tell us how you're feeling right now.

(There is a pause as Darlene pulls herself together. Everyone focuses on her.)

DAR        You know, I've wanted everything this year to be perfect, and I wish I could tell you that it all is. My house...the presents...the cooking...or even me, but I can't...far from it. But, I'm beginning to understand that Christmas isn't about getting it all right. It's about the fact that we can love and be loved just the way we are. We don't have to earn it.

I guess the only thing left to say is...this Christmas is... just... perfect! I've got my perfect Christmas! (The crowd cheers as the lights go out.)

**SONG OF INVITATION:**

*"Jesus, Born on This Day" and Tag (CD cue #68)*

**WRAP-UP AND INVITATION BY PASTOR**

**CLOSING SONG:**

*"On That Day with One Day" (CD cue #78)*