

“Ghost of a Christmas Chance”

by
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- What** This modern-day Scrooge story follows Phil, a well-meaning husband and dad, who continues to overbook himself during the Christmas season, often leaving his family and the manger out completely.
Themes: Christmas, Advent, Second Chances, Scrooge, Redemption, Too Busy
- Who** Phil
Marvin
- When** Present
- Wear (Props)** Single chair at downstage center. Upstage left is a simple manger
Both in modern casual clothes. Marvin wears a sports jacket (or some other jacket)
- The past, present and future are all implied, so no setting or extra actors are necessary.
- Why** Matthew 11:28; 2 Peter 3:9
- How** Phil and Marvin can also be played by females, simply change the names. Have fun with each of the characters, but be careful not to overact, especially with Phil at the end during his monologue.
- An idea is to use your full stage and even different places in your worship center—the aisles, the choir loft, etc.—for the past, present and future locations.
- Time** Approximately 6 minutes

At curtain, we see Phil pacing and wringing his hands.

Phil: *(to himself)* Ohhkay big fella, you can do this, I have faith in you. Come on, you promised yourself and your family that THIS advent season would be different. No more rushing around like you've lost your mind. No more doing everything and anything and ending up exhausted on Christmas Eve. So, who cares if the church needs another wise man for the Christmas play. Who cares if the choir is one bass short? It's not my problem that we've been invited to 80 parties this year. *(Weakening, sitting down)* It's not...it's not my... *(standing up)* it IS MY PROBLEM!! I HAVE to be there for everyone! I can't let ANYone down! *(Goes to manger and grabs it, holds it up, looking skyward)* I pledge to BURN OUT for the Lord this year! I—

Marvin has come in at some point during this rant. He has a clipboard overloaded with papers/reports, etc. He is carrying a laptop and digital projector, plus balancing a PDA, too. Marvin is talking on his phone.

Marvin: Look Lucy, you CAN'T schedule these things so close together! I'm only ONE Christmas ghost, come on! You're killing me here...that is, if I could be killed. Anyway—no, I'm here now. I'll text you later.

Phil: *(sees Marvin and quickly lowers the manger)* Uh...who—?

Marvin: *(consulting his sheets, not looking up)* OHHkay, let's get this over with. Mister...Neddebaum. OK, says here you hate humanity, you're mean to your workers, could care less about charity, don't like puppies, you pull the wings off flies, blah blah blah.

Phil: Needlebaum? No, I'm Evans. Phil Evans. And who?

Marvin: Huh? Evans?! *(Shuffling thru papers again)* Wait, you're not scheduled until a week from Tuesday. *(To self)* LUCY!!

Phil: Ummmm—can I help you?

Marvin: Look pal, NO one can help me with this killer schedule. Back in the day, this visiting people who had their priorities out of whack was fun. We had plenty of help...we were redeeming people left and right. Bam! Bam! Bam! NOW—because of all this downsizing, I'm it! No more ghost of Christmas Past, Present and Future. Just one ghost—ME, doing it all. And trust me, I'm a ghost on the edge!!!

Phil: Um, er, bummer.

Marvin: Tell me about it! *(Takes a deep breath, exhales)* OK, OK, well, since I'm here now, I might as well get you out of the way. *(Starts setting up projector, laptop, screen)* Look, instead of me flying you through 50 time

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dimensions, let's just do this quick Power Point presentation and I'll be on my way.
Phil: Huh? Power—what's going on?

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Marvin: *(still setting up)* Not up on modern technology, huh? Great. Look, you were just complaining about not being able to say no, being too busy, etc. etc. etc.?

Phil: Yes, but—

Marvin: B.A.M.!! Behavioral and Attitude Modification my friend. That's what I do. *(Phil stares blankly)* Uggg. Umm, OK, ever hear of Scrooge? Christmas Carol? Tiny Bob or Tiny Tony or whatever that kid's name was? Hello?

Phil: Tim.

Marvin: No, Marvin. And you're...just take a WILD guess.

Phil: Uh, er, really? I'm supposed to be Ebenezer—

Marvin: Bingo! Give the man a cookie. Sooo, anyway, just sit back—I have handouts of the slides somewhere and we can knock out this bad boy.

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Phil: WAIT a minute. I don't care if this is supposed to be some sort of low-budget Christmas Carol, I still want the works. You know, touch your robe and we go flying through the clouds.

Marvin: You're killing me here, Tim.

Phil: Phil.

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Marvin: Whatever. *(Huge breath)* OHH kayyy. You really want the works? Fine. Let's dance!! *(In melodramatic voice)* Come thou mortal, touch thy robe *(looks down at self)* ...er, sport jacket, and be ye transformed in more than this.

Phil: Sweet!

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Phil touches Marvin's jacket and they both do the time travel thing with their hands and voice. They end up DSR. Phil blinks.

Phil: I can't see anything.

Marvin: Oh, right. *(Smacks Phil on the head)*

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Phil: Ow! Oh, OK, wow. That helped. HEY—this—this is where I grew up. The old house on Elm street. *(Pointing)* There's that big wheel that I loved so much. And there's the whole family, at dinner. I remember this! But,

where's my Dad? *(Remembers)* Oh, yeah. Right, right. Late again. So—
(sees Marvin is texting and not paying attention) Hey! Wanna quit
texting for like 2 minutes?

Marvin: *(puts phone away)* Sorry, sorry. OK, so here we are. *(Flat, unenthusiastic voice)* Magical, huh?

Phil: I remember this night. Christmas eve. Dad was juggling ten things at once like always. He always meant well, you know?

Marvin: Of course. *(Move to his other side)* Always well intentioned.

Phil: *(defending)* Hey, he was a talented guy and he was just using the gifts he was given.

Marvin: *(back to the other side)* Yeah...looks like he was given other gifts too...
(move again) like all of you. Sitting at the dinner table waiting for him. Waiting to share your special Christmas Eve dinner. He was a no-show, wasn't he?

Phil: *(still defending, but weaker now)* He...he had his reasons.

Marvin: *(back again)* Of course. Always. But look at your faces. No one seems to buy it.

Phil: I just wanted him there...all of us together at one time. All of us together with the Christmas story and the manger scene prominently displayed. Dad would always read us the Bible story...But as years went by it became less and less important.

Marvin: *(pause...checking his watch)* OK that's enough, grab the jacket again. Two more stops. *(Time travel thing)*

Phil: Okay, okay, If I remember my Dicken's story right, we are in present day. Yeah, there's my family!!

Marvin: Oh, that doesn't look so Christmas-y.

Phil: Ah no. The wife and I had a little "intense fellowship" about me attending one of the kid's dramas...or was it the musical? I don't remember. I had this major client that I had to meet in (LOCAL CITY). They were from China. Only here for a day or two. I also didn't realize my kids were hearing all our conversation. Ouch...

Marvin: Yeah, peaceful. The manger scene isn't a major player here is it? I think it's off in the corner. Oh, and look, I see your family Bible is there on the bookshelf. Lots of dust. It hasn't been open for some time now.

Phil: My wife just doesn't understand how important that presentation is! I can't just ditch all my clients for a simple Christmas pageant or just to read my kids some Bible story.

Marvin: Right. *(Pause)* Okay Phil, next stop. You know the drill.

Phil: Wait, you don't understand—

Marvin: I don't need to understand... *(time travel)*

Marvin slowly points and/or gesture like the Ghost of Christmas future.

Phil: *(looking around)* This is strange. *(Looking off in distance)* It...it looks like my house, but it seems so...different. Something's missing. What am I looking at? *(Looking for Marvin who's disappeared)* Marvin? Marvin?! Oh, fine, I get it, you're REALLY burying yourself in this part aren't ya? Okay I'll play along. *(Looks in distance again, to himself)* Weird. *(Spots the manger and goes to it)* It's Christmas Eve and there should be family around here. Laughing. Jumping around. Reading... *(voice fades)*. What happened? *(Confused)* Wait. Where am I now? Whose apartment is this? I shouldn't be here *(sees something and refers to it)*. Wait. That's my...my coat. But pretty beat up now. *(Points)* My old chair. My...briefcase. *(Panics)* Where's my kids? My wi— *(pause, then loud)* okay, Marvin, where are you hiding them?! Smack my head again so I can see them! *(Pause, no response—starting to break down)* Come on, man, show some mercy. This...this can't be the way it's gonna be. I LOVE my family. I'd never do anything to—to... *(starting to realize that he indeed lost them—hands to face in recognition, then slowly walks to manger)*. Tell me...please tell me it's not too late. *(Gripping the manger)* Please tell me I didn't give up everything for...nothing. *(Speaking to the manger now)* PLEASE...*(quiet)* come back. Into my life. Tell me it's not too late. Tell me.

He embraces the manger and holds. Perhaps instead of Marvin coming back out to do the time travel thing, there's a special effect—like quick flashes with stage light, like lightning. At the point, Phil looks around.

Phil: Whoa! *(As if coming out of a fog)* Where—where am I? Wow, that was intense. Better check the expiration date on the eggnog I drank. *(Shakes his head)* Had to have been a dream— *(sees manger again)*. Then again... *(remembering, starts to panic for a sec)* Wait, the apartment, I remember...where's— *(sees something off in distance)* No, wait, I'm here. Now! *(Sees the manger)* It's real. And it's not too late! *(Yells in direction of offstage right)* Liz! Kids! Yeah, I'm here! *(Listens as they respond; looks around)* Huh? Oh, yeah, guess I am outside. Coming! *(Starts to exit, then stops, runs back, gently picks up manger, and turns back)* And hey, throw out that eggnog!

Phil exits. Marvin comes downstage, looks after Phil, pumps his fist in victory.

Marvin: You know? Sometimes this job isn't all bad.

Lights out.

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