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"Gideon's Nighttime Academy of Sheep Herding"

By
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What Four aspiring shepherds are taking a night class from an experienced old shepherd, but the night takes an unexpected turn when an angel shows up.

Themes: Christmas, angels, Birth of Christ, The Good Shepherd

Who Gideon - an old man Rhoda - a teenage girl
Candace - a teenage girl Tobiah - a teenage boy
Jason - a teenage boy Gabriel - an angel

When Biblical Times, the night Jesus was born

Costumes Period clothing. Candace's robe should be pink (or adjust Gideon's relevant line)

Props Four sheets of parchment (or paper) with Gideon's syllabus on it.
A shepherd staff for each student. Opt. staff for Gideon, to keep his hands free.
A clipboard for Gideon

Why Luke 2:8-20

How No set is really required. Actor portraying Jason should try to vary the "I don't know" lines, and should savor the final line and present it clearly. Gideon's terrified reaction can be played for laughs. The angel choir can be your sanctuary choir or can be a video/sound/lighting effect. Try to make it grand, if possible. This script pairs well with "Angels Don't Do Diapers," using the same Gabriel actor.

Time 5 minutes

Lights up on four young shepherds waiting in a field at night.

Tobiah: *(shivering)* It's so cold.

Rhoda: *(with an I-told-you-so attitude)* It's not that bad! You're just a baby.

Tobiah sticks his tongue out at **Rhoda**.

Candace: Now, come on – stop that. If Gideon sees you acting like that, he'll kick us out of his class! Right, Jason?

Jason: *(shrugs)* I don't know.

Candace: Well, I know.

Tobiah: Whatever. I don't know why we're here anyway.

Gideon: *(enters and overhears)* Oh, you don't, do ya, kid?

All four snap to attention.

Tobiah: Oh – uh – sorry, sir.

Gideon: *(to Jason)* What about you? Why are you here?

Jason: I don't know.

Rhoda: We're here because we want to learn the art of shepherding.

Gideon: *(a little impressed)* Good answer, boy.

Candace: I'm a girl.

Gideon: What's that?

Candace: She's a girl. So am I.

Gideon: *(doesn't understand)* Speak up. You're mumbling. Well, let's get started. Welcome to GNASH - Gideon's Nighttime Academy of Sheep Herding. As the boy here stated – *(gestures to Rhoda, who starts to protest but Gideon continues)* – you're here to learn the ins and outs of herding sheep. Here's your detailed syllabus. *(passes out papers)* Study it. Know the deadlines. In eight short weeks, I'll have filled your heads with all the sheep knowledge they can hold.

Tobiah: *(aside to Jason)* What's a silly-bus?

Jason: I don't know.

Rhoda: *(looking at the page)* The final exam is half our grade?

Gideon: That's right, boy. Now – you – *(looking at Jason, who is awkwardly holding his staff in front of him)* you're holding that staff all wrong. Tell me... *(looks at his clipboard)* Jason, what is a staff for?

Jason: *(looks around helplessly)* I don't know.

Candace: *(eager to answer)* Oooh me, me!

Gideon: The boy in the pink.

Candace: But... *(decides correcting him is futile)* A shepherd's staff is used to guide the sheep. You can nudge them – gently – with the end or press the stick against their body to move them in a certain direction. If a sheep gets in trouble, you can use the hook to help pull them out.

Gideon: *(grudgingly impressed)* Good job, boy. Anyway – that's not for tonight. Tonight is about the philosophy of being a shepherd. You *(to Jason)* – what's the top priority of a shepherd?

Jason: I don't know.

Gideon: I'll come back to you. *(addresses Tobiah)* Well?

Tobiah: Ummmm... the top priority of a shepherd is... the sheep.

Gideon: Right. *(back to Jason)* What's job number one for a shepherd?

Jason: I don't know.

Gideon looks to **Rhoda** for an answer.

Rhoda: To protect the sheep?

Gideon: Is that a question or an answer, boy?

Rhoda: To protect the sheep!

Gideon: Good answer. Now... here's what you have to remember – being a shepherd – it can be difficult. It can be lonely. It can be frightening. But most of all... it can be BOOOOORING.

The shepherds laugh.

Gideon: It's true. That's why we meet at night... if you can survive nighttime... when almost nothing happens... night after night after night... then you *might* have it in you to be a shepherd.

Candace: My dad says being a shepherd is noble.

Gideon: Oh, does he? Is he a shepherd?

Candace: No, he's a rabbi at the synagogue.

Tobiah: Yeah, he teaches me and Jason.

Gideon: (to **Jason**) Why doesn't he teach your two friends?

Jason: I don't know.

Rhoda: (irritated) Because we're *girls*!

Candace: Yeah... it's not fair. But it's true.

Gideon: (realizes for the first time) *Girls?* I've got *girls* in my shepherd class?

Candace: We've been trying to tell you!

Rhoda: *(fiercely, perhaps even approaching eye-to-eye with **Gideon**)* And don't even think about kicking us out. This is a new era – a new millennia! There's no law that only boys can be shepherds!

Gideon: Well... I can't argue with that. And what you said about your dad... I agree. Being a shepherd is noble. *(nudges **Jason**)* Who was the most famous shepherd, hmm?

Jason: I don't know.

Tobiah: King David! He was a shepherd.

Gideon: That he was.

Candace: And he wrote the Psalms... and there's that one...

Rhoda: *(excitedly)* where he says the Lord is my shepherd!

Gideon: *(warming)* Y'know, lads... *(corrects himself)* and lasses (**Candace** and **Rhoda** are pleased)... maybe there's hope for this generation yet.

He begins to wax eloquent – turning toward the audience, not seeing what's about to happen behind him.

Gideon: Now – back to the boredom – it could drive a person batty, but I find that being out here is a great time to memorize the scriptures and ponder. Like Joshua says... meditate on his words day and night. We night shepherds have an advantage... most folks are sleeping at night – but we're awake.

*About this point, a bright light shines on the four young shepherds. **Gabriel** emerges, behind and unseen by **Gideon**, while the young shepherds are frozen in fear.*

Gideon: People overlook us shepherds – we're at the bottom of the rung, pretty much. But we have a responsibility, you could say – to carry the night time burden of praying and thinking while we watch our sheep. Now... tell me, what do you think of when you read the words of David about the Lord – it is He who made us – We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. And we have to pay attention. We owe it to the sheep to keep our eyes peeled. We can't let anything get past us.

***Gabriel** taps him on the shoulder, and **Gideon** turns to see him. He is comically terrified.*

Gabriel: *(with kindness)* Don't be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.

Optional: Lights bump to full on Angel choir.

Angels: *(thunderously, in unison)* Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!

*Lights out on choir. **Gabriel** exits.*

The following lines are quick – almost but not quite overlapping.

Candace: What in heavens was that?

Jason: I don't know!

Tobiah: Were those angels?

Jason: I don't know!

Rhoda: They were *definitely* angels... but why would they come to us?

Jason: I don't know!

These next lines from the students overlap as they chatter excitedly.

Rhoda: Is this a dream? Pinch me! *(offers her arm to **Candace**)*

Candace: It was so surreal! And bright! *(pinches her)*

Tobiah: That... was amazing... do you think the other guys will believe us?

Jason: I don't know!

Rhoda: Ow! Not so hard! So it's not a dream...

Candace: I've never *been* more awake!

Tobiah: I thought angels had four faces!

Rhoda: *(panicking, perhaps she drops to her knees)* Is this the end of the world??

In the moments after Rhoda's breakdown (and hopefully audience laughter), Gideon quickly speaks.

Gideon: *(firmly but not angrily)* Listen to me! Calm down.

They look to him silently.

Gideon: *(with contained excitement)* Kids... I think class is over for the night. This isn't on the syllabus... but I think it might be important for the final exam. Go and see what the angel told us about. Run ahead... I'll watch the sheep.
(they exit, with Jason bringing up the rear until Gideon calls his name) Jason – come back and tell me what you find, will ya, lad? This... this is something special.

Jason: *(smiles, then with confidence)* I know.

Jason exits as Gideon watches and smiles.

Blackout.