

a script from



WORSHIP

"The Thanksgiving Complaint Department"

By
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What At God's imaginary Thanksgiving Complaint Department, Christians arrive intending to register their gratitude, yet every expression of thanks comes attached to a complaint. A patient receptionist gradually helps them discover how easily the word "but" can erase the blessing that came before it.

Themes: Thanksgiving, Gratitude, Contentment, Blessings, Perspective, Stewardship

Who Receptionist - adult female
Carol - adult female
Mike - adult male

When Contemporary

Costumes Receptionist wears neat office attire and perhaps a name badge. Carol and Mike wear normal contemporary clothing.

Props Desk, three chairs, clipboard, pens, complaint forms, small desk sign reading "THANKSGIVING," Bible, file folders

Why 1 Thessalonians 5:18

How The Receptionist should never become a comedian or play for laughs. Carol and Mike should also be believable. The drama should leave the congregation asking whether they routinely place a "but" after God's blessings.

Time 7-8 minutes

Lights up on a simple office. A sign on the desk reads "THANKSGIVING." The **Receptionist** is arranging paperwork. **Carol** enters.

Reception: Good morning. Welcome to the Thanksgiving Department. How can I help you?

Carol: I'm here to give thanks.

Reception: Wonderful. We don't get enough of that.

Carol: Really?

Reception: You'd be surprised.

The **Receptionist** picks up a form.

Reception: Name?

Carol: Carol.

Reception: And what would you like to give thanks for?

Carol: My house.

Reception: Excellent.

The **Receptionist** begins writing.

Carol: I'm very grateful for it.

Reception: Good.

Carol: Although it is getting a little small.

The **Receptionist** stops writing.

Reception: Sorry?

Carol: The house. We've outgrown it.

Reception: But you're thankful for it?

Carol: Absolutely. Very thankful.

Reception: Excellent.

Carol: But the kitchen is hopeless.

Reception: Right.

Carol: And the bathroom desperately needs renovating.

Reception: I see.

Carol: And our neighbors have just put in this enormous outdoor entertaining area.

Reception: Are we still giving thanks?

Carol: Of course.

Reception: Just checking.

*The **Receptionist** writes carefully.*

Reception: Anything else?

Carol: My family.

Reception: Wonderful.

Carol: I have been enormously blessed.

Reception: Excellent.

Carol: But have you met my children?

*The **Receptionist** slowly puts the pen down.*

Carol: I love them.

Reception: Of course.

Carol: But getting them to help around the house—

Reception: There's the "but" again.

Carol: What?

Reception: Nothing.

Mike enters.

Mike: Is this the Thanksgiving Department?

Reception: It was when I arrived this morning.

Mike: Great. I've got plenty to be thankful for.

Reception: Please. Sit down.

Mike: I've got a good job.

Reception: Wonderful.

Mike: Great company. Good people.

Reception: Excellent.

Mike: But my boss—

*The **Receptionist** closes his/her eyes briefly.*

Mike: Have you ever had one of those bosses?

Reception: I work for God.

Mike: Right. Probably not.

Reception: Let's stay with the job.

Mike: I'm very grateful for it.

Reception: Without a "but"?

Pause.

Mike: How long do I have to answer?

Reception: Just give it a try.

Mike: I'm thankful for my job.

Pause.

Reception: And?

Mike: That's it.

Reception: Good.

Mike: Except—

Reception: No.

Mike: I didn't say "but."

Reception: Hmmmm...

Carol: I'm thankful for our church.

Reception: Wonderful.

Carol: Really thankful.

Reception: Good.

Carol: But—

Reception: Of course.

Carol: The air-conditioning.

Mike: Oh, absolutely.

Carol: Freezing.

Mike: Depends where you sit. My side is hot.

Carol: And the parking.

Mike: Don't get me started on the parking.

Carol: And sometimes the music—

Mike: Too loud.

Carol: Sometimes.

Mike: Other weeks it's too soft.

Carol: Exactly.

*The **Receptionist** turns the Thanksgiving sign around. On the reverse side it reads "COMPLAINTS."*

Mike: What are you doing?

Reception: Just trying to identify which department I'm actually running.

Carol: We're grateful people.

Reception: I'm sure you are.

Mike: We've just said how grateful we are.

Reception: Yes.

*The **Receptionist** studies the form.*

Reception: House—too small.

Carol: Well—

Reception: Kitchen—hopeless. Bathroom—outdated. Neighbors—too successful.

Carol: I didn't say *too* successful.

Reception: I summarized.

*The **Receptionist** turns to Mike.*

Reception: Job—good. Boss—apparently not.

Mike: Accurate.

Reception: Church—good. Temperature, parking and music—unacceptable.

Pause.

Reception: Interesting.

Carol: What?

Reception: You both came in to tell me about your blessings.

Mike: Yes.

Reception: But most of what I've written down is what's wrong with them.

***Carol** and **Mike** exchange a look.*

Carol: That's a little confronting.

Mike: I preferred the air-conditioning discussion.

*The **Receptionist** turns the sign back to "THANKSGIVING."*

Reception: Let's try something different.

Carol: What?

Reception: No "buts."

Mike: At all?

Reception: At all.

Mike: That seems unnecessarily restrictive.

Reception: One minute. Tell me what you are thankful for, and you are not allowed to add anything.

Carol thinks.

Carol: I have a home.

Pause.

Reception: Period.

Carol: Period.

Mike: I have work that provides for my family.

Reception: Period.

Mike: Period.

Carol: I have children I love.

Mike: I have people who love me.

Carol: I have food every day.

Mike: I have friends.

Carol: I have a church family.

Mike: I have people who pray for me.

Mike and Carol's delivery gradually slows.

Carol: I have more than I need.

Mike: So do I.

Pause.

Carol: I don't think about that very often.

Reception: That may be the problem.

Mike: What is?

Reception: Blessings become normal.

*The **Receptionist** picks up the Bible.*

Reception: And once a blessing becomes normal, we stop noticing the blessing and start noticing what's wrong with it.

Pause.

Carol: The house is still small.

Reception: Yes.

Carol: But—

*The **Receptionist** looks at her.*

Carol: Sorry.

*The **Receptionist** starts again.*

Carol: I have a home.

Reception: There you go.

Mike: My boss is still difficult.

Reception: Probably.

Mike: But—

*The **Receptionist** raises an eyebrow.*

Mike: I have a job.

Pause.

Reception: Paul wrote, "Give thanks in all circumstances."

Carol: Not *for* all circumstances.

Reception: Exactly. Gratitude doesn't mean pretending everything is perfect.

Mike: It means refusing to let what's wrong make us forget what's good.

Reception: Now you're getting it.

Carol looks at the complaint forms.

Carol: So what happens to those?

Reception: These?

The **Receptionist** gathers the forms.

Reception: I think we can shred them.

Mike: All of them?

Reception: Unless you want to keep the one about the air-conditioning.

Carol: No.

Mike: Maybe just—

Carol looks at him.

Mike: No. Shred it.

The **Receptionist** smiles.

Carol: You know, I thought Thanksgiving meant remembering to say thank you.

Reception: It does.

Carol: Maybe it also means learning to notice what we've stopped noticing.

Pause.

Mike: Without adding a "but."

Reception: Especially without adding a "but."

Carol and Mike begin to leave.

Mike: Thank you.

Reception: You're welcome.

Mike: This has been very helpful.

Reception: Glad to hear it.

Mike: Although—

*The **Receptionist** slowly reaches for the "COMPLAINTS" sign.*

Mike: No. I'm good.

He exits quickly. Carol follows.

*The **Receptionist** turns the sign back to "THANKSGIVING," looks at it for a moment, then addresses the thought quietly rather than directly preaching to the audience.*

Reception: Maybe Thanksgiving begins when we stop putting a "but" after every blessing.

Lights fade.