

Bad Christians

"Pilot"

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COLD OPENEXT. COURTYARD - MORNING

SAM (23, reluctant leader) NAOMI (22, tough, passionate) and MATT (35, schlubby, loose cannon) sit at a table, sipping COFFEE and staring at their PHONES. Matt smokes a CIGARETTE.

SAM

Wow, seventy "likes" already. People are loving these pics.

(thinking)

Is it bad to "like" photos of poor Haitian children?

Matt and Naomi shrug it off.

NAOMI

Oh here's a *great* one of me holding that sweet little girl.

She shows them a photo on her phone.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

I'll never forget the way she looked at me when she said "please Naomi, don't ever leave." We were like besties.

SAM

What was her name again?

NAOMI

(stumped)

Huh. I don't remember.

MATT

Well I for one have been humbled... no, changed, by the experience.

A pause. They sip their coffees.

SAM

Devil's advocate... do you think it's possible we didn't *actually* do a lot of good while we were in Haiti?

NAOMI

You're overthinking it.

MATT

They'll be fiiiine.

SAM

I'm just saying. We formed bonds only to leave after two weeks, and we didn't even finish building that well, which was the whole point in even going...

(CONTINUED)

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NAOMI

We could always go back.
(light bulb)
And we could start a revolution!

Sam and Matt groan.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

What?

MATT

You always want to start a revolution.
If everyone went around having revolutions
all the time, nothing would ever get done.

SAM

Except revolutions.

NAOMI

Whatever. We'll see who's laughing when
I finally get around to starting one.

SAM

(thinking)
I mean, we must have done *some* good over
there, right?

Matt scoots over to Sam and puts his arm around him.

MATT

Hey, we spread some joy and got a free
trip out of it. And check this out --
(showing Sam his phone)
I just Amazon Prime'd some food over to
what's-her-name's village.

NAOMI

It's Cynthia!
(then, thinking)
No, that's not right. Sandy? No...

MATT

A drone is dropping off a pallet of mac n'
cheese right now as we speak. Doesn't get
much more "do-good" than that.

SAM

Don't you think a flying robot might
scare them?

NAOMI

And did you also send milk, pans, and
clean water? ... All of which is needed
to make boxed macaroni?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Matt thinks about this, then types on his phone.

MATT

Fine, order cancelled. Geez you try to do one nice thing.

They look up and notice VOLUNTEERS WITH LANYARDS setting up BOOTHS nearby. Sam checks his watch.

SAM

Guess we should head over. You guys wanna pray before service starts?

Matt and Naomi groan.

NAOMI

I mean we could, but we're about to go to church... seems like overkill?

MATT

Yeah I already prayed this morning over breakfast.

SAM

How 'bout this:

(praying)

Dear God, you already know all things, so... we pray for everything that we would have prayed about today. Amen.

NAOMI

Bravo, Sam. Very efficient.

MATT

Yeah, dope shortcut!

Sam finishes his coffee, then crumples the cup.

SAM

Happy Sunday, friends. Let's go be good Christians.

Sam throws his coffee cup toward the trash, but misses. They walk over to the booths and put on their own lanyards as the congregation arrives for the morning service. A sign reads: "WELCOME TO UNITY CHURCH."

Smash to title: **"BAD CHRISTIANS"**

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONEEXT. UNITY CHURCH - COURTYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Churchgoers mill about in the courtyard before the service. Unity isn't quite big enough to be a megachurch, but has the same sort of vibe. Matt gives a tour to RAJ (24, kind). We see several groups of Christians as Matt lists them:

MATT

So over there we've got some older Christians... young parents... Jocks for Jesus... hipster musician dudes... overly spiritual weirdos... Unity Church is unique in that it is *divided* into different cliques. I think there's a term for that...

RAJ

Irony?

MATT

Yeah, that.

Matt takes two COFFEES from a coffee booth and hands one to Raj.

MATT (CONT'D)

Oh, check it out -- over there are some *hungover* Christians.

A few ill-looking YOUNG ADULTS wait in line for the bathroom.

MATT (CONT'D)

Worst part of church being on a Sunday morning? Comes after Saturday night.

(then)

So what type of Christian are you?

RAJ

Oh, I'm not a Christian. Agnostic, actually! I stopped by the "new members" booth to inquire about a job, but you immediately started giving me a tour.

MATT

(With a laugh)

Classic Matt. I tend to act without thinking. Not my biggest sin though. My biggest sin is definitely internet porn.

RAJ

(quickly jumping in)

I do landscaping! I noticed you guys had some weeds and thought I could lend a hand.

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We see tons of WEEDS surrounding the property.

MATT

I gotcha, Aggy. *Short for Agnostic*, congrats on the nickname. Pastor handles the hiring, I'll take you to his office.

As they turn around, Raj bumps into HEATHER (23, uppity and proper, a bit intense). She talks on a HEADSET.

HEATHER

No, Jeremy, we cannot use *Triscuits* as communion wafers. Plus, the ones you bought are *Habanero* flavored. That is definitely not the way Christ intended his body to be consumed.

Raj holds out his hand.

RAJ

Hi, I'm Raj. Sorry for bumping into you.

HEATHER

Heather.

They shake hands and smile at one another.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

Has Matt taken you by the singles booth? I believe every Christian man should be thoroughly educated on the intricacies of Christian dating.

(then)

That is, of course, if you're single.

RAJ

Oh, um, well I'm not -- I mean, I am single, but I'm not exactly a --

HEATHER

Great! Follow me.

Heather drags him away.

EXT. UNITY CHURCH - COURTYARD - SINGLES BOOTH

Naomi is working at the singles booth. She talks with RUTH (22).

NAOMI

I'm just saying, if you want to find a husband, that's cool and everything. But I'm here to let you know that it's *okay* to be single. In fact, it can be a huge blessing!

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RUTH

You know what? You make a great point.
Why does the church treat singleness like
it's some kind of disease?

NAOMI

(pleasantly surprised)
My thoughts exactly! Here's some
literature.

She hands Ruth a pamphlet that reads: *You're Never Alone When
You Have Jesus*. Ruth walks away as Heather and Raj approach.

HEATHER

Naomi, this is Raj. Sign him up for the
Christian Dating 101 class.
(to Raj, excited)
There will be coffee.

NAOMI

(aside to Raj)
And you will want to kill yourself.

Raj is taken aback. Heather listens to her headset.

HEATHER

(on headset)
You're opening with a *Sarah McLachlan*
song? This is church, Jeremy, not an ad
campaign to save some dog from euthanasia.

She exits. Matt approaches, noticing Raj staring at Heather.

MATT

Yeah good luck with that, bro.

He puts his arm around Raj and they walk off.

INT. CHURCH - SANCTUARY/BACKSTAGE - LATER

A screen projects images of Sam, Matt and Naomi holding Haitian
children as a SARAH MCLACHLAN SONG plays. Heather shoots an
annoyed look to JEREMY, who shrugs. Sam watches backstage. He's
sweating and drinking from a THERMOS. Naomi approaches.

NAOMI

You okay man? You look... not so hot.

SAM

Couldn't be better.

He takes another swig. The song fades out as Sam, Matt and
Naomi walk on stage. Heather grabs a mic and addresses them.

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HEATHER

Wow. These photos sure do speak volumes. You three have obviously done a tremendous job serving Haiti.

Sam, Matt and Naomi produce forced smiles.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

And as a reward for your service, church leadership has a little surprise for you.

She takes a breath, excited.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

We are flying out your orphanage director, Jean-Jean, and will be throwing a banquet to celebrate all of the hearts you've turned to Christ! I'm sure your conversion numbers are just off the charts!

Cheers and applause. Sam is sweating.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

Naomi, would you like to say a few words about the mission? Perhaps about how you rescued them from voodoo or whichever snake God they worship? Just kidding, of course!

The congregation laughs. Heather hands Naomi the mic.

NAOMI

It was definitely life-changing. They may not have enough clean water, but we were able to start production on a well that we sincerely hope they will finish.

The congregation applauds. Naomi passes the mic to Matt.

MATT

But the most important gift we gave them was hope. And also these Bible character trading cards with inspirational quotes on the back.

(holding one up)

This one says, "never put off tomorrow what you can do today."

The congregation applauds. Matt hands the mic to Sam. Sam takes it, but then just stares at the photos on the screen.

HEATHER

Sam? I can see that you are obviously overcome with emotion, so why don't you just close us in prayer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He smiles and nods. Everyone bows their heads.

SAM

Dear God, thank you for using us to help
make Haiti just a little bit better --

He pauses, then VOMITS on the stage. The congregation gasps.

INT. CHURCH - WOMEN'S BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sam lies down in a stall, feet sticking out. From his view
he sees two HIGH HEELS approach.

SAM

Hi, um, this is the men's bathroom...

Heather opens the stall door and crouches down next to him.

HEATHER

It's a touch light on urinals for a *men's*
bathroom.

Sam quickly sits up and realizes where he is.

SAM

Heather! I'll be out in a second. Just
had a little too much coffee.

HEATHER

Coffee? Why then, does the sanctuary
reek of a brewery? Sam, you are Pastor's
right-hand man and have an example to set
for this church. Are you willing to give
that up for some pre-noon booze?! People
would kill to be in your position.

SAM

Trust me, I'm well aware. Okay, getting
up now. Feeling much better, Hallelujah!

He stands up, clutching his stomach.

HEATHER

Actually, Pastor has insisted that I set
up a meeting between the two of you
for... right now.

Sam sighs and exits.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

But please be sure to respect his time,
he has an important sermon to prepare.
He's calling it "Suppression: God's
Answer to Most Problems."

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She runs out after him. Matt emerges from one of the stalls, puts out a WEED CIGARETTE and waves away the smoke. A GIRL walks in and then right back out.

INT. CHURCH - PASTOR RICK'S OFFICE - DAY

PASTOR RICK (60s, selfish, objectively hateful, yet has a sweet demeanor) sits with Raj.

RAJ

...And I thought I could lend a hand!
I've got years of landscaping experience,
and I'm a very hard worker.

PASTOR RICK

I'm gonna stop ya right there, bud. We are a Christian church, so I'd prefer to have a *Christian* do the work. No offense! That's how I diffuse any anger that I might trigger. By saying "no offense!"

RAJ

I see. Well, it worked. I'm not offended!

Sam walks in, Heather in tow. Raj moves out of their way.

PASTOR RICK

Sammy! How are you feeling?

SAM

Thanks for penciling me in, Pastor.

PASTOR RICK

Please, call me *dad*.

HEATHER

Sir, I know tattling is a sin, but alcoholism is arguably a larger one. Sam was *drinking* --

PASTOR RICK

-- Too much coffee, yes. Sammy would never do anything to intentionally embarrass the church. And due to grace, his "cookie tossing" has already been forgiven and forgotten. Right, Sammy?

He gives Sam an awkward, stilted hug.

SAM

(theatrically)
Yep! Everything is great and fine and wonderful, as always!

(MORE)

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SAM (CONT'D)

Now if there's nothing else, I have a
little more

(burps)

Purging to do. Of my sins, of course.

Sam exits. Heather takes a seat in front of Pastor Rick.

HEATHER

How lucky Sam must feel to be the son of
such a revered Pastor. The way you
handled that just now with a message of
grace? Phenomenal. Like Jesus himsel--

PASTOR RICK

(cutting her off)

Heather, what's my day looking like?

Heather clenches her teeth, then pulls out a huge PLANNER.

HEATHER

Let's see... you've got a Kids Club
meeting at four, a Planned Parenthood
protest at five, and then at six, you
have a meeting... with me! Which we put
on the books back in February.

PASTOR RICK

Let's have that meeting now. You've got
two minutes.

HEATHER

(excited)

Well, I've been filling in as service
coordinator a lot more lately, and I
thought maybe I could take a stab at the
job *permanently*.

PASTOR RICK

Ahp-ahp-ahp! Remember what the Bible
says. Women are not to take on
leadership roles, remember? No offense.

HEATHER

But, I'm overqualified for the position.

PASTOR RICK

Great, think of it that way! Not my rule,
God's rule. You're still my right-hand
woman though, for all matters related to
hospitality and administration, and when I
sometimes need the Mustang washed. Right?

(CONTINUED)

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HEATHER
(resigned)
... Of course.

PASTOR RICK
That's my girl. My Girl Friday.

He winks at her. She exits, deflated. Pastor Rick looks over his sermon, not noticing that Raj is still there.

RAJ
Thank you for your time!

Pastor Rick is startled and clutches his chest.

PASTOR RICK
Jesu-- You're still here?

Raj awkwardly slinks out.

INT. CHURCH - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

A frustrated Heather walks down the hallway. Raj catches up to her.

RAJ
Heather, are you okay?

Heather turns around, manufacturing a smile.

HEATHER
I'm fine! Totally fine. Perfect, in fact. Another beautiful, perfect Sunday.

RAJ
Would you like to get coffee later? I'm assuming you like coffee, based on the vats of it you guys serve here. We could talk about what happened in there.

HEATHER
Nothing "happened" in there.
(then, taking a breath)
I do enjoy coffee though, you were right about that. Save you a seat inside?

RAJ
Oh, um, I'm not going to the service. I just wanted to help you guys clean up your weeds. I'm actually *Agnostic*.

HEATHER
I see. Well it was a pleasure meeting you and best of luck with your life.

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She turns and walks away. Raj shouts after her.

RAJ
So it's a "no" to that coffee?

She turns back and walks toward him.

HEATHER
Raj, I've been through this scenario a thousand times. *"Atheist boy tries to get nice Christian girl into bed."*

RAJ
I just want to get coffee. And I'm not Atheist, I'm *Agnostic*.

HEATHER
Even better, someone who can't make up their mind. I'll pray for you.

She walks away. Off a stunned Raj.

INT. CHURCH - SANCTUARY - A LITTLE LATER

We pan down from a MURAL of Pastor Rick reading to children, to Pastor Rick *presently* reading to children. AARON (5) sits on his lap. Heather and Sam sit in the pews, miserable.

PASTOR RICK
And God says in Corinthians: "Homosexuals will not inherit the Kingdom of God." I think I would also add *abortionists* to this verse. You know Aaron, if God permitted abortion, you may not have ever existed.

AARON
Wowwwww.

The congregation "awws" at Aaron's cuteness. A woman who appears to be his MOTHER shifts uncomfortably in her seat.

PASTOR RICK
But church, rejoice! We are a people who are far from such sins. What do we tell those who are dealing with any type of earthly struggle?

CONGREGATION
Just Pray Harder!

PASTOR RICK
That's right! Whether you've got cancer, or depression, or even those occasional gay thoughts, Just. Pray. Harder.

(MORE)

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PASTOR RICK (CONT'D)
(to kids)
Okay kiddos, back to your parents.

The kids head back toward the congregation.

PASTOR RICK (CONT'D)
Now it's time to pass around the baskets.
We accept all major credit cards, Paypal,
Venmo, Apple Pay, and yes, we still take
checks. I'm talkin' to you, Marsha.

MARSHA (80s) smiles as she writes out a check. Sam sees POLICE LIGHTS outside, then notices Rick quickly gathering his things.

PASTOR RICK (CONT'D)
Just keep those baskets movin'. Now I'll
say a quick prayer and it's off to Sunday
brunch for all of us.

Two OFFICERS enter. Rick makes his way to the side door as he prays. He slowly opens it and winces at its creakiness.

PASTOR RICK (CONT'D)
Lord, we thank you that even though we
all make mistakes, you forgive us, and we
are then able to avoid punishment. Amen.

He's almost out the door as the Officers approach him.

OFFICER #1
Pastor Rick, stop right there.

PASTOR RICK
Oh, hello Officers! Have you come for
some prayer? Perhaps for those *Black
Lives Matter* folks to lighten up a bit?

They cuff him. The congregation stirs and murmurs.

OFFICER #2
You're under arrest for drug possession
and distribution.

Gasps. Parents pull their children close as the officers escort Pastor Rick away.

PASTOR RICK
This is just a misunderstanding. Not to
worry! Keep passing the baskets along!

Naomi and Matt look at one another in shock. Heather and Sam stare up at the mural in horror.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOINT. JAIL - VISITATION AREA - LATER

Pastor Rick awaits a visitor. On the other side of the glass appears: HEATHER. She picks up the phone.

PASTOR RICK

Heather! You've come to my rescue. You know, I wouldn't be here right now if there wasn't that damned separation of church and state.

HEATHER

Pastor, I need you to be very honest with me. Are these accusations regarding drug dealings... correct?

PASTOR RICK

A donor paid me to send a few conspicuous packages overseas. That's it! You would never punish the person who *transports* the drugs, would you? I'm being persecuted!

HEATHER

How could you allow this to happen?

PASTOR RICK

He funded the Haiti trip.
(pointed)
And how could we not give to the people of Haiti? That's God's will.

HEATHER

And your new Mustang?

PASTOR RICK

Also God's will! Is Sammy coming? Or did he give you any cash to bail me out? Listen, take the collection money from this week, add it up, see if it's enough.

HEATHER

But that money is for the needy families.

PASTOR RICK

I'm needy, technically. And there's no church if there's no me. Right, sweetie?

HEATHER

You know Pastor, I thought that while you were out, I could take over in the interim. As you know, it's my dream to one day lead a church.

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PASTOR RICK

Heather, we've talked about this. Women just aren't built to lead. You're a Bible-believing lady, right?

HEATHER

(frustrated)

I thought I was. But maybe now I'll be like you and make up my own rules. "It's okay to steal money from the church. It's okay to talk down to women. It's okay to possess and distribute illicit substances."

Other inmates and visitors look over at them.

PASTOR RICK

Heather you're overreacting. All we need to do is pray. Just Pray Harder, remember? God will see this through.

Heather considers this for a moment.

PASTOR RICK (CONT'D)

Now about that collection money...

Heather angrily hangs up the phone and walks away.

INT. SAM'S HOUSE - PASTOR RICK'S ROOM - LATER

Sam, Matt and Naomi watch as POLICE OFFICERS remove DRUG PARAPHERNALIA from Pastor Rick's room.

OFFICER

I'm sorry, Sam. This must be very difficult for you.

SAM

Yes, well, I'm sure it's all somehow a blessing in disguise.

OFFICER

That's the spirit.

The Officer pats Sam on the shoulder and walks away. Sam pours himself a drink as Naomi approaches.

NAOMI

How are you holding up?

SAM

I'm a little shaken, but this is great. Gives me something to pray about.

He pours himself a little more.

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NAOMI

Sam, I'm sure you're totally fine like you always say you are, but anything you need, let me know.

SAM

Thanks Naomi.

NAOMI

I'm gonna cover the Planned Parenthood ministry while your dad is out. Least I can do to help.

SAM

Just promise me, no revolutions.

NAOMI

(hand up)
On my honor, no revolutions.

She exits. Matt walks over with a ZUNE.

MATT

Dude! Check it out. Your dad has a *Zune*. Who owns a *Zune*? And why is it hollowed out?

(realizing)

Oh, do you think this was for...

SAM

Matt, please give my dad's Zune to the police officer.

Matt nods and promptly walks away.

EXT. PLANNED PARENTHOOD - LATER

Naomi takes her place at a booth outside of a Planned Parenthood. Her parents, VAL and KEITH (50s, conservative) approach wearing "Unity Church Volunteer" T-shirts.

KEITH

There's our little girl.

NAOMI

What are you guys doing here?

VAL

Since Pastor is off dealing with those *definitely false* accusations, we decided to help out more around the church.

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CONTINUED:

KEITH

Plus it gives us more time to spend with our daughter! Now where do we get those signs with the dead babies on them.

NAOMI

We don't. I'm using this opportunity to turn Rick's protest into something *loving*. To support women, not condemn them.

KEITH

It's one man, one woman.

NAOMI

You're hating the wrong thing, dad.

VAL

(to Naomi)

Speaking of traditional marriage, I've been praying for you to find a husband.

NAOMI

(rubbing her temples)

Oh God.

KEITH

Val, we've talked about this: it will happen in the Lord's time.

VAL

(dismissive)

The Lord will align our timings. Naomi, you're running a singles group for God's sake. Practice what you preach, dear.

NAOMI

I'm running a singles group to preach that there is *nothing wrong with singleness*. Jesus was single, mom, have you gotten that far in the Bible yet?

Val sees a GIRL (15) leaving the clinic and shouts after her.

VAL

Baby killer! I'm praying for you!

(to Naomi)

Could you imagine if your sister had chosen to abort any of her five boys who are all currently going through puberty at the same time?

NAOMI

I'm gonna go talk to that young woman and make her feel loved. And mom...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NAOMI (CONT'D)

(pointed)

I'll make sure to pray for you.

Naomi walks off. Val turns to Keith.

VAL

Well what could she mean by that? I don't need prayer for anything.

Keith shrugs. Naomi approaches the girl.

NAOMI

Hello, I'm Naomi. I'm a Christian but I also believe in things like feminism and a woman's right to choose. Did you want to talk about the difficult choice you made today?

GIRL

I'm just here to get free condoms. Stop condemning me!

(storming off)

Friggin' Jesus freak.

Naomi looks at her parents. They give her a thumbs up.

INT. CHURCH - BOARDROOM - DAY

Heather enters the boardroom to find three elderly board members: VIRGINIA, HAROLD, AND PAUL. She approaches the podium with her massive PLANNER.

HEATHER

Hello, Board. Virginia, my fellow woman. Girl power!

She raises her fist. Virginia doesn't react.

PAUL

Heather, are you here to take notes on our meeting? You're a bit early.

HEATHER

I'm not here for that. In light of Pastor Rick's recent scandal --

HAROLD

-- *False accusations*, you mean.

HEATHER

Sure. In any case, please hear me out. I have served this church for over ten years.

(MORE)

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HEATHER (CONT'D)

I coordinate hospitality, events and missions, counsel women and handle petty cash. I have a master's degree in theology, and I'm basically running this place anyway, so I'd like to nominate myself for the role of Interim Pastor. Sam is clearly not in any shape to lead, and I am more than prepared to.

The Board looks at one another. Then, Sam enters, bags under his eyes and THERMOS in-hand. He sits down next to the Board.

SAM

Hi everyone. Sorry I'm late.

HEATHER

Sam! Shouldn't you be tending to your father's "incident?" My deepest condolences, by the way.

PAUL

We called him for guidance.

SAM

And who am I to deny providing help to my father's flock?

(forced smile)

No matter how intensely trying and difficult the circumstances may be.

HAROLD

Better to have some of Rick's DNA than no Rick at all!

HEATHER

Anyway, Board, I know that you will make an educated decision regarding this leadership role, keeping in mind the long, long, long list of things I do for this church.

PAUL

Heather, we will absolutely consider you. Now let us pray.

They bow and pray silently. Heather and Sam follow suit.

HAROLD/PAUL/VIRGINIA

(simultaneous)

Amen.

HAROLD

We vote for Sam.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Heather and Sam both let out a sigh.

PAUL

You've got a great resume, Heather, it's just that...

PAUL (CONT'D)

Women can't--

HEATHER

Women can't, I know.

Heather packs up her planner and walks over to Sam.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

(forced smile)

Congratulations, Pastor.

She slams her planner down in front of him. He jumps.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

Here are a million things you need to do this week. Counseling, meetings, preparation for the Haiti banquet...

HAROLD

Heather, were you taking down notes for this session? What was the last thing we said? I can't remember.

HEATHER

(gritted teeth)

You said Sam will lead the church.

HAROLD

Right, of course. Thank you dear.

Off a nervous Sam and a frustrated Heather.

EXT. CHURCH - COURTYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Heather storms out. She notices Raj outside pulling weeds.

HEATHER

Hey. Atheist boy. You're doing this... pro-bono?

RAJ

Agnostic. And yes! You all seem to be going through a tough time so I thought I'd offer my services, free of charge.

HEATHER

You're a better Christian than all of us. And you're not even a Christian.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAJ

Thank you? I'm sorry? Not sure how to respond to that.

HEATHER

(realizing)

That's why you're so content. You've got it all figured out. Why should I waste another second practicing a religion that tells me I don't matter?

(taking his hands)

Let's have that talk you wanted. I've suddenly got some free time because I'm leaving the church and I'm not coming back. Raj, I'm one of you now!

RAJ

Oh, well wait a second--

Off a nervous Raj.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREEINT. CHURCH - PASTOR RICK'S OFFICE - LATER

Sam sits at his father's desk and looks through Heather's giant planner. Matt and Naomi sit across from him.

MATT

Sam, I know the pressure's high, and you're expected to step in, and everyone needs you, and this is all on your shoulders --

NAOMI

Matt, get to whatever you're trying to say.

MATT

... Oh, I don't know where I was going with that. Sorry.

NAOMI

Sam, I can't imagine how you must be feeling. You don't have to do this.

SAM

I do though. And even if I didn't want to, I should, because it's not about me, it's about serving the people of this church. I'm the Pastor now. Pastor Sam. Pastor Sam the Pastor Man.

MATT

Well, I guess it can't be that hard. Except this Haiti event is pretty huge, and a big first appearance as Pastor --

NAOMI

Matt, get to the point.

MATT

... Oh, again, not sure where I was going with that. Sorry.

NAOMI

We can totally help out with the Haiti stuff. Don't worry about a thing.

SAM

Thanks guys. I'm sure everything will work out just fine.

JEAN-JEAN (40s, Haitian) enters.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JEAN-JEAN

Hi friends, just flew in. I was wondering if you could move me to a room at the W down the block? The Motel 6 is a bit "dirty" for my tastes. I may live in Haiti, but I still know how to use Yelp.

They stare at him. Sam manufactures a smile.

SAM

Welcome Jean-Jean. And of course, anything you need, you got it.

JEAN-JEAN

It's the least you could do for the damage you've done to our community. Can't wait for this banquet!

They stare at Jean-Jean, and then at one another. Guilt is sinking in.

JEAN-JEAN (CONT'D)

Oh don't worry, I'll lie to make it sound like it was a worthwhile trip. Can I charge room service to the church account?

Before Sam can respond, a middle-aged couple, CAROLINE and BILL enter.

CAROLINE

Hi Pastor, we have counseling scheduled for today. And I'd like to talk about how Bill has been watching internet pornography.

BILL

It's not pornography, it's just those pop-up ads of sexy women that come up when you download movies illegally!

Sam looks outside and notices a long line of people. He walks over and opens the door to the crowd, including a YOUNG MOTHER (30s) holding a child, and an OLDER MAN (60s).

YOUNG MOTHER

Pastor Sam, we need change.

OLDER MAN

The church is fine and the accusations against Rick are unfounded! Sam, keep everything the same.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAM

Hello everyone. As Pastor, I promise to help each and every one of you with your problems, and --

YOUNG MOTHER

Completely overhaul the church!

OLDER MAN

Keep everything the same!

SAM

-- Yes. To both of those things.

CROWD

Sam is our savior! Sam is our savior!

Sam flashes a fake smile at the crowd. Matt and Naomi stand behind him, nervous.

INT. TEA PLACE - LATER

Heather has tea with Raj.

HEATHER

(ranting)

Tea is such a refreshing alternative to coffee. I don't know how coffee became such a "thing" in the Christian community. It's a symbol of gluttony, if you ask me. Which is a sin by the way, but better not to acknowledge it as such if everyone indulges! I'm over Christian hypocrisy. Not my problem anymore.

RAJ

Hold on, back to your story. They wanted you to *take notes*?

HEATHER

The leaders have a weird thing with women. It's as if I'm still just a "rib" to them. A little rib walking around like

(cartoon voice)

"Oh, look me, I'm just a rib. Came from man, so I can never be as good as one"

RAJ

How awful to be treated that way. I'm so sorry.

She fidgets, not used to the sympathy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HEATHER

Yeah well, it's all in the past now. Anyway Raj, tell me more about your amazing and correct system of beliefs.

RAJ

Well, I live by two rules: Be kind, and put others above yourself. I'm a very happy guy as a result! The amount of smiling I do on a daily basis would be exhausting if it wasn't so fulfilling.

HEATHER

For my entire life I've followed rules that have resulted in nothing but judgment and hate toward others. But now that everything about my faith is crumbling in front of me, I can finally see how wrong it all is.

Raj leans in.

RAJ

Heather, I know you've been let down by the church. And as flattered as I am that you want to be "one of me," I don't think that the mistakes of one shitty Pastor should take away your long-established faith in God. You've been hurt and your instinct is to run away.

Heather looks down at her tea.

RAJ (CONT'D)

But the people at that church need a strong woman like you. Maybe instead of running away from the church, you should use this opportunity to bring about the change that is long overdue.

Heather thinks about this.

INT. CHURCH - EVENING

A banquet is set up. A banner reads: *Thank you, Haiti Missionaries!* Matt and Naomi meet.

MATT

Okay, I think we did it!

NAOMI

(inner inventory)
Banquet is set up, Jean-Jean is backstage, the congregation is arriving...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATT
I'll find Sam.

He exits. Naomi notices Ruth sitting nearby, smiling and waving. Naomi smiles and heads over, but she's blocked by VAL who approaches with TED (22, goofy looking).

VAL
Naomi! You remember Ted, your ex-boyfriend.

NAOMI
I've never seen this man in my life.

TED
From when we were little!
(aside)
We took baths together.

Naomi looks disgusted.

VAL
Can you believe he's still single?

NAOMI
Mom, what are you doing? Are you trying to somehow fulfill something inside of yourself through me "finding a man?"
Guess what? I never want to get married!

Val gasps. Ruth approaches.

RUTH
Excuse me, I'm sorry. Naomi, I need some prayer. My boyfriend just broke up with me and I'm having a really hard time, what with the singleness and all.

NAOMI
(suspicious)
...Of course. Excuse me, mother. Todd.

TED
Ted.

Ted looks sad, Val rubs his arm. Naomi and Ruth exit.

EXT. CHURCH - EVENING - MOMENTS LATER

Naomi and Ruth stand behind the church. Ruth lights a CIGARETTE and hands one to Naomi.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NAOMI

Well I suppose God doesn't mention smoking in the Bible, so it can't be a sin, right?

Ruth smiles and gives her a light.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

So you need prayer about a boyfriend?

RUTH

Oh, no, sorry. Just wanted to rescue you from what looked like a pretty cringe-worthy situation.

NAOMI

Oh. Thank you. "Cringe-worthy" doesn't even begin to describe the half of it.

RUTH

I don't have a boyfriend. I'm actually more into girls.

Ruth chokes on her cigarette.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Was that cough from the cigarette or my gay confession?

NAOMI

First time smoker.

They smile at each other. Matt approaches.

MATT

Hey, I spotted Sam. Aw man are you guys smoking without me?

INT. CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

The congregation waits for Sam. Matt and Naomi take their seats. Then, Sam bursts through the doors, LIQUOR BOTTLE in-hand. He approaches the stage.

SAM

Hello, church! Pastor Sam in the hizz-
ouse! Jean-Jean? Come on out!

JEAN-JEAN enters to confused applause and sits next to Sam. Matt and Naomi look concerned.

SAM (CONT'D)

Welcome everyone, to the Haiti volunteer appreciation event! Let's start with a little Q and A.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sam picks up a mic. Loud feedback, everyone winces.

SAM (CONT'D)

Tell me, Jean-Jean, how did our mission trip help your people? Let's get real.

JEAN-JEAN

(whispering to Sam)

If I'm truthful do I still get to stay in the suites?

SAM

Tell the church how much "good" we did for your country.

JEAN-JEAN

Okay... if I'm being honest, you didn't really help at all.

The congregation murmurs.

JEAN-JEAN (CONT'D)

The children aren't any better off, our need for food is as desperate as ever, and there are tons of little Jesus trading cards littering our village. One just says "hang in there." That's not even from the Bible!

Matt slinks down in his seat.

SAM

Jean-Jean, I know we didn't do jack shit for you or the kids or Haiti. And I'm sorry. I'm sorry that we are a horrible example of Christians, and basically only went to pat ourselves on the back for "helping" the less fortunate.

JEAN-JEAN

Eh, at least I got a free trip to the States. And the W has a fantastic continental breakfast.

SAM

Church, I'm lifting the veil on this long-standing facade. It's not all smiles and love and sinlessness at Unity Church. It's time to get woke. My dad is a messed up dude. I knew about his problems, but the front I've been putting up isn't going to protect us anymore. I don't wanna be pastor. Maybe she should do it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He points to Heather, who has been watching from the back.

OLDER MAN

But she's a woman!

YOUNG MOTHER

Exactly! A man failed us, it's time for
a woman to lead!

OLDER MAN

But God is a man, Shelly, don't forget that.

YOUNG WOMAN

My name isn't Shelly!

Heather approaches the stage. She's about to speak, but
then she just hugs Sam. Really tight. His eyes water.

SAM

What are you doing?

HEATHER

I'm sorry for what you're going through.

He begins to cry. The congregation falls silent.

SAM

I'm crying. But... how can I cry when
I'm totally fine?

Jean-Jean approaches Heather.

JEAN-JEAN

So when this nice moment is over, can we
talk about a per-diem?

Heather nods and continues to hug Sam.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUREXT. CHURCH - COURTYARD - THE NEXT DAY

Sam, Matt and Naomi sip coffee in their usual spot. Their Bibles sit open on the table. Sam stares into the distance.

MATT

So for real, where do we think dinosaurs fit within the timeline of the Bible?

NAOMI

I think sometimes it's just better not to ask certain questions. And I'm not sure how we got to dinosaurs, we're in a very dry part of Leviticus.

MATT

I'm just saying, if dinosaurs aren't even mentioned, then doesn't that also open up the possibility of aliens?

Sam notices Heather walking toward the church with a BOX.

SAM

I'll be right back.

He walks off. Matt turns to Naomi.

MATT

And what about Bigfoot? And the Loch Ness Monster? ... and Centaurs?!

NAOMI

Matt, let's just sit here quietly.

EXT. CHURCH - COURTYARD - ELSEWHERE

Sam rushes up to Heather.

SAM

Heather! Welcome back. What's in the box?

HEATHER

Oh, nothing.

(then)

It's planners. Tons of planners. It's kind of an obsession and I'm a touch worried.

SAM

Thank you for yesterday.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HEATHER

Hey, you're the one who opened up. Maybe this is the start of us actually talking about our problems, instead of dismissing them with a "Just Pray Harder." I'm glad to be back, and I'm happy to help out with anything you need.

SAM

I appreciate that. On an unrelated note, I think I might be coming down with something.

(fake cough)

Could be mono, Zika maybe. And it might prevent me from performing my pastoral duties for a while. Would you happen to know of anyone qualified who could sub in --

HEATHER

(cutting him off, excited)

I'll do it.

Sam laughs.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

Thank you, Sam.

SAM

No, thank you. I've got more important things I need to deal with.

He smiles and walks away. Heather turns and notices the courtyard. Most of the weeds have been cleared. She approaches Raj, who is finishing up his work.

HEATHER

Raj. My favorite Agnostic.

RAJ

Nailed it that time!

HEATHER

I appreciate you listening to me yesterday. I never would have expected such wisdom from a non-Christian.

RAJ

Perhaps us "nons" have something to offer afterall.

HEATHER

It looks like I'll be subbing in as Pastor for the time being.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HEATHER (CONT'D)

And my first official duty will be adding you to the payroll. You know, if you're still interested. What do you think, friend?

Raj smiles.

RAJ

I think that I'd love to join the team, friend.

They shake hands.

INT. CHURCH - HALLWAY/PASTOR'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Heather walks through the church hallway, setting the box down on her desk. A SIGN ON THE WALL reads: *Heather - Female Secretary*. She tears it off the wall.

She walks into Pastor Rick's office, sits down at his desk and takes a breath. She smiles and begins to daydream, until she notices a FRAMED PHOTO on Pastor's desk of him smiling big with his new MUSTANG. She then chucks the photo into the trash.

END OF PILOT