The Job Interview With God

The Job Interview With God — Short Christian Playlet (20 min)

WHAT

A waiting room. Five strangers sit with manila folders, prepping for the most important interview of their afterlives. The receptionist (by minute fifteen the audience figures out he is the Good Shepherd) calls them in one at a time. Each candidate rehearses with the others — a pastor with sermons memorized, a missionary with a slideshow, a single mom who served at every fundraiser, a Wall Street tither, and a teenager who only just believed last week. They walk in expecting questions about their accomplishments. They get one question instead: did you know me. Four of them spiral. The teenager, who has nothing to bring, says, no, but you know me. The receptionist smiles and opens the door.

THEME

Eternal life is not earned by religious performance. It grows out of a personal relationship with Jesus. Matthew 7:21-23 set on stage.

WHO

RECEPTIONIST — Mid-thirties. Calm. Warm. Wears soft work clothes. Knows every candidate's first name without checking the folder. The audience figures out late that he is Jesus.

PASTOR ALAN — Late fifties. Charcoal suit. Manila folder thick with notes. Has been preparing this interview for forty years.

DR. RUTH NDUKWE — Late sixties. Missionary. Photo album. Sensible shoes. Carries Africa in her face the way some carry weather.

DELLA MAE — Forty. Single mom. Casserole-dish hands. The kind of tired no rest cures. Folder is a church bulletin she folded into quarters.

CHASE WHITLOCK — Mid-forties. Wall Street. Tailored. Tithe receipts in a leather portfolio. Fingers a watch he does not wear.

KAI — Eighteen. Hoodie. Sneakers. No folder. Only a paper bracelet from a youth retreat, four months old.

DOOR VOICE — Offstage, very gentle. Speaks once at the very end.

HOW (STYLE / TONE)

A clean, warm waiting room. Five chairs in a curve. A reception desk downstage right. A door upstage left, plain wood, no number. The lighting is soft and even — not heavenly, just kind. The candidates speak loudly at first, taking up space. As each one comes back from their interview (or does not), the energy in the room compresses. The receptionist never raises his voice. The teenager says nothing for the first ten minutes. The first time the audience clearly hears him speak is in the final scene — and his voice is the lightest thing in the room.

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PROPS

- Five waiting room chairs in a soft curve
- A simple reception desk with one folder open
- A plain wooden door upstage left
- Pastor Alan's thick manila folder, sermon outlines visible
- Dr. Ruth's small leather photo album with mission photos
- Della Mae's folded church bulletin
- Chase's leather portfolio of tithe receipts
- Kai's paper youth-retreat wristband
- A water cooler downstage left, never used

TIME

20 minutes

Scene 1 — The Waiting Room

(Lights up. A simple, warm waiting room. The RECEPTIONIST is at the desk, unhurried, arranging a single folder. PASTOR ALAN sits in the leftmost chair, reviewing notes. DR. RUTH NDUKWE in the next, photo album closed in her lap. DELLA MAE next, eyes mostly closed. CHASE WHITLOCK next, polishing his cufflinks. KAI sits at the far right, hood up, hands tucked into the front pocket. None of them quite look at each other yet.)

RECEPTIONIST

Welcome. We will begin in just a few minutes. I will call each of you in by name. The interview itself is brief. There is no need to be nervous.

PASTOR ALAN (almost reflexively)

There is always a need to be nervous, son. The Lord himself said work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

RECEPTIONIST (smiling)

He did say that, Pastor.

DR. RUTH

Excuse me — sir — I prepared a small portfolio of my work in Lagos. Will I be able to present it?

RECEPTIONIST

Anything you would like to bring in is yours to bring in, Dr. Ndukwe.

CHASE

And you have the giving records on file? St. Paul's Episcopal, Chapel of the Sea, two seminary endowments — they should all be in the system.

RECEPTIONIST

I have everything that needs to be here, Mr. Whitlock.

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(Kai pulls the strings on his hoodie tighter.)

Scene 2 — Rehearsing

PASTOR ALAN

I have been preparing for this interview for four decades. Forty years in the pulpit. Twelve years in seminary if you count adjunct teaching. Three honorary doctorates. I have my opening line memorized.

DELLA MAE (eyes still closed)

You memorized your opening line for God.

PASTOR ALAN

Of course. The first thing I will say is, by the grace of God I have run the race set before me. Hebrews twelve.

DR. RUTH

I will lead with the school in Lagos. Eighty-seven children. Three of them now serving as pastors themselves. I will let the photographs speak.

CHASE

I plan to lead with the numbers. Seven point two million in cumulative giving across thirty-eight ministries. I will not be ostentatious. I will simply say the spreadsheet speaks for itself.

DELLA MAE

I do not have an opening line. I have a casserole dish. Twenty-six years of casseroles. Funerals, baptisms, weddings, hospital weeks. I cannot add up the casseroles. I just know my hands hurt and the ladies of the church always knew where to find me.

PASTOR ALAN

That counts, sister. That counts.

DELLA MAE

I hope so.

CHASE

Kid. What are you bringing?

(Kai looks up, startled. The room turns toward him.)

KAI

I — I do not really have anything.

CHASE

Nothing?

KAI

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I have a wristband. From a thing I went to. Four months ago.

PASTOR ALAN (kindly)
Son. You will need more than a wristband.

KAI (small)
Yeah. I know.

Scene 3 — Pastor Alan

RECEPTIONIST
Alan.

PASTOR ALAN (standing, brisk)
Yes, son. Lead the way.

(Pastor Alan strides to the door. The RECEPTIONIST holds it open. They step through. Door closes. The waiting room holds for a beat.)

DELLA MAE
Lord, hold him.

DR. RUTH
He has been a faithful man, by all accounts.

CHASE
Built three campuses. I attended the second one until '08.

(The door opens. Pastor Alan walks back out. He looks — not stricken, but lighter, in a way that makes the others stiffen. He sits in his chair. He does not open his folder again. He folds his hands.)

DELLA MAE
Pastor — how was —

PASTOR ALAN (after a long beat)
He asked me one question. I prepared forty years of sermons. He asked me one question, and the sermons did not answer it.

CHASE
What was the question.

PASTOR ALAN
He asked, did you know me.

(Silence.)

DR. RUTH
And what did you answer.

PASTOR ALAN

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I told him about the campuses. The radio show. The seminary chair. The book that sold three hundred thousand copies.

DELLA MAE
And he —

PASTOR ALAN
He asked again. Did you know me. And I — I do not have an answer to that question, sister. I have an answer for every other question. Not that one.

Scene 4 — Dr. Ruth

RECEPTIONIST
Ruth.

(Dr. Ruth rises. She tucks the photo album under her arm. She moves slowly but without hesitation. The door opens. She enters. Door closes.)

DELLA MAE
Eighty-seven children. He cannot say no to eighty-seven children.

PASTOR ALAN (very quietly)
It is not — it is not whether he says no, sister. I do not think he was looking for a yes or a no.

CHASE
Then what was he looking for.

PASTOR ALAN
I am still figuring that out.

(The door opens. Dr. Ruth steps back into the room. She is crying — not loudly, just steadily, the way old trees lose leaves.)

DR. RUTH
Eighty-seven children. Forty-three years. He thanked me. He said he loved them. He said he loved me.

DELLA MAE
Ruth. That is — that is everything.

DR. RUTH
And then he asked me. Did I know him.

CHASE
What did you say.

DR. RUTH
I said I gave my life for him.

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PASTOR ALAN
And he —

DR. RUTH
He said, daughter, I did not ask whether you gave your life for me. I asked whether you knew me. And I — I sat there with my photo album, and I realized I knew the work. I knew the field. I knew the children. I do not know that I ever — slowed down — long enough to know him.

(She sits. She holds the album in her lap, but she does not open it.)

Scene 5 — Della Mae

RECEPTIONIST
Della.

DELLA MAE
Oh — yes, baby. Coming.

(She rises with the unfolded bulletin. She walks slowly toward the door. She pauses at the threshold.)

DELLA MAE
I do not know what I am supposed to bring in here.

RECEPTIONIST
Bring you, Della. That is all that comes through this door anyway.

(She steps through. Door closes.)

CHASE
Della Mae is going to be fine.

PASTOR ALAN
I hope so.

CHASE
She practically lived at that church.

DR. RUTH (gently)
Brother, I lived in my church too. I am not sure that is what was being asked.

(Door opens. Della Mae steps out. Her face is wet but lit. She is smiling, but slowly, like a sunrise.)

DELLA MAE
He asked me. He asked me did I know him. And I said — I said, baby, I have been talking to you over the casseroles for twenty-six years. I have been talking to you while I scrubbed the foyer carpet. I have been talking to you while I held Eunice's hand at her husband's funeral. I have been talking to you

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when nobody was around to hear it but me.

DR. RUTH
And he —

DELLA MAE (laughing through tears)
He said, I know, daughter. I was there. I was the one you were talking to.

Scene 6 — Chase

RECEPTIONIST
Chase.

CHASE (standing, smoothing tie)
Yes. Right. Let us — let us do this.

(He steps to the door. He stops. He turns back to the others.)

CHASE
Pastor. Quick — quick advice.

PASTOR ALAN
Brother, I am the wrong man for advice today.

DR. RUTH
Just answer the question, son.

CHASE (almost a smirk)
I have been answering questions in suits for twenty-five years.

DELLA MAE
Not this one, baby.

(Chase enters. Door closes. Long pause. Door opens. Chase walks back out, slower than he went in, leather portfolio dangling from one hand. He sits. He stares at the portfolio.)

CHASE (after a long beat)
I told him about the giving.

PASTOR ALAN
And he —

CHASE
He thanked me. He said the seminary in Nairobi I helped fund will produce eight hundred pastors before it closes. He said I should know that. He said I should be glad.

DR. RUTH
And then —

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CHASE

He asked me did I know him. And I — I started to list the years I served on the elder board. I started to list the small group I led from 2007 to 2011. I started to —

DELLA MAE

Chase.

CHASE

He stopped me. He said, son, you are listing things again. I am asking about a person.

(Chase sets the portfolio down on the floor next to his chair. He does not pick it back up.)

Scene 7 — The Folders

(The four candidates sit in a line. None of them is looking at their folder anymore. KAI watches them from his chair. He has not moved. The receptionist is at the desk, doing nothing in particular.)

PASTOR ALAN

Forty years.

DR. RUTH

Forty-three.

DELLA MAE

Twenty-six.

CHASE

Twenty-five.

PASTOR ALAN

And not one of us, when he asked, could just — say his name. We told him resumes. He asked for a relationship.

DR. RUTH

I told him about the children. I should have told him I missed him on the long mission flights. I should have told him I sang to him at the kitchen table when nobody was watching. I did sing to him. I forgot to mention it.

DELLA MAE

Sister, you sang to him. He heard.

CHASE (almost a whisper)

I have not prayed without an agenda since college. I prayed about the firm. I prayed about the renovation. I prayed about my daughter's wedding budget. I do not know that I have prayed without asking for a thing in twenty-five years.

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PASTOR ALAN
Brother. Same.

DELLA MAE
The casseroles were prayers. I just — I just did not know that until I walked through that door and he told me.

PASTOR ALAN
Della Mae. You may have been the closest of any of us.

DELLA MAE (laughing softly)
Imagine that. Twenty-six years of casseroles.

KAI (softly)
Excuse me. Sir.

RECEPTIONIST
Yes, Kai.

KAI
I do not — I do not have a folder.

RECEPTIONIST
I know.

KAI
I do not have anything to bring in. I do not know what I am doing here.

RECEPTIONIST (warmly)
I called you here, Kai. I sent the invitation.

KAI
But — I have only known you for four months. I am not — I am not like them. I have not done anything yet.

DELLA MAE (turning toward him)
Baby, what is your name.

KAI
Kai.

DELLA MAE
Kai. Listen to me. Listen to all of us. You are the only one in this room who has been listening for the last forty-five minutes.

DR. RUTH
You are the only one in this room who has not picked up your folder once. Not once.

PASTOR ALAN

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I do not even know what is in your folder. I know what was in mine.

CHASE

Kid. Tell me — tell me what happened four months ago.

KAI

I — I went to a youth thing. I was not even supposed to go. My friend dragged me. There was — there was a guy on the stage. He was reading from a book. I do not even remember which book. He said, you do not have to fix yourself first. You can come now. Tired.

DELLA MAE

And what did you do, baby.

KAI (looking at his hands)

I went up. To the front. I did not really know why. I just — I knew I was tired. I have been tired since I was thirteen. I went up and somebody put this paper bracelet on me. And I have been talking to him every night since. Out loud. Like he is in the room.

Scene 8 — Kai

RECEPTIONIST

Kai.

KAI

Sir.

RECEPTIONIST

It is your turn.

(Kai stands. He is shaking. He pulls the hood off his head for the first time. He walks to the door. He does not look back.)

(Door closes. The four others sit in stillness. None of them speaks.)

(After a long moment — longer than any of the previous interviews — the door opens. KAI steps out. He is crying, but not the way the others cried. He is laughing through it. He looks ten years younger and a hundred years older at the same time.)

PASTOR ALAN

Son. What — what did he ask you.

KAI (small)

He asked me. He asked me did I know him.

DR. RUTH

And.

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KAI

I said no, sir. I just met you four months ago. But you — you know me. You know my name. You said it like you have been saying it forever.

DELLA MAE (whispering)

Oh.

KAI

And he — he just smiled. He said, that is the answer, son. That is the only answer the question was ever asking.

Scene 9 — The Door

(The receptionist crosses the waiting room. He stops at the door. He puts his hand on the knob. He turns to the four candidates who have already had their interviews.)

RECEPTIONIST

Friends. The door is going to open. The question has not changed. It has not been about the folders. The folders have been about you. The question has only ever been about me.

PASTOR ALAN

Son. Sir. Are you — are you —

RECEPTIONIST (gently)

Yes, Alan.

(Pastor Alan slides off his chair onto his knees. Dr. Ruth puts her hand to her mouth. Della Mae closes her eyes. Chase, very slowly, very deliberately, picks up the leather portfolio at his feet — and sets it down again, on the floor, away from him.)

RECEPTIONIST

The folders are not the qualifications. They are not the disqualifications either. The question is the only qualification. And the answer the question is looking for is the one Kai gave.

DELLA MAE

Lord. Can — can we answer it again.

RECEPTIONIST

Daughter. I have been waiting all afternoon.

Final Moment — The Open Door

(The receptionist turns the knob. The door opens. The light from the other side is warm — not blinding, just kind. Kai is the first to step through. The others rise,

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leaving their folders behind on the chairs.)

DOOR VOICE (warm, gentle)

Well done. Come in. I have been waiting on you with a meal already on the table. There is a place set for each of you. I have been calling your names since the world began.

(The four follow. Pastor Alan goes second. Dr. Ruth third. Della Mae fourth, with the unfolded bulletin still in her hand. Chase last — he leaves the leather portfolio and the gold watch he was not wearing on the floor by his chair. The receptionist is the last to leave. He pauses at the threshold and looks once at the empty chairs, the abandoned folders, the unused water cooler. He smiles — not in triumph, but in something like relief. He steps through. The door closes softly. Lights down.)

END

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