

A Wonderfully Wasted Life©

- Message:** a pastor reflects on twenty years in the same church.
A sequel to the movie “A Wonderful Life”
- Set:** The main set is a church office, (with two desks, phones, usual office materials), remains the same in every scene, but slight changes reflect the passing years.
Scene V is a dark, plain, bare set. This set could be at side of main stage or could be behind scrim
- Props:** book, box of papers, knives, gun, Lyla’s glasses
- Costumes:** reflect the time frame of the scene, mainly leisure clothing
Street kids clothing for Scene V
- Sound:** Lapel mics would be very useful if available
- Lighting:** normal except a bright spotlight in Scene V
- Cast:** Jed (Jedidiah) Crawford – a Jimmy Stewart type person
Lyla Morris – church secretary
Annie (Cooper) Crawford – Jed’s wife
Ronnie Crawford – son 15
Stacey Crawford – daughter 13
Bobby Crawford – son 6
Peter Crawford – Jed’s brother
Frank Anderson – board chairman, likely middle age +
Bessie Miller – older woman
- Special Casting Considerations:** Jed, Lyla, Annie and Peter appear as characters twenty years ago and also present time. This script has been written in such a way as to allow the same actors to play in both time-frames, or you may choose to have different actors play the roles, (i.e., young Jed and old Jed). There is some benefit to using different actors as the lines for the two main actors are substantial
There is time between scenes for a quick costume change if the same actors are used.
We suggest getting Jimmy Stewart type speech and delivery down as much as possible
- Song:** Thank You For Giving To the Lord
- Run Time:** 90 minutes
- Script:**

Scene I

scene opens as Jed is alone on stage in his office, the phone rings several times, Jed looks around

Jed: Lyla, you gonna pick up that phone? Lyla, you there? Look I am too busy right now to answer the . . . oh for Pete's sake . . .

frustrated, picks up phone

Jed, *in monotone*: You have reached Elm Street Community Church, on Main Street here in Paynes Landing. Pastor Jedidiah Crawford, he's the pastor here, sorry we can't be here to answer your call personally right now but if you feel like you can leave your name, phone number and a brief message, why we will be just thrilled to

(pause, listens)

Oh, hey Roger.

(pause, nods head)

Yeh, well, seems like Lyla, she is off doin' somethin', doin' her thing, not sure what, anyhow, so what's happenin' with the Chairman of the Board of Deacons so early this mornin'?

(pauses, listens)

Yeh, guess you could say that was some board meetin' last night.

(pauses, listens)

No, no apologies, everyone said what's on their mind, which is good, nothin' personal taken.

(pauses, listens)

Look, I been pastor here at Elm Street Community Church for, goin' on eighteen years, fella develops thick skin, seems like. Those kinda comments slide offa you like water offa duck's back seems like.

(pauses, listens)

Hey, young Jimmy Anderson, he's new to the board, young Jimmy's . . .

well, he's . . . young is what. He'll do OK. Any son of old Frank

Anderson, why he's bound to do OK!. Tell ya what, after the rough edges wear off seems like young Jimmy's gonna do fine, just fine, like I say.

(pauses, listens)

Tell ya what now, young Jimmy, he's got a right to his opinion. Fact is, I been thinkin' maybe this is the time for me to move along, look for a new church. I mean my oldest, Ronnie, he's goin' into high school this year, maybe time I made a move while the family are still young.

(pauses, listens)

Hey, listen Roger, Elm Street Church, it did just fine for a gazillion years before this here Pastor Jedidiah Crawford came along. Can take it to the bank this here church will stand just fine after ol' Pastor Jedidiah Crawford is gone on down the road, that I guarantee!

(pauses, listens, during which time Lyla comes on stage, sits at desk)

Hey, that's real kind for you to say, but . . . hey listen, someone just

walked in the office here Roger, I gotta go, Lyla, she's still no where to be found, no idea where that woman's at, hard to find good help nowadays seems like.

(pauses, listens)

Yeh, yeh, fine Roger, we will do that, we'll sit down real soon, have a real chin wag over all these things, you bet, real soon is what . .

(pauses, listens)

You got my word, Roger, no rash moves here til we talk, you got it. . gotta . . gotta .. sorry, Roger, guy here is prancin' one foot to the other, waitin' to talk to me. . . Byyyyeee now .. Bye . . . Yeh, you bet, Roger, bye.

Jed hangs up phone, looks sheepishly at Lyla

Lyla: And just who is this . . .*(points at herself)* . . . guy . . who wants to talk to the pastor?

Jed: Sorry 'bout that Lyla, you know how that Roger Martens likes to go on and on, tougher to shake than a bur on a pigs belly. I had to think of some way to get off of the phone, you were just there, seemed like. Sorry 'bout that, no harm meant Lyla.

Lyla: Yes, I was just there, just like I have been just here for going on twenty years . .

Jed: Eighteen, it's been eighteen years.

Lyla: Like I said, twenty years next month.

Jed: Twenty? You sure it's been twenty years?

Lyla lowers her glasses on her nose, looks at Jed over top of glasses

Lyla: You, Jedidiah Crawford, guy can't remember where he left his Bible, you are asking Lyla Morris if she is sure how many years it's been since you came in here, spindly leg little kid, just two years out of high school?

Jed: Man! Who'da guessed it's been twenty years, well, who other than Lyla Morris, walkin' memory bank, that is. You know, that bein' the case, more than ever makes sense I move along.

Lyla: Is this another, *(mocks Jed's style of speech and delivery)*, "Jedidiah Crawford tenderin' his resignation, seems like" event?

Jed: What in tarnation are you blabbin' about woman? "Another"?

Lyla: This is a milestone, marks the one hundredth time in the last twenty years you have decided to resign as pastor of Elm Street Community Church.

Jed: Oh there ya go, exaggeratin' again, why it's not been . . .

Lyla, *lowers glasses, looks over top, challenging*: Like I said . . . one hundredth time! I got each one recorded in a little black book in my file. Strange you know, other women would make more interesting use of a little black book. *(takes on style of Jed)* Guess maybe it's time ol' Lyla Morris, church secretary these thirty-five years, oughta just be moseyin' on, move on to pasture, seems like.

Jed: As if Elm Creek Community Church gonna stand if Miz Everthing-at-the-church Morris isn't here!

Lyla: Like someone I once knew once said, *(in Jed style)*, "Elm Street Church, it did just fine for a gazillion years before Lyla Morris came along. Can take it to the bank this here church will stand just fine after ol' Lyla Morris is gone on down the road, that I guarantee!"

Jed: Why you cantankerous ol' biddy, you was listenin' outside the door, wasn't you?

Lyla: Maybe I was. Maybe I wasn't. Certain privileges come with old age and time served. And don't you forget, I have watched you, and watched over you, last twenty years of your life, likely know you better than anyone, save maybe your Annie.

Jed: Yes, yes, I declare you likely do that too. Wow, woulda swore its not been . . . no matter, this is the time to be mossyin' along, likely. Sure never planned to be here twenty years when I came . . . never planned to come here when I came here, for that matter.

Lyla: Don't tell me, here we go, another rerun of "the reluctant pastor".

Jed: Reluctant? Yeh, well, matter of fact I was reluctant, so that's just a fact isn't it then? I mean, never even had the chance to go to Bible college, just pushed into the pulpit is what.

Lyla: Poor reluctant, pushed-in-the-pulpit pastor!

Jed: Besides, what pastor wants to go preach in the church he grew up in, I ask you that, huh? Best a fella has some anonymity comin' in, new church, new set of folks in the pews. Best that way, seems like.

Lyla: Jedidiah Crawford! Way you talk it's as though folks in the church held a gun to your head, forced you to agree to be the pastor here at Elm Street Community Church!

Jed: Well, not far off, I mean I was young and not near as bold as I am today, I tell you, what's a young fella to do, make a scene? Lyla Morris, you was there, you saw yourself how they all painted me into a corner . . .

lights fade out on Scene I

Scene II

Scene is twenty years previous, same set simply made to be in an older era. Lyla is sitting at her desk, Jed comes on stage

Lyla: Well, if it isn't young Jedidiah Crawford! Just coming back to rub it in that you will be on your way to the big city tomorrow, aren't you? We're gonna miss you a lot, Jedidiah. You have done an awesome job volunteering as youth pastor, filling in at the pulpit too, what with old Pastor Rance in poor health this last bit.

Jed: My pleasure, they are good kids, and well, like, I kinda like the preachin' too, I'm not about to deny that. Folks is good, give a young fella like me a break, maybe sometimes I mix up my theology. Except for old Ben Miller, he sleeps all through every sermon I ever did preach, makes a falla wonder why ol' Bessie Miller bothers wakin' ol' Ben on a Sunday mornin', gettin' him dressed and outta the house, if all's he's about to do is just to sleep through the entire sermon! But, hey, not my worry anymore. Tomorrow I will be leavin' for Philadelphia, Bay Trails Seminary! Best evangelist training in these here United States of America is all! I mean it's not Providence College, but then who could ever afford the tuition at Providence College? Saved up every dime for the last two years, finally have \$480, just enough for college!

Frank comes on stage

Lyla: Hey there Frank Anderson! How's Lily doing, hear she's suffering from rheumatism again, painful that is.

Frank: Lyla, Jedidiah, don't know how to tell you this, fact is that Pastor Rance just passed on.

Lyla: Oh no!

Jed: Pastor Rance, dead? I mean, that's not possible, Pastor Rance has been pastor here at Elm Street Community Church since, like, forever.

Lyla: What will we do? It was Pastor Rance who started this church, I mean, who will we get to . .

Frank: Replacing the pastor will be difficult, no doubt on that, not the least problem being that times is tough right now, folks just can't afford to support the church the way we need to.

Jed: Man! Elm Street Community Church without Pastor Rance! Just doesn't seem possible!

Frank: I am just back from an emergency church board meeting. Jed, the board are asking a favor of you.

Jed: Favor? Well, yah, whatever I can do, I mean, but what kinda favor you talkin' here, Mr. Anderson?

Frank: We, the church board, we would like for you to temporary take on the job of pastor here, until things can get straightened around, til we can get us a real pastor.

Lyla: Frank, Jedidiah leaves tomorrow for Philadelphia to go to seminary.

Frank: We realize that you had plans Jedidiah, and nothing all of us would like better than see you go off, get to be a preacher.

Jed: Evangelist. Gonna be an evangelist is what.

Frank: And a fine evangelist you will be Jedidiah! Look, we aren't asking that you give up that dream, just delay it a little, a few months, year at the most, Elm Street Community Church will be back on track, new pastor in place, ready to move ahead. Then you go on to Philadelphia with our blessing.

Jed: Hey, look, Mr. Anderson, Frank, I appreciate what you are sayin' and I sure wouldn't want to leave Elm Street in a tough position but . . .

Frank: We knew you would sense that it's God's will you stay here to help shepherd the flock.

Jed: No, just you hold on a minute here, I am not saying I will stay, and I don't see this as God's call at all, I mean . .

Lyla: Frank, what Jed is saying is that his head and his heart are set on going to Philadelphia. We shouldn't take that away from him.

Frank: No one is taking anything away, Jed. It's just a few months, maximum a year, likely not that long though. And we can't pay much but we will see that you get enough to get through seminary just fine next year.

Jed: No, not next year, it's gotta be now. I have been plannin' and savin' and thinkin'. One more day delay I am about to just explode, seems like!

Frank: Listen, no snap decisions. Jedidiah, you think, you pray on it.

Jed: Nothin' to think about, nothin' to

Frank: Think and pray, Jedidiah. That's all we ask.

Jed: Fine, I can think and I can pray and . . look I know what God's plan for my life is, and believe me it's not at Elm Street Community Church.

Frank: Like I said, think, pray. I will call you back later, we can discuss.

Jed: Look, no disrespect to you, Frank, or to the church, but like I told you . . .

Frank: I will call you later.

Frank goes off stage

Jed: You know, Lyla, I feel real bad here, seems like, feel as though I am lettin' the folks here down, what with Pastor Rance dyin' and all but . . .

Lyla: Jed, you have to do what's right for you. You've been planning this since you were a kid, and . . .

Peter comes rushing on stage, yelling happily

Peter: Jed! Jed! You will never guess what I got in the mail!

Jed: Slow down little brother, before you throw yourself and everyone around you into a tizzy! Now what's this all about? And slow!

Peter: Providence College! It's Providence College!

Jed: Peter! Slow down! Now what about Providence College?

Peter: Remember, I went to that youth conference back in April? Well I filled out this form from Providence College, and you will never guess what!