

# Gain the world only to lose your soul?

CHARACTERS: 9M, 1F. Doubling possible

COSTUMES: Biblical

PROPS: None specified

SETTING: Bare stage

RUN TIME: 12 minutes

## MOSES

I had it all. I, Moses, was the grandson of the most powerful ruler on the earth – the mighty Pharaoh of Egypt. But when I grew up, I refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. I chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the treasures of Egypt and fleeting pleasures of sin.

Why? Because I was looking ahead to my reward. I did not fear the king's anger because I saw him who is invisible.

He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

## SAMSON

I am Samson, blessed by the Lord with amazing strength. God allowed me to lead Israel for twenty years in the days of the Philistines. In the days when God's spirit was rare, he poured it out on me time and time again.

Yet I threw it away. I lost my freedom, my eyes and eventually my life.

What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

## DAVID

DAVID: *(praying)* Who am I, LORD God, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? And as if this were not enough in your sight, my God, you have spoken about the future of the house of your servant. You, LORD God, have looked on me as though I were the most exalted of men.

*(to audience)* I had nothing. Then God gave me it all. Yet I nearly lost my soul.

I was the youngest son of Jesse, a shepherd. Yet God gave me, David, the courage to face Goliath. Then he made me king over all Israel. My fame spread throughout every land, and the LORD made all the nations fear me. God gave me victory everywhere I went. Women cheered my name and I was loved. God blessed me with family, peace and prosperity. I was known as the man after God's own heart.

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Yet I nearly threw it all away for another man's wife.

NATHAN: This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own.

DAVID: *(falls to his knees, praying)* Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

*(to audience)* What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

## SOLOMON

I am Solomon. Once I had everything. Money, power, fame, love. But what good was it to gain the whole world and lose my soul?

God gave me the throne of my father David. He said that if I walked before Him faithfully with integrity of heart and uprightness and did all I was commanded and observed His decrees and laws, He would establish my royal throne over Israel forever.

But that was not all.

He came to me again. He blessed me and said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." He was so pleased when I asked for wisdom that he gave me even more. He said "I will give you what you have not asked for—both wealth and honor —so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings.

I had the world!

All he asked in return was for me to love him with all my heart and obey his commands. Did you know Moses had given a special command for kings? *(Pulls out scroll and reads)*

When the king takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel.

*(looking up)* But I, the wisest man on the face of the earth, ignored the laws for kings. *(reading)* The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them *(looking up)* I built up a mighty with thousands of Egyptian chariots and horses. Strike one.

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*(Reading)* He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold. *(Looking up)* Tribute from other countries poured in – 25 tons of gold every year. Strike two.

*(reading)* He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. *(looking up)* I loved many foreign women, 1000 actually, starting with Pharaoh's daughter. Women from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, *(reading)* "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods."

*(looking up)* Strike three. To please them I built altars to Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. Later on my own descendants would burn their own children as sacrifices to them.

Yes, I was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with me to hear the wisdom God had put in my heart. My fame spread everywhere and from all nations people came to listen to me. But my heart was not fully devoted to the LORD.

But what good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose their very soul?

### JEROBOAM

I grew up with no father, yet God blessed me with remarkable abilities and opportunities. When King Solomon saw how well I did my work, he put me in charge of the whole labor force of the tribes of Joseph. But the Lord became angry with Solomon when his heart turned from God. He sent the prophet Ahijah to me with amazing news.

AHIJAH: Hear, O Jeroboam, the words of the Lord! God is going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand. You will rule over all that your heart desires; you will be king over Israel. If you do whatever He commands you, walking in obedience to Him and doing what is right in His eyes, as David did, the Lord will be with you. He will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one He built for David and will give Israel to you.

JEROBOAM: What unmerited favor! What an undeserved gift. Me! A no one.

Not only that, but when Solomon tried to kill me, God protected me. When Solomon died, I became king of the ten northern tribes, just as God had promised.

I had it all. God blessed me, kept me safe and made me king. All he asked in return was for me to love him with all my heart and obey his commands.

*(Regretfully)* But instead, I relied on myself. Strike one.

I worried that if the people offered sacrifices at the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem, they might kill me and again give their allegiance to King Rehoboam. So I made two golden calves, idols, in direct disobedience to God's command. I appointed my own priests and festivals and led all of Israel astray. Strike two.

*(deepening despair over his actions)* God sent another prophet to warn me. He did a miracle, healing my own hand, yet I persisted in my disobedient rebellion. Strike three. I was out. *(pause, quietly as the enormity of his actions sink in)* Forever.

I had it all, incredible gifts from God. And then I turned my back on Him.

What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?

## ESTHER

I had it all. Beauty, a favorite of the court, the one King Xerxes loved more than any other. I was Queen Esther with a royal crown on my head. Even when the king signed an edict to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews —young and old, women and children—on a single day, I did not fear for my cousin Mordecai had wisely counseled me to hide my Jewish heritage.

But then, Mordecai asked me to risk it all. All of it and my very life.

MORDECAI: Esther, you must go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for your people.

ESTHER: Everyone knows that anyone who approaches the king without being summoned will be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives.

MORDECAI: *(Taking her hands, gently but firmly)* Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?

ESTHER: Who knew, indeed? So I asked him and Jews to fast for three days. *(MORDECAI kneels in prayer)* After that, I would risk it all, my very life. *(to MORDECAI, placing one hand on his head as he continues to pray)* I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.

But I did not die. I saved my people. I would have been a fool not to give what I cannot keep to gain what I cannot lose.

## JESUS

I am the firstborn over all creation. In me all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities. Without me, nothing was made. God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in me yet I did not consider equality with God something to be grasped or retained. Instead, I emptied myself, made myself nothing. I took on the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness and humbled myself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!

I gave it all up, heaven, equality with God, my life, for you. Will you give me what you cannot keep to gain what you cannot lose? What good is it for you to gain the whole world, yet forfeit your soul? You may possess the whole world yet you will never have enough of what is needed to give in exchange for your soul.

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But I have already given my life as a ransom for yours. Whoever believes in me will not perish but have eternal, abundant life.

Behold! I stand at your door and knock. Will you open and invite me in?