

LOSING MY RELIGION

Written by

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INT. LIGHTHOUSE LIFE MINISTRIES - DAY

A medium size church, with a half empty congregation, finishes up the morning service. As the patrons exit the sanctuary, PASTOR DAVID LIGHT, 42 and skinny, mumbles "Thank you" and "goodbye."

As the last person leaves the sanctuary, David drops his body into a chair.

DAVID
I'm desperate.

DAVID'S OFFICE

Business letters labeled "Past Due" and "Final Notice" cover a small desk. Alongside the letters is an opened book titled "Members" at the top of the page. The number 906 and 723 are crossed out, and the number 415 is written underneath.

EXT. LIGHTHOUSE LIFE MINISTRIES - DAY

David paces the church parking lot while smoking a cigarette.

A red luxury car pulls up and parks near David.

SIMON LOTT, 44, exits the vehicle. He walks up to David as he sips from a ceramic to-go coffee cup. The watch on his wrist sparkles as he hands a styrofoam coffee cup to Pastor David.

DAVID
The church has a coffee pot.

Simon flashes a smile. His head motions to the steaming cup in his hand.

SIMON
But the church can't produce a
delicious six dollar latte.

David flicks the cigarette on the ground and smashes it with his scuffed loafers.

He snatches the cup from Simon and takes a drink.

DAVID
You're such an Ass sometimes.

Simon chuckles as he looks up to the sky.

SIMON
What would your Father think of
your stinging tone?

DAVID
Our Father.

Simon walks past David and laughs.

SIMON
Yes, our Father.

He pulls a stack of envelopes from his sports jacket. He glances at the church sign in the front lawn and shakes his head.

SIMON
I grabbed the mail on my way up. I see you only had one service today.

David takes the mail and reaches in his back pocket. He fumbles around in his front pocket before he finds his lighter.

DAVID
Thanks for bringing me more bills to add to my collection.

He's quick to ignite his cigarette. His body relaxes as he inhales and exhales the smoke.

DAVID
Yes, one service. More members are going to that new church on Broad Avenue. The one you were talking about last month.

Simon twists his head to avoid the smoke. He smirks as he reaches into his pocket.

SIMON
Those things will kill you.

He tosses an unopened pack to David.

DAVID
Herbal cigarettes?

SIMON
Trust me; they're better for you.

David puts out the old cigarette and studies the new pack.

Simon walks over to a bench on the side of the lawn and takes a seat. He motions for David to join him.

DAVID
I never see you smoke.

SIMON
I'm not stressed. Besides, speaking
of stress...

Simon whips another item out of his pocket and hands it over.

David looks over the pamphlet in his hands.

INSERT - THE PAMPHLET, which reads:

"Ocean Mist Missionary specializes in sending orphaned, poor,
sick, and homeless youths to trade schools and universities."

David shrugs.

DAVID
Ocean Mist Missionary.

SIMON
They're the answer to your money
problems, my friend.

DAVID
What's the catch?

SIMON
We just need a church to be the
face of the organization.

Simon takes out his cell and starts tapping.

He shows the screen to David.

David's eyes widen.

DAVID
200 thousand dollars.

SIMON
That's in good faith.

Simon puts an arm around David as he talks. Within seconds,
David is grinning.

They stand up and shake hands.

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INT. LIGHTHOUSE LIFE MINISTRIES

A year later, and David has the number one church in Ohio. Membership increased to over 2,000, and they host an average of over 1,000 guests each Sunday.

Lighthouse Ministries blew up so much that they had to build a new church and hire a staff of seven new pastors. David is now the senior pastor.

DAVID'S OFFICE - DAY

A massive executive style desk sits in the middle of the room. Off to the right is a window with opened blinds.

Through the blinds, the sun gleams off of a duck pond.

David sits at his desk going over blueprints for a seven bedroom house.

His Bible sits on a bookshelf behind him. A thin layer of dust rests on the cover of his Bible.

SANCTUARY [SUNDAY]

Three large monitors go black after David thanks the large congregation for their donations.

DAVID

Because of you, more children will
have the opportunity to go to
college or learn a trade.

He says goodbye to the church patrons and releases his staff for the day.

One person, JONATHAN SAUL, 28, remains in the sanctuary.

David stops as he makes his way off of the stage. He looks towards Jonathan, then heads in his direction.

DAVID

Young man, are you okay?

Jonathan rises to his feet. He shakes David's hand.

JONATHAN

I'm good. Are you okay?

David looks confused. He withdraws his hand as he takes a step back.

DAVID

I'm Senior Pastor David Light. This is my church.

JONATHAN

I know, and what a mighty church you have. I attended service at your old location.

DAVID

Hmm, you were a member who left.

JONATHAN

Yes, but not for another church. I left years ago because I didn't feel welcomed.

David softens his tone.

DAVID

I'm glad you decided to come back.

Jonathan looks around the sanctuary. His eyes stop when he sees a large portrait of David.

David smiles when he notices what Jonathan sees.

DAVID

Isn't it lovely? The head elder, Simon Lott had the painting commissioned a few months back.

JONATHAN

What do the members think?

DAVID

They haven't complained.

JONATHAN

I'm talking about how their money is used.

The silence lasts for ten long seconds.

DAVID

It's not a crime for a church to make money.

JONATHAN

I've dealt with Ocean Mist Missionary. They came to us asking for donations last year.

David sees that Jonathan is alluding to something.

DAVID
I haven't done anything wrong.

JONATHAN
I didn't accuse you.

Jonathan is casual with his tone. He pulls his Bible from his bag and hands it to David.

David folds his arms.

JONATHAN
When's the last time you opened yours?

DAVID
I have my Master of Divinity.

JONATHAN
So do I.

David's face is red. He raises his voice.

DAVID
I don't understand...

Jonathan hands David an article from a London newspaper.

INSERT - THE ARTICLE, which reads:

"Ocean Mist Missionary Under Investigation For Fraud"

David reads the entire article. He slams into Jonathan's chest.

DAVID
I don't have anything to do with these claims. I'm not involved.

JONATHAN
Your church is mentioned as the face of Ocean Mist.

Jonathan flips through the article. He points at a passage.

JONATHAN
It says that 100 thousand out of 20 million dollars have gone towards the futures of those kids.

David places his head on his forehead.

Just then, the lights inside the church flicker on and off.

DAVID

I don't oversee the money.

JONATHAN

But you receive your portion.

Jonathan strolls out of the sanctuary as Simon enters.

Simons shivers as he approaches David.

SIMON

You might want to check the
thermostat. It's a little too brisk
in here today.

David faces Simon. He glares into his eyes for a bit. As he walks past, Simon picks up the article that David left behind. He gives a half grin and follows David.

EXT. LIGHTHOUSE LIFE MINISTRIES - DAY

David stomps his way towards his shiny sports car.

Simon follows close behind.

David ignores him as Simon calls his name.

Simon grabs him by the arm.

SIMON

What in the Hell is your problem?

David knocks Simon's arm away.

DAVID

You set me up. I'm running a scam
on my entire church.

SIMON

I never said all of the money was
going towards those kids. Besides,
you haven't been complaining.

David opens the car door; then he slams it shut. He marches up to Simon and gets in his face.

DAVID

You fooled me. You knew I needed
the money to save my church!

Simon forces him to take a step back.

SIMON

You didn't have to keep all of that money, buy that car, and build this church. Aren't you building a new house with that money?

He pokes David in the chest.

SIMON

I led you to the water, but you decided to drink.

Simon spits on David's car as he pushes by him. A slick smile crosses his face.

EXT. RIVERSIDE PARK - DAY

Simon whistles as he walks down the trail to the picnic area. He pulls out a pack of herbal cigarettes and offers one to a man sitting at one of the tables.

He says no, then lifts up his head with a disgusted look on his face.

Simon smiles and laughs.

SIMON

Are you sure you don't want one, Jonathan? Your friend David sure does like them.

He smacks the pack out of his hands.

JONATHAN

Calling them herbal doesn't make them healthy. Plus, David isn't making the best choices.

Simon takes a seat across from him. He can't stop smirking.

SIMON

Lucifer said if we waited long enough, then David would be ours for the taking.

JONATHAN

I don't understand why he stopped talking to God. We couldn't hear his prayers.

SIMON

But we could. The key words were,
"I'm desperate." Desperation is a
sign of losing hope.

JONATHAN

But David knows it's also a sign to
hold tighter to his faith.

Simon laughs as he rises to his feet. He looks down and sees
Jonathan clinging to his bible.

SIMON

Even now, with everything that is
happening, David hasn't asked for
help from any of you. I've made
sure that money is all he wants.

Simon leaves Jonathan to sulk. If Lucifer's demons can keep a
saved soul from rediscovering its faith for more than a year,
then that soul enters a darkness that keeps it lost to God's
angels for another two years.

During those few years, the demons can torment the soul
without any fight.

EXT. LIGHTHOUSE LIFE MINISTRIES - EVENING

Jonathan runs through the church parking lot. He's shouting
for David.

David exits the building and moves in the direction of the
yelling.

DAVID

Jonathan, I don't need anymore
lectures from you.

JONATHAN

I want to remind you of something.

David stops to listen.

Jonathan holds his bible in the air.

JONATHAN

Remember when you were broke,
homeless, and hungry?

DAVID

Yes, I was 15. How did you know?

JONATHAN

You thought about killing yourself,
but on that night, you went to that
church on Sycamore.

DAVID

That's when I met Pastor White.

Jonathan shakes his head. He shouts Amen towards the sky.

David sees a glow coming from Jonathan's Bible.

JONATHAN

And then he gave you...

DAVID

He gave me my first bible. He
taught me the laws of religion but
reminded me that religion would
only take me so far.

JONATHAN

Because...

DAVID

Religion holds the rules, the keys
to how to live life.

JONATHAN

But Faith is what builds our
relationship with God. Lighthouse
Ministries guides lost souls to
religion, but then you show them
how to create a relationship.

DAVID

That's the key. When I was losing
my church, I forgot to seek out my
faith. I never leaned on God.

Simon was so pleased that he forgot he needed to focus on
David for a few more hours. He allowed Jonathan to sneak in
and take back David's soul in the last few hours.

David went inside the church and pulled down the portrait of
himself. He ripped up his blueprints. He grabbed his Bible
and went with Jonathan to see a lawyer.

