

“Why”
By Nora Spinaio

Scene I

(Int Day Living Room. Esther is on the phone.)

Esther: Hi, Maggie. I’m just calling to see if you still have that old baby bed.
(Beat) Well, because the church nursery has more babies than beds.
(Beat) Great, the youth pastor will be at your house tomorrow afternoon about 6 to get it. (Laughs) Who? Me? Assume? (Looks at phone receiver) Maggie, my call waiting’s going off. I’ll talk to you tomorrow. Thanks for the bed. (Beat) Bye now.

(Clicks phone to pickup other call)

Esther: Hi Dave. Are the homeless bags ready? Now, have I ever missed a week?
(Laughs)

(Starts putting things in a plastic bag for the homeless with one hand and still holds onto the phone with the other)

I’m filling up the last bag now. All I’ll have to do in the morning before we leave is put in the cold soda and fix the lunches. Yes, I’ll see you at 7 a.m. just like always (beat) O.k. bye now.

(Esther finishes filling the homeless bag)

There –done – for the moment. Off to the garage you go.
(Takes the bag offstage and returns)

(There’s a knock at the door. Esther answers.)

Esther: Son, Sara! I wasn’t expecting you today. Come on in.
(She ushers them in with hugs. Scott and Esther each take a chair but Sara begins to pace.)

Scott: Well, Mom, we were in the neighborhood and....

Sara: Oh, Scott, tell the truth. You were worried about her doctor’s visit.

Scott: Yes, partly. So....?

Esther: So? (Laughs)

Scott: What did he say about your heart?

Esther: Oh, I’ll live. At least that’s what I told him. He wants me to slow down

and not do so much, (uses a flip hand gesture) silly man.

Sara: (With good-natured sarcasm) you slowing down, yeah that'll work.

Esther: I told the old goat I was 80, not dead. I'll do what I like and where the Lord leads. Besides, it's not up to him.

Scott: But, still you do too much.

Sara: Now, honey, Esther should know her own limits, don't you think?

Scott: (following Sara with his eyes) But, she does too much what with the nursery and the homeless ministry and Lord only knows what else that she doesn't tell us. Sara, do sit down, you're starting to make me nervous.

Sara: (Sara Sits.) But....

Esther: (stands and speaks loudly) That's enough. I'll do what I can for the Lord as long as I'm on the planet thank you very much. Is that clear?

Scott: (puts his head down almost like a little boy) Yes, ma'am.

Esther: (sits back down) So, tell me about you two. What's been going on with you?

Sara: Well, Scott does nothing but work just like always. (She starts to pace again) But, me, I've been very busy.

Scott: (looks at Sara as she moves back & forth across the room) I'll say! The woman never sits still. But, in my own defense, I do cook the men's breakfast every month and I help around the church.

Sara: (still pacing) Dear, I didn't mean that you literally did nothing but work. But, ministry is what other *people* can see you do. Like me. No one ever sees the stuff that you do.

Esther: And what ministry are you in, dear?

Sara: Oh, just lots and lots.

Scott: (laughs) And lots and lots and lots. Sara do sit down.

Esther: Oh, Scott don't be silly. Let the girl talk. But, do try to sit still Sara.

Sara: (playfully pops Scott on the back of the head before she takes a seat) Thank you very much Esther. As I was saying. Last month I was president of the women's group. But, I resigned after my speech at the annual meeting. Last Sunday I joined the praise and worship team. The director says that I may not do many solos so I may change my mind

about that. Then, there’s the annual Christmas production coming up. Of course, I’ll get the lead for that. Oh, I could just go on and on.

Scott: And she often does.

Sara: Scott Harris! That simply is not true (with false modesty) I can’t help it if people want to see me *doing* things.

Scott: Sure, as long as people *see* you. (Exasperated) Mom, you explain it to her. She won’t listen to me.

Sara: Now, Esther, your son has the crazy notion that ministry isn’t about being seen. Can you imagine?

Esther: (gets up and gets coffee from the side table, serves both of the younger people before answering.) Well, yes dear, I can. Ministry isn’t just about what people can see. Remember what the Bible says

"Be careful not to do your `acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

Sara: But, Esther, I’ve even *seen you* in front of people.

Esther: (sits by Sara and pats her on the hand as if she’s a small child) Yes, you have seen me in front of people. But, I hope I’ve done a few things no one knew about too. Besides, it’s the attitude that counts.

Sara: Attitude?

Esther: Sara, it’s the reasons that count. Sara, why do you do anything at church?

Sara: Why...I....I like, um....how to put this.....um.....

Scott: See there, Mom.

Esther: (Turns toward Scott) What about you, son, why do you do what you do at the church?

Scott: Well, somebody has to do it.

Esther: Well, is that really enough?

Scott: Well.....I.....um, I suppose.....

Esther: (sighs) Maybe....

(Scott’s cell phone rings)

Scott: Hello yes, we’ll be right there. (Hangs up the phone and turns to Esther)

Mom, that was the sitter. Little Johnny’s got the sniffles so I guess we need to go.

Sara: (rises hurriedly) Yes, let’s.
(Sara and Scott kiss Esther on the cheek and exit.)

Esther: (Esther Sits in her rocker) Lord, they just don’t understand, do they? Help them understand would you, Lord?

(Lights go down)

Scene II

(Lights up. There's a knock at the door.)

Esther: My, I'm popular today (answers door)

Aaron: Surprise!

Esther: (grabs Aaron and pulls her in)
What are you doing in town? I thought you were in Philly.

Aaron: Well, I'm...

Esther: (interrupts) Come sit down and tell me everything.

Aaron: (takes a chair) I'm trying to tell you. I'm in town for a meeting on home missions.

Esther: Well, I'm so glad you came by. Tell me everything. (Moves toward coffee) Do you want some coffee?

Aaron: (Rises and goes over to Esther) No, Esther, I don't want coffee. I want to say thank you for helping me find a job and a home when I was homeless. Mostly, I want to thank you for introducing me to Jesus.

Esther: Oh, Aaron, you don't have to thank me. I only did what Jesus asked me to.

Aaron: I know. (They both sit down) I still wanted to come for that and to ask you something.

Esther: What's that dear?

Aaron: I've been wondering for a long time how you came to help the homeless in the first place.

Esther: Well, dear. Many years ago I was in prayer about what the Lord wanted me to do. Then, one day I realized what he wanted me to do was to find a need and fill it. After a few weeks of looking around for something that needed doing, the Lord led me downtown and showed me the homeless and here I am. (Beat) But, enough of that. What have you been up to?

Aaron: I've just been going from church to church trying to get people to give and work for home missions. It seems we can send people all over the world but we can't find the time and money to reach people for the Lord in our own country.

Esther: You'll find a way, dear. You have now for almost 3 years.

Aaron: Yes, well.... So, how are Scott and Sara?

Esther: Busier than a one-armed paperhanger to hear Sara talk.

Aaron: I guess she still jumps from one thing to the other without any real purpose.

Esther: Constantly. Would you pray for her and Scott?

Aaron: I always do right after I pray for you.

Esther: Bless your heart.

Aaron: (looks at her watch) Goodness, look at the time. I was supposed to be at Bro Billy's house by now. (Gets up)

Esther: You don't have to go already? You just got here.

Aaron: (hugs Esther) I'll be back before I leave town tomorrow afternoon.

Esther: I'll see you then. (Esther watches Aaron go and sits down in her rocker)

Bless her Lord in all she does. (Dozes off. Lights dim and spotlight goes onto Esther. Esther stops rocking)

(Enter Gabriella who taps her on her shoulder)

Esther: What is it?

Gabriella: (She kneels by Esther's chair) It's time to go home, Esther. Heaven's waiting for you.

Esther: I believe you're confused. I am home. How'd you get in here anyway?

Gabriella: I'm Gabriella, your angel and I've come to take you home to Heaven, Esther.

Esther: What? No, it's not time yet.

Gabriella: But, of course it is. The Father's sent for you.

Esther: But, there's so much more to do.

Gabriella: (takes Esther’s hand) Esther, I’ve come to take you home.

Esther: (Both rise) But, I’m not ready to go now. There’s too much to do.

Gabriella: The Father will send others in your place.

Esther: But, the babies....who will take care of the nursery.

Gabriella: Maggie’s being called right now. She’s been thinking about it for quite a while.

Esther: What about the homeless? Who will take care of them?

Gabriella: Others are being called much as you were so many years ago.

Esther: But...(sits)

Gabriella: (starts to bring Esther to her feet) No, buts Esther.

Esther: What about my Son and his family? What will happen to them? There’s so much that they don’t understand.

Gabriella: It’s being taken care of very soon. Come now.

(Esther goes with Gabriella off stage. As she approaches the edge of the stage a bright light appears and she starts to hurry in.)

Esther: OH!

(Lights down)

Scene III

(Lights up. INT. DAY. Esther’s living room. Sara is dusting the furniture. There’s a knock on the door. Sara answers)

Sara: Pastor, come on in.

Pastor: (Sara motions him to a chair.) I hope I’m not interrupting anything, Sara.

Sara: (puts the duster down on the coffee table and sits) No, I’m just doing a little housework.

Pastor: How did you end up in Esther’s house?

Sara: We were renting and Scott couldn’t stand the thought of selling Esther’s house (does arm sweeping motion) so here we are.

Pastor: Are you enjoying living here?

Sara: Pretty much. But, you didn’t come by to check on the house.

Pastor: No. I have something to ask you. I know you’ve had trouble finding your niche in the church with enjoying the limelight...

Sara: The limelight...I have you know...

Pastor: Now, Sara, I didn’t come here to pick a fight. And you have to admit that you enjoy people *seeing* you doing things.

Sara: Well, of course, doesn’t everyone?

Pastor: Well, some people like Esther, just do and don’t think about who sees them.

Sara: Well, Esther was a special lady.

Pastor: Yes, She left quite the legacy. Not to mention the woman could really keep a secret. No one knew about all the ways she ministered. Well, no one but the Lord himself.

Sara: Well, anyway (adjusting herself on the chair) you wanted to talk to me about something.

Pastor: Yes, I did. Bro. Bob is retiring and moving out of state and the church needs someone to step in and take over his ministry.

Sara: (questioning) Bro. Bob? Oh, you mean the man in the sound booth. The man no one sees.

Pastor: You could say that I suppose. Though I don't think he cares if people see him or not.

Sara: But, I don't know anything about running sound equipment. Besides...

Pastor: Besides, no one would *see* you. Sara, I really don't know why the Lord brought your name to my mind for this. He just did.

Sara: But.....

Pastor: I just want you to pray before you give me your answer. It means you would have to make a real commitment. You'd have to be there for everything. Bro. Bob can give you extensive training on the equipment. After that, you would be responsible.

Sara: I don't know what to say.

Pastor: (rises from chair) That's why I want you to pray about it.

Sara: (rises from chair) I will but I don't see it happening. I really don't.

Pastor: Well, I have an appointment to get to.

(Both go to the door as Sara sees him out)

Sara: Well, I'll let you know, Pastor.

Pastor: Good.

(Pastor exits)

Sara: (shakes head and starts back toward center stage) I wonder what he was thinking. I can't stay behind the scenes that way. I wasn't made for that sort of thing. (Sits in rocker) No ...no way.

(Scott enters)

Scott: No way what, Sara?

Sara: You startled me. Pastor was just here.

Scott: Pastor? (Sits)

Sara: (leans back) Yeah, He wants me to run the sound system after Bro Bob retires. Can you believe it? Me.

Scott: Well....

Sara: Of all things. And he thinks I like the limelight.

Scott: There is that...

Sara: Now, don't you start.

Scott: So, what did you tell him?

Sara: I told him I'd pray about it.

Scott: Oh.

Sara: What oh? He asked me to pray so I'm going to pray.

Scott: Nothing except when you pray about something like that you may not like the answer.

(Scott rises)

Scott: I'll see you later. I promised Henry I'd stop by.

Sara: O.k., I just want to finish dusting.

(Sara rises. Scott kisses her on the cheek and exits. Sara picks up the duster, turns on the radio and starts to dust.)

Radio: Peter said: "Lord, you know I love you." Then, Jesus replied: Feed my sheep. What do you think he meant?"

Sara: (still dusting and talking to the radio) I don't know. I'm just waiting for the music to start.

Radio: Jesus was trying to tell Peter that if he truly loved him he would serve him. See, the disciples were like most of us. At that point in scripture, they still thought that it was all about them.

Sara: You don't say.

Radio: Later the disciples realized what Jesus meant. Jesus is the reason they went on to do great things. They understood.

Sara: Understood what?

Radio: You see, Moses, Paul, Peter, John and all the rest had this understanding in common. They knew they had an audience of one. These powerful saints realized it was God alone who truly watched them. It is God who is the true audience no matter who else does or doesn't see your good works. Scripture says: "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven."

Sara: (stops dusting) Wow.

Radio: Who do you serve –the Lord, your ego, someone else? Who is your audience? Is your audience an audience of one?

Sara: Oh, Lord, I’m so sorry. I guess I forgot. It’s really not about me, is it? It’s... it’s all about you. (Stays kneeled in silent prayer for a moment)

Sara: (rises and goes to phone) Pastor, this is Sara. Yes, I’ll take over Bro. Bob’s ministry in the sound booth. Yes, I’ll come by your office tomorrow and talk more about it. Bye.

(Lights down)

End

Song: “Audience of One”