

JASON ROWENS

YOUR. DREAM. MATTERS.

Jason: Welcome everyone this is Jason Owens. Thanks so much for joining me for episode 3 of my new podcast that I have going. I really appreciate you being here.

This is going to be a really good time. I mentioned to you back in podcast number one that there are different types of show formats that I'm going to end up doing.

Well, this is my first *interview* based podcast. Ended up having a chance to get out into the field, got a couple of new gadgets here to help me do interviews out in the field so, ended up taking those along with me.

And I had a chance to catch up with Joe Phillips of Joe Phillips Ministries. He's doing some great, great work.

Very busy guy, very multi-talented guy and I tell you what I'm really, really happy to be able to bring this interview to you: where he talks about a project that he's working on right now delivering this out in the field and tell you what it's great stuff and I can't wait for ready to hear.

So here we go.

Alright so we're here with Joe Phillips. Joe thanks a lot for joining us for this episode in this segment of the podcast.

I understand that you are packing right now to head out for the first leg of your 'Ebenezer Experience'. Can you tell us a little bit about what the Ebenezer Experience is it?

Joe: Well it's great to be here Jason thanks for having me. And actually this is the second leg.

Ebenezer Experience is a one-man but now two person; actually a six-person show of Charles Dickens Christmas Carol.

In 5 years we did 21 presentations with a cast of 80 in the Charlotte North Carolina area. Last year we had 4,200 people in 4 sold-out shows and they paid ten or fifteen dollars... ten and fifteen dollars a ticket.

And I thought well, if I'm going to memorize all of these lines I might as well take it on the road. And we've done 21 full cast and before this year 21 solo deals.

It was solo at first, a monologue and then it evolved into something where I put pictures of the characters that I was speaking to in the middle of the stage and then on the sides of the stage and we incorporate the ghost of Christmas present. Now she travels with me.

Last year she traveled and we have a new one this year. And we do video; we do a little video work with Jacob Marley. And so I'm talking this real spooky character in the middle of the stage on the videos.

So we have several different elements we incorporate. And I also had a seamstress make 4 small outfits for children. And we incorporate 4 local children in every show.

This year we have 19 shows and we have 4 children scheduled in each of them except for one.

And so if you get a child involved, you're going to get all of the relatives and neighbors and all of that and so we've done two of them so far this year.

One in Parkersburg West Virginia. We did one in New Albany Indiana just outside of Louisville. And tonight we're going to have one in down North Carolina.

Tomorrow we're going to Winton, North Carolina to do a free show for a large prison. I'm excited and a little nervous not because it's a prison but just because there's a lot of security and a lot of protocol that I'm not used to. So I want to make sure we do everything right.

Jason: Alright, excellent. So what gave you the idea for the Ebenezer Experience?

Joe: To be honest it was a sheer selfishness. I thought ... I felt like the Lord wanted me 13 months out in my planning calendar November of whatever every year that was 2011 to ... yeah 2011 I guess to ...

I wrote in my planning calendar "Don't travel next in December" which was thirteen months out. So November the year before, I wrote "Don't travel" in my planning calendar when you get to this month.

So, I didn't book anything in December ,and I didn't have any expectations I would be on stage. I hadn't really been on stage since high school. Just a couple chruchy things.

But, I heard that there was a community theater for "Christmas Carol", and just out of a sheer act of obedience I showed up at the rehearsal.

I tried out and they picked me for Scrooge, and then when I saw the script that I there were 258 lines and to 258 queues.

And my selfish motivation was: if I'm going to memorize all of this I don't want to do it two times which is what we did the first year, two or three times.

I want to really squeeze everything I can out of this so I just threw it out there on Facebook. I showed up and did my monologue and it seemed to take off.

Jason: That's great, that's great. That's fantastic. So, it started out as being something that was just locally to the Charlotte Concord/Kannapolis area, but really sounds like it's grown over the past few years.

Joe: It's grown, we've done shows in 11 states, and the only problem with it: there is a great element and a tough element.

The great element is it's recognizable all over the world, really, Charles Dickens Christmas Carol. The tough element is that you cannot do it in July. It's awkward in July.

Jason: Right

Joe: You're handicapped and handcuffed to the holiday. But so we just try to make it better every year. I've got a director, I've got the ghost.

We have the marketing, we have the promotional stuff. So you know we just see where the Lord takes it. And every year I need a little bit less makeup because I just start growing older and uglier like Ebenezer.

Jason: So you just mentioned the marketing materials that you have. You just showed them to me here just a few minutes ago before we started. They look really good. They look very professionally done.

Fantastic certainly hats off to you for that. So, people who then have you come out to do one of these shows. Tell us about how the marketing material works.

Joe: Well, I think the marketing part is one of the most important parts. And what I know the least about.

And my old secretary, who is phenomenal, runs basically a print shop for several campuses at church campuses here in the Charlotte area.

Her son is a great artist, a great photographer.

He does a lot of commercial shoots. I think he's done 7up and Puma. And so he has a real knack and a gift and he put the pictures out.

The church was generous and let me have those images. We send the images to the churches and then used them for organizations that are booking us.

One of the organization's that's booking us is a children's home in Arkansas. So I'll be there in a few days the flying into little rock. So these organizations have this free promo material.

And then when people see how great that stuff looks they're like. "You know what? I think this is not just some kind of a little church cool aid play. I think this is rightly something."

Jason: That is fantastic, fantastic. So, if somebody wants to have you come out to do this show for their church, for their Christmas program; roughly about how long does the program take?

Joe: Great question. We've been advertising at 55 minutes, and in Louisville last Sunday, I timed it. It was an hour and ten minutes, which I've been working all morning on carving 15 minutes out.

My new ghost is the Ghost of Christmas present. She's been a little longer at the end.

I'm talking a little longer so, we want that from the time that the pastor or the leader introduces me, 'All the way from the streets of London, England — Ebenezer Scrooge' until I say, 'Thank you all, see you, God bless you". We want that to be 55, no more than one hour.

Jason: Okay

Joe: It's important and so it you know for 55 minutes to have myself, another person, 4 children, a video element, dancing, jumping around, spinning, you know.

Even though I'm doing it, it's a kind of a cool exciting thing. It's a good show.

Jason: Certainly, certainly. So Joe, one last question for you here. You obviously do a lot more throughout the year than the Ebenezer Experience.

Can you tell our listeners just a little bit more about what you do with the ministry that you have.

Joe: If I could put 4 images in front people's minds this is what I've been feeling lately.

- It would be a **stage**.
- It would be a **bank teller** and I'll get to that in a moment. It sounds a little nefarious for a minister to talk about a bank teller.
- It will be a **classroom**.
- It would be a **table**.

The stage represents normal preaching, quote-unquote: preaching, speaking and camps conferences, conventions, extended services; some people call them revivals, renewals.

Whenever you do stand-up comedy on that stage, or everything, we try to have a purpose behind it of bringing people to know Jesus. So, we have comedy, and we always end with the gospel.

With Ebenezer, in the acting outreach at the end, I share Jesus for four minutes, and give people an opportunity to find Him as their best friend. And then I think that basically covers the “stage” — the acting, the ministry, the stand-up comedy.

The bank teller: we try to give away as much money as we can to orphanages and missionaries around the world. I think last year was \$16,000 which for our small ministry is significant.

Before we pay anybody in our organization, myself included, we pay missionaries and orphans around the world.

So that bank teller piece is an important piece to me because we try to generate a lot of income and we love to give it away.

The classroom piece is: we try to train the up-and-coming speakers and presenters on a variety of things.

How to tell stories, techniques of crafting, writing and organizing your messages. All the “Road Dogs” (Comedy Series) from hotels to transportation, all the little minutia and mechanics. So we want to train the next generation of speakers.

Finally the table: we've written two books. One is called *The Third Chair* you can find it on Amazon. *The Third Chair: Implementing Lasting Change*.

And the newest book that came out two weeks ago, pretty excited about co-written with Dr. Jerry Nance, the global Teen Challenge drug rehabilitation center director who directs Teen Challenge centers around the world and several thousand in America.

He asked me to come together and write this book called Fundamentals: all caps on the word “fun” *FUNDamentals in Family Life: Humorous Stories and Practical Principles Offering Families Hope*.

So those two products, as well as a stand-up comedy piece, the full Christmas Carol DVD. That resource table also connects directly with the bank teller as we raise money and give money away around the world.

So those are the four pictures and that's basically it. We do a few other things but that's a pretty concise picture of what we do.

Jason: That is fantastic Joe. Well listen, thank you so much for being on today's show and telling us a little bit there about the Ebenezer Experience.

And if people want to learn more about that where can we go find out more about the Ebenezer Experience?

Joe: Well then go to JoePhillipsMinistries.com and there's information on the website.

Then you click on the Ebenezer Experience and you can email me or my assistant Jennifer Joe@JoePhillipsMinistries.com or jennifer with a J – Jennifer@JoePhillipsMinistries.com and we would love to connect with you.

I've gotten calls today for work, and so I've got to return.

People are excited about I feel like God's in it and we just want to give him all the glory and the credit for it.

Jason: That's great. Thanks again Joe really appreciate you being here

Joe: Thank you Jason.

Jason: Alright, so that was a great episode, great interview with Joe and I certainly thank him for being on the show. I can't wait to get out in the field to do more of these interviews.

So as we go on I just want you to remember. I want to give you a word of encouragement.

I know many of you out there are in the very beginning stages of maybe writing your first book, may be capturing some of your thoughts onto a blog or thinking about getting out under the public speaking trail.

I just want to encourage you to stick with it. This is a very rewarding career and you can do it. There are many people less talented than you who are making a go of it, right.

And great, Scott I just want to give you encouragement. If you think maybe, Jason I don't really think that I look good in front of a camera or I don't know if I can do this on stage. Yes, you can.

You can do this. This is great work and I just I want to just continue to encourage you to go out there. Have a blast doing this.

Have fun you have a message inside you and if it's something that you feel needs to get out there if it's something you want to share them I feel that means you're called to this line of work.

So stick with it. If there's anything I can do to help you please reach out.

And in the meantime just remember, 'always take your message to just one more person'. Take care everyone.