

## Pilgrim's Progress: The Condensed Version

*Narrator using lectern stood centre stage, Christine wearing a large rucksack of sin stage right, cross stage left. Obstruction (dressed in black) keeps blocking Christine's journey towards the cross. Every time Christine argues with Obstruction she gets to walk round her and take another step to the cross. But then Obstruction keeps coming up with new objections, and blocking Christine's way again. Narrator plays joint role of narrator and the encouraging character of "Evangelist" from Pilgrim's Progress.*

Narrator: The Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan....sort of.

Christine was carrying a heavy burden. She could not escape the new found understanding that the life she had been living was missing something. Pride had made her try to carry the burden in her own strength, but now she was wondering if there was a way to be free of it altogether. She tried to explain her unsettled thoughts and feelings to her family, but they did not sympathise with her. Rather they thought her quite mad. Her daughter, Criticism, said:

Obstruction: *(blocking Christine's path to the cross)* What are you going on about? Yesterday you were fine with having a good job, tv, shopping, and us. And now it's all "There has to be more to life than this! What happens when we die? What's the meaning of life?" It's embarrassing! Get a grip!

Christine: Do you know how I can be freed from this burden I am carrying?

Obstruction: You're not carrying a burden, it's all in your head!

*(Christine turns and stands with her back to the cross)*

Narrator: After a sleepless night, Christine awoke with her heart still heavy. She found no comfort in her daughter's words. She couldn't pretend anymore. It's not that life was bad, it wasn't – but she felt drawn to... well, she didn't really know what. *(Christine turns back towards the cross)* While the family ate breakfast, Christine excused herself and went for a walk round the block to clear her head. I met her outside the corner shop and greeted her with a cheery "Hello! Where are you off to at this time in the morning?"

Christine: Oh Evangelist, I don't know! You've got to help me! I don't know what direction to go in, I just know that I've been heading down a dead end, and that it's not where I'm supposed to be going...

Narrator: "You know, that restlessness is Jesus calling you... invite him into your life and see where it takes you..." I told her. But as Christine was nodding and seriously contemplating following this advice, a colleague from the office, called Mockery, crossed over the road and came to join in the conversation.

Obstruction: Don't listen to him! He's full of mumbo-jumbo! He'll have you sat in church bored to tears every Sunday, that's his idea of a good time! You can't live your life based on a fairy tale lie, you won't find any relief in that, how could you?

Christine: Can you help me get rid of this burden I am carrying?

Obstruction: I don't see a burden; I don't know what you are talking about.

Narrator: "Don't give up now Christine. This is just the start of an exciting journey. I know it doesn't all make sense to you yet, but once you step out in faith God will open your eyes and you'll be amazed at how differently you see the world and what a relief it is to know that God has a role for you in it." Christine prayed her first prayer.

Christine: God, if you're real please show me what to do next. *(tries to step round Obstruction)*

Obstruction: *(blocking her way again)* Are you praying? What a load of codswallop! Who are you praying to? That cloud there?

Christine: No! I wasn't praying! I was just... muttering to myself...you know, "God! What a day I'm having!" *(turns her back to the cross and freezes)*

Narrator: And with that she scurried home, still weighed down by her burden. Nevertheless the rumours spread, as at work Isolation gossiped:

Obstruction: Christine has finally lost the plot! I always thought she was weak! She's thinking of going religious! You want to stay away from her!

Narrator: Christine surprised herself by saying in front of the whole office, almost before she knew she knew it herself...

Christine: *(turning towards the cross again)* I know there's something in all this Jesus stuff. You can gossip about me as much as you like, but I need to find out for myself what's what, rather than just going along with your opinion. *(Christine steps around Obstruction)*

Narrator: Admitting her interest in all things Jesus out loud somehow strengthened Christine's resolve, and the others backed off for a bit, until they could regroup. Mockery and Isolation may not have shaken Christine off her pursuit for truth, but they felt confident they could bring her back down to earth with some good old flattery and Temptation.

Obstruction: *(steps in front of Christine, blocking her way)* That promotion could be yours, as long as you stop going on about God and start acting normal again.

Narrator: But Christine knew that the only way she would ever be free of the burden she carried was to keep heading in a Jesus direction. At least she thought she knew, but as she stepped past Temptation (*Christine steps past Obstruction*), she came face to face with Doubt (*Obstruction steps in way of Christine*).

Obstruction: Are you sure? You're making people feel uncomfortable, rocking the boat the way you are, and making a lot of enemies for yourself. Are you sure this pursuit of yours is worth it? What if it turns out to be nothing? You'll have alienated your friends, and made a fool of yourself, just to end up back where you started.

Narrator: And then Christine thought she didn't know anything at all, and that maybe her burden wouldn't ever be got rid of, and that she was barking up the wrong tree. Maybe she should shut up and take the promotion. The thought of that being the end of her journey sent her into a deep depression of inactivity for a week, (*Christine sits on the floor, despondently, at the fit of Obstruction*) until she came to her senses.

Christine: (*stands up*) When I was headed towards Jesus I had hope. You have nothing to offer me. You either can't see the burden I'm carrying or you're pretending you can't, and either way, you don't know how to help me get rid of it. I'd rather step out into the unknown with hope, than give up and be stuck with this heaviness forever. (*steps around Obstruction*)

Narrator: And so Christine overcame the obstructions of Pride, Criticism, Mockery, Isolation, Temptation and Doubt and completed her journey, for as God promises "when you seek me, you will find me". As Christine said

Christine: (*kneeling before the cross*) Jesus, I'm sorry for the things I've done wrong. Please come into my life. I want to live my life for you and with you.

Narrator: so she was freed from the great burdens of sin and separation from God (*Christine is able to take of the rucksack*) and able to step out with confidence into a new life of freedom.