



Grace in the Shadows

A Groundbreaking Faith-Based Noir Film

Grace in the Shadows is not just another faith-based movie—it's a daring reimagining of Christian cinema. Shot in a striking **noir style**, this powerful film exposes the depths of human sin while revealing the unstoppable light of God's grace in a way never before seen on screen.

Inspired by the true events chronicled in *Murder in the Church*, this story ventures where most Christian films refuse to go—into the raw, unfiltered darkness of deception, betrayal, and brokenness.

At its heart lies the personal testimony of **Pastor Chris J. Schimel**, who courageously shares the painful struggles within his own church community. Through shattered trust and spiritual warfare, his journey reveals a single, timeless truth: **only the love of God can redeem what sin has destroyed.**

Grace in the Shadows is more than a film—it's a wake-up call, a testimony, and a cinematic experience that will challenge and inspire audiences to see God's grace in places they never imagined.

Character Profile: Pastor Jonathan Brant

Age: Early 50s

Occupation: Senior Pastor of Church

Jonathan Brant gives the first impression that he is a confident pastor, more of a leader than a shepherd. He is 5'9" tall and has a partially bald dirty blonde head of hair. He carries himself with calmness, but can be seen nail-biting from time to time. He is often quick to make decisions which causes people to trust him and mistrust him at the same time.

In daily life Jonathan is diligent about sermon preparation as well as organizing for the church. He commands attention in most any room he enters where he is the pastor. He is an influencer and people are drawn to his leadership. He likes to golf and play basketball, and is very competitive in any sport he plays. A weakness he shows at times, is his tendency to speak the truth, and it sometimes offends people.

Beneath the surface, Jonathan is very sensitive in his relationship with the Lord. He is often seen in tears when he communicates the miracle of new life that Jesus has done in his life. Often, it is hard for him to get through a sermon without some tears. He comes from a home with a strong faith-filled mother and a not so devout absentee father. This created troubled adjustment issues that the Lord has helped him to negotiate life. He is 100 percent sure of his call to ministry and it shows in his commitment to the ministry.

Sides

6 EXT. CHURCH YARD - NIGHTFALL

6

Twilight settles. Lanterns glow. Guitars strum familiar chords--"Amazing Grace My Chains are Gone." Children's voices ring out.

Wide shot: the whole community together, lit by firelight against the mountain dusk.

PASTOR JONATHAN BRANT steps up to the circle, Bible tucked under his arm. He gestures gently for attention.

JONATHAN

Friends... before we sing another verse, I want to share something. Maggie woke a few weeks ago, with a sense that God had spoken to her-- something pretty weighty.

Faces glow, eager. Heads nod. A ripple of anticipation.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

She has sensed his voice before and we have been praying for Him to move. And she sensed Him saying something is going to happen very soon. So, let's keep this in our prayers.

Applause. The guitars strike up Amazing Grace--My Chains are Gone.

FINAL IMAGE

The congregation sings, faces haloed by firelight. Children sway. Parents clap.

Christi sings confidently, hair lit gold, joy written across her face.

Elliot stands nearby, laughing with a neighbor.

Jonathan kneels beside Sarah at the rail. His eyes search hers.

JONATHAN

Tell us.

Sarah steadies herself, voice low but unflinching.

SARAH

After everyone left... he said he's leaving. He wants a divorce.
And Vince—(beat, forced steady) — he's made him partner. In the business. In everything.

A long silence. Maggie presses her hand over Sarah's trembling one. Jonathan's voice carries, quiet, measured — the first taste of his inner narration.

JONATHAN VO

I see it now, clearer than I wish. At the table, he wouldn't speak until the other man's glance gave leave. Permission disguised as friendship. Control hidden behind smiles. And we—(beat)—we called it fellowship.

Jonathan bows his head, whispering aloud now, his words half prayer, half confession.

JONATHAN VO

We prayed for a stirring, Lord. We asked for a flame. And You've given us fire...but not the fire we thought.

INSERT — THE ALTAR BIBLE

Its red ribbon bookmark trembles in a draft, curling across the page like a thin thread of blood.

Sarah sees it, blinks hard, then presses her palm flat against the open page.

HOLD on the three at the altar — Sarah bent in grief, Maggie steadying her, Jonathan bowed in thought, already piecing fragments like a detective at a crime scene.

Outside, the storm rumbles on. Inside, the sanctuary feels both fortress and crucible.

FADE OUT

23 EXT. CHURCH STEPS - DAY - FLASHBACK

23

Sunday sunlight. Families spill out, laughter, chatter. ELLIOTFENWICK stands apart, face tight, confronting Jonathan.

ELLIOT
(angry, low)
If God's so good, Pastor, why does He gut
families like butchered deer?

JONATHAN
(Calm but stung, he tries to answer.)
Well, sometimes the wound we feel... isn't the
Shepherd's blade, but the wolf's bite. God is
still near.

Elliot scoffs, storms off. Sarah lingers at the steps, torn
between following her husband and her pastor.

DISSOLVE TO

24 INT. CHURCH - EVENING (1 8 MONTHS EARLIER) 24

FLASHBACK YOUTH Q&A NIGHT. The FELLOWSHIP HALL hums with
restless ENERGY.

TEENAGERS fidget in folding chairs, snacks CRINKLE in their
hands.

PASTOR JONATHAN stands at the front, microphone in hand,
his smile warm but weary.

JONATHAN
Questions asked like knives. Faith fractured between them.

(V.O.)

A SLIP OF PAPER is passed forward, folded twice. Jonathan
accepts it, unfolds carefully.

INSERT — the note in CHRISTI'S sharp handwriting:

"If God loves us so much, why does He let families fall
apart?"

CLOSE ON Jonathan's face — his eyes flicker, the smile
falters.

He glances up. Across the room, CHRISTI sits small in her chair, arms drawn around herself. Her eyes are steady, but there's no defiance – only ache. She waits.

Jonathan swallows, grips the mic tighter. His hand TREMBLES.

JONATHAN

Well... sometimes God lets us walk through the valley of shadows, because that's where the still waters are.

The room stills. Christi lifts her eyes, her voice quiet, trembling at the edges.

CHRISTI

But... why does He let it hurt so much... first?

A ripple moves through the teens – an uneasy shifting of chairs. Jonathan exhales, his voice soft, almost prayer.

JONATHAN

Well...the Bible says he is always near. That means, He is with us in our pain...which probably also means, He feels it with us.

Christi bites her lip, nods faintly – not convinced, not combative.

CHRISTI

I just... wish He'd fix it sooner.

Jonathan lowers his eyes. The MIC HUMS faint feedback.

JONATHAN

So do I, Christi. So do I.

The silence thickens. Christi looks down at her folded hands
– fragile, restless.

Sarah sitting across from young Christi moves over to her pew and puts her hand on her back. Sarah's voice steady, warm.

SARAH

Honey, He hasn't forgotten us. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted. If we lean on Him – we won't fall.

Christi's eyes glistens, and she softly, whispers:

CHRISTI

But Dad doesn't believe that. Why should I?

Sarah reaches for her hand – but Christi pulls back, restless, unresolved.

JONATHAN (V.O.)

The sins of the Father can be visited on the sons and daughters for generations. I pray Go show us how to break this generational curse before it takes root.

The camera HOLDS on the empty pew, stained-glass light flickering across it.

At the pulpit, PASTOR JONATHAN prays, hands resting on the open Bible.

His voice is steady – but his eyes drift.

JONATHAN

Almighty God, You are our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

From across the aisle, MAGDALENA BRANT glances toward the empty pew. The piano swells, voices filling the sanctuary.

Jonathan clears his throat, presses his palm on the Bible, and his voice strengthens as he begins to read directly:

JONATHAN

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

His hand lingers on the page, almost trembling.

CONGREGATION

(Spotted amens ring out.)

Jonathan's face is caught between faith and doubt, pastor and detective. HOLD on the empty Fenwick pew.

WHITE OUT.

He's already taken too much. But I can't lose Christi. She is so confused now. She doesn't know if she should blame Vince, her dad or God. But mostly her dad and God seem to be her preference now.

Jonathan lowers the notes, his voice shifting – half reflection, half prayer.

JONATHAN (V.O.)

How did we miss him?

He smiled in our pews. Broke bread at our table. And I... I thought Vince was a lost man. But, there are shadows that wear borrowed light.

JONATHAN

Lord... unmask the lies of the enemy. Guard your people. Scatter the shadows.

A silence falls. The CLOCK ticks.

SARAH and JONATHAN sit at the kitchen table, heads bowed,

MAGDALENA "MAGGIE" BRANT is about to join them in prayer.

The FRONT DOOR creaks. CHRISTINA "CHRISTI" FENWICK slips in, damp from the night air, face drawn tight.

Sarah rises half a step, but Maggie catches her arm.

MAGGIE

Let me.

Sarah nods, sinking back down. Jonathan watches as Maggie ascends the stairs.

30 INT. CHRISTINA'S BEDROOM – CONTINUOUS

30

OVERHEAD SHOT – Four figures form a circle in the living room: JONATHAN, MAGDALENA, SARAH, and CHRISTINA.

Their HANDS clasp tight across the table.

Their voices rise in overlapping WHISPERS – urgent, broken, indistinct.

A single CANDLE flickers at the table's center, throwing shadows long and warped across the walls.

CLOSE ON — SARAH bowed, lips moving but unheard. CHRISTI squeezes her mother's hand, jaw set.

MAGGIE'S eyes glisten, whispering scripture under her breath. JONATHAN'S hand trembles, gripping tighter.

The CAMERA BEGINS TO PULL BACK — wider, higher — the small circle shrinking in the frame.

The whispers continue, muffled now, drowned beneath the storm's breath.

The candle sputters, nearly goes out.

JONATHAN (V.O.)

We prayed as though light itself were at stake. But shadows had already entered. A husband drifting, a wife clinging, a daughter caught in the crossfire. And a stranger... always at the edge. I did not see clearly then. I see it now.

A beat of silence. Lightning washes the room white, then black.

JONATHAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And that... was Day Two.

FADE TO BLACK.

31 INT. CHURCH STUDY — MONDAY MORNING

31

SUPER: DAY THREE — MONDAY

A wall CLOCK ticks, loud in the stillness. PASTOR JONATHAN sits behind his desk.

MAGDALENA works in the outer office, Bible open on her desk.

The door creaks. SARAH slips in. She doesn't sit immediately— just stands, hollow-eyed, arms crossed, then forces herself into the chair opposite Jonathan. MAGDALENA follows her in. A long pause. The ticking clock.

SARAH

(voice low, frayed)

Hard daylight stripes the room through half-closed blinds. Books, a legal pad, a yellowed card with a NON-EMERGENCY number.

PASTOR JONATHAN sits at the desk, staring at his CELL PHONE. His fingers drum the blotter. Stop. Start. Stop. His lips move – silent rehearsal:

JONATHAN

(mouthing)

This is Pastor Jonathan Brant...I need to report—
This is Pastor Jonathan Brant.I... I need to report
a—

He stops. The wall CLOCK grows loud. His eyes flick to the legal pad: blank. His pen hovers, useless.

JONATHAN

(quieter, reasoning loud) If I call now... and I'm
wrong... I look like a fool. Alarmist. Hysterical
pastor.

A beat. He presses the pen to the pad, writes a single word: "research".

JONATHAN

(firmer, convincing Himself)

No. Better to learn more first. Look into him.
Vince Lupin. Then I'll call—with cause. With
proof.

The word "research" underlines twice. The pen digs too deep, leaving a dot of ink that slowly bleeds. Jonathan lowers the phone. The screen goes dark with a hollow CLICK. He stares at the phone as if it betrayed him. Or as if he betrayed himself.

HOLD on the dot of ink spreading, silent as guilt.

37 INT./ EXT. FENWICK HOUSE - LIVING ROOM- MONDAY AFTERNOON 37

Flat daylight filters through blinds. The kitchen is too still. A wall CLOCK ticks loud. On the table: SARAH FENWICK's yellow PAD. Words half-scrawled: "Vince controls him. Elliot whispered: won't let me out of sight." The pencil TIP SNAPS. She drops it.

A KNOCK rattles the back door. Sarah jumps.

She opens it. JONATHAN and MAGDALENA step in from the path, coats damp with wind. Jonathan carries his notebook; Maggie her bag. They join Sarah at the table. The PAD lies face-down.

SARAH

(blurts, low)

Do you think we need the police? If Vince is pressing Elliot... won't it make things worse?

Jonathan leans forward, urgent but measured.

JONATHAN

Sarah... the police have power we don't. He's on parole. Maybe breaking it now. One word—one violation— and he's back inside.

Sarah's gaze flicks to the curtained window. Leaves scrape siding.

SARAH

And Christi... Before we do anything... I want her voice in this. She's his daughter.

Jonathan exhales, fists curling, then unclenching.

JONATHAN

This feels dangerous.

Too dangerous for silence.

Maggie covers Sarah's trembling hand.

MAGGIE

And too dangerous for you to carry alone.

A faint CRACK outside — like glass breaking. The three glance toward the window. Only shadows. Jonathan steps out onto the patio. He pulls out his phone, considering calling the police. From the woods — a RUSTLE. Birds erupt skyward, wings thrashing. Between the trunks: a darker SHAPE. Still. Watching. Then gone. Jonathan grips the phone tighter, heart pounding.

JONATHAN

(whisper, to himself)

...what was that?

He stares into the trees – empty, indifferent – then turns back inside, shutting the door soft. He sets the phone on the table beside Sarah, conceding.

PASTOR JONATHAN sits at the desk, his pen scratching furiously. INSERT – LEGAL PAD: "Restraining order?" "Parole check?" He circles the words again. Harder. Ink digs grooves, finally tearing the page. He exhales, frustrated, and tosses the pen aside. His CELL PHONE glows. A number half-dialed. Erased. Cursor blinking. Waiting. Jonathan rubs his face, then lowers his hands, staring at the torn paper. His voice breaks the silence – half-prayer, half-confession, like a man reasoning with himself.

JONATHAN

If I call tonight... maybe they'd listen. Check his parole. Find him violating. Lock him up. A pause. His voice grows softer.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

Or they laugh. A pastor's suspicion. Shadows in the woods. A frightened wife. Whispers on the phone. Nothing more.

He leans back, staring upward. The ceiling beams slice the light like prison bars.

JONATHAN

How do I weigh it? A man's habits... his eyes... his lies. But I see only fragments. A pacing shadow. A daughter split between anger and hope. A wife clutching scripture like a shield. And Elliot... once my friend... but now speaking in another man's voice.

The phone screen buzzes, clock blinking 10:00. He studies it, thumb hovering over the green CALL icon.

JONATHAN

Lord... is this Your warning? Or my fear? If I move too soon... I drive him farther. Make Vince the martyr. Close the door of salvation for good.

A long beat. His thumb lowers... then lifts away. The screen goes dark. Jonathan bows his head, whispers, almost ashamed of his own frailty.

JONATHAN

More light, Lord. More wisdom. Not yet.

The lamp hums. Shadows pulse against the walls. Jonathan sits still, paralyzed between action and inaction, like Hamlet, penitent but immovable.

JONATHAN (V.O.)

The papers lay before me. One word to the police, and he might be bound. But would chains keep sin from spreading? Or would it shut the prison door of his soul for good? I chose silence. Prayer over summons. Mercy over justice. And that was Day Three.

FADE OUT.

40 INT. CHURCH OFFICE - TUESDAY MORNING

40

SUPER: DAY FOUR - TUESDAY

Pulls his LAPTOP forward. The glow reflects in his weary eyes. CLOSE ON SCREEN: Search bar. He types: "Vincent Lupin - BoulderColorado." Links scroll past - fragments: minor arrests, rumors, parole. Nothing certain. Jonathan frowns. Types again: "Why do men leave their families? why do they fall?" Search results: blog posts, statistics, advice columns. He closes the window. Unsatisfied.

One more search: "spiritual discernment against evil influences."

The screen fills with verses, half-formed sermons, scattered words:

"The devil prowls like a roaring lion..."

"The thief comes in to steal, kill, and destroy." That last verse draws him up short, hits home.

Jonathan leans back. His thumb hovers over his phone -

the green CALL button gleaming. He almost presses it. Stops.

JONATHAN

(murmuring aloud)

Who is this man, Lord? How did Elliot-how did my friend- end up in chains? Where do I even look?

He closes the laptop, presses the Bible flat beneath his palm. His voice lowers into prayer, almost a whisper.