

Traffic School For Sinners TV Series Bible

# TRAFFIC SCHOOL FOR SINNERS



By Michael Howard



# WHAT TO EXPECT



## FORMAT/GENRE

Traffic School for Sinners is a single camera faith-based dramedy series

## LOGLINE

A failed comedian must overcome the sins of his abusive upbringing when he opens a comedy-based church crisis center.



# TONAL COMPS



The faith based, situational drama of The Encounter meets the diverse, clean comedy of The Neighborhood.







# WHY WILL PEOPLE WATCH?



The American faith based community is an under-served fan base of modern television. While there are excellent faith based television and films, they are largely tethered to specific dogma which limit the context or dilute the content.

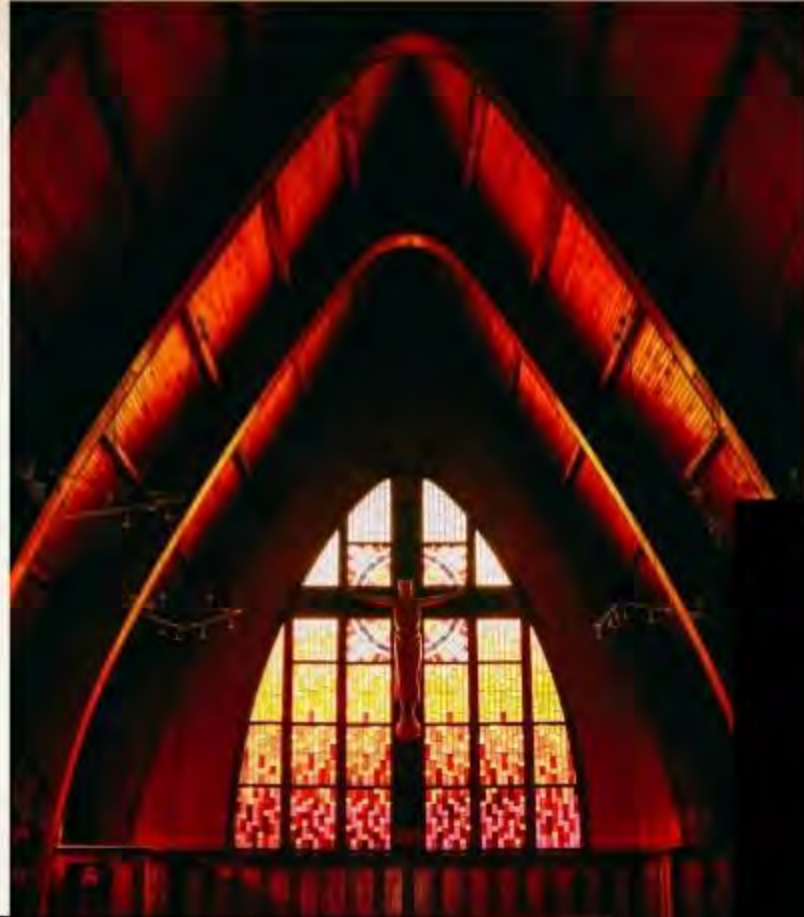
Traffic School for Sinners embraces dogma of all faiths. Our protagonist Devon Gottlich was born Jewish, raised Baptist and married a Muslim. This interfaith approach loosens the constraints of today's faith based entertainment and broadens the capacity of content while widening the context available.

Dogma aside, people will watch to follow Devon in his exploration of his abusive past in service to bettering himself today. He does this from a unique humorous perspective that combines faith with comedy.

This unique blend of faith and comedy is brought to light most vividly while operating the comedy-based crisis day center Traffic School for Sinners. In this role, he shines the light of an all loving, all-tolerant interfaith God while providing basic nourishment to the souls desperately in need of food, shelter and respite from the secular world.



# THE WORLD



Traffic School For Sinners is set in Kingfish, a fictional urban community outside of Atlanta, Georgia.

The town of Kingfish was originally named after its first mayor and large landowner Fischer King, the great-grandfather of our story's Ms. Lucinda King.

A long-standing working-class industrial hub, the region is a dichotomy of religion and vice. Lo'Town Avenue acts as the proverbial train tracks that separates the good side of town from the bad, which coincidentally runs parallel to the actual railroad tracks that run north to south.

The westside of Lo'Town Avenue hosts the area's religious community of churches, including Great Awakening Baptist Church of our story. Conversely, the eastside is infamous for bars, strip clubs, underground gambling halls and barely disguised brothels. It is on this side of town our Lo'Town Comedy Club once stood and is replaced by Traffic School for Sinners.

Homelessness, drug use and prostitution are an ongoing concern of the residents of Kingfish. With a diverse population consisting of black, Hispanic, Asian and white families, the two sides of town are in constant competition for the attention of the other. Sinners are lured by the worldly pleasures of the east side, but return to the providence of the west.

Good and evil. Always present, always fighting in Kingfish.



# THE STORY



Traffic School for Sinners is about the psychology of sin.

It follows Devon Gottlich, a recently fired faith-based comedian whose life is upended when his wife Holly is raped by the son of an influential church member.

This event triggers in Devon all of the un-processed emotions of his abusive upbringing. The hurt and harm of his formative years quickly come back to him as he navigates how to deal with the present circumstances. And for Devon, that is anger. Selfishly, he allows his anger to affect his and Holly's life, even when she needs him the most.

As the series progresses, we learn more of Devon's dark past where an abusive father and addicted mother inflicted deep psychological scars, all the while we follow his current circumstances raising a controversial child he did not father.

Traffic School for Sinners reveals the dark, often disturbing root cause of sin, but is ultimately a show of hope. Each episode shines the light of love, laughter and faith as the solution to the burden of sin. It does this through Devon's work at the comedy based church crisis center Traffic School for Sinners. As its Director of Programs, he uses his gift for laughter to change the lives of the downtrodden in search for shelter, food, showers and nourishment for their souls.

And it's there that Devon's past ultimately converges with his future to reveal an unlikely fact no one would have guessed.



# THE CHARACTERS

Actors shown are for reference only. They display the attributes of the character, but are not currently under contract for this series.



DEVON GOTTLICH

Devon Gottlich knows how to make people laugh. He's been doing it since 3rd grade when his uncle bought him a book on jokes. Every Christmas, he would entertain the mostly men family members drunk on the porch, toking on a single joint or passing around a glass pipe, laughing at Devon's antics.

His escape to comedy at an early age is the beginning of Devon's suppressing the darker side of his upbringing. His mother Annabella and father Kelvin met at a party where she was addicted to crack and he an alcoholic. Their relationship was tumultuous one. Kelvin was jealous of her imagined affairs with others, Annabella's erratic behavior was driven by the fear of abandonment, the result was an almost daily bout of violence.

When Devon was born, it was just another reason for anger, anxiety and fear fueled arguments on how to raise him. Annabella's family faith was Jewish, Kelvin's, Baptist. The two parents were torn in the middle by the interests of their families, forced to defend one faith over the other. Ironic, given neither parent, or family for that matter, lived by the tenants of their faiths.

At age eight, when Devon received the book of jokes, he found a safe haven, a solution to the problems he perceived around him. When he made people laugh, the violence, the pain, the unsafe environment would temporarily fade away, replaced by laughter, safety and love.

When his father was eventually thrown in jail for domestic violence and ultimately killed in prison, Devon decided two things. First, he would chose the uplifting, song-filled Baptist faith over his mother's Jewish religion and second, he would become a comedian.



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HOLLY GOTTLICH

Holly Gottlich grew up as the proverbial Jewish princess. Her mother doted on her, her father adored her. Excellent in her academic studies, she aspired to be a nurse or a doctor.

When her family seriously introduced her to Judaism at age 11 by asking her to prepare for her Bat Mitzvah, she excitedly proclaimed to her mother "Watch out world, I'm coming!" And with that, she began a long journey of exploration into religion and social commentary. It began with the confusion between the rites, rituals and structured roles of the Torah compared to her daily life at home. "Why doesn't Dad make you take a Mikveh now, Mom?" she asked referring to the orthodox ritual bath a woman would take after menstruation cycles. Many questions followed of Torah law and actual practice. In an act of rebellion, Holly secretly began researching other religions in her school library, in an attempt to find a "modern" religion that still practiced what the literature instructed its followers to do.

Then, in high school, she met Fatima. A Muslim girl, she intrigued Holly with her hajib and daily prayers at school. While others shunned her, Holly quickly became her bestie. Drawn to her intelligent, thoughtful personality and devoted adherence to Islam, Holly would eventually convert to Islam, to the horror and shame of her family.

After high school she began dating Muslim men, mostly black, some Arabic. When Fatima met Cisco, his friend Devon pursued Holly with the charm and gallantry of a knight out of a fairy tale. There was only one problem, of course. He was Christian.



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KELVIN GOTTLICH

As Devon's father, Kelvin Gottlich plays a pivotal role in Devon's past.

An abusive, domineering father, Kelvin never gave much thought or spent enough attention to actually parent his son. Too caught up in the daily grind of alcoholism, pursuing his dream of winning the big one, and chasing down the men he was sure were having an affair with his wife, his son Devon was just -- well, in the way.

And he wasn't one to suffer a fool. At any indication of a slight or disrespect by his son Devon, his wife, or anyone else, Kelvin was sure to make it clear he was no chump.

Kelvin was not only instrumental in Devon's past, he also pokes his angry demeanor into Devon's present world by appearing as memories that affect Devon's behavior today. Like it or not, the fruit doesn't fall far from the tree, and Devon is proof of that. He still makes the same mistakes as his father, despite living with them as a child.

When Devon was 13, Kelvin was arrested for domestic violence, and as fate would have it, Devon never saw him again. Kelvin's life ends in prison similarly in the way he lived it. Violent, angry, painfully.

Now it's up to Devon to ensure his father Kelvin doesn't play a part in his future, for if you don't learn from the past, you are sure to repeat it.



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ANNABELLA GOTTLICH

Where Devon's father is a big part of his past, Annabella is a big part of his present and his future.

When she found out she was pregnant with Devon, Annabella was in full party mode. And it wasn't so easy to stop, even after she found out she was with child.

Her family had all but disowned her for her irresponsible, and to them, reprehensible behavior of drinking, drugging and spending time with those certain kind of men. The unsaid message was both racist and clear to Annabella, as her parents were of old stock and equally old perspectives.

Without the financial or moral support of her parents, Annabella resigned herself to the fact she would both have the baby and give it a try with Devon's father Kelvin.

When Kelvin was killed in jail, she was forced to reach back to her family for support. Reluctantly, they helped and supported both Annabella and Devon as Annabella once more struggled with alcohol and her favorite drug, crack cocaine.

When Devon left home, she once more spiraled back into the lifestyle, ending up bouncing around the country, following her addiction and her desires.

When she learned she was a grandmother, everything changed. It was time to reconcile with her son and his new family.



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CISCO MALAK

Cisco grew up in the hard streets of Hosseinia, Iraq. As a boy, he learned how to hustle the street vendors by selling them the wares of competing vending carts, telling them they did not have a product the other carts did, then selling them the item at a mark up from the very competing carts he originally spoke of.

When his family told him at age 11 he would be moving to America, he was very excited. The opportunities would be endless, he thought. No more running on dusty dirt roads from one end of the city to another chasing vending carts for coins.

When his family landed in the equally mean streets of Atlanta, Georgia, Cisco found himself just as shoeless, just as disenfranchised as he was in Iraq. At 14, he began running with a street gang known for its smash and grab style of store robberies, stealing bottles of wine and alcohol to sell to the winos for cents on the dollars. In and out of juvenile hall, his life's trajectory looked bleak until he was placed in a program for troubled youth ran by a local Baptist church.

With the guidance of street-smart reformed staff members, Cisco turned his life around and was baptized at 16.

Soon after, he met Devon in high school. They were instantly inseparable. Devon looked up to Cisco for his hustle and faith, Cisco was equally enamored with Devon's charisma and jokes.

When Cisco began dating Fatima, it was only natural that Devon take a liking to her friend Holly.



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FATIMA MALAK

Fatima was already of high school age when her aunt and grandmother said she would accompany them to America.

The reason for the move was kept a family secret to the large extended family Fatima grew up with in Anarak, Iran. She had become pregnant at age 15 and was unmarried. The religious, social and familial culture could not tolerate such a blow. The rules were clear in each of these segments, and none of them allowed this transgression.

It was a devastating blow to Fatima. She was revered and beloved to all with her thoughtful wit, caring affection and intelligent eyes.

A cover story was developed and before she knew it, she was saying good bye to the life that meant everything to her. The plan was to visit friends of her aunt in America and under the cover of this visit, have the baby and adopt it. The friends were sworn to secrecy and it was thought she would return with no one the wiser.

When she arrived, she promptly had a miscarriage and demanded to immediately be sent home. But, Desert Storm began and she was separated from her aunt and grandmother who were sent back, but Fatima forced to stay.

In a country, city and family she did not know, she was alone and devastated.

Then, she met Holly, and life got a little less unbearable. Along came Cisco and it got down right interesting.



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LUCINDA KING

Lucinda knew from an early age her life would not extend beyond the little town of Kingfish, Georgia.

Her granddaddy and his daddy had lived here for all of their lives, and she knew it was expected she sit down and stay right here in the same town her entire family had laid roots down at.

Her granddaddy had basically started the town, having been freed from slavery and given 40 acres and a mule in 1866. A determined man, he tilled the land for tobacco and hemp, bought surrounding plots and soon found himself the mayor of a town he basically built with his own hands.

By the time Lucinda was born, her family owned nearly all the downtown buildings and industrial plots and most of the surrounding un-developed land slated for housing.

She became interested in business when her mother would drag her to the family's downtown office to do the accounting for all the businesses under the King name. Watching the townsfolk come and go and seeing the respect and admiration they showed her mother, she felt the call of duty and went to business school at Howard University.

Returning from college, she learned her mother kept the fact she had contracted breast cancer and had only months live from her. Faced with the prospect of losing her mother and gaining the family business in one fell swoop, she quickly sought the man of her dreams to face both prospects together.

Things didn't turn out as planned.



# THREADS OF FORGIVENESS



## EPISODE 1 (Pilot)

When Holly is raped by Ms. King's son Jalen, Devon cannot contain his anger.

His past comes flooding back when he feels betrayed by Cisco who comforted Ms. King after the attack. We learn this is similar to the betrayal he felt when his father hit his mother and would leave her sobbing on the floor.

Devon attacks Cisco and lands in jail, where he must learn forgiveness -- but not just any forgiveness -- rather, the forgiveness of Grace, where it is undeserved, but necessary to live in God's love.

Forgiveness is the spark that leads Ms. King to donate funds and buildings for a new church crisis day center.





# RULES OF VIRTUE



## Episode 2

Devon and Holly struggle with being pregnant. Not knowing whether the baby is Devon's or as a result of her attack, Devon's past swirls back to haunt him and Holly.

We learn when Devon was born, his father Kelvin was drunk and belligerent in the hospital. He loudly proclaimed Devon wasn't his child to nurses, family and visitors, ostracizing Annabella and staff.

Similarly, Devon battles his ego and fear of being thought a chump by supporting a baby that isn't his.

Meanwhile, they work to get the new church crisis center off the ground. They hit a snag with Ms. King who wants to name the center after her son who is also Holly's rapist and potential biological father of her child.







# WITH OR WITHOUT COURAGE



## Episode 3

Devon and Holly face several major decisions in their lives.

The first is whether to consider abortion. Their faith and desire to honor God's gift of life is severely questioned but is ultimately decided with the help of Cisco and Fatima and a little nudge by a new abortion law.

That decision made, now they must decide on the role Ms. King will play in the baby's life. Here, Devon's memories cloud his judgement when he recalls his father Kelvin abandoning the family when he hit a gambling pay dirt.

Finally, they decide on the services of the newly named Traffic School For Sinners, including how comedy will heal the souls of the clients that require its services.





# SOULS OF INDUSTRY



## Episode 4

Holly and Devon visit the doctor for Holly's 20 week ultrasound visit, revealing the gender of the baby. With each parent having their own desired gender, they work through the emotions of learning whether to buy pink or blue.

The Traffic School For Sinners crisis center is launched with a focus solely on crisis care, but lacks the comedy aspect the name meant to invoke. When the financial drain for the church becomes clear, Devon suggests an income source worthy of the center's name.

The stress of financial difficulty triggers Devon's memory of his father's jealousy of a neighbor's apparent success.



# ODE TO RESTRAINT



## Episode 5

Devon's past appears in the form of a client when his cousin drops in for food, shelter and a shower. The cousin reminds him of the time his father Kelvin was pursued by angry debt collectors that put the whole family in danger. And the mystery man who saved them all.

The Traffic School For Sinners new venture of being a shelter by day and comedy club by night launches with great success. Devon performs his stand-up to a packed crowd and much applause.

Holly is wobbling about the shelter on opening night and has a scare. With only three weeks until her due date, she wrestles with taking maternity leave or keeping active at the shelter.





# FAITH BY NAME ONLY



## Episode 6

Holly gives birth to their newborn son Emunah even while Devon's memories of his father accusing his mother of infidelity and claiming Devon wasn't his son burn brightly in Devon's mind.

Instead of providing comfort, strength and sense of family to Holly, Devon's razor thin faith in God, in Holly, and the fear of the unknown color an otherwise joyful occasion. It's Cisco's wisdom and friendship that renews Devon's faith when he shares the true meaning of the word from his own childhood memories.

With both Devon and Holly out, Ms. King covers for the couple at Traffic School for Sinners, welcoming a young couple with a newborn recently evicted from their home in need of food and shelter. She shares the strength of faith and prayer to the couple, who turn out to be distant relatives.





# HORIZON OF HOPE



## Episode 7

Hope prevails as Devon and Holly's newborn brightens the Traffic School for Sinners center at the early age of two months old.

Devon gets a surprise phone call from his mother Annabella, congratulating him on becoming a father. She tells him of a time after his own birth when she and his father Kelvin were doing good and the future looked bright because both had stopped their alcohol and drug addictions. She says she will come visit her new grandson in the near future, causing Devon some anxiety.

The crisis center welcomes a single mother on crack, telling a similar story of Devon's past, which heightens his anxiety from his phone call with Annabella.



# HARMONY ON LIFE



## Episode 8

Holly begins to isolate with baby Emunah. Protective of him and not allowing Devon to be alone with him or perform day-to-day tasks for him, she exhibits signs of post-partum depression. Meanwhile, Emunah becomes colic, inducing further stress between the new parents who struggle to understand what's wrong and how to ease the baby's discomfort.

A man with aids visits the center in need of counseling for addiction to pornographic videos, reminding Devon of his mother's story of catching his father Kelvin watching similar videos shortly after Devon was born.

Fatima helps the couple's strained relationship by recounting her harmonious family life in Anarak, Iran despite the harsh realities of life there.



# CHARITY'S NUMBER



## Episode 9

Devon's mother Annabella continues to insert herself back in Devon's life with weekly phone calls checking on baby Emunah. Their conversation this week bring back some of the pain from Devon's childhood when she recounts to him how his father Kelvin's stalked a neighbor he suspected was having an affair with Annabella.

Ms. King also insists on being part of Emunah's life, insisting on babysitting and caring for the baby while Holly and Devon work at the crisis center. The two matriarchs applying pressure to be part of Emunah's life bear down on Holly and Devon, causing some strain between them.

The crisis center provides services for the one thousandth client, whose need is more financial than spiritual.



# ANNABELLA'S TRUTH




## Episode 10

Annabella drops into Traffic School For Sinners unannounced to visit baby Emunah. Devon is a bag of mixed emotions -- proud to show-off his family, but afraid of her abusive, passive-aggressive disapproval that haunted him during his childhood.

Annabella's visit brings several bombshells. Meeting Holly for the first time, there is tension when Holly suspects Annabella is on drugs. Protective of Devon and her newborn, she insists Annabella utilize the counseling services the church provide in order for to be allowed to visit with Emunah.

The biggest bombshell is when Annabella reveals there's truth to her husband Kelvin's suspicions about her infidelity and she never did fully know if Devon was his.



**TRUTH...**



Season one is the beginning of Devon's journey into self and faith.

He goes on a quest to find the truth of whether Kelvin is his father. DNA testing, visits to his original home town and talking with relatives serve as both a back drop as well as the catalyst for Devon's growth in Christ. His faith is tested, his propensity for anger stretched and his relationship with Holly exercised.

In parallel, his own uncertainty whether he's the father of Emunah exacerbates his anxiety, cementing his life's goal of not repeating the mistakes of his father, despite regularly doing just that.

Traffic School For Sinners is the bedrock of his faith, as he serves his church, God and those in need with vital services. Season two ends with the church voting on opening a second center.

# SEASON 2 AND BEYOND





Faith in something greater than ourselves is a timeless, universal truth that has proven to uplift, broaden and enrich our lives since humans have inhabited the earth. As a timeless truth, it is therefore unnecessary to ask or answer "why now" since both the question and answer is known. Faith in something greater than ourselves has always and will always uplift, broaden and enrich our lives.

With that fact out of the way, it is also our nature to apply context to our current circumstances, which in today's world, there are numerous examples to help us understand why now.

Most prevalent, is the rise of divisiveness between nations, cultures, neighborhoods, families, and individuals. Political, religious, and even erstwhile universal truths are now meat on a well picked bone of alternate facts, fake news and outright lies amongst each other.

We need a little laughter and a little faith right now, more than ever.

# WHY NOW?





# WHY ME?



Michael Howard

Writer, Creator

I did not receive the gift of faith until much later in life.

In fact, I suspect with my birth, a crisis of faith occurred between my parents, as they immediately deposited me with my paternal grandmother, where I lived until age four. My mother, for reasons not clear -- whether by a sudden blast of conscious or planned all along -- retrieved me and began raising me without a thought of religion or faith. It was her mother, my maternal grandmother, who introduced me to an Old Testament God with rules and dogma that were strictly observed in my summers spent with her.

It took my own life circumstances to explore and seek a God who I could do business with. One whose relationship was personal to me, a conscious contact that I counted on and came to view as the gift that it is.

The journey of how I got there is a story for another time. But to answer the question, "why me," the answer lies in that journey. The interfaith approach that embraces all beliefs is one that I took myself and is represented in the story outlined here.



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