

Picture perfect. Isn't it a grand thought to have everything go perfectly in life, especially during the holidays!

That perfect Christmas tree sparkles. Perfect decorations adorn the whole house with lights aglow on the rooftop and delightful lawn ornaments pleasing the passersby. Putting up the lights created nothing but bliss for all involved. Wrapped under the tree are those perfect gifts for special people. Better yet, all those special people get along so perfectly.

It gave me great comfort to sit back and soak in the absolutely amazing production of "Picture Perfect" at New Hope Church in Ogallala.

Wow! Wow! Wow! Oh, did I remember to say Wow?

The truth is, life is not perfect.

The setting unfolded as a family gathered at the family auto shop to snap the perfect picture to utilize for a good image during the holidays. But where was Grandma? She's the one who thought this was such a great idea. Oh grandma and her grand quirky ideas.

Grandpa had died yet the son followed tradition, continuing to offer a valuable service to the community. The daughter helped with bookwork, much to her chagrin. After all, why would you want to work in a greasy, nasty environment? She married a doctor and wanted a more respectable lifestyle

for her children.

Lucky, the son, had two teenagers with typical teenage attitudes. His wife was the jeans and t-shirt type of gal, that attire fitting for her in the family photo. The daughter (Lucky's sister Lizzy)

showed up in sparkly sequins, making clear that her attire was purchased at a high priced establishment. Her doctor husband was antsy to meet his poker appointment.

Their daughter waited patiently but their son would miss the picture as he was serving his country in Afghanistan. That certainly wasn't what she had planned for him.

Where was Grandma anyway? Alas, she arrived, dressed in the same sparkly attire as her daughter, thrilled at the great price she got on eBay. Her daughter was aghast to think they were dressed alike and was especially disgusted that her mother brought her male companion along.

Call Grandma quirky or whatever, but she had character and spunk. Oh. Was there one thing that she had forgotten? Did she not call a photographer?

Shucks. Guess they'd have to get together another day.

Lizzy, concerned mainly with image, spearheaded projects for the homeless shelter downtown. She delegated duties and put someone else in charge of a talent show fundraiser. Not knowing Lizzy was going to abandon her, the volunteer found frustrations as enthused performers, whose talent was more annoying than entertaining, tried out for the show. Chaos. Chaos. Chaos.

But what about the homeless? Lizzy's daughter took real compassion for their needs and the girl's dad, the doctor, even slipped away from the office to help her serve at the shelter. Lizzy on the other hand, could really care less about the people. It was the image that got her involved.

Meanwhile, stage lights faded and a spotlight turned to an ordinary-looking guy in the aisle. He listened to a booming voice that filled the room. He looked up as he spoke but you couldn't see who he talked to.

Lord, he would say. The Lord was explaining that he would have to work with this family as the photographer. There was a plan.

Oh no! Family photos are a nightmare, he recalled. There's too much focus on whether everyone matches rather than on if anyone really wants to smile.

Someone's always disagreeable and it's chaos. Did the Lord really have a plan?

So the plot developed with an angel on earth serving as the photographer.

Chaos did continue.

Yet time slipped back a couple thousand years to a scene in Bethlehem. The lady at the local inn was stressed out trying to keep up with all the travelers. They all needed rooms although many didn't have means to pay.

Her husband wasn't carrying his share of the load and the work was falling on her. Alas, the rooms were full.

But here came a couple with their donkey. The gal was very pregnant and needed a place to rest. They were led to the stable. The weary travelers, Mary and Joseph, discussed how this wasn't how they had planned their life when Mary was approached by an angel about being pregnant and carrying the Christ Child. Shouldn't it be more of a perfect setting?

Yet that night, Baby Jesus was born, the one being who is perfect. The lights and stage presentation were remarkable.

Back to the auto shop, Lucky shared his contentment, recalling the time in his life when he

accepted Christ. He was no longer scared with situations that would have previously haunted him. He longed for his sister to find Christ as her desire to always be perfect was stressful for everyone.

Truth be known, it was stressful to her as well. And she finally reached devastation and turned to prayer, accepting Christ. Contentment filled her heart. She celebrated with the community on a very special day when her son was to arrive home from Afghanistan. Music filled the room as people waved flags in anticipation of Christopher's arrival.

She sought out a new friend as she had some questions. It was the photographer friend. But when she started to ask him questions, the resounding booming voice exclaimed from above, he was needed in Afghanistan.

Sounds of a loud war scene took over and a young soldier fell to the ground. Had he died? The guy who had portrayed the photographer appeared above him with angel wings.

Meanwhile the scene shifted back to the community celebration. A vehicle had arrived. Was it Christopher? On the contrary. It was two men in military dress coming to make an announcement. Lizzy fell to the ground in tears.

Emotions soared.

My heart filled and my own tears flowed. I thought he had died. I have two local friends with sons overseas right now and the drama hit too close to home.

Well he didn't die but was missing. When he returned home safely, he spoke of the day in the battlefield when he thought he was dying but he reached out to an angel that had appeared.

What a story.

Yes, there's chaos in my life now. Plenty of chaos. We have a comfortable home. I never go hungry. I have a delightful family and good friends. But life certainly isn't perfect.

Yet I also believe in Jesus Christ who is perfect. And I have no doubt that angels are there to guide us if we just pay attention and reach out.

Thank you to those who spent hours preparing for this special production.

You were my angels.