

*From PressPlus: The Press of the Atlantic City Online*

## **Did you hear the one about the Christian who became a comic?**

By Elaine Rose  
Staff Writer

A stand-up comic doesn't need a supply of off-color jokes to keep the audience in stitches. Even if that audience is in a casino.

Jeff Allen hopes to prove that point next week, when he appears at The Comedy Stop at the Tropicana Casino and Resort. A born-again Christian who draws upon his family life and everyday incidents as fodder for his humor, Allen will be in Atlantic City for a weeklong engagement from Monday to July 16.

A 20-year veteran of the stand-up circuit, Allen said he has no qualms about playing in a gambling hall.

"My attitude is Jesus always hung with the shadier types. We're called to be the salt of the earth," Allen said in a recent telephone interview. "Christians are called to go into the culture and season it."

Allen, 44, lives in Nashville with his wife and two teenage sons. He lived in Somerset County for about two years. During that period, he and his sons spent plenty of time on the Atlantic City beach.

His humor wasn't always G-rated, Allen said. He got his start in 1978, when he was working for a jewelry company. He and some friends went out for drinks at a comedy club, and he took a turn at the open mike and got hooked. Back then, he wasn't a Christian, and a lot of his jokes were about alcohol.

Allen said he joined Alcoholics Anonymous about 12 years ago in an effort to sober up. He found relief in the prayer that the program recommended, but still resisted religion. A buddy gave him some Bible study tapes, and it took him about 18 months to open and play them. Soon after, he let Christ in his life.

"It changed my work, it changed my marriage, it changed my relationships," Allen said. "I'm accountable now to a higher authority."

### **Family Jokes**

Allen's wife and sons are a frequent source of his comedy – and he said they don't have a problem with that.

His 16-year-old son recently did something wrong, and he had a little heart-to-heart talk with him, Allen said. The boy concluded the conversation by asking "Is this going to be part of your show?"

At first, his younger son was sensitive to being included in the act, Allen said. So he would work the jokes so as not to mention him. After a while, the boy came to like being included.

“Now he’s probably going to screw up on purpose so he can get into the show,” Allen said.

Next on Allen’s agenda is to produce a television sitcom that he’s already titled, “Happy Wife, Happy Life.” The program would be a cross between “The Cosby Show” and “Touched by an Angel,” and the idea is to air a funny program that families can watch together, he said. A Los Angeles production company has taken on the project, and will try and sell it to the networks this summer.

Meanwhile, Allen said he makes no attempts to convert non-believers during his act. Although he occasionally quotes Scripture as part of his bit, his aim is to provide family-oriented humor for a diverse audience. He runs jokes by his Jewish manager to make sure they don’t offend non-Christians.

“I understand how angry people can get when (religion) is thrown in their face... and a casino in Atlantic City is not the place to preach the gospel,” he said. “I just hope people go out and on the way home say, ‘Man, that was a clean act. And it was funny.’”