



Are You There God? It's the Quarterly Earnings Report



This is a live action roleplaying game about faith, friendship, and finding meaning for a group of five to eight players and one facilitator conducted through a video conferencing system. A group of angels is convening for their quarterly meeting, and they'll be electing the angel who will lead this division for the next thousand years.

MATERIALS

All players will need access to a video conferencing system such as Zoom, Hangouts, Skype, etc. Ideally, players should have the ability to 1) see and hear each other and 2) send written messages to individuals or to the whole group. Depending on the access needs of your group, you may want to prioritize other features, like automatic live captioning. Players should also have access throughout the game to the character descriptions and the special powers cheat sheet. A link to a shared document is one way to accomplish this.

SAFETY MECHANICS

It is recommended that the [safewords](#) Cut and Brake be used as necessary during play, along with any additional calibration or safety tools that are useful to the players. Whatever techniques are used, provide a clear explanation of how these will work in a video conferencing format.

HOW TO PLAY

Briefing and character workshopping should take approximately 30 minutes. Game play itself will take an hour. To begin, all players should sign on to the chosen video

conferencing system. If needed, the facilitator can give some instruction on how to use the technology. The facilitator will be playing the role of Head Angel, and will lead the briefing, reading aloud passages in italics.

Characters

You are an ethereal being with powers mortals cannot imagine. You've been around since before the Almighty created humans, and will be around after they've killed each other off. Your work consists of winning souls for the Almighty, which may include duties such as helping mortals avoid temptation, delivering messages, promoting beauty and harmony, comforting the lonely, cataloging and answering prayers, fighting the forces of darkness, and other angelic things. Angels are genderless creatures. Players will choose the pronouns by which their character should be addressed.

Show the list of characters (see below) to the players, and allow them to discuss options and choose. Alternately, you can allow players to pick one by one, starting with the player who has dwelt longest in this mortal coil, and continuing in chronological order. If possible, once characters have been chosen, have players set their display names in video chat as "Character Name (Player Name)."

The players should take some time to customize their characters. Read each of these questions, pausing in between to give players time to think or take notes.

- What kind of work do you like to do?
- What kind of work do you get assigned?
- What are you hoping to do over the next thousand years? Any dreams or goals?
- What are you going to report on today's call about your work in the past three months?
- What would be the best possible outcome of today's call? The worst?

Relationships

Players will be assigned three predetermined relationships to start the game. However, all these angels have known each other for thousands of years, so other relationships exist. These are the kids you grew up with, the coworkers you can't escape, the family you talk to every day, the peers you vent to after a long day of working with beings who don't understand you and can't even look at your true form. They were with you when you were made, and will always be there. Love them or hate them, they're all you've got.

Work spouse: A work spouse is the person at work with whom you are closest. You care about this person and want them to succeed. You tell them things you wouldn't tell anyone else. Work spouse pairs are the people listed next to each other in the facilitator's video interface, starting from the top. If there's an uneven number of players, assign one work triad. Take 2-3 minutes for each work spouse pairing to describe what their relationship is like. How did you become close? What do you have in common? What do you do together?

Work nemesis: A work nemesis is the person at work whom you hate with a burning passion. You do not want this person to succeed in any of their endeavors. Instruct all players to type their favorite of the seven deadly sins into the chat window. Now you have a list of players in a different order. Assign work nemeses starting with the player who answered first; their work nemesis is the next player down in the answer list who is not their work spouse. The second player on the list's work nemesis is the next player down who is not their work spouse or someone else's nemesis, and so on. Every character should both have and be a nemesis. Unlike work spouses, work nemeses should not be mutual. Take 1-2 minutes for each player to decide what their deal is with their nemesis. How did they come to hate this person? What don't they like about them? How obvious are they in their hostility? Is it a secret, or does everyone know?

Finally, instruct players to pair up with someone that isn't their nemesis or work spouse. Take 1-2 minutes to discuss what their characters' relationship is like. Remember that these characters have thousands of years of history together. Some suggested dynamics: older/younger siblings, mentor/mentee, ex-friends, ex-enemies, grudging allies, partners in crime, etc.

Special powers

Angels never knowingly do wrong, but sometimes accidents happen that work to their advantage. During play, players can use the following angelic powers to assist their allies or thwart their enemies:

Call dropped: Oops, must be a problem with my wifi! Sign out of the chat for up to two minutes. No one can reach you if you aren't on the call. If possible, please send a private note to the Head Angel that you will be using your "call dropped" power so they know you're planning to return. (NOTE: This is not to be confused with a player leaving the game, which can happen at any time for any reason, and requires no explanation.)

Camera off: This thing's been glitchy all week! Turn off your video for up to two minutes. Now you don't have to look like you're paying attention. It mysteriously turns back on after two minutes or when it's convenient for you, whichever comes first. Huh, technology.

Forgot to mute: So sorry, I thought I'd clicked that already! Create a distracting background noise (music playing, unexplained banging, extremely aggressive typing) that can continue until the facilitator says, "Can everyone please mute your lines?" or 15 seconds, whichever comes first. Please keep your un-muted noise to a non-dangerous volume level.

Filibuster: No one else was trying to talk, were they? Keep talking for up to 30 seconds after it is clearly not appropriate to continue talking.

'Scuse me for a second: The UPS driver is at the door, the office microwave is on fire, or your roommate is calling from the

other room. Excuse yourself and step away from your internet device for up to 2 minutes. You can go take a break, or just listen and see if anyone talks about you while you're gone.

Use your powers wisely and well, and be thou not an obnoxious jerk.

GAME PLAY

Note: this description of game play includes spoilers, and players may have a more enjoyable experience if they do not read it before the game.

The Head Angel will lead the video call. Keep the agenda moving along as close to the listed timeframes as possible. Set a timer to count down the 60 minutes of the call (if possible, in a place visible to players), and plan to end promptly at that time. Let the players know what signal you will use to begin and end the call. This may be a [dial tone](#), or solemnly intoning “Let us pray” to begin, and “Amen” to end. You may use video conferencing tools (such as muting participants) at your discretion. You are, after all, the Head Angel of this division, and you answer only to God.

You are attending the quarterly virtual meeting for your division of angels. At this meeting, you will report on your activities of the past three months. You may have had contact with some of your fellow angels recently, but this quarterly meeting is the only time you all get together. Today your division will be electing a new Head Angel, who will lead the division for the next thousand years. The call is scheduled for one hour. After that, the call will automatically end. (Note: players are encouraged to stay on the call for the debrief.) Uriel, the current Head Angel, will facilitate the call, and will be reporting on your behavior and performance in your annual review. You're expected to behave professionally on the call, but no one can stop you from using the private chat function to communicate with your fellow angels.

The call begins (2 min)

As the Head Angel, you call the meeting to order, and welcome the group.

Icebreaker (5 min)

Ask the angels to re-introduce themselves by saying their name, the pronouns they're using this quarter, and one thing about mortals that they find really cute or funny (or another suitable corporate icebreaker).

Regional updates (10-14 minutes)

Instruct each angel to provide a two-minute summary of their accomplishments for the first quarter of the fiscal year. Call on the angels in whichever order seems most awkward. Keep time if needed. You may give some indication of how this summary will be reflected in each angel's annual performance report, but there's no need to publically evaluate each presentation.

Prepare for nominations (5-10 minutes)

Explain the official rules for the election process-- your division hasn't done this in a thousand years:

The election of the Head Angel is a democratic process. Each candidate will need a nominator and a second. You may nominate yourself. The servants of the Almighty may not decline a nomination.

Help your team define what they're looking for in a Head Angel. Brainstorm a list of qualities they'd like in a Head Angel, and flaws they wish to avoid. You may want to solicit feedback on what aspects of your own Head Angel performance were good or bad. If your conferencing software has a whiteboard system, or you have a physical whiteboard in the space with you, taking notes is helpful.

A note from the Home Office (3 minutes)

You have just received an email marked urgent, with the subject line “Please read at your division meetings immediately.” Let the team know there will be a brief detour from the agenda to hear the will of the Almighty. If necessary, mute participants for the duration of the email reading.

The email reads as follows:

“Several consecutive lackluster soul earnings reports have caused the Universe to experience a downgrade in operational quality. Consequently, the Armageddon phase of the strategic plan is now scheduled to commence at the end of the fourth quarter of this fiscal year. As a reminder, all existence will cease promptly at that time and forevermore. Soul acquisition quotas will be adjusted accordingly. This means there will be no bonuses for Q4, but continuation of your diligent work is appreciated.”

This is unexpected. You were supposed to have many more millenia left. There’s so much more you wanted to do. More you wanted to be. Probably it’s tough to speak for a while. But, uh, try your best to forge ahead with the plan for this call. Keep the others on task as appropriate and necessary.

Nominations (10-15 minutes)

Ask for nominations from the group. Any angel who receives a nomination plus a second is in the running for the job of Head Angel. If possible, make a visible list of the candidates. Once no more nominations are forthcoming, ask each candidate to give a short speech explaining why they would make a good Head Angel. If necessary, draw attention to the brainstormed list of desirable qualities. If there is time, you may allow general debate about the merits of each candidate.

Elections (10 minutes)

A new Head Angel must be appointed before the conference call ends. You can decide if voting will be done publicly (voice vote)

or anonymously (by one-on-one message to the Head Angel). Pick whichever option will be more contentious, and explain the procedure to the group. Run-off elections may be necessary if no single candidate receives a majority of the vote. Your vote is the tiebreaker if needed. If the timer gets down to 2 minutes, even if the vote is not completed, you must decide who the new Head Angel will be and announce it.

Adjournment

Wrap up by thanking everyone for their participation. Congratulate the new Head Angel. It’s no longer your job to deal with any concerns related to the impending Armageddon. At 60 minutes exactly, use the pre-arranged signal to end the in-game call. (Note: players should stay on the call for the debrief.)

DEBRIEF

You are all mortals again. If desired, players can participate in a short debrief. Debriefing is optional. The facilitator should read the following questions and allow folks to answer (or not) as the mood strikes.

- What is one word that describes your current state?
- Share a moment in the game you found exciting, interesting, or meaningful.
- How did you decide what your character’s priorities were during play? What events or behavior influenced or changed those priorities?
- Are those priorities different from you as a player?
- Is there anything you’d change in your life if the world was going to end at the end of this fiscal year?
- Thank someone for doing or saying something that made your gameplay enjoyable.

Thanks for playing Are You There God? It’s the Quarterly Earnings Report.

Are You There God? It's the Quarterly Earnings Report
List of characters

<p style="text-align: center;">Uriel <u>(This role is played by the facilitator.)</u> Current Head Angel. Excited to be stepping down. Plans to vacation in Bermuda immediately after this call ends.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Vangelis A true believer and overachiever. Does everything by the book, and always concerned with what The Almighty would think of any decision. Obviously better than all their coworkers.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Simiel Tired. Feels too old for this shit. So, so far behind on paperwork. Wants as little responsibility as possible.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Zachariel The new kid, despite being created at the same time as all the rest. Eager to take on new responsibilities, and enthusiastic about the will of the Almighty. Believes the best of everyone.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Orfiel Imposter syndrome. Just fine at their job, but insecure about how others see them. Paranoid that they've done something horribly wrong and everyone knows it but them.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Tien Sweet but incompetent. Despite their best efforts, they are terrible at saving souls. Would like to avoid talking about their own work, and hope that being well-liked is a substitute for being good at their job.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Ramiel Bitter. Their abilities are being wasted in their current role. They may be slacking, but they could do so much better if they were appropriately challenged. Nobody appreciates their talents.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Bahram Over it. Sees mortals as tiresome and annoying, and would be thrilled if there was another great flood. Far prefers the company of fellow angels to interacting with humans.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Eligor Rule breaker. Has serious doubts about the will of the Almighty being worth following. One act of rebellion away from freefall into a pit of burning sulfur.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Apollyon Believes they are the very best at angeling. Have unwittingly caused the worst fuck-ups in the division for 926 years running. Takes credit for any accomplishment with which they've had even peripheral involvement.</p>

Are You There God? It's the Quarterly Earnings Report **Special Powers Cheat Sheet**

General notes:

The Head Angel reserves the right to mute participants at any time.

The first commandment of special powers is “Use your powers wisely and well, and be thou not an obnoxious jerk.”

Call dropped

What: Sign out of the chat

How long: Up to 2 minutes

Possible uses: Avoid an awkward conversation or get out of doing something

Notes: If possible, send a private note to the Head Angel that you will be using your “call dropped” power so they know you’re planning to return

Camera off

What: Turn off your video while remaining on the call

How long: Up to 2 minutes

Possible uses: Stop having to look professional, prepare a surprise for when your camera comes back on, don’t have to be subtle about chatting with friends instead of paying attention to the meeting

Filibuster

What: Keep talking after it is clearly not appropriate to continue talking

How long: Up to a 30 seconds

Possible uses: Prevent someone else from talking, change the subject, delay moving on

Forgot to mute

What: Create a distracting background noise (music playing, unexplained banging, extremely aggressive typing)

How long: until the facilitator says, “Can everyone please mute your lines?” or 15 seconds, whichever comes first

Possible uses: Interrupt someone, create a distraction, increase the level of general chaos

Notes: Keep your un-muted noise to a non-dangerous volume level

‘Scuse me for a second

What: Excuse yourself and step away from your internet device

How long: Up to 2 minutes

Possible uses: Take a break, listen for being talked about behind your back, muffle your laughter off screen or silently scream out your frustrations