

"Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread" **Drama/Dialogue: Week Five**

Characters: Mary, a new food pantry volunteer; Sue, a veteran food pantry volunteer; Tom, a veteran food pantry client; Jeff, a friend/co-worker of Tom

Note: In Scene 2, when characters are "thinking aloud", an alternative is for other actors to speak the characters' "thoughts" off-stage, while Mary and Tom are silent onstage.

Props: three chairs, magazines, table (see arrangement for Scene 2)

Scene 1

A phone conversation. Mary and Sue, with (pantomimed) phones to their ears, may stand or sit on opposite sides of the stage, or Sue's voice might appear from off-stage while Mary stands or sits center stage.

Mary: Hi, Sue. My name is Mary. I just moved here from out of state, and I used to volunteer with the food pantry at my old church. The pastor told me you're the person I should call to get involved here.

Sue: Wonderful! Are you free on Wednesday night?

Mary: Yes, I am.

Sue: Great! I'll see you at 6:30. That way I can give you a quick orientation and get you on the regular schedule before our guests arrive. See you then!

Scene 2

At the food pantry welcome desk—perhaps a table with some papers on it and at least one chair behind it. Two more chairs are set up as the waiting area, a couple of magazines on one chair.

Sue: *(entering and gesturing around as she concludes the tour, followed by Mary)* ...Well, that's pretty much everything. Do you have any questions?

Mary: I don't have any questions about logistics. But is there anything I should know about our guests?

Sue: What do you mean?

Mary: Well, I guess I’m curious why they’re here. I mean, I know that everyone’s circumstances are a bit different, but are there any particular issues that most of them are facing?

Sue: Oh, I don’t know – I’ve never asked.

Mary: Really? Then how do you know how to help them?

Sue: Well, I know they need food, otherwise they wouldn’t be here. I’ve just always felt like they don’t want to talk about their situations. Especially at church. I don’t want to embarrass them.

Mary: Oh, I see... *(thoughtful pause)* I guess that makes sense.

(Mary sits behind the desk/table. Sue exits to work “in the back”. After she leaves, Tom enters and comes up to the desk.)

Mary: Hi, I’m Mary.

Tom: Hi Mary, I’m Tom.

Mary: Nice to meet you Tom. Just fill out this form and then I’ll take it back and return with your bag.

Tom: Thanks.

Mary: *(Mary peeks in “the back” to check on things)* Sorry, they’re just a little short on volunteers back there today. And we’ve been swamped all night! It will just be about five minutes.

(Tom flips through a magazine)

Mary: *(speaks aloud, but as if thinking to herself, perhaps while doodling)* This is so awkward! I really want to talk to Tom. But maybe Sue is right. Maybe he doesn’t want to share his story with a total stranger. *(Mary continues to sit, looking thoughtful and worried.)*

Tom: *(still flipping through magazine, speaks aloud, but as if thinking to himself)* I hate coming here. It’s embarrassing enough just to walk in – but they never talk, except about the weather – and this lady can’t even manage that!

Mary: *(still “thinking” aloud to herself)* This is stupid. You’ve done this hundreds of times before; just say something!

Mary: *(to Tom)* Some weather, huh?

Tom: Yup.

(Awkward silence)

Mary: *(still “thinking aloud” to herself)* Well, that didn’t work. Better just to jump in, I guess.

Mary: *(to Tom)* Tom?

Tom: Yeah?

Mary: I’m new, so forgive me. Do you come here often?

Tom: More than I’d like.

Mary: Sure. *(pause)* So why exactly do you come? *(Tom looks puzzled.)* I mean, what are some of the reasons you can’t afford all the food you need? I’d like to be informed so that I can be a good advocate.

Tom: *(with more energy, but still a bit reserved)* Well...housing for one. Rent plus utilities is about half our income. And we can’t live where it’s cheaper, because we wouldn’t be able to take public transportation to work.

Mary: Thanks for sharing with me, Tom. Unfortunately that makes a lot of sense. I bet it’s a pretty common problem. But hopefully we can do something about it...someday.

Tom: What do you mean?

Mary: Well...Advocacy!

Tom: What’s Advocacy?

Mary: Advocacy is a way that we can use our citizenship to voice concern for our neighbors in need. As a Christian, it’s very important to me that I do everything I can to help my neighbors, just as my neighbors have helped and will help me. That’s why I volunteer here. But volunteering isn’t going to solve big problems; it’s only going to help you today, not in the long term. Plus, if I talk to my elected officials about the problem of affordable housing, I can do more than just help a few families: I can help hundreds or thousands of families!

Tom: Advocacy...wow, that’s really great. Thanks for doing that for me.

Mary: It’s my pleasure, the least I can do. But, you know, it’s something you can do for yourself, as well. I mean, it’s something we can do together.

Tom: Oh, I don’t know about that – I think I’ll leave the important meetings up to you.

Mary: It’s really not as intimidating as you might think. In fact, it can be a lot of fun!

Sue: *(entering from behind and interrupting conversation)* Hello, Sir! Here’s your bag.

Tom: Thank you. Thank you so much. I have to be going...but I hope I see you again soon, Mary.

Mary: I'll be here. Sunday mornings too!

Tom: Thanks – take care! (*exits*)

Sue: Wow – he sure looks different!

Mary: What do you mean?

Sue: Well...he's one of our regulars – the most solemn-looking of the bunch. I've never seen him smile like that before.

Mary: Oh, well, he wasn't like that for most of the time...only when I started to talk about Advocacy.

Sue: Right, I heard a little bit of that. I guess it's good that you gave him some hope...but you don't really believe we can have an impact on big problems like affordable housing, do you?

Mary: Of course I do!

Sue: Really?

Mary: Absolutely! My former church was very involved in advocacy, and we got to celebrate several big victories over the years. We did "paper plate campaigns" about hunger so that our efforts would be noticed more by officials – and many of the pictures, stories and poems were quite moving. One year, this resulted in several million dollars being added to food and nutrition line items of the state budget.

Sue: That's incredible! But that was because you did something unusual, right? I mean most of the time they don't really read your letters.

Mary: Sure they do! Especially if they know you. And on the state level...it's not so hard to start a relationship. Just call them up and ask for a meeting.

Sue: I had no idea...!

Mary: Most people don't. And then when they first hear about it they get excited...but it fades as soon as their first efforts aren't as successful as they would have liked. Sometimes we didn't get millions – but even in the years where we were able to keep the funding from getting cut, we were excited. You definitely have to learn to celebrate even the smallest successes to be a good advocate.

Sue: But over time, I bet they add up.

Mary: Exactly!

Sue: Well, we should really finish cleaning up and head home. But would you be willing to come and share your advocacy experiences with our social ministry committee? I'd love for us to work together on advocacy as a group.

Mary: I'd be delighted! In fact, I'm relieved. Advocacy is so much more rewarding (and effective!) when there's a group of people working together. I was afraid that moving might mean dropping advocacy as a major part of my discipleship, and I really get a lot out of it. It's kind of a spiritual practice for me.

Sue: Fascinating! I would never have thought. I can't wait to hear more! *(Sue and Mary exit)*

Scene 3

New location: workplace of Tom and Jeff— may indicate this by rearranging chairs/table, or by centering on opposite side of stage than previous scene. Jeff is already onstage when Tom enters.

Jeff: Hey, Tom! What's gotten into you? Is that a smile I see?

Tom: Come on now, have I really been that bad lately?

Jeff: I'm sorry, you're right. Considering everything you've been going through...you're a peach. What's up?

Tom: Well...I went to the food pantry at St. Matthew's last night.

Jeff: Whoa...this is gonna be some story if you're smiling after that. You hate that place!

Tom: Yeah, I know. But...I met someone different last night. She actually talked to me. And not just about the weather. She really wanted to know my story and wanted me to share it with others, even politicians.

Jeff: Wow...that's a switch.

Tom: Yeah, I think I've been too hard on those volunteers. They must all be nice people, just a little shy and not sure how to act around people who are different. And now, with Mary, things may really change there. I'm actually looking forward to going back.

Jeff: That's great! Well, I hope this new attitude of yours can last for another two weeks. Let me know how I can help.

Tom: Thanks, Jeff. Actually...I think I want to visit them on Sunday morning for worship.
Would you come with me?

Jeff: Would be happy to! We'll figure out the details on our lunch break.

Tom: Great...talk to you then! (*both exit*)