

## "Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread" Drama/Dialogue: Week One

*Characters: Narrator, Sarah (a compassionate worker for justice), Betty ( a person in need), Pastor( still new to the congregation). As the scene begins, Pastor and Sarah are seated behind a table. A couple of "food bags" are within reach. The narrator introduces the scene, then moves aside, off-stage.*

Narrator: We are in a food pantry of a small village in rural Pennsylvania. The pantry serves about 500 families per month, and about eighty on a given evening. The pantry gives out food bags, clothes, and on special occasions, turkeys and hams. Tonight, however, is slow, because of a snowstorm warning. Only a few people have shown up so far. Sarah, who has worked at the pantry several years, knows most of the people who come in to the pantry. She and the new pastor are at the reception desk.

Pastor: How long have you been volunteering here at the food pantry?

Sarah: It's been quite a while. I don't know...about ten years.

P: When I asked at our church[es] for an extra collection for the food pantry I got this gut feeling that some people are not too fond of this project. I'm not sure, but I think they're opposed to it.

S: *(becomes angry)* We Americans grow more and more wealthy; money is becoming a kind of narcotic for us. We hardly notice our own prosperity or the poverty of so many others. We have more and more money, and less and less generosity -- less and less public money for the needy, less charity for the neighbor.

P: *(agreeing)* Though many of us are well intentioned, we've invested our lives in consumerism. We have a love affair with "more" -- and we will never have enough.

*(The door opens and a woman enters.)*

S: Hi, Betty! How are things going?

Betty: I had a long day. I'm glad I got here before the storm.

S: I sure hope the storm will wait till we close. You won't have to wait today for anything. So you'll be out of here fast.

B: Wonderful! That is good news.

S: *(turning towards the pastor)* Betty used to be our neighbor.

B: Those were the good old days, till I got divorced. Now I'm a working mom, taking care of everything, needing help wherever I can get it. This food pantry is a blessing.

- P: I noticed that the pantry serves a lot of people who are working full time. Somehow that doesn't seem right. There should be a way for everyone who works to make a decent living.
- S: Well, I don't know. Sometimes people make bad choices. They want it all. Then they buy way too much and put it all on their credit cards. You know how that goes.
- B: Just look at me: I married young, and right away we built this big house. Everything had to be the newest and the best: hardwood floors, flattop stove, central heat and air-conditioning. We were young; our motto was "live for today and pay for it later". The bank encouraged us to do so. We put a lot on our credit cards. I had just finished my education and started to work when the first baby arrived, and a little over a year later our second boy came. It was too much!
- P: That IS a lot to manage. Did you have any help?
- B: My grandmother pitched in, and my in-laws helped out with the kids. My husband had been on active duty in Iraq and he had also been in Afghanistan. When my husband came back he wasn't the same any more. We tried, but it didn't work out. He got violent. I was afraid of him. One night I took the kids and left. *(she pauses)* Now we live with my Grammy. I tell you, sometimes I think my life is a mess. Everything is piling up. Bills. Diapers. Dishes. I'm exhausted! It's almost 8:00 p.m. and when I get home, there's more work waiting. So, I better keep moving. See you next week! *(she leaves)*
- S: *(sighs...then stands, walks around the table, and speaks to the audience)* The Bible starts out with abundance. It keeps saying, "It is good, it is good, it is very good." Later, God blesses Abraham, Sarah and their family. God tells them to be a blessing, to bless the people of all nations. Then somehow everything gets mixed up.
- P: *(standing and moving to stand next to Sarah)* I guess it started in Egypt with Pharaoh's dream. Pharaoh dreams that there will be a famine in the land. So Pharaoh gets organized to administer, control and monopolize the food supply. Pharaoh introduces the principle of scarcity into the world. For the first time in the Bible, someone says, "There's not enough. Let's start storing up."
- Narr.: *(entering the scene, and standing next to Pastor)* Pharaoh hires Joseph to manage the monopoly. In Genesis 47 when the crops fail and the Hebrew peasants run out of food, they come to Joseph. And on behalf of Pharaoh, Joseph says, "What's your collateral?" They give up their land for food, and then, the next year, they give up their cattle. By the third year of the famine they have no collateral left but themselves. And that's how the children of Israel become slaves -- through an economic transaction.
- P: When the children of Israel are in the wilderness, beyond the reach of Egypt, they still look back and think, "If only we had died. All the world's glory is in Egypt and with Pharaoh." But when they finally turn around and look into the wilderness, they see the glory of God.

Narr: In answer to the people's fears and complaints, something extraordinary happens. God's love comes trickling down in the form of bread. They had never before received bread as a free gift that they couldn't control on their own. The gift of life is indeed given by a generous God. It's a wonder, it's a miracle, but God's abundance transcends the market economy. Three things happened to this bread in Exodus 16. First, everybody had enough. But because Israel had learned to believe in scarcity in Egypt, people started to hoard the bread. When they tried to bank it, to invest it, it turned sour and rotted, because you cannot store up God's generosity.

P: Finally, Moses said, "You know what we ought to do? We ought to have a Sabbath." Sabbath means that there's enough bread that we don't have to hustle every day of our lives. There's no record that Pharaoh ever took a day off. People who think their lives consist of struggling to get more and more can never slow down because they won't ever have enough.

S: We who are now one of the richest nations never feel that we have enough; we have to have more and more, and this insatiable desire destroys us. We must confess that the central problem of our lives is that we are torn apart by the conflict between our attraction to the good news of God's abundance and the power of our belief in scarcity -- a belief that makes us greedy and ignorant.

P: Sabbath, it seems, is also a justice issue. This rest is a justice issue because we need an economy in which people can make a living wage, so that no one needs to work every day of the week to make ends meet and provide for the needs of their households. We are mortals, and resting reminds us that we are creatures with bodily needs to stop and be refreshed. If we ignore Sabbath, just as we ignore needy and hungry people, all will not be right in our world.

Narr: Let us pray: Gracious God, give bread to those who hunger, and hunger for justice to us who have bread. Amen.

Reference: *The Biblical Vision of Sabbath Economics*, by Ched Myers, Washington DC, Sixth printing, December 2008.