

Don't Be Frantic

By

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Theme:

This play teaches that a celebration of Jesus' Birthday is different from a cultural celebration of Christmas. It gives us ideas on how we can make our celebration of Christmas an example of an act of worship rather than just a family winter gathering.

Biblical Reference:

Matthew 25

Approximate Running Time:

15 minutes

Props:

A long winter coat that has white envelopes attached to its inside.
A bunch of shopping bags like you'd find at your local mall.
A long Christmas list.

Cast of Characters:

Bob: Bob is a Christian man who is at the mall to challenge people to ask if their celebration of Christmas is driven by culture or by an act of worship for Jesus at His birthday.

Sally: Sally is a frantic Christmas shopper who is at the mall to shop for last minute Christmas presents.

Scene: The local mall just a few days before Christmas. Sally is doing some ordinary Christmas shopping at the mall. She has a bunch of bags full of presents she's just purchased and she's going from shop to shop looking for her next find. Bob is hiding in the shadows at the mall, trying to get the attention of the various shoppers as they pass by.

Bob: *[Calling out to Sally as she passes by.]* Psst.

[Sally doesn't notice Bob.]

Bob: Psst. *[A little bit louder.]* Psst.

[Sally notices him but is unsure of his presence.]

Bob: Psst. Come over here.

[Sally looks around and then looks back at Bob.]

Bob: Psst. Come on over here.

Sally: *[Points to her chest with a questioning look on her face.]*
Are you talking to me?

Bob: Yeah, I'm talking to you. Psst. Come on over here. Get out of the crowd.

Sally: *[Takes a step closer to him.]* What do you want with me?

Bob: Come on over here. I saw you over there by that store, looking into that window. You're looking for Christmas presents, aren't you?

Sally: Uh, yeah. But how'd you know?

Bob: Look it don't take no rocket scientist to get that one right. It's the week before Christmas, you're at the mall, you're carrying a bunch of bags, and you're looking in shop windows with a frantic look on your face. It's pretty easy to guess you're looking for more Christmas presents.

Sally: Oh yeah, I guess you're right. Do I really look frantic?

Bob: Yeah, you really look frantic. I've been at this mall all day; I've seen all kinds of frantic. I've seen the "I don't have enough money to buy the stuff I want to buy" frantic. I've seen the "I looked in all the shops and I still can't find the right thing" frantic. I've seen the "I'm running out of time" frantic. I've definitely seen the "I can't put up with these kids anymore" frantic over and over again. And I've seen the "I wish we didn't have to do Christmas at all this year frantic" - and you look like you're somewhere close to a combination of them all frantic.

Sally: Oh, it's that bad? I thought I was hiding it well.

Bob: Nope, sorry to be the bearer of bad news - but you're not hiding it well at all. It's as plain as the words on a page, it's as plain as the clouds in the sky, it's as plain as tinsel on a Christmas tree, it's as plain as...

Sally: Okay, okay, I get it. I admit it: I look frantic. Don't tell that security guard over there, but if I don't find a few more things for these hard to buy for people on my list I'm libel to freak out and hold some old lady hostage until I get my way.

Bob: I don't think that's the best decision...

Sally: It is that time of year, you know. Hey, didn't you say something about having Christmas presents...

Bob: Yeah, I got Christmas presents. The best kind. That's why I'm here. This is your lucky day.

Sally: [*Totally over the top.*] It may very well be! What kind of stuff do you have? [*Checking her list. Taking a step closer with each thing, then placing her hands on his collars and pushing him around.*] Do you have any jewelry, huh? Do you have any video games, huh? Do you have any meat I can send in the mail, huh? Huh, huh, huh?

Bob: Woah! Unhand me. Take a step away from the merchandise, lady. See, how frantic you are. Settle down. I don't do well with frantic. You need to settle down or this deal is done. There's a cop at the donut shop right over there and all I have to do is scream like a little girl and you'll be spending Christmas in a cramped room with a bunch of guys with lots of tattoos.

Sally: I'm sorry. I don't want to spend Christmas that way and I certainly don't want to hear you scream like a little girl! It's just that I'm in a really big rush, and you're the one who called me frantic. There are only a few more days of Christmas shopping left and I have a bunch of presents to buy and so far this little conversation isn't helping me much.

Bob: Give me a couple minutes. So, you have more presents to buy, right?

Sally: Yeah

Bob: More presents to buy for your family?

Sally: No, I've already gotten their presents.

Bob: I see. More presents to buy for your friends, then?

Sally: No, I've already gotten their presents too.

Bob: Oh, so are these presents for coworkers?

Sally: No. Got those.

Bob: You've got family, friends, and coworkers covered. Umm, do you mind my asking, who else is there?

Sally: Oh, there's always people to buy presents for. I'm shopping for the people I don't know I have to buy presents for yet.

Bob: The people you don't know you have to buy presents for yet? How do you shop for people you don't know you have to buy presents for?

Sally: It's tough. That's why I'm here. That's why I'm stuck. That's why I'm frantic. That's why I'm talking to you.

Bob: help me out here. I just don't get it. What kind of people are you buying presents for?

Sally: Every year there are more people who I need to buy presents for. The people from church who give me presents, the people who just show up at my door to bring me presents, the neighbors who drop by with some cookies or brownies or a present for me. I can't just let those people leave without giving them a present too. And I know they're going to be stopping by. They always do. So I'm shopping for things I can give to them as they come up in my Christmas.

Bob: Yeah, I see you're dilemma, lady. I really do. I feel for ya. That's a tough spot to be in. *[Pause.]* I'm just curious, what do you love best about Christmas?

Sally: Oh, I just love Christmas. Who doesn't? It's definitely my favorite time of the year. I just love the peace, love, joy of the season, the time with our family, decorating the house and the tree, oh, and the presents.

Bob: Yeah, I figured you'd sneak the presents in there.

Sally: Who doesn't love the presents!?! Christmas is a great time for me to celebrate Jesus birthday. *[Like she's doing a York Peppermint Patty Commercial. With lots of emotion and passion.]* I just love the story of the little baby Jesus in the manger, God's great promise of a messiah, the long trip to Bethlehem on the back of a donkey, no room for them at the inn, the shepherds watching over their flocks by night, the angels who come to announce His birth, the wise men bowing down to worship Him with gifts of gold, Frankenstein, and myrrh.

Bob: Oh, I'm sorry lady, but I don't have the kind of presents you're looking for.

Sally: Excuse me.

Bob: I said, I don't have the kind of presents you're looking for. [Somewhat aside.] At least not yet.

Sally: What do you mean? Did you run out of stock or something?

Bob: No, I definitely didn't run out of stock.

Sally: Are you still looking for presents too?

Bob: No, it's not that I'm looking for more presents myself.

Sally: [Grabbing him by the collar again.] Look mister. You'd better not tell me that you're just wasting my time. I don't have any time to waste! I'm on a thin line and you don't want to push me across it!

Bob: Woah! Unhand me. Take a step away from the merchandise. You're getting frantic again. Did you forget? I don't do well with frantic? Remember the cop in the donut shop right over there.

Sally: You're right. I'm sorry.

Bob: It's okay. It's just that my collar wasn't made to take that much frantic.

Sally: Sorry.

Bob: What I meant to say is that you're not looking for the kind of presents I've got right now, but you might be looking for them in a little bit.

Sally: I'm sorry, but you're not making any sense to me.

Bob: [Opens coat to show the kinds of presents he has.] See, these are the kinds of presents I have to offer, but I don't think you're looking for presents like these.

Sally: Oh, you're selling gift cards. I don't mind giving gift cards away. [Moving towards him.] Let me see what you have available.

Bob: [Taking a step back and closing his coat.] You're mistaken. These aren't gift cards.

Sally: No, then what are they?

Bob: you mentioned that you liked to celebrate Christmas because of the baby in the manger, right?

Sally: Well sure, doesn't everyone?

Bob: Humm. You raise an interesting point. Let me ask you a few questions.

Sally: Okay.

Bob: Who was that baby in the manger?

Sally: Jesus.

Bob: Why was He born in a manger?

Sally: Because there wasn't any room for Him in the inn.

Bob: What was special about how the shepherds found out that He was born?

Sally: Angels told them.

Bob: Yeah, angels told them. Have you ever thought about that? Angels told the shepherds. I mean, how many other people had their birthday announced by angels in the history of the world?

Sally: Uh... [*Searching her memory banks.*] None that I can think of.

Bob: That's right. So what was so special about this little baby that angels were announcing His birth?

Sally: He was the Son of God.

Bob: Yeah, the Son of God. Immanuel, God with us. God incarnate - in flesh here to dwell with us. That's pretty special isn't it?

Sally: I'll say.

Bob: A birthday worth celebrating, am I right?

Sally: That's what I love about Christmas.

Bob: Oh, you're celebrating Christmas all right, but do you really think you're celebrating Jesus' birthday?

Sally: well, aren't they both the same thing? Isn't Jesus' birthday and Christmas the same thing?

Bob: They could be, but then again, they might not be. It all depends on how you look at it.

Sally: Okay, you just lost me - and I have time for this.

Bob: Stick with me for a bit. You said that you love Christmas because of the peace, love, and joy, right?

Sally: That's right.

Bob: And yet you're frantically running around a mall looking for presents for people you don't even know you need presents for - and you're willing to assault a total stranger just because he doesn't have the gift cards you might or might not be looking for.

Sally: Okay, you got a point.

Bob: You said that you love Christmas because of spending time with your family. What does that look like in your house?

Sally: Our extended family comes over for a dinner and a gift exchange. It's a great time. Of course, we usually argue about whose house we're going to meet at and what we're going to cook for dinner, but doesn't everyone?

Bob: Certainly not everyone argues over that stuff.

Sally: Then after dinner we open presents, watch a movie, and head for home.

Bob: Doesn't sound like it's the family bonding experience of the year.

Sally: Hey, it's Christmas. It doesn't have to be perfect to be special. You get bonus points just for trying, don't you?

Bob: Not sure about that. But I still think that you're missing the main point of Christmas. Christmas should be all about Jesus' birthday. It doesn't sound like you're doing much to celebrate it.

Sally: What do you mean? I told you that our family celebrates Christmas every year.

Bob: You might find this a bit extreme, but I don't consider Christmas to be a celebration of Jesus' birthday.

Sally: What planet are you from? Everyone knows that Christmas is all about Jesus birthday.

Bob: I agree that people are celebrating Christmas, but I don't think that they're celebrating Jesus Birthday. Let me put it to you this way. What do you like to do on your birthday?

Sally: Relax. Go out to a nice dinner. Maybe get a manicure. And the presents are nice, I'm not ashamed to say that I really like to get presents.

Bob: I think just about everyone loves getting presents. So, how would you like it if, on your birthday, instead of giving you presents everyone who celebrated your birthday gave presents to each other - and you didn't get any. Instead of spending time with you, they all spend time with each other and they end up leaving you at home all alone?

Sally: I doubt anyone would like that.

Bob: I know I wouldn't.

Sally: But that's me and that's you, but that just doesn't work for Jesus. I mean, he's not here. He's not missing out on gifts because He's in Heaven. We're not leaving Him at home because He's always with us. [Pause.] Right?

Bob: True and true, everything IS different with Jesus. But Jesus did tell us that it was possible to give Him presents. He said that anything that we do for the least of these is something we do for Him. So anytime that we love on someone who is in need, we're doing it for Jesus. Anytime we're meeting someone's need, we're doing it for Jesus. Every time we give someone a cup of water, a meal, an article of clothing in Jesus' name, we're doing it for Him.

Sally: Hmm.

Bob: And if we want to give Jesus a present for His birthday all we have to do is give a present to someone in need. It's as if we were wrapping up that present and putting Jesus' name right there on the tag. That's the kinds of presents I have to offer. Presents for Jesus. [Opens his coat to show the white envelopes.]

Sally: You're selling presents for Jesus?

Bob: Not selling. I'm giving away presents for Jesus.

Sally: You mean they're free?

Bob: You don't have to give me anything for these presents, but they're definitely NOT free! There is a cost. Some of them will cost money, but some of them won't. In fact, with just about all of them, there may just be costs that you wouldn't expect or believe if I told them to you.

Sally: [Reaching for one.] Let me see what they say.

Bob: [Opens his coat.] Sure, take one. See what it says.

Sally: [Opening and reading.] Giving someone a ride to the doctor.

Bob: That one costs the gas and the time - but you're meeting a felt need in their life.

Sally: I can do that.

Bob: And you're giving Jesus a gift for His birthday.

Sally: I can do that. [Reaching for another one.] How about another one?

Bob: Sure, take another one. See what it says.

Sally: [Opening and reading.] Bake some brownies, bring them to a shut in, and stay for an afternoon of getting to know each other. I can do that too.

Bob: That one costs the brownies, and the chance that you're not only going to go there once. You just might develop a long-term relationship.

Sally: I can do that one too. [*Reaching for another one.*] Can I have another one?

Bob: Sure, take another one.

Sally: [*Opening and reading.*] Buying, wrapping, and delivering presents to a family whose father is in prison. Hey, that's the angel tree ministry, right?

Bob: Right. Give those kids a gift and you're giving one to Jesus too.

Sally: that one only costs the amount we spend on the presents, right?

Bob: I don't know. What if you find out that the family has other needs than presents at Christmas? Fathers who are in jail really can't do much to provide for their families. They might need food, help with rent, utilities, friends, who knows? Are you just going to give them presents or are you willing to go beyond that?

Sally: I see what you mean about things costing more than we might think. [*Reaching for another.*] How about another one?

Bob: [*Stepping back.*] Uh, hold on. These aren't just things to read. These are things to do. And these aren't just "feel good" things to read or do. These are presents to Jesus for His birthday. Can you handle these things after you find all of your presents? I'm not just going to give you these things to help you feel good about yourself or for you to read them and think about doing them.

Sally: I can do these things.

Bob: I know you can. Anybody can. Very few do, but I hope you will. I hope you're one of them. I hope you do them as an act of worship to Jesus on His birthday.

Sally: I mean, I will do these things. These are the kinds of things that I should have been doing all along to celebrate Christmas. They're certainly more meaningful than the stuff I have been doing, sorry to say.

Bob: You see, I knew there was something special about you in that crowd over there.

Sally: I'm really glad that you called me out of that crowd. You've helped me see that I wasn't really celebrating Jesus' birthday and I want to change that. I want my Christmas to be all about Jesus birthday. I want to give him some white envelopes for His birthday this year.

Bob: Then, when you do something you find in one of these envelopes, or you can come up with your own, you put the envelope in the boughs of your Christmas tree. And in my house we wait until all of the presents under the tree are opened and then we open the white envelopes that we put in the tree and we read them out loud.

Sally: That's a great idea.

Bob: I'm not afraid to tell you that I'm crying like a baby before we get half-way through them.

Sally: I'd like to see that.

Bob: Nobody wants to see that. Anyway, we read them so that we all get to hear the things we did to celebrate Jesus birthday. Every year there are different things in that tree. Every year we come up with new ways to give presents to Jesus.

Sally: How long have you been doing this?

Bob: Me and my family have been doing this for years. In fact, as the years have gone by we've found that there are now more envelopes in the tree than there are presents under the tree.

Sally: Huh. I guess that's what it should be like, shouldn't it - I mean, if we're celebrating Jesus birthday.

[Bob starts to take off his coat and hands it to Sally.]

Sally: What are you doing?

Bob: here, you take my coat and all of the envelopes in it. I think you're ready for it.

Sally: But won't you need a coat then? I mean, it's cold outside.

Bob: Yeah, but there's a great sale on coats in that store right over there.

Sally: Which store?

Bob: Just kidding. I've got plenty of other coats with envelopes in them out in my car. *[Looking around.]* There are plenty of other frantic people here who need to learn that Christmas is all about celebrating Jesus' birthday, too.

[Exiting.]

Bob: Merry Christmas.


Sally: Merry Christmas. And thanks!

[Sally looks at the coat, hesitates, and then decides to put the coat on herself. She pulls all of the envelopes off the inside and opens them one at a time as she's walking off of the stage.]

Sally: *[With growing excitement.]* Giving someone money to repair their car, going to Celebrate Recovery with someone, purchasing livestock for a family in a third-world country, inviting someone to your house for Christmas dinner, filling a shopping cart and donating it to the local food pantry... This is going to be the best Christmas I've ever had!

[Exits.]

- CURTAIN -



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