

Working On A Deadline

By

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Theme:

This play conveys how we often let pride get in the way of allowing others to minister to us and ultimately hinder God's ability to work in our lives.

Approximate Running Time:

20 minutes

Props:

A briefcase
A laptop computer bag
A laptop computer
Two carry-on luggage bags
A McDonald's bag
A 20 oz. bottle of Coke
A blanket and pillow
A lamp on a table

Cast of Characters:

David: David is a carefree writer. His clothing is thrown together and his appearance is disheveled.

Jonathan: Jonathan is a prim and proper Christian man who is neat and orderly. He is dressed in a pair of trousers, dress shoes, dress shirt, necktie, and sweater.

Scene 1

The interior of a New York City apartment or Townhouse. There is a TV/VCR and a couch set up for viewing, a dining room/kitchen table and four chairs set up for eating, a coat tree, and other furniture to set the scene.

[As Scene 1 opens Jonathan is sitting on the couch reading a newspaper. After a beat there is an impatient knock on the door. He neatly folds the paper, places it on the couch, and rises to answer the door. There is another impatient knock.]

Jonathan: Just a minute. I'm coming.

David: Jonathan. Great. You're home. I was afraid you were out.

Jonathan: David, what are you doing here in New York?

David: Standing in the hall of my brother's building. So, are we gonna' stand here and talk or you gonna' invite me in?

Jonathan: Oh, where are my manners. Of course, come in, come in. *[He moves aside to allow David to enter. David enters with a briefcase, a laptop computer bag, two carry-on luggage bags, a McDonalds bag, and a 20 oz. bottle of Coke.]* You've got a lot of stuff with you. How long are you planning on staying?

David: Just a few days. *[He throws all of his stuff onto the couch, crushing the newspaper that Jonathan so neatly placed there.]*

Jonathan: A few days?

David: Yeah, a few days. I'm on an assignment here in New York and I figured my brother wouldn't mind me staying with him for a few days while I was working. Was I wrong?

Jonathan: No, uh, there's no problem with your staying a few days, it's just that it's a bit of a surprise with your just showing up like this. I mean, you didn't even call to let me know that you were coming so that I could clean up a bit.

David: You need notice to clean. I don't think so. You keep this place cleaner than my house has ever been. The place looks great, just great. And I promise not to walk around with any white gloves on or anything like that.

Jonathan: But you didn't even call to let me know what you were coming.

David: I didn't really have a chance to call. This is kind of an emergency. The job just came up and it was a rush. I told my boss that I didn't need an expensive hotel room because my brother lived in New York and he wouldn't mind if I stayed with him for a few days.

Jonathan: I already said that it was okay for you to be here. You don't have to make me feel guilty about it.

David: I just wanted to make sure that it was okay with you. I don't want to impose on you or anything like that. That is if it's possible for one to impose on one's brother. One's closest relative in the world. The one and only brother I had growing up in Brooklyn. One's own flesh and blood..

Jonathan: All right already. I said you can stay.

David: Great. Where do I get to sleep?

Jonathan: There's only one bedroom.

David: And you're going to let me stay in it? How nice of you.

Jonathan: No. Actually, I was going to say that you'll have to sleep on the couch.

David: But that's where all of my stuff is.

Jonathan: I noticed.

David: [*Checking it out.*] Does it have a fold-out bed?

Jonathan: No, it's just a regular couch. It's all you get at the "Hotel Jonathan." [*Reaching for the phone.*] Perhaps we should call the Ritz and see if they have something better.

David: No. [*Taking the phone out of Jonathan's hand and hanging it up for him.*] This will definitely do. [*Picking up his stuff.*] So, where should I put this stuff?

Jonathan: There is a hall closet. It will probably fit in there.

David: [*Dropping it next to the couch.*] The hall closet? Nah, this will do.

Jonathan: But that's right next to the couch.

David: Yeah, this way I won't have to walk all the way into the hall to get my stuff out. [*He sits on the couch and reaches for his stuff.*] See, it's within an arm's reach. Now that's convenient.

Jonathan: **B**ut the hall closet will be much neater. You don't have to feel as if your stuff has to be all out in the open like this.

David: I'd prefer it was closer to me. This way I don't have to interrupt any of my research to get at the papers I need.

Jonathan: It's not worth arguing about. Put it where you'd like. Look, I was on my way out in just a few minutes for a dinner date with a friend of mine. Would you like to join us?

David: Are you buying?

Jonathan: [*Flustered.*] Am I buying? Well, I uh, I don't know...

David: Jonathan, I was just joking. You don't have to buy me dinner. You're putting me up at the Hotel Jonathan. That's enough for one night.

Jonathan: Are you sure you won't join us?

David: Nah, I've got work to do. You go on your little dinner date. Don't worry about me. I'll find something to eat on my own.

Jonathan: Are you sure?

David: I'm sure.

Jonathan: There's plenty to eat in the kitchen. Help yourself to whatever's there.


David: I was thinking about getting a burger. Is there a McDonald's somewhere nearby?

Jonathan: There's one just around the corner. [*Pointing.*]

David: Great. [*He grabs his coat and exits.*] See ya when you get back.

[*Jonathan tries to straighten a few things before he leaves. He then puts his coat on, checks his appearance in the mirror, and exits with one last disgusting look at the couch.*]

- CURTAIN -



Scene 2

Later that night.

[As Scene 2 opens David is sitting on the couch watching a movie on the television. The house is a mess. There are 6 or 7 half-emptied 20 oz bottles of coke are strewn throughout the room. There is an opened pizza box on the floor with about ½ of the pizza eaten, as well as two Mc Donald's bags on the floor.]

Jonathan: [Quietly enters so he doesn't disturb David. Then incredulous.] What in the world happened here?

David: [Trying to watch the movie while talking to Jonathan.] Nothing happened. What do you mean?

Jonathan: Nothing happened? It looks like you had a party while I was gone. That or there was a freak storm that ripped through my apartment.

David: Nah, it was nothing like that. It was just me. I had some dinner and then I did some work and then I had a snack.

Jonathan: [Picking up some of the mess.] You ate all of this stuff for dinner - all by yourself?

David: Yeah, it was dinner and a late night snack.

Jonathan: Oh, that makes a difference. Which is which?

David: I had the pizza for dinner and then I did some work and then I got some burgers because I was hungry and I didn't really like the pizza anyway.

Jonathan: I thought you were going to Mc Donald's for dinner.

David: I started walking in the direction you told me to and I saw this great pizzeria so I thought I'd get a pizza instead.

Jonathan: I see. Did you finish your work?

David: What work?

Jonathan: The work you came to New York to do.

David: Oh, yeah, that. Nah, I'm suffering from a bad case of writer's block. I'll work on it more tomorrow.

Jonathan: Tomorrow? It is tomorrow. It's after one in the morning.

David: Oh, then I'll do more on it when I get up in the morning. No big deal. I got plenty of time.

Jonathan: I thought you said it was a rush job.

David: What?

Jonathan: I thought you said it was a rush job.

David: Oh, yeah, well, I'll rush on it tomorrow - uh, I mean later today. It's no big deal. My boss understands.

Jonathan: That's not what you told me when you burst into my apartment - and my life - earlier tonight.

David: It is important, but it doesn't have to be done in one day.

Jonathan: Then why couldn't you call to tell me that you were coming?

David: What?

[Jonathan makes his way to the television set and turns it off.]

David: Hey, I was watching that.

Jonathan: I know, but I need some straight answers to my questions. I don't like talking to someone while they're watching television - especially when they're not even paying attention to what I'm saying.

David: Okay. Sorry. Can I watch the rest of it when we're done without little face-to-face meeting?

Jonathan: It's one o'clock in the morning.

David: So?

Jonathan: We both have to go to work in the morning. I don't think it would be wise.

David: I guess you're right. Boy, can you tell you're the first born son.

Jonathan: Very funny. Someone has to be the responsible one in the family. *[Sitting down on the couch so he can see David eye-to-eye.]* What's wrong David?

David: What do you mean?

Jonathan: There has to be something wrong. I know that you're impulsive and a slob, but something just isn't adding up right. This is way over the top. All of this, here in my house, well, this isn't like you and I want to know what's really going on. That is if you want to say at the Hotel Jonathan.

[Pause. David is looking at the remote.]

Jonathan: Did you and Susan have a fight?

David: Boy. You were always the one to cut right to the chase.

Jonathan: I am the firstborn. You said it yourself. So, what was your fight about?

David: It's nothing really. It's about stuff we've fought over before. Fighting for us has been no big deal lately. We seem to be doing it more and more. This is the first time she asked me to leave, though. I thought I would spend a few days with you and give her a call and see if we could patch things up.

Jonathan: When were you planning on telling me about this?

David: When? Actually, I was hoping that it wouldn't come up.

Jonathan: You were hoping that I wouldn't notice that something was wrong?

David: Well, yeah. This is something that we just have to work through. I just need some time to get my thoughts together. I was hoping to be able to hide it from you because I didn't want to get you involved.

Jonathan: I don't mind being involved. You're my brother. How can I help?

David: [Abruptly.] No, I just said that I don't want any of your help. I don't need your money, I don't need your speeches, and I don't need your lessons on Christianity. I really appreciate that you're willing to let me crash here for a few days, but that's all I need from you.

Jonathan: Okay. Well, then can I at least pray with you?

David: No, I don't need that either.

Jonathan: Can I share your need with my prayer team at church?

David: No, this is a personal matter. It's between me and Susan. I don't need anyone else knowing about this. I didn't even want you to know about this. You're letting me sleep on your couch, and I really appreciate that. I don't need anything else from you. I'm giving this a day or two to work itself out. Then I'll call Susan and see if we can patch things up.

Jonathan: All right. I'll honor your request, but the Bible says that pride..

David: Uh, uh, uh. You said that you'd honor my request. I don't want to hear what the Bible says. I don't want to hear what mom would say. I don't want to hear what you would do if you were me. I don't want to hear the awesome opinion of the mighty first born. I just want to deal with this on my own.

Jonathan: But tough times like these can be so much easier if we lean on others.

David: The only person I want to lean on is me. I got myself into this mess - I sure can get myself out of it. I've gotten through it before and I can do it this time too. All I need is a few days.

Jonathan: It's great that your boss happened to give you this kind of an assignment at this time. You've got an excuse to be away and hopefully you can get things resolved before you have to go back to work.

David: Yeah, that would be great.


Jonathan: But you're not going to be able to get your work done if you don't get enough rest. This isn't summer camp, you know. At least listen to this brotherly advice - get a good night sleep. We'll talk about it more in the morning. [*He gets up to go to bed.*]

David: I really won't want to talk about it then either.

Jonathan: I know. We'll see how you feel about it tomorrow - uh, later today. Good night.

[*He exits. David clears part of the couch off, picks up a blanket, fluffs his pillow, and tries to get comfortable on the couch. Then he realizes that the light is still on and he reaches over and turns it off.*]

- CURTAIN -



Scene 3

The next afternoon.

[As Scene 3 opens David is still sleeping on the couch. The room looks the same as it did at the end of scene 2. It's about 4:00 in the afternoon. Jonathan enters after a day at work.]

Jonathan: Are you still sleeping?

David: *[Beginning to rouse.]* What time is it?

Jonathan: It's after four in the afternoon. Have you been sleeping the entire day?

David: I guess so.

Jonathan: Stress does make one sleep longer than usual, and your stress level, combined with the late night we had last night must have caused you to sleep the entire day away.

David: *[Stretching.]* I feel great though.

Jonathan: I bet you do. My only concern is for your deadline. Weren't you supposed to finish that article you were working on sometime today? You only have about a half an hour is you wish to beat a five o'clock deadline. How much more do you have to write?

David: I'm not worried about that.

Jonathan: When is your deadline?

David: Uh, it's not until tomorrow or the next day.

Jonathan: I don't get it.

David: What?

Jonathan: Last night you said that your deadline was today. Two days ago you said that your deadline was yesterday. Today you say that you still have a day or two before your deadline. What is this some kind of a revolving deadline?

David: *[Standing.]* Look, I've got use the bathroom. Let's talk about this when I get back.

[He exits. Jonathan starts to pick up mess from the night before.]

Jonathan: I can't believe this mess. Mom must have spent hours doing this for him when he was a kid. [*Talking louder so his voice carries to the next room.*] If you've slept all day you must be famished. I can remember a time when I slept all day because I wasn't feeling well and I was famished when I awoke. Your hunger must be much greater than mine because you've slept all day and you're well. We sure can get something better than pizza and hamburgers for dinner if you'd like. I know of this great place that serves Italian food. You still like Italian food, don't you?

David: [*Walking in.*] Yeah, Italian would be great. I don't really have any money on me, though. Could you treat tonight and I'll get it next time?

Jonathan: [*Confused.*] I just don't get it. I want to give you the benefit of the doubt. I want to believe that your story is true, but there are too many things that just don't add up.

David: What do you mean?

Jonathan: You said that your boss would have put you up in a nice hotel, but you wanted to stay here and let me clean up after you. I would have thought they would have paid for your travel and meals while you were here. And there's the whole thing about the mysterious moving deadline. What's the true story?

David: You don't want to hear the true story.

Jonathan: Sure I do. I'm your brother. I want to be able to help you.

David: I don't need anybody's help.

Jonathan: Yeah, I know, we went over this last tonight. I have to confess, I prayed for you before I went to bed. Does that make me a bad brother?

David: Nah, it's just a trait of a first born.

Jonathan: I'm really worried about you David. Something's not right and you're not telling me what's going on. I want to help but you're not letting me in so I can help you.

David: I told you, letting me stay here is all the help I need.

Jonathan: It's not enough for me. I want to do more to help you. Tell me what's really going on. Did you really have a fight with Susan?

David: Yes.

Jonathan: What was it about? Will you at least tell me that?

David: I don't really want to get anyone else involved.

Jonathan: I'm your brother. I want to help.

David: I can do this on my own.

Jonathan: We're just going around in circles. David, don't allow your pride to get in the way of letting others help you through tough times in life. That's why we're here. That's why God gave you a family. That's why he gave you a brother that cares for you. So, are you going to let me help you?

David: I want to do this on my own.

Jonathan: Why? What would that accomplish?

David: It would prove that Mom raised us to be self-sufficient.

Jonathan: Mom raised us to be self-sufficient, but this has nothing to do with being self-sufficient. Mom also raised us to know God and rely on Him and each other in times of crisis. If she was here right now she would want to help you too, you know.

David: But I don't need anybody's help.

Jonathan: Maybe I'm saying the wrong things. Look, I don't want to talk to Susan, I don't want to know all for the juicy gossip, and I'm not saying that I know the answers. I think it would really help you if you'd get this off your chest and then we could pray about it, and talk about some possible next steps for you to take.

David: Do you really think that would help me?

Jonathan: I can't help you unless I know what's going on and I don't think you'll get any closer to that deadline unless you get some of this stuff off of your chest so you can start writing.

David: *[Pause as he thinks about it.]* Well, I uh, guess it can't really hurt for me to tell you some more about what's been going on. *[Pause.]* I haven't really been honest with you about a few things.

Jonathan: You mean about the deadline?

David: Yeah, but uh, there's more to it than that. There is no deadline.

Jonathan: What?

David: There is no assignment.

Jonathan: But I thought...

David: Yeah, well, uh, I don't even have a job right now - if you want to know the truth. I was fired last week.

Jonathan: But I thought things were going well for you at work.

David: That's what I told everyone. But I haven't been writing very well for the past year or so - with all of the stress at home and all - and my boss told me that I had a deadline to start writing better, but I just couldn't meet it. So he fired me.

Jonathan: I thought you were writing last year. You published all of those articles under a pseudonym.

David: Well, that really wasn't a pseudonym. I just told people it was. That was really the name of the guy in the next cubicle. I just couldn't come to a point where I could admit I wasn't writing anything at all.

Jonathan: Did Susan know you were struggling?

David: No, she thought I had a pseudonym too.

Jonathan: So she was pretty upset when you came home and told her that you were fired and that led to a fight and that's why she kicked you out?

David: No, that's close, but she actually kicked me out about six months ago. We had been fighting about other things and I didn't want to put the effort into making our relationship better. We've been officially separated since then.

Jonathan: Wow. I never knew.

David: We tried to keep up appearances as long as we could. And I just didn't know how to call everyone I knew to tell them that my life was falling apart so I just tried to keep things going as well as I could until things completely fell apart last week.

Jonathan: So, what brought you here?

David: I got my own apartment about six months ago - even though I couldn't really afford it. My boss took me off salary about six months ago and kept me as freelance. I haven't written anything in the past six months so I've been living off of my reserves. They finally ran out about two months ago. My landlord evicted me this past week. I really had nowhere else to go, so I made up the story about work and I came here.

Jonathan: Going back to Susan wasn't an option?

David: What are you kidding me? If I couldn't admit to you that I had a problem how in the world was I going to go back to her with everything I've screwed up?

Jonathan: Yeah. So, what's next?

David: I don't know. I have no idea what's next. I have no money. I have no job. I have a wife who wants nothing to do with me. And now I have a brother who knows I'm broke. I don't know what I can do next.

Jonathan: Well, you can stay here as long as you need to. You've taken a big step in admitting to me that you need help. Our pride is a hard thing to get past, but once we're past it we can get help from a bunch of places.

David: You're not going to take me to church, are you?

Jonathan: Not unless you want to go, but I do think it's about time for you to admit to God that you need His help too.

David: I'm not sure if I'm ready for that. I mean, He let me get into this position.

Jonathan: Yeah, he LET you, but you had a lot to do with it too, you know. He desires the best for us. We're the ones who often get in the way of His plan for us. Look, I'm not going to preach to you now. We need something to eat.

David: Yeah, I'm starving.

Jonathan: How about we go to that Italian restaurant and then we can talk about getting right with God - and getting right with Susan.

David: Do I have to?

Jonathan: You've got to do it some time. Hasn't it been long enough?

David: It seems like it's been forever.

Jonathan: Don't worry about it now. Let's eat first.

David: But I don't have any money.

Jonathan: That's all right. I can cover you this time. We have to get you dressed into something more appropriate, though. This place does have a dress code.

[He rises. David follows.]

David: Uh, Jonathan, I didn't really bring anything dressy with me.

Jonathan: Come with me. I'm sure we can find something that will fit you. That is if you don't mind wearing clothes that belong to the first born.

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