

BREAD AND STONES *by Scott Crain*

GENRE: Dramatic monologue

SYNOPSIS: A father's faith is strained to the breaking point by a series of disappointments, and the apparent ineffectiveness of prayer.

TIME: 3-5 minutes

CAST BREAKDOWN: 1M

THEME: Prayer; Faith; Doubt; Suffering; Autism

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: Philippians 4:6-7; Luke 11:1-13

CHURCH YEAR SEASON: Any

SUGGESTED USE: Sermon Starter; Worship Service

CHARACTERS:

MARK

PROPS: None

COSTUMES: Contemporary

SOUND: One wireless microphone

LIGHTING: General stage

SETTING: Unspecified

DIRECTOR'S TIP: The tone is somber. These words have perhaps been a long time coming, but this is the first time that Mark has voiced them aloud.

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Lights up.

MARK: I remember when Keaton was born. Our first child. My first baby boy. All the dreams of baseball games and fishing, playing catch in the backyard, *(Smiles sheepishly)* telling him about girls. When he was born and the doctors and nurses finally left us alone in the hospital room with him for the first time, I remember going into that tiny bathroom and kneeling down on the cold linoleum and praying. I said, “God, please bless this boy. Give him health, give him happiness, and give us the grace to be the parents you want us to be.” I was on my knees every night.

“Bless this little boy.”

Beat, his expression darkens.

The diagnosis of autism hit us like a fist. The diets, the medications, the therapies—all the things that have worked miracles for other autistic children—none of it seems to touch my little boy. Week by week, he gets worse. He’s six years old now, and barring a miracle, he’ll never learn to speak. He screams and flails his arms. Hits himself in the face with his little fists. We have to restrain him, hold him down, and that upsets him even more. He shrieks like we’re hurting him. Like we’re killing him.

Silence, as he swallows down the tears.

My mother is sixty years old and alone. Since she and my father divorced, I’ve prayed for her every day. “Lord, she’s been through so much. Raising my sister and me on a limited budget. Dealing with the emotional pain of my father’s rejection, feeling abandoned and helpless. Give her strength and happiness, Lord. Give her wholeness in this new life, with her kids grown, and living on her own.” Every night I’ve been on my knees for that woman who sacrificed so much for me.

Beat.

But last spring, she was diagnosed with MS. The disease works differently in different people, but with her, it’s spreading quickly. She lost her ability to walk. Her memory is unpredictable and getting worse. Sometimes she doesn’t remember my name. While my father is living happily with his new family, my mother is trembling in her old recliner, trying to remember how to work the telephone. She has a live-in caregiver now, and anything like independence is now gone.