

# The Burden

CHARACTERS: 6 adults; Diane, Jesus, Betty - An off stage voice (typical Mother-in-law), Ruth (an older woman), Debra (old burn on one side of face), Paula (every woman), Joan (very well dressed)

PROPS: Backpacks, signs, 5 dolls, cell phone

COSTUMES: Biblical for Jesus, street clothes for women

MAKE UP: Burn on face

SETTING: none specified

*All the women on stage have backpacks on - one or two are those huge kinds for week long camping trips. They are stuffed to look full. They each carry an 8X11 label with the character's name on it. (Some have dolls inside)*

DIANE: *(staggering on stage under a heavy sack)* Why is my burden so heavy? Is there no rest from this life? *(Stumbles to the front carrying the heavy load - drops it to the floor, pleading to the heavens)* Oh, God, let me sleep. Let me sleep forever and never wake up!

*(Jesus enters. Diane stares at him a moment then realization of who he is hits)*

JESUS: *(Gently)* My child, why do you want to come to me before I am ready to call you?

DIANE: Lord, I'm sorry; it's just that ... I can't go on. You see how hard it is for me. Look at this awful burden on my back. I simply can't carry it anymore.

JESUS: But haven't I told you to cast all of your burdens upon me, because I care for you? My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

DIANE: I knew you would say that. But it's not like you are usually here on earth. Not like you're flesh and blood anymore. How am I to cast my cares on a person I can't see or feel? *(Whining)* Why does mine have to be so heavy?

JESUS: My child, everyone in the world has a burden. Perhaps you would like to try a different one?

DIANE: I can do that?

JESUS: *(4 women enter carrying their burdens but also using a free hand to help hold someone else's up)* You may try any of these.

DIANE: Hmmmm. *(Going over to the well-dressed woman)* Let's see, the label here says "Joan's". *(Pulls name off bag and reads)* Joan is married to a wealthy businessman. She lives in a sprawling estate and dresses her three daughters in the prettiest designer clothes. She drives to church in a Cadillac. *(looking up at Jesus)* Let me try that one! How difficult could her burden be? *(Jesus removes Diane's burden and places Joan's on her shoulders. Diane falls to her knees beneath its weight.)*

DIANE: *(Startled by the weight)* Take it off, take it off! What makes it so heavy?

JESUS: Look inside.

DIANE: *(Unties straps and opens the top. Takes out a doll.)* This is Joan's Mother-in-law!

*(Voice off stage):* Joan, you'll never be good enough for my son — he never should have married you! — you're a terrible mother to my grandchildren.

DIANE: *(Puts doll back in bag and pulls out another doll)* This says it's Donna, Joan's youngest daughter.

JESUS: Yes, Donna has epilepsy and recently had surgery on her head, but the surgery was a failure.

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DIANE: *(Puts doll back in bag and pulls out another)* This is Joan's brother.

JESUS: Joan's brother is addicted to drugs and he has just been convicted of killing a police officer.

DIANE: I see why her burden is so heavy, Lord. But at the same time, she's always smiling and helping others. I don't get it.

JESUS: Would you like to try another?

DIANE: *(Lifts another bag and takes sign off)* This is Paula's. She is raising four small boys without a father. *(Puts bag down and lifts another)* This is Debra's - she has a childhood of sexual abuse and a marriage of emotional abuse. *(Puts down and picks up another)* This is Ruth's - she has arthritis, is older, but continues to hold down a full-time job and has a beloved husband in a nursing home.

DIANE: They're all too heavy, Lord, give me back my own. *(Jesus hands back her bag)*

JESUS: Open up your bag, Diane.

DIANE: *(Taking out palm pilot or similar device)* This is my horrible schedule. I am always running behind with too much to do. And I hate my job. I just hate it. *(Jesus nods and motions for her to go on. Paula starts to step forward but Diane is oblivious and hurries on)*

DIANE: *(Taking out a doll)* That's Brian, I hate to call him a burden, Lord, But he's hyperactive. He's not quite like the other two. He makes me so tired. He's always getting hurt, and someone is bound to think I abuse him. I yell at him all the time. Someday I am afraid that I may really hurt him. *(Ruth steps forward and slips a hand under the doll with Diane's)*

RUTH: I can help you carry Brian *(slides her hand under the doll)*

DIANE: *(Pulls out another doll.)* This is my father. He is so distant from me since he divorced mom. We used to be so close...

JOAN: Let me help you with that. *(She slides her hand under the doll)*

JESUS: *(Reaches in the bag again and pulls out some pebbles)* What are these?

DIANE: Well, Lord, I know those are small, but they weigh me down. I hate my hair. It's thin, and I can't make it look nice. I can't afford to go to the beauty shop. I'm overweight and can't stay on a diet. I hate all my clothes. I hate the way I look!

PAULA and DEBRA: *(come forward and take some of the pebbles)*

PAULA: I've struggled with my weight before. I can help you carry this one.

DEBRA: *(Has hidden upstage half of face until now. Turns and audience can see scars and redness from an old burn)* I was in a fire as a child. I know what it's like to hate how you look. Let me help you.

DIANE: *(Amazed and in shock)* Why are you ladies helping me? You just met me.

RUTH: We're Christians. We're all family. In this family we carry each other's burdens

JESUS: You were right when you said you couldn't always see or feel me.

DEBRA: Other Christians are Jesus hands and feet.

PAULA: And his comforting arms *(Places arm around Debra and hugs her close)*

DEBRA: *(Choked up with emotion, looking at each of the women)* Thank you. *(Turning to Jesus now)* I think I can go on. It's going to be alright. *(Putting her arm around Ruth.)* You know I could go with you to the nursing home sometimes.

RUTH: *(Hugging her back)* I'd like that

JESUS: Remember, my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Do you understand now?

DIANE: Yes, Lord. When we carry each other's burdens. They do become light and manageable. (*Gives him a hug, while the others resume their positions helping with each other's burdens and adding Diane's in with them*). Camera fades out.