

## JULIE'S STORY-GLIMPSES OF GOD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

# The Get-Well Box

### WHEN I'M HURTING

#### SCRIPTURE STUDY

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8  
James 2:1-8  
Philippians 4:13-19  
2 Corinthians 12:7-10

#### PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,  
Thank you for reminding me that in my pain you remember me and comfort me. Thank you for the people you bring into my life to love and support me.  
In the Name of your Son,  
Amen



#### SICK AT HOME

My fifth year of life was a nightmare. Captain Kangaroo had lost Green Jeans. No, that's not what the Captain wore, Green Jeans was his hilarious side-kick who made my favorite kiddie TV show worth watching. KTVT, our local public television station, tried to dam the flood of plummeting ratings by compensating with a local yokel named Mr. Peppermint. Every kid knew Peppermint was a sorry substitute for Green Jeans. Mickey and Amanda Mud Turtle, Mr. Peppermint's lame puppets, were used to teach bored five-year-olds the alphabet. Why would we want to learn that on TV? Wasn't that the sole purpose of kindergarten?

But TV was soon to become my only source of companionship. My two-year-old sister Kathy was worthless in the friend department. All she knew how to do was cry and break all my toys. My baby sitter, Mrs. Richardson, was nice enough. But she only made lunch and put us in time-out when we sassed her or trashed the living room.

I had high hopes for kindergarten. Mrs. Drake's School for Eager Beavers was a white wooden-framed house on the end of our cul-de-sac. The idyllic little pre-fab home displayed a school-bell sign on the front lawn.

As a four-year-old, I spent lazy afternoons under our mimosa tree watching happy youngsters spilling out of the front door, squealing with delight. Yes, Mrs. Drake's School for Eager Beavers was akin to paradise in my estimation—a veritable wonderland escape from the monotony of home life.

I crossed off the days of sweaty summer on our refrigerator calendar. As the grasshopper chirps subsided and chiggers ceased to chomp, the brisk fall air signaled my chance at freedom. I obtained the required list of school supplies from the Rexall on the corner: a number two pencil, a 24-pack of Crayolas, a lined tablet and a plaid lunchbox with matching thermos. The list was scanty, but eager beavers were just beginning scholastic endeavors that would dominate the next thirteen years of life. Five-year-olds have the energy of a bunny and the attention span of a gnat.

The greatest challenge of kindergarten was nap time. We weren't allowed to talk, wiggle or poke our neighbor. If you blatantly disregarded the "nap code" you could say goodbye to mid-afternoon Oreos and milk. I learned later that nap time was not designed for us to catch up on our sleep. It was for Mrs. Drake to catch up on her sanity.

September blew by quickly. I was getting my kindergarten sea legs: only one girl was at the top of the pecking order, burps and booger-picking were taboo and nobody—yes, nobody could make jokes about Tommy Tugbottom's last name. He was feisty and packed a punch. In retrospect, I realized that poor boy would go through life fighting a battle, just like the Texas governor Jim Hogg who named his girls Ima and Eura. Sadist! (True story...)

October rolled around and I was a kindergarten pro. I knew my ABC's, I could count to a thousand without blinking an eye, and I learned to dunk my Oreos in my milk while Mrs. Drake picked up the blocks or snored in her seat after story time. After all, twenty five-year-olds could squeeze the life out of any self-respecting grownup.

Then disaster struck. Just as we started tracing Halloween pumpkins and the fall air turned chill, I got sick. Really sick. Really, really, really sick. At first, red blotches popped up everywhere, covering me from my scalp to the bottoms of my feet. You could fry an egg on my forehead. At first, my mom assumed I had contracted a routine case of German measles, but my measles were not German and my pox were not Chicken. I suffered with a roaring case of Scarlet fever and pneumonia.

My mom stayed home from work to swath my forehead with cold washcloths and rock me when I cried. At night, she would hold me in the rocker as long as she could while I gasped for air, but then she dropped off to sleep. I lay awake listening to "Moon River" on the radio, trying to make my heaving chest match the slow, undulating rhythm of the music. When I visited the doctor, he'd shake his head and give me another shot in the bottom. A lime lollipop was hardly adequate compensation for a stinging poke down "where the sun don't shine..." At that point, I was too ill to care.

Green Jeans was gone, my friends couldn't visit me because our house was quarantined, and I dreaded the lonely nights of wheezing and coughing. My annoying little sister stayed at Grandma's to avoid "the plague," and Mrs. Richardson, my nanny, also kept her distance as much as possible. Weeks turned into months. I coughed through Christmas, I whined through January, and by February I had given up hope of being an "Eager Beaver" again.

Had God forgotten me? I couldn't even go outside and smell the fresh air. I was a prisoner in my own house. "Chutes and Ladders" played alone is just "Chutes." Shoot! I'll bet the Eager Beavers didn't recall that I existed. The doc said I was improving and might be able to return to kindergarten in March. But four more weeks at home seemed like an eternity. I had been sentenced to solitary confinement by this evil disease. I begged for a puppy, but mom said all furry creatures would make me wheeze.

On a particularly frosty, gloomy morning in February, I sat in my little bedroom rocker gazing at pictures of Hansel and Gretel that I had seen five hundred times. Although I couldn't read, I knew the story by heart and determined I'd plan an escape from my bedroom dungeon and leave a graham cracker-crumble trail on the sidewalk to find my way home. At least running away would let me breathe the outside air for just a little while.

Just before I made my break, I heard a knock at the front door. It didn't sound like a grown-up knock, but a little kid's rap-tap-tap. I didn't know what to think. Had the "runaway from home" police gotten wind of my evil plan? Who was at the door? Was my little sis coming home? Did Dougie Scott from next door learn I was finally germ-free? I didn't care. I just wanted to see a friendly face from the outside world.

I peered out of the frosty window and couldn't believe my eyes. Mrs. Richardson called me to come to the front door. Tommy Tugbottoms, the toughest Eager Beaver of them all, smiled a toothy grin and presented me with a box—an enormous beautiful cardboard box covered with construction paper hearts and doilies. I had completely forgotten it was Valentine's Day. Tommy handed me the present, blushed, waved and ran toward the Ford Fairlane pattering down the driveway.

What treasure would I find? Why had Tommy, of all people, courageously appeared on my doorstep? I could still smell the drying wheat paste beneath the paper doilies. I lifted the lid and gasped at what was inside—a veritable treasure trove of handmade cards, valentine candy and an unopened box of Oreos (the food of the gods). The large letter on the top was from Mrs. Drake. “Dear Julie,” she wrote, “we are so sorry you have been sick. The Eager Beavers are not eager without you. Please come back to us soon. Love, Mrs. Drake.” My heart leapt with joy. I had been missed! Card after card had messages like “Be well” or “Happy Valentine's Day” scrawled in red crayon. The girl's hearts were painstakingly neat with paper doilies and taped-on candy hearts. The boy's notes were rattier, but they still managed to say something kind like “Stop sniffing-start living” or “Get well, Stupid.”

I never felt so valued. It didn't matter that Mrs. Drake had probably threatened them within an inch of their lives if they didn't complete the assignment. I could care less if Tommy and his cronies teased me when I returned. God, in His own way, had taken time to show His love for me through a few scrawny, hyperactive five-year-olds.

Mountaintops and valleys are etched in my memory, but that Valentine box is unforgettable. The despair of feeling alone and hopeless had been erased by the simple kindness of the Eager Beavers. On that misty February morning, God reminded me that I was loved, cherished and remembered.

- Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. Solomon reminded his readers that there is a time for everything—for blessings, for trials, for sorrow and for joy. List all the things in this passage that are a part of life. The king's powerful observation about all of these life events is written in verse 11. What did Solomon say that God does with our life experiences? How can suffering and loss be “beautiful”? As you reflect upon your life, have you seen God's hand in the dark moments as well as the light ones?
- Read James 2:1-8. James wrote in the first chapter of his letter that God uses troubles we experience in a positive way. What are the results of enduring suffering, according to verses 3 and 4? James promised that we can ask God about His purposes in our trials, and that He will give us wisdom. Can you think of a time in your life when you went through a tough time and God taught you some valuable lessons? Describe the events and write the lessons you learned below. If you are in the midst of a problem and have no idea what God is doing, spend some time in prayer asking God to show you His heart and His plan.
- Read Philippians 4:13-19. Paul wrote this memorable verse—“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” What were some tough times in Paul's life that caused him to need Christ's strength and grace? (Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10). God's sustaining power is sufficient for any suffering you might experience. When have you needed His grace the most? Now read the following verses in Philippians 4:14-19. Paul not only needed God, he needed a support system to survive. Do you have a support system? Who are the people in your life that come alongside you when you are hurting? List them here. If you don't have any, ask God to bring those people into your life and consider joining a small group of Christians in your church, or a Bible study in your neighborhood. Be proactive in developing a “support team.”