

JULIE'S STORY-GLIMPSES OF GOD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

When Granny Comes Marching Home...Again!

PREACH IT, TEACH IT DEVOTIONAL

SCRIPTURE STUDY

Psalm 127
Psalm 133
Ephesians 4:29-32

PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,
Help me to really appreciate the family you have given me. Help me to be gracious and meet their needs. In Jesus' Name,
Amen



THE RELATIVES ARE COMING!

This particular Christmas morning had a frosty nip in the air and clear-flying skies for Santa. By 6:00 a.m. my sister Kathy and I had ripped the paper off of every present, fought tooth and nail over every Barbie and wiffle ball and had eaten half of the Monopoly hotels-all before breakfast.

By noon the troops started rolling: extended family member from Fort Worth, Fairfield and Post Oak. Ford Fairlanes and Chevy pickups rattled up the driveway bringing our country kin. These were the days when Fords were Fords and Mitsubishi was the sushi place down the block. A glitzy Cadillac glided to the curb carrying our upscale cousins and their pharmacist-father. My maternal grandparents took up two city blocks with their boat-sized Impala that I later inherited for college.) Granpa Boy and Moy Tacker (named by my eldest cousin before she could actually gurgle a name) pulled up in a shiny red T-Bird. They sold real estate up into their eighties and drove flashy rides to dazzle the clientele. I would definitely buy a house from someone spunky enough to schmooze and pedal houses when most folks their age were hitting the nursing home. Every vehicle was loaded to the gills with gifts, coats, covered dishes and decorations.

The tribal ritual ensued. Kinfolk poured out of their cars like clowns from a Volkswagon and raced toward our front door. Dad and Mom were breathless from stashing away wrapping paper and wrestling us out of our footy pajamas. All children feel entitled to pad around the house in sleepwear until noon on Christmas. But no, my sissy and I had to be gussied up for the family feast-hair bows, brushed teeth, lacy socks and patent leather shoes. By Christmas dessert the hair bows would be drooping, the gravy would be dripping, turkey strings would hang from our molars and our shoes would disappear beneath the tablecloth.

Grandma Tacker, “Moy,” burst through the door first. You could hear her belly-laugh from three blocks away. She would sashay into a room like she owned the place carrying a bejeweled purse the size of Alaska. Moy would hand off the chocolate pie to Mom and plant a red-radiance lipstick kiss on each of her adoring grandchildren. Moy dressed flashy-just like her car-with crystal earrings, a sequined sweater and crimson stilettos. She reeked of “White Shoulders” perfume. We adored her. When we went to her house on weekends, she would let us try on all her jewelry bling and make wedding dresses out of curtain sheers. Although Moy was lively and fun, she had the annoying habit of giving us new cotton panties every Christmas. What could be more revolting? Toys were prominently displayed in every shop window, and Moy traipsed right past them to the underwear department. Finally, when we became teenagers, Moy branched out and bought us panty hose.

Ma Blakely, affectionately known as “Ma B,” was my Mom’s mom. MaB always smelled like cornbread. She lived on an East Texas dirt farm most of her life, and her meals were hearty, home-made and full of home-grown ingredients like pickled okra and canned pears. Ma B was a genius with a cast-iron frying pan. Ma B didn’t have much money, but her gifts were works of art. She was a remarkable seamstress. Kathy and I would receive beautifully embroidered dresses with matching dolly clothes she had sewn, knitted or crocheted. Quiet and unassuming, Ma B would take in the Christmas chatter, but when Moy got her going the two biddies would cackle like hens at the top of their lungs.

Grandpa Blakely, “Pa B,” smelled like Old Spice and peppermints. He was very dapper in his striped suit and tie replete with silver cuff links. Pa B had moved up in the world from dirt farmer to grocery store manager. He was a self-made man and proud of it. Pa B would cash in a few bills and bring us quarters and half dollars from Safeway. We had a shoe box full of them. They were cashed in for college textbooks, but the silver dollars would be worth a fortune now. Go figure! My first tricycle came from Pa B.

Grandpa Boy was hands-down my favorite relative even to this day. Amidst the array of cousins and chaos, Boy always had time for me. I would climb in his lap anytime-day or night-and he always had a hug, chocolate and a story to tell. Boy was a fascinating man. He had taken President Wilson across the bay during World War I and he played sousaphone in John Phillip Sousa’s band. But neither of these prestigious events were his claim to fame. Boy had magic tattoos from his navy days! His right bicep was painted with a sailing ship that would sail over the waves as he flexed his muscles. Huey, Dewey and Louie-the three Disney ducks-lived on his left foot and would bounce up and down when he wiggled his toes. His best trick was to take his false teeth (he called them “snappers”) in and out in a millisecond to make his grandchildren laugh. Boy never gave me underwear. When I was three, he bought me a toy piano. When I was four, he gave me a xylophone, and when I was six, he bought me a real piano I still play to this day.

Now that the “grand” introductions are done, the Christmas day festivities commenced. The men folk lumbered in like bulls in a china closet-knocking over unsuspecting Christmas balls off the tree and converging upon the television set before the first quarter started. Joke-telling, back-slapping and Frito-munching filled the living room. Once the men were ensconced in their bubba chairs and ottomans, they didn’t seem to mind us kids playing tag around the living room (during half-time, of course). The women headed for the kitchen. To this day I am unsure why Christmas afternoon was a segregated event. The ladies chatted, cooked and cleaned the kitchen while the men lazily lounged in their comfy pants (worn especially when serious eating was done).

Christmas feasts were potluck dinners at our house: everyone brought a covered dish-for better or worse. Boy, sweet Grandpa that he was, toted his oyster stuffing to the feast. Oysters should be banned by the food and drug administration. Any food that would slide down your throat without chewing is both disgusting and dangerous. To mix such hideous shellfish with cornbread is a travesty! Mincemeat pie was always brought by Aunt Ivelle-a pie that was a disappointment to all. If a dessert had “pie” in the title, it was supposed to be tasty. Whoever had the bright idea to mix meat and fruit had to be an idiot. My first cousin Paula told me some Count in England invented mincemeat, and I believe he should have kept it to himself along with goose liver, spotted dick and figgy pudding. No one ever knows which fowl to serve for Christmas: turkey (been there, done that), goose (who knows how to cook it?) and game hen (way too measly for the guys). Out of desperation and total lack of consensus we’d always sell out for ham, sweet potatoes and green-bean bundles. As a kid, the principle rule-of-thumb was to move the meat and vegetables around the plate so you look like you ate them and tank up on the chocolate pie and sugar cookies.

After dishes were done and ball games were won, the party was over. The hugging ritual commenced once again and promises were made to get together more often. The truth is, you can’t improve on perfection. We all knew that holiday family reunions come but once a year and should be savored like a gourmet meal. At sunset, the Grannies went marching home...again!!!

- Read Psalm 127. This psalm is all about family. What do we learn from this passage about building a godly home? What does Solomon say about children in verse three? Do you cherish your children and your extended family? How can you minister to them more effectively? What does Solomon promise about the blessing they are to you in verse five?

- King David writes in Psalm 133 that family unity is good and pleasant. He also says that the “oil of the Holy Spirit” flows over brothers and sisters who come together in love. How would you evaluate your relationship with your family members? Are there any dysfunctional relationships? Why or why not? Spend some time praying for your family members. Ask God to bring healing to any broken relationships.

- In Ephesians 4:29-32, Paul gives some very practical tips on how to “build others up” according to their needs. What are some of the needs of your spouse and your children? If you are single, what are some of the needs of those closest to you? List them here. Paul also tells us to “get rid” of some behaviors. What are they? What are some things you can say to encourage your family members? At this Christmas season, have each person around the table say what they admire about the person sitting next to them.