

JULIE'S STORY-GLIMPSES OF GOD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Pitiful Pearl and Otis Lee



SCRIPTURE STUDY

1 Thessalonians 2:19-31
 Hebrews 13:5
 1 Timothy 6:6-12
 Philippians 3:7-11

PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,
 Show me what true contentment
 means and help me to love You
 and others above all else.
 In Jesus' Name,
 Amen

Making a list and checking it twice may be easy enough for Santa, but pleasing the fickle fancies of preschool children is a daunting task. If parents were really savvy, they would realize that most young children are perfectly content with a pile of Christmas wrapping paper and a refrigerator box. Saturday morning cartoons parade an endless array of blinking, flashing, buzzing gadgets during commercial breaks between Halloween and Christmas. The wishlist of greedy kiddies grows and grows.

One particular Christmas, Santa and his elves (my mother and father) found themselves in a quandary. Kathy and I had been cranky during the fall and truly deserved to be on the “naughty” list. When Christmas came it was payback time. On Christmas morning, Tiger Lil (Kathy) and I rolled out of bed at four a.m. and stumbled into the dark living room. This was the strangest array of toys ever assembled. A mini-ironing board and iron were in the forefront with my name attached. I didn't iron back then and I never use it now. (If it's not perma-press, Roger doesn't get dressed.)

Kathy's big gift that Christmas was a “Mary-Get-Well” doll. Some twisted toymaker at Mattel designed a plastic patient who could catch every communicable disease known to man. Mary-Get-Well had red, round stickers for measles, sticky white pustules for chicken-pox, and foam inserts for mumps. If you filled her head with petroleum jelly, she could have a snotty nose, and if you filled her behind with chocolate pudding-well, we won't even go there. Mary-Get-Well was an enigma. She was sick her whole miserable life, and yet Mattel made millions from selling her. Kathy never let me play with her because I wouldn't return the sticky measles to their rightful place.

To add insult to injury, my second gift from Santa was a “Pitiful Pearl” doll. Unlike Malibu Barbie and her plastic cohorts, Pitiful Pearl was as ugly as mud.

Her hair was frayed and stringy, her tummy pooched and her eyes bugged out. She even had crooked rubber teeth. I imagine my Daddy thought Pitiful Pearl was a hilarious gift, but I was not amused.

The only saving grace that holiday was my Easy-Bake oven and Kathy's rubber playmate, Otis Lee. The Easy-Bake oven was another attempt to point me toward domesticity, but it never stuck. The finest baking I have ever done was under that Easy-Bake oven lightbulb. My culinary talents declined from there. When Otis and Easy-Bake appeared, Christmas was saved.

What causes us to cherish some things and discard others? Is there rhyme or reason why we choose those things that are precious to us? Of all the gifts and toys she received, Kathy had three treasured possessions in her young life: the first was the "animal blankie"-a multi-colored mini-quilt pock-marked with farm animals and handed down from my toddler days. One tear-filled afternoon, we jumped in the car, peeled out and frantically drove to El Paso's Motel 6 to retrieve it-dust bunnies and all.

The second treasured possession was a blue taffeta dress with a built-in jingle bell petticoat. It never left her sweaty body between the ages of three and four without a fist fight. The third, and by far the greatest, was the bald baby doll named Otis Lee. Otis was the undisputed trophy toy from her Christmas bounty. None of the other gifts mattered. It was Otis that stole her heart.

Otis had a hard life. Besides the smelly task of living under Kathy's armpit day and night, Otis had many brushes with death. Lady, our spotted Dalmatian from next door, fancied Otis as a chew-toy. Besides dragging the plastic heartthrob through dog-poop, several teeth-marks had actually penetrated Otis' skull. After major surgery and some duct tape, Otis survived. We're not sure whether he had brain damage. The worst catastrophe of Otis' and Kathy's lives came when her older sister (namely me) had finally taken all of the pestering I could stand from my little sister. Being the precocious yet sneaky seven-year-old that I was, I watched the weather channel to find a rainy night in July. After dark, I slipped Otis under a very deeply planted rosebush and waited for the mud to bury Otis alive. My act was ruthless, pre-meditated dolly murder.

Much to my chagrin, Otis was found. Kathy was in hysterics. In desperation, Mom threw Otis in the washer on perma-press. Although the rubber body parts were slightly deformed, Kathy didn't mind. Otis slept in her bed for years. One day she was forced to give up Otis for another. Otis was exchanged for Bud Wright, the man who captured her heart. Kathy loved Otis, but as long as she held onto him, she could never grow-up and enjoy the man of her dreams. After all, Bud is washable.

We hold onto many things in this life-journey. Most of them are made of plastic. However, if by faith we choose to invite Jesus Christ into our lives and receive His gift of eternal life, we are forever transformed. All the play-things of this earth seem to fade when He captures our hearts. We are hungry for that will last. We do not carry Him under our arm, as Kathy toted Otis. We carry Him in our hearts. And when He draws us with His love, we will never be the same.

- Paul writes in 1 Timothy 6:6-12 that godliness with contentment is great gain. Do you feel you are experiencing true contentment? Why or why not? What relationships, things, or circumstances bring you the most peace and contentment? List them here. Do you feel that pursuing and intimate relationship with Christ is a passion of your life?
- The writer to the Hebrews makes an enigmatic statement in Hebrews 13:5. What does he say? What is the connection with the first and last phrase of the verse? Why does God's promise help you focus on eternal things? Spend some time meditating on God's words "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Can you remember any time in your life when you felt that God had forgotten you? Go back to that place of pain and picture Jesus' arms holding you closely. Picture Him walking with you through that experience.
- In 1 Thessalonians 2:19-3:1, Paul says that something or someone is his hope, joy and crown. To whom or what is he referring? Can you list those in your life who bring you hope and joy? Can you imagine yourself in heaven seeing some of the people that you have led to Christ or disciplined standing at heaven's gate eagerly waiting to see you? List them here. If you can't think of anyone, ask God to bring you people who need God's touch and your influence.