

JULIE'S STORY-GLIMPSES OF GOD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Prince Charming



SCRIPTURE STUDY

Matthew 3:13-15
 Mark 11:13-16
 Luke 18:1-17
 Matthew 11:28-30
 John 15:9
 Revelation 3:19-20

PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,
 Thank you for wanting an intimate relationship with me.
 Help me to live my life walking hand in hand with You.
 In Jesus' Name,
 Amen

STORIES, STORIES, STORIES!!

Books were my friends when I was a wee one. My parents own countless black-and-white Polaroids of me snoring, sprawled on top the bedspread covered in fairy tales and animal adventures. I'd travel to faraway places or rendezvous with the Prince of my dreams with just the flip of a page. My treasured books came in all shapes and sizes. The flimsy cardboard models came from the grocery store. Mom purchased them in desperation when I went "cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs" in the cereal aisle. Mom let me use my wax crayons on the cheapie books. I drew in extra characters and added trees and flowers with magenta and yellow-orange. Hardback books were much more precious. Mom put them out of reach on a higher bedroom shelf. They only came down to visit at bedtime when Daddy would read to me. I would touch their slick pages in awe and wonder. Occasionally, after bedtime, I'd pull my rocking chair up to the bookshelf and sneak a peek. Finally, there were the enormous coffee-table books—glorious and too heavy to lift. Daddy loved Art Museums, so the family would gather in the living room after supper and gawk at the masterpieces of Renoir, Rembrandt and Van Gogh.

I learned many valuable lessons from my story books. If the "Little Engine that Could" had climbed that mountain twice a day and laid off the Fritos and Snickers back at the station, he would have "thought he could" much earlier in the tale. Red Riding Hood was asking for trouble when she wore that racy red outfit. If she had donned the simple gingham frock that her mother had laid out for her, the lusty Big Bad Wolf would have overlooked her and scarfed a nearby bunny instead. Then there was the matter of the air-headed Three Little Piggies. If they had hired out their construction job to the responsible Woodsman from Red Riding Hood's neighborhood, the Big Bad Wolf would have given up his penchant for barbecued pork and would have become a vegetarian. Goldilocks should have been jailed for breaking and entering. I'd imagine her high-maintenance stint in the pokey would have aggravated the prison guards as she whined about her cot being "too hard or too soft" instead of "just right." Lock her in the slammer for good. She should have known better!

Love stories always held a mysterious fascination for little girls. Prince Charming had a shoe fetish and found his true love barefoot and in need of a pair of Jimmy Choos. Good Sunday shoes are hard to find, and princes are even in shorter supply. Some women would rather have glamorous footwear than a ne'er-do-well prince any day. The nameless prince in Snow White could have been an idiot for all we know about him. He followed his nose to Sleepy, Dopey and Snoopy's house to discover his True Love in a cryogenic coma. His only redeeming quality was his ability to play tonsil hockey and wake her up from her cold, frozen sleep. One would hope that after he realized the vain, wicked Queen's chicanery, he'd put his nasty Mom in rehab or behind bars. That lady had serious anger issues. Now Sleeping Beauty's Prince had real moxy. He scaled thorny castle walls and valiantly parried with a giant dragon-lady who looked amazingly like Cruella DeVille from 101 Dalmatians. The Walt Disney animators had no imagination.

Some stories were written and some were told. Imaginary stories always fascinated me. My Grandpa Boy would invite my sister Kathy and me over for a Friday night sleepover. As the moon rose over his gargantuan pecan tree, Johnny Squirrel, cheeks stuffed with nuts, would wave his furry tail and eavesdrop on Grandpa's captivating yarns. These were no ordinary adventures. They were chock full of imaginary villains he dubbed "Gee-Whizicusses" and "Wally-Goppers." The monstrous creatures were lurking in the backyard shadows and only our muscle-bound Grandfather could outsmart them. We traveled the globe to exotic destinations in search of these pretend enemies. Our pulses would race, our eyes were big as saucers, and we'd fall asleep on his cuddly shoulder feeling safe and protected.

One of my story books changed my life. *More Little Visits with God* was prominently perched on the shelf above my headboard. Mom read to me every day. One chilly Saturday morning, I sat with my back to the dryer in the laundry room. The air vents were warm and comforted my chubby, chilly toes. I was gazing at a picture of Jesus holding little children in His lap. He was smiling and hugging them gently. The kids were red and yellow, black and white-skinned. Some were pudgy, some were skinny. A few children were well-dressed and others were in rags. I heard Jesus speak to me as clearly as if He had His arm around me in that cozy laundry room. "Julie," He said, "come up here and sit my my lap. I will hold you there always. I will love you and take care of you." In my heart of hearts, I trusted that this quiet voice was real and this moment was monumental. As a young child, I didn't comprehend redemption, sanctification or substitutionary atonement. I would later realize my need of a Savior and ask this Jesus to forgive my sins and give me a home in heaven.

But before big church and before kindergarten I met the real Jesus. I felt His warm love and I was certain He would keep His promise. That was the beginning of my story, and I know a happy ending awaits. And the rest—well, it's a real page-turner.

"Jesus said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."
Mark 10:13-16 NIV

- Christ's invitation to the children appears in three of the four gospels: Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16 and Luke 18:16-17. There are many principles Jesus taught in his encounter with the little children. He was teaching the observers about His love for the little ones and about childlike faith. What are some of the principles taught in these three passages? How does Jesus' response to the children make you feel? Is this your view of Jesus, or do you see Him as more impersonal and rejecting? Take time to memorize the above verse and meditate on it this week.
- In Matthew 11:28-30, Christ offers an invitation to those who are weary and burdened. This remarkable promise is life-changing. This is also the only passage where Jesus describes Himself. What does He say? How does reflecting on His character shape your image of the real God? When He promises rest for your soul, what would that look like in your life?
- John 15:9 and Revelation 3:19-20 describe the experience of intimate fellowship with Jesus. How does He compare His love for you with the love the Father has for you? What would "abiding in Christ" or "share a meal as friends" look like in your daily walk with God. What do those images evoke? Spend some time thanking the God who wants to hold you and share a meal with you.