

JULIE'S STORY-GLIMPSES OF GOD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Car Wars



SCRIPTURE STUDY

Genesis 4:1-16
 Psalm 133:1-3
 James 3:13-18
 Romans 12:8-13

LIVE LONG AND PROSPER

Yesterday I was sitting at a stoplight minding my own business, re-setting my iPod, picking my nose, answering my cell phone and peeling off my sweat socks when I noticed a familiar scene in my rear-view mirror. Car Wars.

A haggard mom in her well-stuffed checkered capris mooned me at the intersection of First and Vine. Precariously perched between the front and back seats, she was hollering at the top of her lungs. Two little buck-toothed boys smeared with Coppertone and dripping with pool water were beating each other senseless. The red-faced, tow-headed kid clobbered his little brother in the head with a model airplane. Older brother fired back with a knuckle sandwich followed by a head butt and a half-nelson hold. Fortunately, there were no cars behind us, so I sat through another red light to enjoy the show. The curly-headed baby in the car seat next to Mom peacefully sucked her binkie, oblivious to World War III behind her. Once "moon Mom" had peeled the two brothers apart, I assumed order was restored. But the fun was just beginning. Big brother, energized by the heat of battle, lobbed a Hostess cupcake at Mom's ponytail scrunchie. Infuriated, Mom careened over the curb into the Walgreen's parking lot, ripped open the back door and tanned the hide of brother number one. I wanted to stay and watch the Mama drama, but a rickety truck filled with lawn mowers and week whackers pulled up behind me, the driver leaning on his horn.

This "all too familiar" car war jogged my memory, taking me back to sister skirmishes of years gone by. My little sister Kathy and I tolerated each other for the most part. We woke up every morning, fell out of bed and stumbled stupefied toward the kitchen. Our early morning tussle began with potty privileges (who got the potty first.) I jerked Kathy's flannel-footie jammies' trap door away from the john and jumped on the porcelain throne ahead of her. Infuriated and constipated, she kicked me in the shins, pelted me with Ivory soap and tattled to Mother. Feeling very smug and satisfied, I was lured to the kitchen by the smell of Fruit Loops and bananas. Kathy left the kitchen in a huff to take her potty turn.

PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,
 Deepen the relationship with my
 near ones. Help me to love them
 with Christlike love.
 In Jesus' Name,
 Amen

Round one: Julie-1, Kathy-0.

Colorful, glistening little “o”s were heaped high in my bowl. I sighed and sniffed my favorite breakfast treat. I was shocked and disgusted when I shoved the first sugary spoonful down my gullet. I nearly choked to death. Kathy had poisoned my cereal with salt and pepper when Mom had her back turned. A knock-down drag-out ensued in the hall between the bathroom and kitchen. Mother peeled us apart, sent us to our room cereal-less and steaming.

Round two: Kathy-1, Julie-1.

Momma thought her time-out plan would discourage further infighting, but she was wrong. She sentenced us to hard labor-cleaning out our disheveled closet-an incredibly distasteful task. Dr. Scholl had not invented Odor-Eaters, so the smell was nauseating. We pulled out the sweaty shoes in stony silence. The shoe battle commenced. We pummeled each other with Keds until we both smelled like foot fungus. Mom stormed through the door and threatened us with solitary confinement if we didn’t finish the job. The worst part of closet duty was clearing the cob-webbed corners. Our mutual fear of creepy crawlers unified us as we swabbed the baseboards with dishtowels and Pine Sol. No spidies surfaced! Fisticuffs were avoided. The next phase of closet-cleaning was old toy removal. Toy ownership was always a bone of contention. Who owned the Malibu Barbie? Even though she was headless and buck-naked, we both claimed her as our own. “I got her last Christmas.” “Liar! She was my birthday Barbie!” “Was not.” “Was too!” “Who gave her to you?” Lathered into a frenzy by our war of words, Kathy and I pulled poor Malibu Barbie apart like a chicken wishbone. She was so mangled, neither of us wanted her. Winnie the Pooh was next. Pooh was Kathy’s bear for sure. He had slept under her arm since she was a tiny tot, but he was suffering from years of neglect. The tubby fur-ball had been stuffed behind moldy beach towels and Chutes and Ladders. When Kathy spied his dusty, disfigured form, she sobbed uncontrollably. For once, I sympathized with her. Pooh reeked of perspiration and chlorine, so he was no longer fit to be her bedtime buddy. We solemnly processed to the backyard, read words of consolation from our Picture Bible, and laid Pooh to rest beneath the mimosa tree. Mom was so touched by our reconciliation that she gave us our lunchtime beans and wienies early.

Alas, our peace-treaty was short-lived. Turf wars are inevitable between countries and children. Mattresses and back seats were hot beds of conflict for Kathy and me. We drew the “invisible line” down the middle of the bed. If either sister poked a hairy toe across the line of demarcation, hair-pulling, finger-biting and jammie-ripping ensued.

Road trips were the worst. Dad got so tired of the “my side,” “her side” quarrel that he pulled out the duct tape, measured the width of the back seat, and clarified the boundaries. This feeble attempt at preserving the peace lasted about fifteen minutes. Our rickety Rambler sedan was un-air-conditioned and the radio was broken. “Are we there yet?” started before we hit the city limits. It was a muggy June day, and we were baked and bored. Kathy and I had to entertain ourselves somehow. We started with an innocuous game of “Cracker Jack” basketball. Each player would alternate chucking a caramel popcorn piece into the open mouth of the opponent. If the candy corn hit the piehole target the pitcher got a point. After two turns, the “Cracker Jack” toss got ugly. The popcorn pelting turned aggressive and a full-out food fight was born. Dad screeched the Rambler to a halt, threatened us with an inch of our lives and re-stuffed us into the backseat.

In a last-ditch effort at tranquility, the family engaged in a rousing rendition of “The People on the Bus Go Up and Down” and “Ninety-nine Bottles of Beer on the Wall” until we were too hoarse to croak. Harassment seemed to be the only activity that held any allure for us. The name-calling started first. “Pig Face.” “Blubber-Belly.” “Snot Nose.” “Son of a Snitch!”

Our names got meaner and our faces got redder. Mom whipped around and warned us of impending doom. Dad tried to divert our attention once more with the license plate game, but we were more interested in pinching. We could poke and pinch quietly without arousing suspicion. Silently, surreptitiously, we tortured each other until one of us yelped in pain. Dad pulled into the 7-11, poured enough Benadryl down our throats to drug a horse, and we snored all the way to Galveston beach.

Sibling rivalry is universal. Cain and Abel certainly started us all on the wrong foot. But Kathy and I buried the hatchet years ago.
We’ve learned to play nicely!

- Read Psalm 133: 1-3. The psalmist writes that brothers (and sisters!) who love each other and live in unity are precious to God. How does he describe that unity metaphorically? Remember that “oil” represents the Holy Spirit. Do you have strong, solid relationships with your family? What are some ways you can deepen those relationships and bless your near ones?

- Read Genesis 4:1-16. The first two brothers, Cain and Abel, had a relationship riddled with jealousy and resentment. What went wrong in their relationship? Who was responsible? Why did Cain get angry with Abel instead of God or himself? When God asked Cain the whereabouts of his brother, what was Cain's reply? Has jealousy or misplaced anger ever sabotaged your family relationships? How can you change our response in the future?

- James 3:13-18 describes the characteristics of a "wise, humble peacemaker." What virtues characterize this man or woman? Who do you know that fits this description? Examine his or her actions and attitudes carefully and write some of the qualities you see in him or her.

- Romans 12:8-13 paints a clear picture of "brotherly love." Summarize in your own words the verbs and adverbs used in these succinct verses. Write down some practical ways you can emulate "brotherly love."