

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

# Van Gogh and Fish Guts



### SCRIPTURE STUDY

PHILIPPIANS 2  
1 CORINTHIANS 13: 4-7

### PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,

Help me to see the needs of others  
and to enter into their world.  
Show me how to make the people  
in my life to feel special and  
loved.

In Jesus' Name,  
Amen

### VAN GOGH OR NEMO

Tacker family outings were diverse, to say the least. They either involved brush strokes or fish guts. My dad, dubbed "Ralph Murle" by his father "Ralph Waldo" had a lot to overcome in the name department. Nicknames or initials were a must for him to avoid incessant playground ridicule. (My mom's name was "Wanda Lanier"-a weird moniker as well.) Thank God I didn't have an ancestral label to incite teasing during my elementary school days!

But with a name like "Ralph Murle," he had much to defend. Thankfully, he was up for the challenge. A wild child from preschool days, I have been told he played Tarzan, swinging from a pecan tree branch with a butcher knife in his mouth. He cheated death by trying to "fly" off of the garage roof and to land feet-first on the concrete below. How he managed to keep his appendages intact is still an unsolved mystery. Ralph mischievously pilfered his beautiful older sister's chocolate-covered cherries and painstakingly poked holes in the bottom of each gooey morsel. These and other elaborate misadventures helped Ralph Murle to overcome his quirky name. From a colorful post-war childhood emerged a man who was half-country and half-city boy.

Dad's interest were broad-to say the least. He was a brilliant artist, a poet and a potter. He also was a down-to-earth fisherman smelling of perspiration and minnows. Some of my earliest childhood escapades were spent trekking through art museums while my sister and I were till young enough to sport sparkly pink jingle-bell sneakers. I knew about Van Gogh before I could ride a two-wheeler. Kathy and I loved to play hide-and-seek in the sculpture wing of the art museum.

We'd play "tag-you're it" by Rodin's "The Thinker" (a copy, by the way) and pretend Mr. Thinker was constipated. He probably ordered the fried cheese sticks from the museum café. That will do it every time.

The museum security guards were fairly tolerant of us since we had season passes, but they finally had enough of our sock-sliding through the Flemish painter gallery. The somber portraits looked down at us with consternation and disgust. Busted!!! The art police marched us over to Mom and Dad who stood perplexed in front of Picasso's "Lady in Blue." "Did she have two heads or three?" they mused. "Was that her belly button or her ear?" Who knew? Our house arrest cut short our little jaunt. Ralph and Wanda grabbed us by the nape of the neck and marched us toward the door. What a shame...the museum air was conditioned. The bathroom floors were marble, and the bookstore sported an endless supply of postcards and pop-up books. Even with an abrupt exit, our museum afternoons were a regular part of summer fun.

The "fishing trips" were glorious fun for Dad. Mom, being madly in love with "Ralph Murle," tolerated his love for all things fishy. Kathy and I dutifully went along for the ride. We were rousted out of bed in the middle of the night (about four a.m.) and deposited in the back seat of the car. Apparently the fish on Lake Tawakoni were early risers. During the long ride to the lake, Kathy and I dreamed of Saturday morning cartoons and Lucky Charms. The only redeeming part of our lake expedition was the hot home-fried donuts at the live bait shop.

The angling ritual ensued. The lures, lines, rods and reels were carefully laid out and counted like weapons in an arsenal used to defeat an aquatic enemy. My job was to be sure the fishing line did not get tangled. Then it got ugly. Out came the jar of muddy, bloody earthworms skewered on the fish hooks. Perky little minnows also faced serious body-piercing before they were tossed into the murky water. (Or we assumed it was water. How could you tell in the dark?) The pitiful little creatures awaited the bite of a menacing trout or bass. After hook-hanging and fish snagging, the "live bait" didn't stay alive for long. The whole process seemed gory and barbaric to my way of thinking. However, getting a wiggly fish on the line wasn't too bad. We'd scoop the little fishies into a net and let them off the hook (or so they thought). Their tiny little fish brains never anticipated they were heading for a fiery pan to be fried, poached or baked with some catsup and finger-licking hush puppies.

Bait fishing was brutish, but fly fishing was pretty entertaining for a kid. Shiny feather-filled lures and swimmers were tethered to the end of the fishing line. After a quick snap of the wrist, the lure would sail over our heads and land "plunkety plunk" in the water. We would quietly, carefully reel in the fishing line in hopes of snagging a big one. Occasionally, a particularly stupid bass would forget the piece of metal in the water was not real food and grab the lure with his large bony mouth. My tugging and reeling in the fish was quite a rush. The only hazard of fly-fishing was wrist backlash. This is when you pull the hook and line too far behind your head and hook the seat of your pants. Occasionally I would hook my sister's ponytail. Not a good idea. This snafu occurred at least once on "fly-fishing" Saturdays.

Fishing was not like "museuming." We were sweaty, the lake was stinky and mosquito-ridden, and if we needed to pee Daddy told us to jump off the boat and pee in the lake. For a boy, this was a simple task, but for a little girl this was total commitment. I would rather pull one of my eyes out of the socket than jump in that water. How many other people had used the lake for this purpose? Beer cans and leftover bologna sandwiches floated past. Kathy and I hollered until Daddy pattered over to the dock and let us use the Texaco ladies room. He must have been perturbed and longed for boys who weren't so particular about such things.

When the sun rose high in the sky the fishing excursion came to a close. Fish swam deeper to catch their mid-afternoon naps. Unlike the trout, our fun had only begun. Daddy now proceeded to teach us the fine art of "skinning" the fish. Between the lake and the lunch table existed a malodorous process of decapitating the prey-their glassy eyes staring you in the face and their tails still flopping. Then the fisherman (or fisher-girls in our case) took a fistful of fish guts and ripped them out of the poor little trout's body-without anesthesia. Then there was the final insult-all the bones were removed and the iron skillet was fired to red-hot. This little fishy would be hotter than hell. Kathy and I felt like cannibals. We named each little fish we caught. Who were we eating? Wally, Harold or Nemo? I guess you probably ascertained which outing I preferred-the museum was far and away my favorite.

However, my sister taught me a very important lesson. Instead of complaining on lake day, she went willingly just to enjoy the look of delight on my father's face. Kathy knew she was entering her father's world and it greatly blessed his heart. She probably did not enjoy lake day any more than I did, but she faithfully joined him in his love of angling. As she grew older, her children would watch Grandpa bait and hook in amazement.

My daughters loved the Louvre, but Kathy's kids also loved the lake.

“Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and sympathetic? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one heart and purpose. Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing.” Philippians 2:1-4 NLT

- One definition of attention is entering the world of another person. Is there someone you love whose interests are far different than yours? Can you think of some ways you can lovingly “enter their world” and be excited about their passions and perspectives? List them here.
- The entire chapter of Philippians 2 is Christ's model for servanthood and humility. Read the chapter carefully and list the ways Jesus deferred His own needs to lay down His life for us. After reading this passage, write your own definition of humility.

The New Living translation of 1 Corinthians 13, the “love chapter,” gives fresh insight on how we can love others:

“Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not *demand its own way*. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.” 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

- What would loving someone by not “demanding your own way” look like with your family? Think of someone you know who is humble, patient and unselfish. List instances where these qualities were displayed. What can you learn from them?