

JULIE'S STORY-GLIMPSES OF GOD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Freaky Friday



SCRIPTURE STUDY

Psalm 68:3-6
 Psalm 104: 24-35
 Philippians 4:4-9

PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,
 Thank you for the unique and beautiful creatures You have made. Thank you for my family and the friends You have placed in my life.

In Jesus' Name,
 Amen

PARTY ON!

Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny seemed like slackers compared to Grandpa Boy. Yes, that is what I called my grandfather. He didn't seem to mind since his real name was Ralph Waldo. Fridays included some serious partying for my sister and me. We leapt out of bed without having to be nagged, chewed our Cheerios without slurping or burping, and even brushed our bicuspid teeth without pitching a fit. At 8:00 a.m. sharp, Grandpa Boy jingled the door bell, scooped us up like sacks of potatoes and stuffed us into the back seat of his Ford Fairlane station wagon. Mom had to work and we were too young for preschool, so Friday was grandparents' day, and we didn't mind a bit.

Grandpa careened down the highway as Perry Como crooned loudly on the radio. Kathy and I chattered and chirped like magpies. Boy seemed unruffled by our incessant queries. "Where are you taking us, Grandpa?" "Why do you have whiskers in your ears?" "Can I stick my head out the window?" "Are we there yet?" Boy would smile and reply with the same three words: "wait and see."

Most Fridays, Grandpa peeled into the parking lot at the Dallas City Zoo. He donned his safari hat and shades, slathered us with sunscreen and double-knotted our sneakers. We scampered out of the car like squirrels and headed for the ticket turnstile. A two-story giraffe towered over the entrance. I was sure I saw him smile and wink at me.

First order of business: the flamingo pool. The three of us strode hand-in-hand toward the statuesque cotton-candy fowls. Kathy and I would see if we could outlast their toothpick legs by standing on one foot as long as we could. Most Fridays the bird won.

The zoo was laid out in a circle. Kathy always whined to see Max the goofy polar bear first. I held out for Digby the baboon with the bright red hind end. Undaunted by our squabbling, Grandpa would flip a coin: heads-the bear; tails-the baboon. (No pun intended.) Kathy won the toss, and so we trudged toward Max's cage. The June day was muggy. The air was buzzing with flies and mosquitoes and the grass was teeming with chiggers. Max's lair was at the top of the hill and there was nothing to see along the way but a few worthless myna birds and a cockatiel. At least when we trotted toward Digby the baboon the otter family would splash us as we sauntered by and the elephants would salute us and snort. Besides, laughing at a baboon's behind never gets old.

Max the polar bear looked particularly bored and gloomy. He swam in lazy circles in his tiny pond, dreaming of the ice fishing he would never do and the lady bears he would never hump. At long last we crested polar bear hill and the African plains exhibit loomed ahead. Zebras, antelope, hyenas and oryx chomped on hay and sun-bathed on the warm sand. Unlike poor Max, the warm Dallas weather agreed with them.

We reverently tip-toed toward Mangus, the lion zoo-king. He yawned and swished his tail rhythmically back and forth. We were mesmerized by his enormous fluffy mane and sharp teeth. Mangus was definitely not a people-person. Today Mangus was particularly cranky. Perhaps he was constipated. Perhaps Mrs. Mangus had made him sleep outside. Who knew? But for some unknown reason, Mangus looked me square in the eye, turned around, lifted his tail and squirted two gallons of warm sticky pee all over my Keds and pedal pushers. (True story!) Horrified and terrified, I froze motionless, reeking of ammonia. Mr. Schultz, the lion keeper, ran to apologize and offered us free passes to the zoo for next week. But Grandpa Boy, my hero, was already in the midst of damage control, dabbing me dry with a handful of hot dog napkins. Nothing would soothe my troubled soul but a cherry popsicle.

However, I had moxy. I decided to stay and hit the monkey cages. The little capuchin monkeys always cheered me up. They would snatch peanuts right out of my hand and deftly peel away the shell with their tiny black fingers. Then they'd pop them into their little round mouths and beg for more. I loved watching furry mother and baby capuchin pick at each other—the sign said they were “grooming.” My sister and I “groomed” each other whenever we were placed in the back seat of the car for too long. I'd mimic their screeches, tickle my armpits and swing my “tail” back and forth to join in their family fun.

As our zoo jaunt came to a close, one fabulous treat lay ahead. A tiny amusement park was placed at the north exit of the zoo. Grandpa Boy always made us see the animals before we were allowed to ride the rides. Seeing the animals first was like having to eat your vegetables before dessert. The ferris wheel was “gynormous”, the electric cars were spiffy and speedy, and the Tilt-a-Whirl was fantabulous!! The lion pee was starting to reek so the kids standing down-wind of me let me cut in the ferris wheel line. I pretended I could fly when we reached the top, and tried to chuck Kathy overboard to see if flight was possible. Fortunately, Grandpa had quick reflexes. The bumper cars were great. I'd picture Donnie, the annoying little kid next door, on the hood of the car facing me and bash into the little red sedan full-force. Bumper cars were anger management tools for kids.

Grandpa Boy suggested we grab some lunch before we left the park. I picked my usual—a greasy deep-fried corny dog, Fritos, Snickers and a Coke. Lunch was an inconvenient interruption on zoo day, so I downed the dog as fast as I could. Kathy and I fought over the last Frito, but we each had our own Snickers. I love my Grandpa! He was headed for the parking lot when I made one last impassioned plea to ride the Tilt-a-Whirl. Boy had reservations, but he threw caution to the wind and buckled us into our little tilt-a-car. The lion pee had dried, my tummy was full and happy and my heart pounded with anticipation. The Tilt-a-Whirl circled slowly at first, then faster and faster, up and down, round and round. Suddenly “all that was within me” came bursting forth on Kathy and some random kid buckled into the car with us. Corn, crunch, chocolate and popsicle covered the seat, but the relentless circling continued. I thought the ride would never end. The ride attendant non-chalantly pulled a water hose over to the car and sprayed us down. Apparently, this kind of thing had happened before. Fortunately, I no longer smelled like lion pee. What a day!

Sneezy, dopey, happy and sleepy, we headed for home.

- Read Psalm 68:3-6. The psalmist tells us that those who love God have reason to rejoice and be happy. Verses 4 through 6 speak of God's kindness in befriending us and placing us in community. Do you spend time just rejoicing in God? God promises to be a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, and sets the lonely in families. Who are the people God has placed in your life to meet your aloneness needs? Spend some time thanking God for those people. When is the last time you told your family members how much you love and value them? Don't wait until tomorrow. Tell them today.

- Read Psalm 104: 24-35. God made all creatures in His wisdom. Take time today to marvel at His imagination, magnificence and humor in His creatures. Just as God has provided for His creatures, remember the ways He provides for you everyday. List some of those ways in the space below.

- Read Philippians 4:4-9. Paul teaches us that maintaining a happy attitude and focusing on positive, pure thoughts will bring us peace and satisfaction. What are some positive, pure thoughts that can make you a joyful person? For example, how often do you thank God for the Christian brothers and sisters in your life? (Paul thanked God for His Christian friends in Philippians 4:1.) How can you use scripture or worship music to lift your eyes to God during the day?