

JULIE'S STORY-GLIMPSES OF GOD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Julia The Cat



SCRIPTURE STUDY

Psalm 121
Psalm 91: 14-16

PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,
Help me to trust You to protect
and preserve my life. I want to be
a loving, faithful caregiver for
those You have entrusted to me.
In Jesus' Name,
Amen

PET-PROOF

Pets were never welcome at the Tacker house. My parents wished to love animals from a distance. On rare occasions we were allowed to bring home low-maintenance pets. Mrs. Snow was a pint-sized turtle I found on the highway near my Uncle Paul's house. Mrs. Snow didn't last long because every time she poked her head out to smell the grass, I'd grab her by the head and swing her turtle-body like a yoyo. If turtles could talk, I think Mrs. 7345

Snow would cuss me out for sure. Then there was the occasional Easter chick. Every spring in front of the five-and-dime store some kid would peddle baby poultry to liven up the Easter egg hunts. My Grandma used to wring chicken's necks and fry them up for Sunday lunch, so when we brought our little yellow puff-balls home she would talk about how good they would taste with honey and barbecue sauce. After we tired of holding them, cheeping in their faces, and chasing them through the bushes, they would mysteriously disappear. In early summer, the fried chicken at Grandma Tacker's looked strangely familiar.

Our next pet was BooBoo the goldfish. We got him from our next door neighbor when Donnie got grounded for trying to flush BooBoo down the toilet. Mother mercifully rescued BooBoo and placed him in a pickle jar by the kitchen sink. I feared for BooBoo's life, because my Dad was always skinning the fish he caught from Lake Tawakoni. I was scared that if he didn't catch his quota, BooBoo would end up battered or boiled. Mom assured me goldfish tasted like dog poop, so I had nothing to worry about. Our fishbowl grew cloudy and every other day we'd forget to feed BooBoo. After three short weeks, he was floating belly-up in the pickle jar, gills and fins still and stiff.

Daddy banned all pets from the Tacker house.

Fortunately, we would enjoy the company of stray dogs and cats who hung around our cul-de-sac. Apparently there was enough edible refuse to keep the mongrels alive.

Julia the cat was definitely not a stray. In her black-and-white splendor, she would cruise the neighborhood and lay lazily in front of each back door until she had consumed her cream quota for the day. However, Julia had one nasty habit. She loved to rifle through trash cans. Be they small, plastic Rubbermaid bins or tall metal fortresses, Julia knew how to burgle her way to the goodies. Countless mornings, we would approach the carport to find last night's leftovers smeared upon the concrete. One afternoon, however, Julia finally got her come-uppance. Curiosity almost killed the cat.

We came through the back gate to find the chubby kitty stumbling around with a large dog food can stuck fast to her head all the way up to her paw-pits. Secretly, we hoped Julia had learned her lesson. But my father had pity on the poor pussycat. He grabbed her gingerly to remove the aluminum vice. Nothing budged. All we could hear were Julia's faint whimpers. In desperation, he picked her up by her tail and her can and shook her like a salt shaker. With a suction sound one hears when opening a jar of pickles, the seal was broken, and Julia slumped to the ground like a sack of potatoes. Normally Julia would skittishly scurry away. Instead, she stumbled around like a liquored-up hobo. Then she looked up at Daddy with pure admiration. He was her hero!

Pets require a lot of care. They like to be loved, licensed and cherished. Anyone who watched "Lady and the Tramp" knows this. I am glad I learned to be a better caregiver in the years that followed. Otherwise, my children would be floating face-up in the fishbowl or fending for food in the garbage. Our Heavenly Father is the best caregiver of all. He knows what we need and when we need it. He never stops loving and He never stops giving. And so should we.

"My help comes from the LORD, who made the heavens and the earth! He will not let you stumble and fall; the one who watches over you will not sleep. Indeed, he who watches over Israel never tires and never sleeps. The LORD himself watches over you! The LORD stands beside you as your protective shade. The sun will not hurt you by day, nor the moon at night. The LORD keeps you from all evil and preserves your life. The LORD keeps watch over you as you come and go, both now and forever." Psalm 121

"Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation." Psalm 91:14-16

- How does the psalmist describe God's care in Psalm 121? How many times are the verbs "watch" and "keep" used? From what does He protect you? How does it make you feel to know that He does this for you every day of your life?
- What can we learn from Psalm 121 about tending those under our care? Perhaps we are shepherding children, spiritual children, aging parents or friends. Take time to pray for them now.
- Psalm 91 teaches that God's love and care not only extends to our physical well-being, but our spiritual and emotional well-being also. How is the intimate relationship between God and His beloved child demonstrated in this passage?