

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

# Daddy's Little Secretary



### SCRIPTURE STUDY

Matthew 3:13-17  
 Philippians 1:3-6  
 John 17

### PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,  
 Thank you for my earthly father  
 who gave me "the blessing" and  
 believed in me. Thank you,  
 Heavenly Father for valuing me  
 enough to send Your Only Son to  
 save me.

In Jesus' Name,  
 Amen

### SECRETARIES GALORE!

The secretarial pool at my father's office was a menagerie of ladies. Each species bore unique markings, trademark behaviors and occupied special habitats. Grizzly Gertrude Brown lumbered through the office front door promptly at 7:59 a.m. The shuffle of her orthopedic wedgies on the checkerboard linoleum struck terror in the heart of every copy boy and mail room clerk. When Gertrude entered a room, everyone saluted and instinctively knew that they must be guilty of something. Gertrude always wore her beige cable-knit sweater (did she ever wash it?) and polyester pants. Her salt and pepper bun was pinned so tightly that it pulled her eyebrows up and made her look perpetually surprised. Two or three post-it notes clung precariously to the back of her pants legs when she headed toward the file cabinet. In spite of her idiosyncrasies, Gertrude had the office purring like a well-oiled machine when she was on duty. Gertrude had joined the firm shortly before the crust of the earth had cooled. Nobody, but nobody messed with the Grizzly.

Francine Smith, the willowy flamingo receptionist, was purely window dressing. Her stilletos were six inches high and she typed a whopping twelve words a minute. All of the execs peered out of the window when Francie pulled into the parking lot to see her latest flashy, feathery ensemble. Francie was flirty, but unfortunately she was two fries short of a Happy Meal. On a good day, she could actually remember the name of the company and take down a coherent message. Like the sleek pink flamingo, Francie would preen and strut her stuff until quitting time.

Mabel Moore was the office hound dog. She would sniff out the office ne'er-do-wells and tattle to their supervisors. Mabel would tiptoe into the break room in hopes of hearing the latest juicy gossip tidbit or discovering the newest intra-office romance. Once she got the scoop, Mabel would wiggle her tail, shake her jowls and howl away. Secrets weren't safe and snooping was an art form when the hound dog came to work. Most of the time, Mabel gave people the benefit of the slop, but in her defense, employees were motivated to keep their noses clean and their dealings above board.

Paula Froman, the hyena, was positively a people person. She would cackle at the latest joke and tell tales around the water cooler. Paula remembered everyone's birthday and would pull out the punch, pound cake and piñatas to celebrate. No one was actually sure what Paula did at the company, but when she punched in, the party started. Her hyena high jinks were legendary. Mischievous office pranks like toilet-papering Brian's convertible or Saran-wrapping the ladies' toilet were her forte. I loved Paula because she could make necklaces out of paper clips and earrings out of foil chewing gum wrappers.

Shy Ella Snowdon, the ostrich, seldom emerged from her cubicle. Ella was a "bean-counter," assistant accountant for the firm. She found socializing with office personnel as appealing as Chinese water torture. Small talk eluded her, so she arrived before anyone else and stayed until everyone left the building. Ella's desk was immaculate-perfectly appointed with pencils sharpened, papers color-coded and files carefully alphabetized. She never made a mistake. She carried her "ones" and crossed every "t." Every office needs an ostrich to stay afloat. Occasionally Ella would let me into her "hole in the sand," and when she did I felt special.

My Mom, the Golden Retriever, was the company controller. Mom made sure that Daddy's imagination didn't exceed his assets. Mom hung in there with Dad through thick and thin. She'd retrieve my sister Kathy and me from school after a grueling day at the office and greet us with a cheerful smile. Every morning my retriever Mommy would faithfully cut the crusts off our tuna sandwiches, slice up half a pear and stuff two Pecan Sandies in our lunch boxes before she headed off to the "war zone" at work. On Saturdays, she would play catch-up with the laundry and potty-scrubbing. In sickness and health, for better or worse, Mommy stayed the course.

Gertrude, Francie, Paula, Ella, Mabel and Mommy made my Dad's office a fun place for a little girl to visit. I'd burst through the front door and head straight for Francie's candy dish. She always let me take the green M & M's. Gertrude would stop barking orders long enough to hand me a number two pencil and a pad of lined paper to keep me quiet and out of trouble. Ella let me play with her spare calculator. I'd type in the numbers, turn the crank and wait for the rat-a-tat-tat to spit out the answer. Calculators weren't digital in my day. They were happy number crunchers that made you feel like a math whiz.

Most days, I would sneak into the architect's office while Mom was meeting with Gertrude or Ella. The drafting tables were enormous-and high swivel chairs were just waiting to spin me into orbit like Sputnik. I think my imagination was aided by the strong fumes of developing fluid. Bryan the architect showed me how to use a t-square and compass. I got to scribble on the giant vellum paper used for drawing plans. Bryan told me to keep my masterpiece a secret because drafting paper was expensive. So I finished my masterpiece, jumped out of his lap and headed for my Mom's office.

Dizzy and delighted, I stumbled into Mom's inner sanctum aglow with joy from all my office adventures. Being the boss's kid had a few perks. Nobody complained about my visits interfering with their work day. Years later, I would spend summer afternoons filing and typing at Dad's office, but I'd always cherish the early days of M & M's and t-squares.

My happiest memory of entering my parent's world was the sunny March day Dad chose me to accompany him on a business trip to Chicago. He said he needed "his best secretary" and I filled the bill! Although I was only nine, I knew I could be his "go-to girl." Mommy packed my plaid dress, my ruffled petticoat and my "no-nonsense" oxfords. Daddy wore his best pin-striped suit and confidently strode into Armco's board room with me in tow. I pushed out my chest and gave everyone in the room a firm handshake. I even had my own name tag. Daddy introduced me as his executive assistant and the board members grinned and chuckled.

I whipped out my spiral notebook ready to take dictation and the meeting began. I scribbled as fast as I could, but words like “joint-venture” and “sub-contractor” did not appear on my fourth-grade spelling word list. If I didn’t know what to write, I’d draw a picture of big buildings and hope Daddy would be inspired. Finally, I lost interest and pulled out my Lady and the Tramp coloring book. For the first time in my young life I sat quietly at the mahogany conference table without squirming or asking to pee.

Daddy was so proud. He picked me up and gave me a big bear hug as we left the meeting. To celebrate, we had chili dogs and chocolate ice cream—the food of the gods. Our business trip concluded with a hair-raising taxi ride to the airport. The yellow cab driver let me turn on the meter, and when we boarded the plane the flight attendant showed me the cockpit and gave me a set of plastic wings. Could life get any better than this?

I snored in Daddy’s lap the entire way home, dreaming of hot dogs and skyscrapers. As I awoke, Daddy told me what a good job I did. I was sure my presence at the meeting cinched the deal. The day I spent with my father was a marker day in my life.

I felt so special, and I couldn’t imagine anything better than hanging with my Pop.

- Read Matthew 3:13-17. Jesus stepped into the Jordan River to be baptized by John, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. Christ heard His Heavenly Father say “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased!” How do you think this blessing made Jesus feel? He had done no earthly ministry yet, but God the Father was already pleased with Him. Did someone in your life ever impart “the blessing: to you? How did they make you feel valued? What did they say or do that impacted your life?
  
- Read Philippians 1:3-6. Paul wrote that he thanked God for every “remembrance” of his Philippian brothers and sisters. What did he say in his prayer? How can you pray a similar pray for your closest brothers and sisters in the faith? Spend some time writing a prayer for one of them right now.
  
- John 17 is an intimate prayer between Jesus and His Heavenly Father. Read the prayer and then focus on verses 25-26. How does the intimacy that Christ had with His father impact the way He treated others? What did He long to see in their lives? What would “oneness” with Jesus look like in your life?