

JULIE'S STORY-GLIMPSES OF GOD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

That's Showbiz!



SCRIPTURE STUDY

Colossians 3:12-15
 Isaiah 14:12-15
 Philippians 2:1-11

PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,
 Show me how to be humble and
 gracious toward others.
 In Jesus' Name,
 Amen

STEALING THE SPOTLIGHT

My stunning showbiz career began at age five. I stormed the stage with a convincing depiction of a broccoli stalk. The play was "Tummy Ticklers" and each bunny class member was heroic or villainous according to FDA approval ratings. Only the skinny girls could play carrots and corn. Since I had a fluffy posterior, my permed green hair added symmetry to my somewhat "pudgy" stalk. The roughage got to cut a rug because we were nutritious, so the carrots, corn, squash and broccoli leaped around the stage captivating crowds before "Veggie Tales" was ever invented. Hamburgers, cheese fries and donuts lay motionless on a heap of yellow beanbag fat cells. The audience was instructed to cheer for the veggies and boo for the junk food. This moralistic tale of nutrition gone awry didn't have much impact on us as kindergartners. As soon as we finished the show, we high-tailed it to the lunch room to down our Oscar Mayer wieners, Cheetos and Twinkies. I paid a high price for my veggie debut, however. I tried to wash the green "broccoli" jello out of my hair for a week, but the green powder simply faded my dishwater blond locks to the color of snot.

My next bid for stardom came in December at the Sunday School Christmas pageant. Randy Phelps was a shoe-in for Joseph because he was the tallest kid in the class. Unfortunately, Randy had a short attention span, so he spent more time horsing around with the donkeys than paying fatherly attention to Mary and Baby Jesus. Ellen Stuffle was the obvious choice for Mary because she still had all her baby teeth. She should have been replaced by her understudy because Ellen couldn't say her lines and rock her little offspring at the same time. Nine times out of ten, Baby Jesus ended up somewhere on the lineoleum under the straw. Always the prima donna, Ellen monopolized the kindergarten toilet, constantly glopping on grown-up blush and lip gloss, and demanded a fresh towel headdress at every rehearsal.

Once again, my stocky shape made me a natural pick for livestock. Manger mammals were selected according to size: boys were camels and donkeys, girls were sheep and goats. Eddie, the class clown, was thrilled with his donkey role. He “hee-hawed” his way through recess, telling “jackass” jokes in his most convincing Eeyore voice. My “baas” were better than my “bleats” so I became a barnyard sheep. I didn’t realize at the time that this was the worst possible role to play. Our furry sheep costumes were hot and itchy. After three sweaty rehearsals, my wet hair was plastered to my head and I reeked like a cow patty. Tilly Savage clawed her way to the top to assume the starring role of the Christmas angel. Angel auditions were cut-throat, so Tilly brown-nosed the teacher by clapping erasers and bribing Mrs. Lucas with Christmas saltwater taffy. All of her efforts paid off. In the end, Tilly floated atop her cotton-ball cloud and warbled “Silent Night.” Stars like Ellen and Tilly had their own paparazzi. I remained content to “baa” in the background and blend into the sea of preschool wannabees.

My sister Kathy, however, was destined for stardom. She was a full-blown scene stealer. At three, Kathy demanded a captive audience, forcing extended family members to offer undivided attention and applause while she clogged endlessly on the bathroom tile with Mom’s stilettos. If parents and grandparents weren’t around to watch her warble and hoof, Kathy would pull nearby neighbor kids away from Mickey Mouse to play her adoring fans.

Nicknamed “Tiger Lil” by my father, Sissy roped me into working full-time as her manager and wardrobe designer. Before breakfast every morning, Kathy would plop on my peacefully slumbering body and demand that I style her curly blonde locks into a “Cinderella bun” as soon as we downed our Cocoa Puffs. I’d painstakingly pin her ponytail into a yellow lump and spray it with Aqua Net until it remained stiff and motionless the rest of the day. Bows and barrettes were added according to her fancy. After hair and makeup were complete, we hit the closet to pull out the old lace bedroom sheers Grandma Moy willed to us when they were too shabby to remain on her windows. We’d use rubber bands, safety pins and an oversized rhinestone brooch to create magical wedding dresses and ball gowns.

Kathy was determined to be a headliner on the Ed Sullivan show along with Mr. Ed and Ringo. Mom and I would roll the grocery cart around K-Mart and Kathy would practice her act by standing up in the shopping cart seat, throwing her arms out and crooning “Moon River” in front of the Frosted Flakes. If other shoppers failed to pay attention, she’d just modulate to a higher key and use the English pea can as a microphone. By the time we hit the cash register, she was signing autographs. Once Kathy could finally stuff her little round shape into a sequined leotard, she was unstoppable. She tap-danced, tip-toed, cart-wheeled and belly danced for anyone who looked her way.

Tiger Lil’s first taste of stardom came when she nabbed the famous “mirror ball” trophy at the John W. Carpenter talent show. She warbled a compelling rendition of “Big Bad Bill is Sweet William Now.” (I’m quite serious-that was the name of the song!) I believe she had absolutely no idea what those lusty lyrics meant, but the grownups sniggered and awarded her first place for her gumption. Most of the time I accompanied Kathy, but our dynamic duet her second grade year was a show-stopper. We pulled on fish-net tights, furry tails and kitten ears. We shimmied and shook our way through Billboard’s number one pop hit “Alley Cat.”

“He goes on the prowl each night, like an alley cat. Looking for some new delight, like an alley cat. He meets you-meow, and loves you-meow, and leaves you-meow, like a Catsanova does.” Where did we find such seedy lyrics? Apparently, grade-school censorship was at an all-time low. In spite of our song choice, the crowds went wild. We still perform encores upon request.

Kathy and I held onto the center-stage spotlight as long as we could. We performed a litany of recitals, concerts and musicals, and begat offspring every bit as splashy and uninhibited as we. Our sequins, gowns and feather headdresses are tucked away in plastic bubble wrap and cotton balls. But every now and then, when we’re feeling low, out come the tutus, tiaras and tap shoes.

- Read Colossians 3:12-15. Paul writes that we “clothe ourselves” with humility along with many other virtues. What are they? List some ways you can demonstrate these gracious ways to your near ones this week. Spend some time asking God to develop these qualities in your life.

- Read Isaiah 14:12-15. This passage is traditionally interpreted as God's scathing judgment of Lucifer's rebellion against God in heaven. What is the sin that Lucifer commits? Is our tendency to "steal" the glory that belongs to God innate? How should we deal with our pride?

- Read Philippians 2:1-11. What are some ways that we can "count others as better than ourselves?" How do we look to the interests of others? Is true humility self-deprecation or self-hatred? Jesus told us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. What is the difference between an over-concern with self and a healthy self-image?