

JULIE'S STORY-GLIMPSES OF GOD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Tea Party

SCRIPTURE STUDY

Galatians 5:22-6:1
Colossians 3:12-14
2 Peter 1:5-7

PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,
Help me to administer
kindness to all those I meet.
In Jesus' Name,
Amen



BOO-BOO AND ARF-ARF

Tea parties are part of a little girl's DNA, along with dress-up and boy-hating. My earliest tea soirees consisted of my baby blankie, Boo-Boo the teddy bear and Arf-Arf, my stuffed beagle. The fare was simple-baby bottles full of water and dried prunes. Mom determined that any other snack wouldn't come out of my bubble-gum pink bedroom carpet. Boo-Boo and Arf-Arf were water-soaked, but the prunes kept them regular.

When Kathy, my little sister, entered the picture, the tea parties became more elaborate affairs. I had to bribe her with real food to induce her to play. Milk and cookies were on the menu, and Barbie, Skipper and Midge were the esteemed guests. Our only male doll, Ken, was never invited. He spent most of his days lonely and naked in the toy box. Ken couldn't wear evening dresses or rubber high heels like Barbie (at least not in those days), so he remained in solitary confinement only to make an appearance as the occasional dream date or groom. Kathy was younger than I, so she was always relegated to "be Ken"-a fate worse than death when we were playing pretend.

Now, back to the tea party. The setting was much more elaborate. A bed sheet covered the dining room table and satin pillows were surreptitiously absconded from the living room couch. The milk was filled with strawberry Quik, and the cookies were stuffed down our throats lickety-split. Barbie and Midge refused to eat because they were always dieting to keep their perfect little plastic bodies from collecting cellulite. Barbie, created in 1964, is still in impeccable shape. If you see her in the store nothing droops, wrinkles, pooches or freckles. She is flawless and ageless. I hate her.

By kindergarten, tea parties included our little play-date girlfriends: Susie, Sandy and Hilda. We hated inviting Hilda because she always scarfed the refreshments before we were finished setting the table and toting the dollies. “Real girl” tea parties were usually full of drama. Little girls, like big girls, have a natural pecking order. The loudest and bossiest guest, usually Sandy, got the first dolly pick and the Oreo. Shy Susie was lucky to get Pitiful Pearl and a crumbled vanilla wafer. “Real girl” tea parties often started well, but devolved into “my dolly is bigger than your dolly” fights. Mom banished everyone to their own homes and made us take a nap—a fate worse than death when you’re five.

You have now had a brief description of my kiddie tea-totaling days. But I’ll tell you about the *piece d’resistance*—the real-life tea parties my Momma would plan. Mom worked as the accountant for my Dad’s business, so Saturday was our special day together. Saturday morning did not seem special at first glance. Mom would march us down to the kitchen, shove a bowl of Wheaties down our gullets and pass out the cleaning supplies. Kathy got the slacker jobs: dusting (no one would know if you forgot a table top or two) and putting away her shoes (how hard could that be?) I was handed a plunger, a potty brush and the Comet. After suffering the indignity of toilet duty, my next job was taking out the trash. Trash duty, before the days of trash can liners, involved pre-chewed gum scraping and snotty Kleenex removal. The sister discrimination also extended to kitchen duties. As the older sister, I had to learn to prepare the main dishes like pot roast. Kathy got to bake cookies and ice cakes. While I had no desire to eat the mushroom soup or sample the raw onions, Kathy feasted on raw cookie dough, warm cookie crumbs and icing-covered butter knives. To this day, Kathy is a pastry chef and I get creative with Jello and Cool Whip.

Saturday’s activities were not relegated to cooking and cleaning. Here’s where the real story begins. At noon, Mom would blow the whistle and gleefully proclaim it was time to go “messing around.” We threw down our spatulas and plungers and headed upstairs to change clothes. Mom exchanged her white socks and granny shoes for panty hose and stiletto heels. I cast off my grimy t-shirt and donned a frilly dress. Looking fresh and perky in our frocks, we completed the ensemble with flowery hats and white gloves. Mom stuffed us into our Monza Spider convertible and headed for downtown Dallas.

These special Saturday afternoons were tea parties in grand style. At Titcher’s Tea Room, gloved waitresses poured English breakfast tea from silver pitchers. Wedgewood china adorned the table. Baskets bulged with tiny blueberry muffins, scones with clotted cream and watercress sandwiches. A real pianist played a real piano as we sipped the warm beverage and raised our pinkies. Everyone spoke in hushed tones. If the whole experience wasn’t glamorous enough, Elva the pianist pounded an arpeggiated flourish that signaled the start of the fashion show. Beautifully appointed models began to hit the runway in rapid succession. They would strut their stuff as we gawked at the gorgeous clothes. The models descended the stairs and visited each table describing their ensembles and telling their exorbitant prices. We pretended that the Chanel suit was a real bargain, but Mother knew all we could afford were the blueberry muffins.

Only a loving, imaginative Mommy could watch her little girls sipping water from plastic teacups and fulfill their tea-party passion so completely. We left Titcher’s dazzled and delighted. Even our table manners improved...for the most part.

- Who in your life has showed you kindness? List them here. What kind acts did they do for you? How did they make you feel?
- Paul admonishes us in his letter to the Colossians to wear clothes of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. How have you seen these qualities demonstrated?

Compassion
Kindness
Humility
Gentleness
Patience

- List three people who need your kindness. Who are they? What specific ways can you minister to them?