

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

# The Charm Bracelet



### SCRIPTURE STUDY

Psalm 63  
1 Chronicles 18:6-36

### PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,  
Help me to love and worship you  
in childlike faith and wonder.  
In Jesus' Name,  
Amen

### MY HAPPY MEMORIES

Batten down the hatches. I was happily brushing my molars early one morning when I heard the jingle of the kitchen telephone. Hurriedly spitting out my Crest (extra-whitening), I scurried to answer the call.

Helen, my mother-in-law, was on the other end announcing her arrival the next morning for a surprise inspection (Oops, I mean *visit*). I swallowed hard, in stark terror, imagining her appearance on our doorstep sporting her orthopedic wedgies and a flowered duffle bag. We'd greet her with a salute and would pray to God she would not look for the dust bunnies behind the frig or the hairy sink drain in the guest bathroom. At our house, spring cleaning was postponed to summer overhaul. In September, we shut our closet doors and hoped no one could smell the mildew or Odor eaters. Old socks and holey underwear happily resided in the corner dresser drawer next to a stripy woolen poncho from Matamoros I had no intention of wearing. Indistinguishable implements crowded silverware drawers. I only cook TV dinners, so I have no earthly idea what to do with the three wire whisks given by Helen at Christmas. The oven was a haven for black molten chicken grease, but its aroma gave me hope that one day I would prepare meals without charring them to a crisp. Such was the state of my House Beautiful. Helen was a stickler for tidiness, and I did not want to disappoint.

In desperation, I placed a call to 1-800-GOT-JUNK and told them to bring a large trailer and a couple of hasmat suits. Two big burly boys with low-slung jeans appeared at my door an hour later.

Dewey and Billy-Bob looked around, swallowed hard, and gave us an estimate. Two truckloads later, we discovered we had a *two*-car garage and a *walk-in* closet. To call the Barriers pack rats was a gross understatement. Underneath the squalor of discarded Golf Digests and Barry Manilow cassettes, I uncovered a priceless treasure I received upon my eighth birthday: a tiny gold charm bracelet.

I was so touched to discover this little window to my past. All of my life I ran head-long from one project to the next, barely coming up for air. College was a marathon race with twenty hours a semester and a double major. High school was a blur with musicals, boyfriends, science fairs and gym suits. Junior high was filled with roller-skates, pimples and braces. But childhood-well, childhood was a set of blank pages, a book unopened in my adult life. Each tiny charm on my bracelet was a window into my past.

A tiny piano medal caught my eye and reminded me of endless hours spent plinking the piano to the tick-tock of the metronome. No cookies, no cartoons were allowed until “practice time” was over. Each minute was painstakingly recorded on a chart made by my piano teacher. Sometimes when Bach was especially tedious, I would pull my *Archie and Jughead* comic book from the piano bench and leave the metronome running. My mother assumed I was pouring over the musical score to the clicks, when in reality I was dying to find out if Archie was going to ask Veronica to go steady. Betty said no. Reggie said yes, and Jughead just wanted another piece of pie.

Despite my futile attempts to circumvent daily piano practice, I won the coveted daily piano practice award three years running. Mrs. Nielson would proudly present me a treble-clef that adorned our mantle for many years. I was glad I could play “Git Along Little Doggies” without a hitch, and that I grew out of “Indian Drums” into the “Moonlight Sonata.”

I examined my little bracelet further and George McCaleb’s ruby-red heart dangled proudly behind the piano charm. Tubby George was my second-grade fling. He scrawled a note between spelling words that said “will you marry me?” Mrs. Olson, the second-grade teacher, nabbed the note thinking George was secretly helping me to spell “hippopotamus.” When she saw the marriage proposal, she quietly chuckled and handed me back George’s unabashed declaration of devotion. That Friday afternoon after school, George handed me a blue plastic Easter egg. I twisted it open, and the ruby-red heart charm fell into my sweaty palm. George giggled, pecked me on the cheek, and ran away. We decided not to tie the knot, but I kept the heart just the same and attached it to my charm bracelet.

On the other side of George’s heart was my perfect attendance pin from Sunday School. My second-grade year, it was my all-consuming desire to win the pin. Practically perfect, the blue and silver shield had “perfect attendance” emblazoned upon the front like a banner from heaven. In order to receive the coveted award, I not only had to show up every Sunday on time without fail, I had to read the weekly Sunday School lesson and bring my offering envelope.

On the Sunday before Labor Day, Mrs. Brumit marched Randy Phelps to the front of the classroom and announced he had won the coveted prize-the perfect attendance pin. He proudly stuck out his chest and Mrs. Brumit pinned his award from Jesus to his freshly washed IZOD polo shirt. Applauding wildly, I had an epiphany. When I looked at Randy’s bespectacled face, for one brief shining moment I thought I saw a halo encircling his blonde buzz cut. I determined that morning that the next year I would stand before God, the angels, and the cheering crowd sporting that silver emblem on my gingham dress.

But “perfect attendance” wasn’t an easy feat to perform. Three Sundays in November I hacked and sneezed all over Lana Rouse because I wasn’t going to let the Asian flu keep me from my trophy. I puked twice in church in April after eating too many donuts before the lesson started-or was I sick? I can’t be sure. After my breakfast preceded me, everyone looked a little green around the gills. Sandy French and Vicky Palmer contracted the virulent strain of intestinal flu I so graciously shared with the class. Undaunted, I came week after week after week after week.....

Twice I almost lost the competition because of an offering envelope. One windy March Sunday, it fell out of my pocket when I hopped out of the Pontiac and onto the pavement. Sweet Mrs. Bentley saw the little white square under the car and returned it to me in the nick of time. The second envelope fiasco came the Saturday night I decided to hide it in my Bible between Nahum and Habakkuk. I hoped the fiery minor prophets would hold it fast until I arrived at class. When Sunday School started, I frantically thumbed through the pages hoping to locate my nickel for Jesus. Where did it go? I scoured all of the “ah” prophets: *Isaiah*, *Hosea*, *Ezra*, *Jeremiah*, *Jonah*, *Nehemiah*, *Zephaniah* and *Zechariah*. My tithe

was nowhere to be found. Suddenly I recalled a Lucky Strike commercial from the night before. The book had something to do with tobacco-no, it was *Habakkuk*. I found Habakkuk and placed my envelope in the offering plate and breathed a sigh of relief.

The last charm on my bracelet was a tiny gold tiara from Momma given to me on my eighth birthday. We celebrated at Grandma Tacker's house. Grandma Moy's kitchen was reminiscent of a 50's diner—metal chairs, a formica-topped table and pink walls. I expected her to bring the cake in on roller skates while Elvis crooned “Nothing But a Hound Dog” in the background. This was Granny's feeble attempt at relevance, though these were the sixties and everything was tie-dyed. Mom and Grandma had hung crepe-paper streamers from the light fixture to the table to resemble a merry-go-round. Chuckles the clown (Mr. Tye from next door) had entertained us with magic tricks and now it was time for the important stuff: ice cream, cake and presents. On a steamy July afternoon, seven chattering little girls sat around Grandma Tacker's kitchen table. Ellie from next door was a semi-friend, invited by Grandma because she really didn't know my usual posse. Ellie was convenient and Granny needed an extra guest. I didn't care, I just wanted the loot. My sister and cousins were invited. Paula and Kim had driven from Fort Worth because Grandma guilted them into coming. Uncle Paul owned a drug store, so my cousins were loaded (at least to my way of thinking). They were required to bring something more than the top at the bottom of the Cracker Jack box. I cheerily unwrapped the pink Barbie suit that closely resembled Jackie Kennedy's inauguration outfit. This was high fashion at its best, probably worth two weeks' allowance. My little sister scribbled a card and gave me a rock-'em sock-'em robot set that she had wanted for Christmas. We knew who really wanted this priceless treasure, and it certainly wasn't me. My three remaining birthday guests were Lana, Laura and Debbie Whitten. Lana and Laura were my best buds. We never celebrated anything without each other. Debbie Whitten came because I knew she would trash me on the playground if I didn't invite her. Lana and Laura pitched in to buy a Monopoly game. We loved playing Monopoly because it took so long to finish a game, they could always weasel their way to stay at my house until dinner. Debbie gave me underwear. Go figure. As we sat around the table eating Vanilla Fudge cake and milk, Momma handed me a tiny pink satin box with a gold ribbon perched on top. The bejeweled crown charm for my bracelet was stunning. Though the glint was probably from rhinestones and gold-plating, it was the most magnificent jewelry I had ever seen. I hugged my Momma tight until I couldn't breathe, and I heard her whisper “you'll always be my little princess.” And so I was.

As I gazed upon the four charms on my charm bracelet, several thoughts flooded my mind. Two of the charms were hard-won: the piano charm and the perfect attendance pin. I think they embody the two passions that have consumed my life: my faith and my music. God did not need my perfect attendance to pave my way into glory, but He saw a little heart that wanted to please Him. Mrs. Nielson did not need to be impressed by my piano playing, but when I looked into her eyes I knew she was proud of me. I learned much about faithfulness and perseverance and the joy of a job well-done from those two charms.

The other two charms given to me by Momma and George symbolized grace-undeserved favor and fervent love lavished upon a little girl when she least expected it. And so God still shocks me with His kindness and surprises me with His majesty.

The four little charms carry my past into my present, shaping my story and reminding me of God's goodness to a little girl, and His constant companionship throughout my life-journey.

- David penned Psalm 63 in the desert as He reflected upon his walk with God. The tenor of the beginning of the psalm is David's yearning cry to know God better-his desperation to be more intimate with his Heavenly Father. In verses 4 and 6, David meditated on the goodness and protection of God throughout His life. This psalm clearly teaches that our reflection about God's hand working in our lives will build our faith and draw us closer to Him.

- Read 1 Chronicles 18:6-36. King David, rejoicing, prayed this psalm of thanks when the Ark of the Covenant had been returned to Jerusalem. The king taught Asaph and the priests (*and their orchestra of cymbals and trumpets*) many ways to remember the goodness of God. What verbs does the King use? In verses 12-15, David uses the verb “remember” twice. He commanded His people to remember something, and He taught them what God remembers. How will this “remembering” affect our relationship with God?
  
- Take some time now to draw a timeline of your life. Place “marker memories” that you have about God’s Hand touching your life. List *recent* memories and *distant* memories you have had. What did He say? What blessings did you receive? What lessons did you learn? Do you have an overall reflection about the diagram you made? Write your observations here.