

Where's Julie Now?

By Rev. Mel C. Montgomery

The time was early 1982. The city, unimportant.

Kenneth Copeland had come to town a few months previously and preached the Word of Faith Message. We were Charismatics. At least that is what we called ourselves in the Charismatic church I had attended for several months. I had been filled with the Spirit there, and began to realize that God had called me to the ministry. We were Charismatics, until Brother Copeland preached in our city. After that, we called ourselves Word of Faith or just “Word people.”

It was an exciting time. The PTL Club was leading thousands to Christ every day. Ronald Reagan was the President. We had an openly Christian President. Copeland, Hagin, Savelle, and so many other Word of Faith ministers were going gangbusters. Our church was about a year old, small, but on fire. We heard that God healed. So some young people (mid 20's) from our church decided to minister healing to others.



There was a handicapped housing complex north of the city, and some in our group went there and found a young woman named Julie. She was in her early 20's, a victim of Cerebral Palsy. She was in a wheelchair. Her legs were useless. Her arms were twisted. She could speak only with difficulty, and you really had to focus on what she was saying in order to understand her. But she was clear thinking. She understood what was said to her, and she understood sermons as she listened to them.

Sunday after Sunday, the young people would pick her up at the complex, load her and her wheelchair into a van, and bring her to church. We all talked to her about how Jesus is the Healer. We told her that he had borne her sicknesses and carried her Cerebral Palsy on the cross. The Devil had put Cerebral Palsy on her, but Jesus had already healed her, and all she needed to do was confess it and believe it, and she would get up out of that wheel chair and walk. We expected her healing at any time. So did she.

Remarkably, she began to have an attitude of faith. She began to believe she had received. Her twisted limbs actually began to visibly relax and straighten a bit. She began to have a bit more motion than she had ever had before. A miracle was in the works. We just knew it! She was held in her wheelchair by a seatbelt. She began to ask that the seatbelt be unfastened during the services so that when she got healed, she could get up immediately and walk. Those bringing her followed her wishes, and unbuckled the seatbelt whenever each service began. This was faith in action!

After weeks of services, she asked for the pastor to lay his hands on her for healing. He prayed. We all prayed. Nothing happened. Julie burst into tears. Her wails and sobs filled the room. The nervous pastor took to the microphone and said, "Julie isn't crying because she wasn't healed. She's crying because she KNOWS she IS healed!" The awkward silence passed. Our cheers drowned out her wails.

For a few more weeks, they continued to bring Julie to the services, unbuckling her seatbelt once the service began, leaving her on the front row to be as close to "the anointing" as possible. One Sunday morning, it all came to an end. The pastor was praying for a man who "fell out" under the power. The problem was, there was no Usher to "catch" him. He fell over against Julie as he went down. Julie was propelled out of her wheelchair, hitting the floor with a thud. The ushers and the pastor's wife rushed over to Julie. Thankfully, she was startled, but uninjured.

As the ushers sat Julie back in her wheelchair, the pastor's wife screamed at Julie. No, I'm not kidding. She SCREAMED: "OK JULIE! THIS HAS GONE ON LONG ENOUGH. YOU KEEP THIS SEAT BELT FASTENED FROM NOW ON!" And she jerked the belt tightly around Julie's emaciated waist.

The next Sunday, Julie was not at church. Nor was she there the next Sunday. Or the next.

I asked those who were bringing her where Julie was. The reply was, "Back at her apartment, I guess."

I asked why no one was bringing her to church anymore.

The scornful response to my question was, "Julie needs to get into the Word for herself! She is not going to be healed until she gets into the Word and believes it!"

How could Julie "get into the word for herself" though?

Julie could not read. She had no practical use of her twisted arms and hands. Julie could not hold a Bible, read it, or turn the pages for herself. Julie lived alone.

The truth was, we were ashamed of Julie.

We had prayed and she had embarrassed us by not being healed. There couldn't have been anything wrong or lacking concerning our faith. After all we BELIEVED she had received her healing. Something was blocking her healing. Maybe she had unforgiveness in her heart. Maybe this. Maybe that. It was up to her to figure it out.

We quickly moved on without her. It was easy. Julie was no longer in our services to cry and wail over her disappointment at not being healed yet. The pastor no longer had to make excuses. The pastor's wife didn't have to worry about Julie embarrassing us all by falling out of her wheelchair during a healing service. None of us had to try to explain why Julie was still in a wheel chair after our faith-filled prayers. Julie was an inconvenience we no longer had to endure.

Julie had a lovely spirit. Her smile was twisted, her teeth yellow, but when she smiled at you, it was a wide-open and sincere smile that lit up her whole face.

Why did we consider her an embarrassment rather than the blessing that she really was?

Why were we not content to have her beaming smile light up our services, accepting her just for what she was--a believer in Christ that was in a wheelchair?

Why didn't we love her just for who and what she was?

Because we were "faith" people.

We weren't really interested in Julie. If we had been, we would have joyfully brought her to church Sunday after Sunday, regardless of whether she was healed or not. You see, it never was about getting Julie healed, or glorifying Christ. It was about us showing what faith giants WE were. And when Julie's Cerebral Palsy proved to be bigger than our faith, and much bigger than our love, we dumped her back in her lonely apartment and blamed her lack of faith as the cause for the healing not coming.

So Julie was born with CP, grew up with the limitations, ridicule, and embarrassment of it. Julie told me that her mother criticized her for having Cerebral Palsy. She told Julie, "You could get out of that chair if you wanted to." Julie said that her mother always referred to her wheelchair as a "high chair." "After all," the mother said, "only a baby sits in a high chair. And that is what you are--one big baby!" For a few fleeting weeks some Christians gave her some hope of a miraculous healing. But when that healing did not come as quickly as they wanted, they abandoned her to her lonely apartment and to her Cerebral Palsy.

I imagine Julie's heart was broken.

I never saw Julie after that one last service.

Over 25 years have passed. I moved away from that city years ago. I still get sick to my stomach when I think back on the way Julie was treated.

I don't know if Julie is still alive or not. I still pray for her though. I pray that she will be healed, or that she will find Christians that know how to love her for the beautiful spirit that she is.

God forgive us.

Copyright 2008 Mel C. Montgomery. All rights reserved. Article may be copied and shared with others as long as it is done so in entirety, without charge, and if attribution is given.