

## Grace Notes

"Gods grace for everyday living"

### He's got my goat

By: Debora M. Coty

"All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way..."

I feel quite sure that when Isaiah penned these words in chapter 53, verse 6, he would've had no problem including goats with the sheep in the livestock analogy. This slight variation is important to me, for recent events have illustrated to me that I, quite frankly, am a goat.

It was a breezy spring morning and the sweet scent of orange blossoms perfumed the air. I was playing tennis—doubles—with three friends at a rural tennis club. The court which we occupied was flanked by open fields, one of which was subdivided by a wire fence into two smaller fields housing livestock owned by the club's management.

The pasture adjacent to the tennis court was occupied by a herd of goats, many of whom had become somewhat like squat, smelly friends to us from their long-term position as tennis spectators and were, we fancied, our biggest fans (in reality, they had nothing better to do than watch the stupid humans slap the little yellow ball back and forth and hope for an occasional miss-hit snack to roll their way).

On this particular day, the far field, usually vacant, was home to an ill-tempered, pernicious donkey who wasn't about to take *no gruff* from the insubordinate goats who liked nothing better than to pester him (he had, in fact, previously dispatched one to goat heaven for persistently nipping at his heels, hence the separate quarters).

If all parties had only acknowledged that their omnipotent and all-wise master knew what was best for them and subsequently honored the arrangements he had painstakingly arranged, all would have been rosy. But no, there was a rebel in paradise.



The Hershey-dipped goat (the brown-fronted, white-reared goat that looks like someone held him up by his hind hooves and dipped his front half in a vat of chocolate) stubbornly refused to acknowledge the parameters placed upon him by his lord and master, and shimmied beneath the wire fence to the forbidden domain of the donkey.

Well, that ornery donkey was having none of the trespasser and lit off after him like a greyhound after a decoy rabbit. Round and round the pasture they ran, the goat desperately using fallen trees and mounds of debris as an obstacle course to elude his pursuer, but the donkey stayed right behind him, dogging him, as it were, over and around all deterrents to his all-consuming goal—the demise of said goat.

At first we humans were amused by this new sport, but when the goat began to tire and lagged enough that the donkey's lips curled back and his rack of large teeth protruded to take a furry plug out of the terrified goat's hind quarters, it became apparent that some sort of higher intervention was called for.

Kathy, the animal-lover among us (who calls a "let" to gently usher misguided earthworms off the court so they won't be inadvertently squashed), leapt into action. Catapulting over the fence, she raced into the field, snatching a leafless branch from a pile of wood to weld over her head like a sword as she fell in line behind the donkey screaming, "Whoa!, Whoa there, you!"

The donkey was only waylaid by this turn of events momentarily, and then he got *really* mad. HEE-HAW'ing loud enough to be heard in Atlanta, his devilish eyes rolled back at Kathy in a most threatening manner, causing those of us lining the fence to holler to our friend to get out of there post haste

before she became hoof fodder.

But desist she would not, so a most ridiculous parade ensued—Kathy chasing the donkey who was chasing the goat round and round the field like a bizarre Three Stooges episode.

Finally, another tennis player gathered enough wits to open the gate and yell, "Here goatie . . ." as Kathy caught on and herded the tenacious stampede in that general direction. The goat, who was by now worn to a frazzle and fully realizing the folly of his ways, bee-lined for the escape route, which slammed shut behind him, leaving the annoyed-as-all-get-out donkey stomping and braying his displeasure at all his wasted energy as Kathy took advantage of his oratory and rapidly exited. (I, of course, was useless throughout the entire ordeal due to incapacitation by side-splitting laughter.)

When I came to my senses, God, as usual, used this event as an object lesson regarding an issue in my life that needs addressing. Like the goat, I often disregard the boundaries God, my master, has placed for my own protection. After all, the grass certainly *appears* greener on the other side, and it's ever so much more fun flirting with danger than hanging out in the boring (albeit safe) pasture prepared for me.

However, once I've snuck into the off-limits territory (the persistent temptation that plagues me), that ole' devilish donkey relentlessly pursues me until I die a painful spiritual death beneath the sharp hooves of my sin's consequences.

Thankfully, the remainder of the Isaiah passage tells us, "But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him (Jesus)." God's son has mercifully rescued us from our just and deserved fate, like Kathy, who jumped in to save the foolish goat that, without her intervention, was headed for utter disaster.

I thank God that He's got my goat.

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"Debbie's articles have appeared in dozens of magazines including Discipleship Journal, MomSense, and Today's Christian Woman and she has just completed her first book. Contact her at GraceNotes1@earthlink.net for comments, commiserations, or speaking engagement requests." She is a member of the Christian Writer's Guild.