

When I was a kid, I loved to go to the beach (and I still do)! My family went to the beach on vacation many times. I loved the sand and the water, the wind and the waves. We would ride the waves on rafts. We even had a really huge raft which we named after a famous British ship, The Queen Elizabeth. It was so much fun.

One day, I was on the shore with my mom. She was putting sunscreen on me. My brother and my dad were already out in the water. It seemed like it took forever to get the sunscreen on – you know how that is. I was just dying to get out in the water to play. Finally, I was ready to go in. I started running and then swimming out to where my dad and my brother were. I just couldn't wait to hop on the raft. As I was getting closer, all of a sudden my dad started yelling at me. He was yelling and waving, "Janet, Janet, Go back! Go back!" He was even yelling in what seemed to be a very mean voice. He was very serious.

Immediately, I started feeling mad about this. I was thinking, "How come they get to be out having fun and I have to go in. That does not seem fair!" Well, I was not happy about it, but I started swimming and then walking back to the shore. I obeyed what my dad said.

Soon after, my Dad came running out of the water to the beach where I was sitting. He was huffing and puffing and very upset. "Janet", he said. "Do you know why I asked you to get out of the water?"

I certainly did not.

"There was a fin gliding in the water close to you. There was no way I could get to you quickly. You needed to get out of the water." I knew what that could mean.... SHARK.

My dad was so glad that I got out of the water; I was glad too.

As we talked about what happened, my dad was sure the fin did not belong to a dolphin. Dolphins or porpoises usually swim in groups; they bob up and down. The fin in the water was alone and gliding smoothly. My dad did feel comforted though that the fin was not very large.

That night, my mom and dad went out to dinner at one of their favorite restaurants. As my parents were being seated at their table, they noticed mounted on the wall above them was a HUGE shark ... with a very small fin (about the same size as the fin that was near me in the water).

I did not tell you that story to make you scared to go to the beach. I still love the beach. Shark attacks are actually very rare. I do tell you this story to show you how my Dad wanted to keep me safe. At first when he told me to get out of the water, I thought he was being mean or unfair. I realized later that he saw something that I didn't. I needed to trust him and get out of the water. I'm glad I did.

It seemed like my dad was trying to take away my fun but really he was trying to warn me and protect me. This would happen many times in my life (though not with a shark). He warned me about staying away from certain movies that could make me think about the wrong things. He warned me not to drive too fast and not to follow the crowd. He set an example of working hard and telling the truth. As a child, it did not seem like these were the most fun or easy things to do. Now as an adult though, I am glad that I listened. He was right.

It is the same way with God. It may seem at times like God wants to take away our fun. It is not always easy to follow His ways. We need to remember though that God sees things that we do not see. His warnings and teachings keep us from things that can harm us or harm others. He wants to show us what is truly good; we can trust Him.

In 1887, John H. Sammis penned the words to a famous hymn:

Trust and obey, for there's no other way

To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Seaside vacation



By Janet Blankenship