

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

# The Retaining Wall



### SCRIPTURE STUDY

Proverbs 18:24-19:1  
Proverbs 17:17

### PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,  
Help me to love unconditionally  
and to be a true friend to all I  
meet.  
In Jesus' Name,  
Amen

### THE RETAINING WALL

What do you get when you add a pound of sugar, three liters of caffeine and ten little girls in footie pajamas? The end of civilization as we know it. I had hounded my Mother for a birthday slumber party since I was five. She steadfastly refused, in spite of my pleading and protesting.

We had zoo parties, Disney parties, costume parties, but nothing satisfied. They were baby stuff. A slumber party was a rite of passage for me. Staying up all night, giggling in a sugar coma couldn't be surpassed.

A month before, I began to create my guest list. Kay and Kandy Oliphant, the evil twins, were must-haves at any social event. They were at the top of the class pecking order because they could hit softballs from here to China. Never mind that their bat-slinging cost Debra Whitten two incisors and a molar, the Oliphants were cool. Even Mrs. Perkins snapped to attention when the twins entered class.

My next guest was Susie Netherton. Susie had scraggly dish-water blond hair, mottled freckles peppering her sunken cheeks, and buck teeth. I invited her because I wanted to be the prettiest girl in the room. No one would steal my thunder! Diana Hornsby and Becky Moore were shoe-ins because they knew clever party tricks. Diana had a lazy eye, but she could blow milk through her nose. Becky could curl her tongue and stand on her head for five minutes straight.

Sara, Nancy and Cherie rounded out the guest list. They had no unique skills, but they were great followers. Whatever scheme the Oliphants devised, the three stooges would follow whole-heartedly.

Mom spent the day before in fervent prayer, baking cookies intermittently. I noticed knick-knacks disappearing from coffee-tables and closet doors being mysteriously locked. She was preparing for the siege.

Then the magic night arrived. My friends stampeded through the front door en masse, trampling my dachshund Hubert and heading straight for the Coca-Cola. The bedlam that ensued was not pretty. I found my father in a vegetative state with a remote in one hand and some Valium in the other.

The bedlam that ensued was not pretty. Diana ripped her underwear due to repeated wedgies by twin number one. Hubert was having a coronary from being chased incessantly. Susie quietly skulked to the corner after being mercilessly teased about her overbite.

The clencher was the march toward the retaining wall. This single event would cause my mother to ban slumber parties from our home forever. My little sister Kathy always hated me for it.

The retaining wall of doom encircled my backyard. Towering nine feet above the patio, the concrete fortress just begged to be scaled. The Oliphants fancied themselves to be tight-rope walkers, daring the rest of us to follow suit. Not to be outdone by the ring-leaders, we all climbed the wall and dangled our toes over the precipice. Before Mom could blink, we lined up like Indians on the warpath, screaming and inching our way across the concrete ledge. The view was breath-taking-grass and sidewalk below, a full moon above and my Mother calling 911.

At precisely 1:00 a.m., the parents arrived to retrieve their malevolent children and the festivities ground to a halt. Monday, when I entered gym class you would have thought I had leprosy...

All because of the retaining wall.

I would never know the ecstasy of watching the sun rise with my pals, bleary-eyed and hung-over from eating cookie dough. I'd never know the sheer delight of terrorizing my little sister in the middle of the night with a can of shaving cream and a rubber spider. I'd never experience giggling in the dark, telling scary stories.

My life was over...All because of the retaining wall.

I did learn one life lesson from the slumber party catastrophe. I learned who my true friends were. Susie, plain and shy, turned out to be a faithful buddy. She never spoke of that fateful night. Susie would make a place for me at the lunch table, share her Fritos and laugh at my jokes. She would always listen when I talked. And when I was nick-named "Party-Pooper" all the way through middle school, I'd cry on Susie's shoulder. And she would cry, too.

"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born to adversity." Proverbs 17:17 NIV

"A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. Proverbs 18:24-19:1

- Recall a time in your life when you needed a friend to show empathy to you and they responded to your pain. How did their kindness make you feel?
  
- Have you suffered betrayal by a trusted friend? How did you get past the hurt? Did you mourn the hurt with someone and receive comfort, or did you minimize the pain and try to forget it ever happened?
  
- Can you remember someone who stood beside you when everyone else was against you? Does God have someone He wants you to stand beside and help now?