

JULIE'S STORY-GLIMPSES OF GOD IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Bullies!



SCRIPTURE STUDY

1 Samuel 17
Ephesians 4:31-32
1 John 4:18

PRAYER FOCUS

Dear Jesus,
Thank you for the peace to deal
with my enemies. Help me to love
and pray for them.

In Jesus' Name,
Amen

WATCH OUT!

Bullies—nose-picking, booger-flicking, shin-kicking meanies could be lurking anywhere. Over-sized ne'er-do-wells ambushed me from knotty, shaded oak trees on the playground. They'd storm my back yard when I least expected it and pilfer Twinkies from my Barbie lunch box. In all fairness, these rock-'em, sock-'em bad boys felt justified in terrorizing their victims because they held the firm belief that all little girls had cooties.

Pudgy, Brillo-headed boys scared the beejeebees out of me by ambushing me behind the slide and tickling my armpits while I was happily swinging on the jungle gym. I would bite the dust every time. Recess was particularly perilous. Tetherballs would catch me in the jaw and pound my braces into my cheek. Soccer balls could come from any direction, and I won't even mention the unspeakable acts committed during Thursday morning dodge ball matches in the sweat-infested gymnasium.

When Davy (Butthead) Lewis pilfered my Hostess snowballs in the lunch room, he'd stick out his goo-covered coconut tongue and taunt me mercilessly. All I had left was a soggy tuna fish sandwich and some stale Cheetos. Lunch became a battlefield where every girl tried to huddle together to hold onto their junk-food booty.

Apparently, bullying behavior in males can emerge as early as three or four years old. My second cousin, Gary Willard began his career of intimidation at the ripe-old age of four. He was a late-bloomer in mischief. We were playing Cowboys and Indians. Gary claimed the heroic role of the Lone Ranger, and Donnie Scott, our next-door neighbor, donned our feather duster and got to be Tonto-the brave Indian sidekick. Instead of Pixie, our Labradoodle playing Silver, the horse, I got the job. For

the next two hours, I winced in pain, hobbling around the living room on all fours while Gary perched on my back, kicked me in the ribs and hollered “Hi-O Silver, away!”

After suffering a sore back and a severe case of rug burn, Silver revolted. I bolted out the front door grabbing Gary’s white cowboy hat and trampled it under the muddy rosebush. A girl can take only so much horse humiliation, and I had had my limit. Thus began my hatred of all bullies, great or small.

Davy Dickert made first grade miserable for most of my gal-pals. Aside from having B.O. and bad breath that would curl your toes, Davy was creative with his pesky pranks. He would salt my lime jello when I went to buy my milk or give me a wedge as I sauntered to the front of the class for show and tell. For Davy, spit wads were child’s play. He’d lob play dough grenades covered in snot and saliva and carefully place ABC (already been chewed) gum on the linoleum under my desk. Mrs. Chase, our teacher would hear me scream and Davy was conveniently preoccupied puzzling over a math problem, looking angelic and innocent.

Fourth-grade terrible twins Buzz and Jimmy McKinney struck fear into the hearts of every little girl in L.O. Donald School. Buzz and Jimmy turned terror into an art form.

They were the worst kind of villains—after-school bullies. Day after day when the bell rang, Lana Rouse and I would don our back packs and high-tail it toward home. As we cautiously ventured beyond Mrs. Tibbs, the hefty crossing guard, Buzz and Jimmy were lurking in the shadows. Lana and I lived three blocks from school, but it felt like three miles. Buzz and Jimmy had a system. They would rip our back packs in a New York minute, dumping the contents at their feet. Loose change, Tootsie rolls, number two pencils and Cracker Jack prizes would fall to the ground. All of our cherished possessions were fair game. The twins were so quick, even Mrs. Tibbs could not incriminate them. Lana and I would limp home, candy-less and penniless. Monsters, Boogie Men, and the Big Bad Wolf were tame in comparison to the nightmares I faced when I closed my eyes to sleep at night. I could picture Buzz and Jimmy’s evil freckle-filled faces ridiculing me, mocking and mean.

It was a cold, hard world for me—an unsuspecting, sheltered, spoiled little girl. Bullies, neighborhood dogs, thunder and cranky Mr. Gardner down the street caused my heart to pause and skip a beat. However, as I reflect upon these villains in my past, my perspective has altered somewhat. Every boy knew for a fact that first grade girls had cooties and should be shunned. Girls were expert tattlers and female teachers often gave little boy classmates the benefit of the slop. In their own way, little girls could be catty and vicious, like Chihuahuas nipping relentlessly at someone’s heels. Principal Moffett would paddle (yes, paddle) errant boys, but girls always got to plea bargain for inside information on classroom pranks.

Little boys were told to idolize athletes like Mean Joe Green and Big Daddy Lipscomb who raked in millions of dollars for pulverizing each other on the football field. A cartoon hero like Wiley Coyote was heralded as clever for procuring Acme dynamite, anvils and booby traps to annihilate Beep-Beep the Roadrunner. Tom and Jerry whacked each other with croquet mallets and we were supposed to join in the fun. Christmas presents for boys always included guns and swords.

Male machismo was the order of the day and little boys weren’t supposed to cry. Girl-clobbering might simply be a cover to mask the pain of a Dad who was never home or a mom who never listened. Perhaps the classroom menace often felt a lonely ache that never went away.

As I reflect upon the tough exterior that present-day bullies wear, I often find a gooey-cream center beneath the hard-candy exterior. The next time I face one, I’ll try a little tenderness.

In the conflict between the “Jews and Philistines,” gargantuan Goliath taunted Hebrew troops by insisting that one of Israel’s finest soldiers go “mano a mano” (one-on-one combat to the death) to decide the outcome of the war. Israelite soldiers cowered at the bully’s threats until a shepherd boy named David heard his challenge.

Victory over the bullies in our lives must come from God.

- Read 1 Samuel 17 and record the reactions of the Israelites toward Goliath. How did the Bible describe their response? What was David's response? How did David propose to fell Goliath? What did he use to destroy him? Is there any symbolism that you can identify in this story? (For example, many scholars say that the five stones represent the five books of the Torah-the Word of God destroyed God's enemy.)

- Name some of your "Goliaths." How can God help you to get victory over these challenges? List them here. Very often, simply identifying some of your fears and confessing them to God begins the process of healing.

- Read 1 John 4:18. Paraphrase this verse in your own words. Read the verses before and after it. What insight do you gain from this promise? How would you describe "perfect love?"

- Read Ephesians 4:31-32. If a "bully" in your life has hurt you, how did Paul say you should respond? Spend some time with God asking Him to give you a forgiving heart toward your enemies.