

Leapfrog



The Story of a Journey to Connect with the Source of Everything

Part I

Options

1

The Visit to the Doctor

OVER AND AGAIN I ASKED MYSELF WHY I WAS going to see the doctor. Each time the thought crossed my mind the answer came back the same—because Carol had suggested I make the appointment. So it was this time, as I maneuvered through the parking lot in search of an empty slot, finally pulling into an open space between an old Cadillac and a cement support pillar. I exited the car and made sure the lock button was hit on the remote, waiting to hear the door locks engage, all the while asking myself, *Can anything help?* The doctor was William Barry, MD, and again I asked the question, *What does he know that I don't already know?*

I had two blocks to walk. Surprising that the bright sun and deep blue sky of this early Midwestern spring afternoon did nothing to help relieve my dark feeling of depression. Since I was a child I could always depend on clear skies and sunshine to cheer me up. Not on this day. How did I get to the point that all was doom and gloom?

How did I get to the point of depression that I would even *think* of seeing a psychiatrist?

Carol, my older sister, had said, “Look, Darlene, this just isn't you. Since you can't snap out of it on your own...call and make an appointment with Dr. Barry. Paul was practically suicidal and look how much improved he is.”

It was true. Carol's husband, Paul, had recently been fired after many years with the same company; he'd worked his way through the ranks to the executive level at CNI, a large manufacturer of electronic instruments here in the Chicago area. In his early 50s, Paul was so devastated he made remarks that his life was over and he wouldn't even look for another job. Who would even consider hiring a man his age? After seeing Dr. Barry a few

times, Paul started looking and got a job as a contract negotiator for another company and loves it and since then has seemed to have forgotten all about his failure at CNI.

That was simple. A lost job, lost confidence, new job—regained confidence.

My situation was not quite as simple, at least to my mind. I was married almost 20 years to a fine man; we had two beautiful, well-adjusted teenage daughters doing well in high school. Our suburban home, which I had thought perfect until recently, was almost paid for; we had plenty of friends—in short, I had no idea why I had started going emotionally downhill. It had started about a year ago, when I woke up one morning and felt depressed.

I have never understood depression in other people. I have always been able to snap out of the normal (what is normal?) “downers” which I thought made their visitations to everyone from time to time. A trip to the mall, listening to Debussy, reading poetry, or even watching a little television were perfect antidotes that would usually bring my spirits back to my ordinarily normal, happy self.

There were no reasons I could think of for being depressed. Period. That there were no reasons for it only made it worse. The lack of excuses made me feel guilty; if I could have legitimized my problem, then surely no one else could blame me either.

My husband, Jack, tried to be understanding...but being an engineer, his normal approach to anything in life was figuring out solutions to problems. As I slipped deeper and deeper he would come up with some new “cure” daily. Get a job. Be a hospital volunteer, get involved in PTA, etc. In other words, get your mind off yourself. All it did was make me realize that he wasn't happy with what I had become. He finally called Carol to find out to whom Paul had gone for help...and convinced her to talk with me about seeing Dr. Barry. And here I am taking the elevator to his office on the 9th floor.

I stepped off into a reception area with rich, dark woods and an obviously expensive carpet, offset by brightly colored draperies and upholstered seating arrangements. It looked more like an exclusive club than a physician's waiting room. I wondered

dejectedly about the cost and if Jack's medical insurance would even cover it.

"May I help you?" Patty, the receptionist, asked me.

"Darlene Adams," I replied.

"Oh yes, your appointment is at 1:30. The doctor is with a patient, but he's usually right on time—so it should only be a few minutes."

I thanked her and sat down thumbing absently through a *New Yorker* magazine that had been lying on a corner table with other publications spread out in an orderly fashion.

A tall, attractive woman came out of a door and stepped up to the reception desk and made her next appointment, wrote out a check for the current visit and walked out without a glance in my direction. I wondered about her...what was her problem? It was another five minutes before Patty said, "You can go in now...down the hall and the second door to your left."

"Hello, Mrs. Adams, I'm Will Barry," he said, standing with his hand stretched out. He pointed to a couple of comfortable looking chairs, on the other side of his office from his massive desk, "Take either one you want." He waited for me to choose and then sat across from me.

I was surprised at how casually he was dressed. A plaid sport coat and an open-collared shirt that didn't really go with either the jacket or his trousers. But somehow it put me at ease...which might be why he dressed that way, I thought.

"So, what's up?"

I was taken back by his almost rude informality, but, again, felt immediately at ease with this short, somewhat portly older man.

"Uh," I finally stammered, when it became obvious that he was not going to say anything more until I spoke. "Is that your technique to get a patient to talk?"

"Perhaps," he smiled. "What were you expecting?"

"I don't really know...I've never been to a psychiatrist before...my stereotypes, I guess, are all gleaned from movie scenes."

"So, why are you here?" Dr. Barry crossed an ankle over his knee and slouched down a bit in his chair.

“My sister is married to a patient of yours, Paul Stark, and she suggested that I make an appointment with you.”

He waited a minute for me to elaborate. I continued, “My family thinks I need help,” without saying anything further.

He finally said, “Mrs. Adams, I prefer that you call me Will. Do you mind if I call you Darlene?”

“No, that’s fine.”

“What do think, Darlene?” he responded after another period of silence. “Do you think you need help?”

“I guess so. I feel depressed and there is no reason for it that I know of and it’s been going on for about a year and I guess my family is tired of me being down in the dumps.”

He asked me to describe what I was going through. I could only say that it was like a dark cloud that I couldn’t seem to get out from under. I was able to share the feeling that I’d had during my walk from the car to his office, about my surprise that the sunshine and blue sky were not having their usual effect on me.

“In my training, Darlene, I was taught that depression is almost always the result of unresolved guilt or anger or sometimes a conflict that comes from not wanting to do what a person thinks he or she should do. In over 30 years of practice, only rarely have I seen an exception to that rule in a lingering case of depression. Does that help you pinpoint anything that may have helped set off your feelings of being under a dark cloud?”

“Not that I can think of,” I said dully.

“Do you want to get past this and get back to the way you were?”

The question startled me. In a flash, I realized that I did not want to get past it. I was comfortable in whatever this was I was going through and definitely did not want to go back to anything. I was more than a bit reluctant to say that, however, and just remained quiet.

“Darlene, up until about five years ago the majority of my patients were long term. Meaning that it took years to sort through emotional problems. I now generally refer what I term chronically ill patients to colleagues. I no longer prescribe drugs nor do I have any affiliation with any hospital...mental or otherwise.

“My goal in patient care is to get to the heart of the matter with patients who are motivated to get past their emotional problems quickly. I am going to make an assessment that you are caught in a bind that you neither want to talk about and aren’t particularly motivated toward clearing up.”

He took a deep breath and then continued. “I always put the responsibility fully on the patient to make the choice as to therapy. If you want a long-term patient-doctor relationship that allows you to slowly unravel what it is you are going through...and believe me when I say that there is nothing wrong with that...I will have to refer you to somebody else.

“I’m close to retiring; I plan to devote my life to other things and it just isn’t fair to start out on a track that meets my needs, but doesn’t meet yours.”

Here I had just gotten comfortable with the man...I did not want to go through the anxiety of starting over with somebody else. Because of his training and experience, could he see right through me? I decided to bluff my way through. “What makes you say that I’m not motivated to doing anything about my problem. I’m here, aren’t I, Doctor Will?”

“Please, just call me Will. The reason I believe you aren’t motivated to solve your problem quickly enough to meet my requirements is simple, Darlene. It was your non-answer to my manipulative question. I told you that the academic explanation for the cause of depression is unresolved anger or guilt or a conflict. Your non-response and your reaction to my question are typical of somebody who just realized the problem is internal conflict and isn’t ready to deal with it. Am I right, or am I wrong?”

“I was wondering if you could see right through me,” I said.

His next words startled me again. “Darlene, you are already coming out of what you referred to as a dark cloud because you’ve identified the conflict. You have also already admitted to yourself you do not want to deal with it quickly because you are able to hide behind it, so to speak.”

“You are incredible,” I laughed. “I’ve been to the doctor and feel better already. I do think I need some help in talking about the conflict...can we have another session or two before you just dump me out on the street?”

“Of course, you know the rules—if long-term therapy becomes your choice, just remember that I have to refer you to somebody else. Go ahead and make arrangements with Patty for your next appointment. Now that you’re alert to what’s going on...think about what you want to do.... If you still want to proceed with me, keep the appointment. If not, just cancel within 72 hours or you’ll be charged with the half-hour even if you don’t show up. Fair enough?”

“Doc...I mean, Will, may I say something?”

He motioned with his hand to go ahead.

“You really are incredible.”

“Well, I guess I’ll take that as a compliment. May I say something to you, Darlene?”

“Sure,” I answered easily.

“So are you. We’ll have a good time sorting some things out. I will tell you right now, you don’t need me, but I’ll enjoy the process nonetheless. Bright patients who are ready to look at themselves and talk about what’s going on are fun.

“Psychiatrists are second only to Dentists, you know, statistically, for being highly suicidal. I don’t have that problem...and I believe part of the reason is dealing only with people who are motivated to get past whatever is bothering them. Who knows, maybe we’ll have time to talk about that, if you are interested.”

“I would be, very much,” I assured him.

This is unbelievable! I exclaimed silently, but enthusiastically to myself, as I walked back to my car. *Look at the sky and the sun...what a beautiful day!*

I was halfway home before I realized that I was going to have to talk to Jack...and when that time came it probably wasn’t going to be fun. The temptation to dive back under a dark cloud was right there and very real. I shook it off and said out loud, “no way!”

I got home to the empty house and immediately called Carol.

“Hey, how did it go?” she asked.

“That man is nothing short of incredible. I’ve got some things to work through, but talk about a guy that can see right

through you. I'm impressed, Carol, and I can't thank you enough for encouraging me to go."

"Wow, sis, you sound like a new woman already."

"Well, my darling sister, I've got some serious issues to deal with. I just hope you can live through them with me, but no more depression, no way."

"I'm not even going to ask for now, Darlene, I guess I'm a bit afraid to...but I want you to know that I'm here for you no matter what."

2

The Conflict

IT WAS JUST THOUGH A WEEK HAD NOT GONE BY. “So, tell me what’s going on,” Will said just as soon as we sat down and he had assumed his apparently normal slouch.

“Well, I do know what the conflict is and I’m ready to talk with you about it,” I plunged ahead. “I want to divorce my husband Jack. I’ve never believed in divorce and I am afraid what it might do to the kids and what my friends will think. I don’t care what Jack thinks, but I’m not anxious to tell him.”

I paused to get Dr. Barry’s reaction. He merely said, “Go on, Darlene, it’s your show.”

“You don’t act surprised,” I said.

He laughed, “Darlene, I’ve been in this business too long to be surprised at anything. Anything else you want to tell me?”

“I’ve just started admitting this to myself, Will, it feels strange telling anyone else. Although I believe my sister suspects.”

“Is divorce something you are committed to...or just an idea because you don’t see any other way to handle the situation in your current thinking?”

“Wow, you don’t mess around. I thought you’d at least want to hear my reasons for wanting to divorce him.”

“What would be the point, Darlene, if there are other options you might be willing to consider?”

“What other options could there be when I don’t love him? I doubt that I ever did. The thought of having sex with him literally causes me to be nauseated.”

“Let me stop you right there for just a second, Darlene, so we can make sure we’re on the same wavelength. Without going into your own conflicts about divorce—which are obviously deeper than you are willing to admit at the moment—let’s talk about some options.... Let’s assume for a moment that what you

say is accurate. The thought of sex with Jack is nauseating to you. You also state that you don't have feelings of love for Jack right now and doubt that you ever did. Let's assume that these two things are irresolvable, fair enough?"

I was again amazed by Dr. Barry—it was obvious he was manipulating me into a very narrow thought process. He restated what I said in a matter-of-fact tone that suggested he really wanted to see if I sincerely believed what I was saying and that he only wanted to clarify it...not to get me to agree. So, I just nodded my head.

"Here is a possible option...it may not be at all palatable to you...but we can't rule it out until we look at some of the pressures a divorce might bring upon you that you don't want.... What if you were able to tell Jack your feelings and told him that you were willing to continue living with him provided there was never to be any kind of sexual contact whatsoever?"

Will held his hand up to indicate he wasn't through with his little speech. "Let me throw out an other option...you tell Jack how you feel, and that divorce is an option, but you want either of you to take up residence elsewhere until you get your feelings completely sorted out and delay divorce for the time being."

I told Will that there were parts of either option that were acceptable to me.

"Okay, Darlene, there are an unlimited number of options once you start thinking about it. Don't get hung up on either of those two. My goal is merely to get you to think clearly about the entire situation and see that you don't have to get caught in a one-option box when there might be many ways more preferable to you for handling the problem than divorce.

"I have an assignment for you. Spend the next week until we meet again writing down all the options you can think of that have any appeal to you. After each one, write the words 'versus divorce.' Then ask yourself this question, which one feels the best to me, this option or divorce? Don't allow any kind of negative thought enter your mind regarding options. For example if you get an idea that you'd like to go to France and study art...don't allow the thought, 'I can't afford it,' get in the way. Just write the option

down...versus divorce and ask the question, which feels the best, divorce or this?

“Try to fill a notebook full of options. Then on the day before our next session, just write out the ones that are preferable to you over divorce. We’ll talk about what you’ve written and perhaps something else.”

I left thinking how interesting it was...Dr. Barry was not at all judgmental about my desire for a divorce, but actually had planted some ideas in my mind that made divorce seem a ridiculous way to handle my feelings. *Was Dr. Barry manipulating me because he doesn’t believe in divorce himself? Or is this merely an honest exercise to help me outside a box in my thinking?*

I decided to see if I could reach him on the telephone before I spent one minute on this assignment of his. I parked the car and called him on my cell phone. Patty said he was available and was able to put me right through.

Dr. Barry’s answer to me was as unsettling to me as it was profound. “Darlene, I do not want to be responsible for anything you do. I certainly do not want to inflict my values on you. It is totally unimportant what I think or feel about divorce either in general or in regards to your specific situation.

“What is important is that you get in touch with your own values and to get total clarity about what you want to do. I would like to save us both from having any regrets about your ultimate decision. The only way I can assure myself that I have done everything possible in that regard is to help you get in touch with the real you—I believe this process will help you be on the path toward that goal. To be without clarity and congruence and confluence of all the thoughts going on in you right now...is to live half-assed. You don’t strike me as the kind of person who wants to live half-assed, or you wouldn’t have just gone through a year of depression over a conflict.”

“Thanks, Will,” I muttered meekly, a little taken aback by his crudity.

The days flew by as I fantasized over the many options that came to mind.

Then the question struck me with full force. Every one of the options I had so carefully conceived and written down...all began with the assumption that after telling Jack my feelings, he wouldn't be the one to decide to file for divorce. There was a question that I would pose to Dr. Barry: what if all this work was moot because Jack wound up filing for divorce? What good would it have done?

Further, how would I feel if Jack now wanted to divorce me rather than live with any of my well thought-out options?

I began to understand why depression was such an easy out and further why I had chosen it.

"NO!" I said loudly enough to shock me. I continued aloud, but in a quieter tone, but fully determined, "I'm not going down that path again. I have some growing to do and I am going to do it."

It was obvious that Jack wanted me to talk about what was going on between the psychiatrist and me. But he noticed, without comment, that I was no longer depressed, and didn't press the subject. Perhaps he just wanted to leave well enough alone, since I was at least acting somewhat normally.

I wanted to talk to Carol about what I was learning, but it was premature. I didn't feel that it would be fair to her to load her down with my breakthroughs and then turn around and load her down with all the new problems that my enlightenment was giving to me. Not yet anyway.

Whatever was going to happen these next few weeks would be interesting, and I had to admit, a bit surprised at the thought, actually even exciting!

3

The Option Not Considered

THE SESSION BEGAN AS I WAS BEGINNING TO expect—no “hello,” no “how are you?”—just “Okay, how many pages did you fill?”

“You told me to bring only the ones I thought were preferable to getting a divorce—17 single-spaced pages.” I tried to contain my enthusiasm over what I felt was a job well done.

For a change Will was no longer slouching; he leaned forward with his hands clasped, fingers entwined, his elbows resting on his thighs, “I don’t want to hear any of your options right now...I want you to tell me how you feel about the process you’ve been going through.”

“Indescribable,” I said softly.

“No, it isn’t, and that’s exactly what I want you to do...describe how you felt.”

“Okay,” I said, rising to the challenge, “at times, I felt like I have been living in a nightmare of having been tied to a post all my life. What I feel about the process is that possibilities in life are endless.... I’ve heard the cliché ‘tunnel vision,’ but I never once before realized it applied to me.”

“I told you this was going to be fun, didn’t I?” Dr. Barry said with a cackling laugh that was annoying to me, but infectious at the same time. “Now, tell me something—besides all the options and possibilities—what have you discovered that was a new thought for you?”

I started to say that other than all the possibilities and my new awareness that I had been living under such ridiculous limits that I couldn’t think of anything else. I had a flash. “Oh yes, there is one thing...it finally dawned on me that all the options I had been considering were ignoring the possibility that talking with Jack about them might precipitate him filing for divorce. I had to stop and consider that.”

“And....” Will said blandly.

“The thought was scary at first, but I finally got used to it. When I was sitting on the little balcony outside our bedroom this morning with my coffee...I simply realized that that’s what living life honestly would be all about...letting Jack know where I was and leaving him free to make his own choices. A little bit like the rules you laid down for me during our first session.

“You demonstrated you cared about me as a patient and I guess as a fellow human being. That’s it,” I interrupted myself, “you treated me as an equal even though you were the doctor—that really impressed me about you—and I realized that I owe it to Jack and anyone else I’m involved with just to be clear. And to myself too. What Jack does is Jack’s choice.”

“From listening to you, Darlene, I’m going to bet that there was an option that you didn’t even consider. Want to hear what I’m betting on?”

For some reason I felt a little anxious about his question. I covered over my anxiety nicely, I thought, with a nonchalant, “Sure.”

“Darlene, I’m betting you didn’t once consider the option, or even ask the question, ‘what if it were possible to fall in love with Jack and even desire him in a sexual way?’ ”

My mouth dropped open. Will was gazing at me with a look on his face that I had not seen before, nor could I decipher its meaning. “You’re right about that,” I finally agreed, “not for one second did that thought cross my mind.”

“Are you willing to look at that as a possible option?”

“Will, you asked me if I was committed to the idea of divorce—I think it was at the very first...no, it would have had to be the second session. Was that just a week ago? Good grief, Charlie Brown! I must be, or have been, committed to the idea of divorce without even realizing it...is that true?”

“You tell me, Darlene...”

I sat there thinking for a while. “Well, I have to admit that divorce isn’t as exciting as some of the options I started fantasizing over.... No, Will, I just don’t think that it is possible after all these years to fall in love with Jack or in any way to desire him physically....” I drifted off with a feeling of dread at the thought.

“Are you willing to simply ask the question and see what starts to flow?”

“I’m lost, Will. What question?”

“What if it were possible to fall in love with Jack and to desire him in a physical way? If that were possible would you consider staying married to him as an option?”

I must have sat there for a full five minutes. It seemed like an hour. I finally realized how much simpler it would be if that were possible. I just didn’t see how it *could* be possible. I shared those thoughts with Will.

“You don’t have take it so far for now, Darlene...not only would you have to do a lot of adjusting...imagine what such a proposition would mean for Jack. Human beings do not like to change. None of us do. So this is a far reach and I realize it, but if you don’t consider all the options, then you are back to living half-assed.”

I was a little surprised that I was now comfortable with the expression ‘half-assed’ that just a week ago I had found somewhat offensive. “Will, how did you get to the point that you could get into somebody’s head and do what you’ve done with me?”

“A big part of that story, Darlene, lies in something a friend of mine told me once. I had dabbled in all kinds of different therapies...and adapted many parts of different types to my own machinations. Thomas Harris, who is a psychiatrist with similar training and background to mine and who wrote the book *I’m O.K., You’re O.K* had a big impact on me. It was based on Harris’s adaptation of a process developed back in the late 1950s called *Transactional Analysis*. The guy that developed it was a psychiatrist at Stanford University, Eric Berne, who wrote the book called *Games People Play*. The process helps people analyze their communication with each other.

“Anyway, I was quite hung up on my own brand of ‘T.A.’ and used to always introduce it as a way to help married couples look at what was going on between them with some pretty good results. My friend said, ‘Barry, there’s no such a thing as a good therapy or a good therapist...a patient motivated to improve will improve...it’s as simple as that.’

“That little bit of homespun philosophy stuck with me...particularly because of the results he got with people. I started asking him to speak to groups of patients and on occasion, one-on-one. It isn't that I'm just getting to retirement age that I insist on short term doctor-patient relationships...it's that this friend who wasn't even trained in psychology could take a patient with whom I had been going nowhere for years—and presto...make changes overnight.

“The answer always boils down to the same thing. Is, or can the patient be motivated to get well fast? It isn't so much that I know how to 'get into people's heads,' as you put it...it's more about setting up scenarios so that I keep only the patients who are willing and want to get results fast.

“So, Darlene, see if you can keep your current revulsion for Jack at manageable levels for the next week and let's talk about the possibilities next week. Okay?”

What did Will have up his sleeve next? I was learning to just let whatever happened unfold without trying to control the outcome. As I say this, I am not at all sure I was even aware of what had already happened. I do know that things in my life were changing drastically and apparently I was in for some more changes, but facing them without fear.

As to what was suggested by his 'what if' question about Jack and me...I just didn't know. *Why not accept it as a possibility and see what happened?*

It is strange how the idea unfolded in a way that I began to embrace it. I began to think of Jack and realize how many women would consider him to be a good catch. Wasn't that how I used to think of him?

Certainly good looking. Tall and maintained his weight. At 43, he could easily pass for being in his early 30s. He was a good provider. He cared about the kids and me...Yes, he was insensitive in certain areas. But as far as I know he had never strayed...he had put up with my emotional darkness for a year with a minimum of fuss.

I had been happy for most of twenty years. *What had gotten into me?*

4

A Different View

WHEN YOU FIRST CAME IN, YOU TOLD ME THAT getting a divorce from Jack was the problem...since you didn't believe in divorce." We were off and running the moment I stepped into his office without further preamble or social graces. I was getting used to this and even expected it. "Can you talk to me a bit about your not believing in divorce?"

"I was raised to believe that divorce was wrong, that's all," I said with a shrug. "If you don't want to keep the wedding vows, my Dad always said, then don't make them in the first place."

"How do you feel about that rule now?" Will asked, back in his slouched position.

"Well, I'm a Christian and the church I attend certainly reinforces that position."

Will sat up and forward abruptly and said, "Darlene, I didn't ask you what your church teaches...I asked how you felt about the rule now?"

"Well, I just doubt that God wants us to stay in a marriage that has gone sour for whatever..."

Dr. Barry interrupted me waving his hands back and forth in front of my face..."Darlene, I didn't ask you what God wants, I asked how you felt about the rule."

"I guess I don't believe in it anymore."

"C'mon, Darlene, belief is intellectual. Get real with me...how do you feel about divorce? Don't answer that...let me help you. You are all out of options...all the things you wrote are meaningless to you. Divorce is inevitable—how does that make you feel. I want a statement that starts with, 'Will, I feel...'"

"How did I get from having 17 pages of options down to divorce is inevitable?" I asked defensively.

"Darlene, what are you feeling right this minute?"

"I feel like you're playing with my mind."

“That’s fine,” Will said dismissively. “Now, how do you *feel* about divorce.”

“I feel more comfortable with any one of the options I wrote down.”

“Yippee skippee...” Will croaked through his cackling laugh, “The lady said what she was feeling. Is it always that hard for you to express a feeling rather than what you think?”

“I just didn’t know what you were asking me.”

“Oh, bullshit, Darlene. You were just defensive as hell. I wonder if that is how you are with Jack? Do you have difficulty expressing how you feel when you talk to him?”

“Oh, oh! I see where we’re headed—”

“Where is that?” Dr. Barry practically snapped.

“Getting me to look at how I communicate with Jack. You want to know how I feel right now?” I asked with hostility. “Damned uncomfortable and angry with you!” I had refrained from using such language since my marriage to Jack, but I glared at him intently and felt good about using the word damned.

“Well, madam goody two shoes got off her high horse...and is getting down to nitty gritty. Now, how do you feel?”

“Pretty good. I can get mad at you and it doesn’t change you a bit. That really feels good.”

“What happens when you express anger to your husband?”

“It’s been so long since I’ve spoken a cross word to Jack...I don’t remember.”

“Yes you do, don’t hand me that,” Will said flinging his hand forward.

“Jack thinks anger is a sin. I said ‘shit’ once and got a long lecture about how Christians aren’t supposed to talk that way. I grew up in a home that my parents always said openly what they felt. Neither one of them had any trouble telling the other they were angry. Jack never heard his parents argue or shout.”

“Now we’re getting to it,” Will said gently. “What does Jack’s attitude toward expressing anger or using profanity say to you, Darlene?”

I thought for quite awhile...finally, “Wow, it makes me feel like I cannot be me. No wonder I don’t think it is possible to continue in being married to him.”

“What are you feeling right now?”

“Determined to be me and damn glad about it!” I said it laughing and feeling relieved.

“Do you think God accepts you the way you are?”

“Will, I have no problem with that at all. My Dad and Mom were both devout in their religious beliefs...and Dad had some pretty strict rules about which he felt strongly...but he also taught me that God’s love and acceptance went beyond our ability to understand. And my Dad was never afraid to express his anger or use some of the barnyard language you like to use.” I said this latter teasingly.

“Darlene, how do you feel about asking Jack to come with you next time?”

“Damned uncomfortable,” I said with a nervous laugh. “But I guess it *is* time to see if we can get through some things...and I’d sure feel more comfortable if you were here when it started.”

“Feeling pretty sure that Jack is going to get exposed, are you?”

Typical Will Barry, M.D., hitting me where I least expected it. “Honestly, I didn’t think of it that way. But Will, I’m ready. I’ll ask him.”

“If he is willing to join us, we’ll need to have a longer session...plan it for an hour or more. If he will come, just call Patty and tell her that I said you needed an open-ended appointment with your husband. If it works better for Jack to do it in the evening or on a Saturday, just tell her that and she’ll schedule it.”

I drove home wondering how Jack was going to react. I also wondered what would happen during a session with Jack and I both present. I was nervous...but I was also determined that it was the right time and a most necessary next step.

5

Interlude

JACK READILY AGREED THAT I COULD MAKE AN appointment for both of us. He didn't ask any questions, just said "sure" and asked me to set it for a Saturday afternoon.

It was three weeks before Patty could fit it in to Dr. Barry's schedule. I remained aloof with Jack, but even Rachel and Debbie, my daughters, noticed the difference in me. Debbie, the youngest and most easygoing finally said, "Sure glad to have you back among the living, Mom." Not wanting to get into a long dialogue, I just told her thanks and that I was glad too. That was enough for her for the time being.

My sister Carol wanted to know what was happening and invited me out to the Wheaton area (west of Chicago) where she worked as an office manager to have lunch and do some elder sister probing.

Carol was very open in her appraisal about my improvement. "My word, Darlene, you look great! Should I go to this shrink of yours? This job of mine is a big pain in the neck and I'm getting an attitude over it."

"The last thing you need is to go to a psychiatrist, oh steady one. I can't ever remember you or Dale [my brother who was almost exactly in between Carol's and my age] ever being anything but steady, stable people."

"Darlene, I don't ever remember you having any troubles either until this last year. Are you ready to tell me all the juicy details? I'm willing for you *not* to...but I sure am interested. Paul says that this Dr. Barry is really something else; he's not at all surprised that you are feeling better."

I was glad to be on safer ground and talk about Will Barry instead of what was going on with me. So I asked Carol a question that had been nagging me. "Carol, did Paul ever mention to you

that Dr. Barry almost insists his patients call him Will, instead of doctor?”

“Yes, he did...I think he figured that it was a guy thing for male patients. Why?”

“I was just wondering, because he has insisted that I call him Will from the beginning and I guess I wanted to know if that was something he did with everyone.”

I continued quickly so the conversation would not drift back to Carol’s curiosity about what was going on inside my head. “Will is really interesting. He warned me right up front that he only continues to see patients who want to improve fast. He is brutal. I haven’t heard some of the language he uses since Dad died. You know how prissy Jack can be. I was embarrassed because I told him he used barnyard language...and right after I said it I realized I got that term from Jack.”

“I’ll never forget the time you guys were over at our place for dinner,” Carol interjected, “and I said something like ‘let’s call shit, shit’ to Paul in front of Jack. I thought Jack was going to have a heart attack. Do you remember that?”

“Are you kidding?” I laughed, “Jack told me that that kind of language was offensive and carried on about it all the way home. It’s a laugh, because he said he was certainly glad I didn’t talk that way.”

“You have to be joking, Darlene. I can remember Mom threatening to wash your mouth out with soap—you had the worst mouth in the family. When did you get so pure?” She started laughing. “Your defense was always that you hadn’t said anything you hadn’t heard Dad say...and she went off shaking her head the way only Mom can still do.”

“Well, I met Jack at church...and, you know, he was always Mr. Proper...I guess I just didn’t want him to know how I really talked.”

“Aha!” Carol almost spat out her split pea soup. She stopped to swallow and apologize. “I remember reading somewhere that suppression—or is it repression?—of feelings or your own personality causes emotional problems. If I’m getting nosy here, just tell me to mind my own business, Sis, but does this past year have anything to do with that kind of thing?”

I wanted to be totally open with Carol, but at that moment I just didn't think it would be fair to her, Jack or myself to get too deeply involved in what was going on at Dr. Barry's office.

"Carol," I started very carefully, "I've wanted to talk with you ever since Will first helped me understand my problem. So, no you're not being nosy; I really do want to have a heart to heart with you about everything at some point. But for now, until Jack and I both see Dr. Barry together—which is still a couple of weeks away...I think I'd rather hold off...until I really know what's going on...."

"Do you mind terribly?"

Carol assured me with a shrug and a grin that it was no problem and that she was just so glad I no longer seemed so withdrawn.

It seemed like such a long while off before Jack and I would go to see Will.

6

Enter Husband

OUR APPOINTMENT WAS AT TWO PM. BEING Saturday, Jack found a parking place on the street almost in front of the office building.

I tried the door into the waiting room and was puzzled because it was locked. Jack reached around me and knocked. We heard Will call out from somewhere inside, “Just a second.”

He opened the door. “Hi Darlene,” and, “you must be Jack,” he began as he thrust out his hand to Jack. “Patty doesn’t come in on Saturdays and the phone goes directly to the answering service, so we won’t be interrupted. C’mon in.”

Will wore a pair of casual slacks, an open-necked shirt and no jacket. He actually looked better dressed to me than he did during his regular office hours. He pulled a chair over to be with the other two where we normally sat and quickly arranged them in a kind of semicircle. He sat down and gestured for us to sit in the other two.

“Have you talked to each other about this visit?” Will asked in his, normal get-right-to-it manner.

Jack answered with a simple, “No.”

“Hmmm, aren’t you a little curious?”

“I figured I’d find out when we got here, Doctor.”

“Fair enough. Please call me Will and I’ll call you Jack...okay with you?”

Jack nodded, but said nothing.

“During our first visit, Darlene started out interacting in the subdued way a patient with relatively mild depression interacts. She rapidly got through that to the place where she admitted she understood she was using depression to avoid dealing with some conflicts.

“Those conflicts revolve around her relationship with you. Darlene, I’m going to tell Jack what I heard you say to me...if at

anytime I am not expressing what you said or meant to say...stop me and tell Jack what it is that needs to be cleared up. Okay?"

It was my turn to nod and I did so.

Will reiterated his rules about doctor-patient relationships and referring anything long-term to another doctor and gave his thumbnail sketch about the causes of depression.

He then looked at Jack and said, "Darlene is the patient. You are here as an aid to her therapy. Can you agree that everything that goes on here today is for the patient's benefit?"

"Of course, I have already seen marked improvement in her," Jack said a bit too loftily for my taste and to my irritation.

"Then I must ask you to also agree that if things get a little uncomfortable for you, to remember that what we are doing is for the patient's benefit and as her husband, part of the patient's problem ultimately will involve the husband. Are we agreed?"

Jack looked a bit apprehensive and I thought, *good—that ought to get you off your high horse.*

Will finally got to where he had confronted me about not wanting to quickly deal with the problem. Once I had recognized that I was in a conflict, we had basically agreed to take it a week at a time to see whether I wanted to continue on a short-term basis or be referred to another doctor.

"It took Darlene the better part of a week..." he paused giving me a look that I was welcome to correct him if that was untrue, "to get in touch with the feeling that she might want a divorce."

I was watching Jack look intently at and listening to Will—when the word "divorce" came out, Jack's head jerked noticeably as he blurted a surprised, "Oh...I had no idea..." barely above a whisper.

"I encouraged Darlene," Will continued, "to examine what all that might mean to her and to look at alternatives. This has brought us, quite quickly I might add, to getting you involved in the process."

"Wow," Jack said in a low voice, "I had no idea she felt that way."

"Really," Will responded in a tone that made it hard to detect if there might be some hidden meaning.

“Jack, I am going to ask you to do something that might be difficult, I really have no idea, but it will be very helpful if you can.

“Will you look at Darlene and tell her directly that you had no idea that she was thinking about, or contemplating getting a divorce?”

“Hon,” Jack stammered with tears in his eyes, “I had no idea...no idea at all.”

“Don’t forget, Will, I wasn’t aware of it either when I first came here.”

Will said, “Darlene, just tell Jack. Let’s see if we can’t get some real communication going between you for the first time maybe in years....”

I turned to him and said, “Jack, I didn’t have any idea either.” I was fighting off feeling any sympathy for him as he openly wept. *Why hadn’t Will better prepared me for this?*

Will told Jack to take a little walk into the restroom and wash off his face and we’d wait a minute, because he wanted to say some things when Jack was completely composed. Jack got up without saying anything to go find the restroom.

Will just sat in his normal ankle-across-the-knee slouch. I started to say something and he just held up one hand and shook his head to silence me.

Jack walked back in looking quite serious and dry-eyed.

Per usual, Will just plowed right in. “What Darlene has been working on the last few weeks is looking at options to getting a divorce. Most of them centered around living apart from you, but without going through a divorce. She was comfortable with that...” he paused giving me an opportunity to say something; I remained quiet, trying to look passive while my heart was beating rapidly...“and finally became willing to look at the possibility of going back to being married with you.

“To reach that point took a lot of consideration about a number of issues that were important to her then. The last time we spoke, over three weeks ago, she was looking at the possibility of staying married and together with you as husband and wife, but was thinking it was not possible. Is that what you still are thinking Darlene, or has your thinking changed?”

My gosh, I thought, *how does this character do this stuff?* I just answered, “No, that is where I am.”

“In other words, Jack, she is willing for it to be possible, but at this juncture she realizes that option would take considerable change in how you both operate...that’s where we are. Are you still in a state of shock?”

“Well, yes, of course....”

“Jack, she is also very much aware now that you know...you could also decide that it is you that could file for divorce.”

“That’s not an option for me, Doctor.”

Will held up his hand and said, “Just Will...please.”

Jack’s eyes narrowed and he said in very measured tones, “I will call you anything I like, Doctor,” and got up and walked out of Will’s office. We sat there and listened as he opened the door going out of the reception area and closed it a bit forcefully behind him as he entered the main hallway of the building’s 9th floor.

Will surprised me (what else is new) with, “how about a cup of coffee while we wait?”

“You think he’ll be back?” I blurted out.

“I wouldn’t guarantee it, but it usually happens in these cases. He received quite a shock...some of my colleagues are more than a bit critical of what I just did. One of them did a paper on psychiatric ethics and my techniques were referred to as deplorable.

“Somebody asked how I would defend myself. My statement is...if I get results, according to my standards, my techniques don’t need any defense. I wouldn’t think of doing that with a seriously disturbed patient, but somebody like Jack—who is functioning at the high end of the range that would be considered normal—what he will do is fairly predictable. If he’s serious about wanting your marriage to work, then I would say a little shock is good for the soul. What do you say we heat up some coffee?”

“Okay,” I said, still in a state of shock myself.

We sat while Will chatted about his wife of almost 40 years...and his four kids and what they did. The he asked, “Are you still active in your church?”

“I quit teaching Sunday school shortly after I started going through depression. I still go every Sunday, though. What about you?” I asked, “Do you attend a church?”

“My wife still goes to a little community church a few blocks from our home. I quit when I got involved with this ex-preacher...who sometimes talks with my patients. He and four or five other men and I meet together for a kind of prayer and sharing time usually on Sunday mornings. It has totally replaced church for me.”

There was a knock on the door outside the reception area. “Just a second,” Will said, “let me go see who it is.”

“Oh, hi, Jack,” I heard Will say nonchalantly. “Going to rejoin us?”

“Am I still welcome?”

Next thing I knew they were sitting in their respective chairs; Will slouched over, Jack upright.

Jack looked at me with a kind of baleful look I had not remembered seeing before.

“I owe you an apology, Will, I feel badly about what I said and walking out.”

“Jack, your apology is accepted, but not required. Nine out of ten husbands do the same thing. It is kind of a dirty trick in one way...to shock somebody like that without any warning. But it always tells me who is seriously interested in saving a marriage—the husband that comes back.”

“Well, you warned me that it might get uncomfortable for me. I just wasn’t prepared for the news that I had failed as a husband.”

“I want you both to listen to me very carefully,” Will said in the other pose to which I had become accustomed...elbows on thighs looking back and forth between Jack and me. “Neither of you have failed. You, like most other married couples, have developed terrible communication habits over the years and drifted apart. And when communication ends, a relationship ends.

“You have a difficult and rocky road ahead. It can be an adventure of growth and learning if you decide that you are willing to work at it together...but you’ve built up habits of non-communication for 20 years. If you are going to make this work,

you need to be prepared for the fact that you don't even know each other.

"That's the good news...you can begin to learn about each other, become friends and partners on a whole new basis. It is really quite exciting if you're ready to tackle the work."

Jack looked at me with hope written all over his face. "I want to make this work...I presume I'm going to have to hear some things about me that I don't want to hear.... But if you'll be patient with me...I'll try, honestly."

"I'm willing to try...." I let it drift off to indicate I didn't have a lot of hope.

Will said, "Darlene, do you remember your marriage vows?"

"You rat, Will, I still have Daddy's words ringing in my ears. Sickness and health and all that."

"I want to say something to you and it is for your own good. You would have been the most miserable person on Earth had you gotten a divorce. Do you remember the day you called me on the phone because you wanted to know if staying married was my value system? Of course it is...but I have a far higher value...what's best for the patient. To impose the staying-married value onto a person who is in an abusive, one-way commitment is disgusting to me. So I told you the truth when I told you I wanted you to get clarity. How are you feeling now?"

"Maybe a little hopeful," was all I could say.

"Are you two ready for your first assignment? It's a tough one."

Neither Jack nor I answered.

"Go home and schedule some time away from the girls—or schedule them away from you—take an hour at a time. Darlene, do you still have your 17 pages of options to getting a divorce?"

"Yes," I said hesitantly, "right here in my purse."

"In your scheduled time, begin reading out loud your options. One at a time."

"But, Will," I felt desperate and in a panic, "I wrote those for you!"

"No you didn't, you wrote them for you and I don't need to hear them...Jack does. This will be the most intimate time you've had together for a long time and it is going to produce some

interesting side effects. It will be a healthy experience for both of you.”

“Is this it?” I asked with I’m sure the fear I was feeling sounding through in my voice. I wanted to tell Will that I didn’t want our times together to end.

“Yep, Darlene, that is it. I told you that you don’t need me...you don’t need anyone. You know your own rules, simply live by them. Jack, Darlene told me that she thought living honestly was being able to tell another person where she is and giving them the choice if they want to stay in the relationship. That posture takes negotiation. But she’s right on...and it is something she came to all on her own. Darlene, he’s lived with you during your dark days...he’ll be able to handle your days in the light. Stick to your guns of honesty...Jack has his own rules. Together you’ll have a ball setting up the boundaries of a marriage that can make good sense for both of you.”

“What if we need a referee or something,” I asked with my voice shaking though I was trying to hide it.

“Tell you what,” Will said, “see how it goes. If you think you need some help give me a call. Instead of coming here...you can take Ann and I out to dinner at Castles over near Arlington and you’ll have four ears instead of two. It will be cheaper than paying for a visit. I drink the house burgundy and it’s only ten or eleven bucks a liter.”

I glanced quickly over at Jack, who was a strict teetotaler to get his reaction to the mention of wine. He didn’t show any reaction. “Will, it won’t be cheaper because my insurance takes care of coming here...but Castles would be great. Can the three of us agree to make it a date?”

“How do you feel about it, Darlene?”

“Wonderful. Isn’t that probably against the professional ethics you were talking about while Jack was out for awhile?”

“Yeah, I’m sure it is. And look how cheaply I sell out...dinner and wine...You guys up for it tonight? I want to get it while I’m sure you’re still together?” He asked with that signature cackle I’m sure he thought passed for a laugh.

Jack and I looked at each other and nodded.

“Hold on.” Will went over to his desk and dialed.

“Hi, dear, I got a couple of suckers here that fell for the line that an appointment at Castles is cheaper than an office visit...you open tonight?” He turned to us, “7:30 okay?” Then back into the phone, “make the reservations will you? I have a bit of work here to do...see you around 4 or 5 o’clock. Yeah, sounds fun to me too. Bye.”

“Okay, you two, I’ve got work to do.”

“Can I at least have a hug?” I asked.

“Sounds good to me,” he said as he practically crushed me. “Now get out of here and I’ll see you tonight.”

My life had changed drastically over the past several weeks. Little did I know what this dinner with the Barrys tonight was going to start something entirely unexpected....

7

The Ride Home

JACK AND I WERE SILENT AS WE STARTED THE forty-minute ride home. As we entered the Eisenhower Expressway, Jack said, “Would you do me a favor?”

“What is it?” I asked tentatively.

“Would you start reading those options to me while we drive?”

“Jack, they’re probably going to be pretty scary to you. Are you sure you want me to?”

“Darlene, I feel like the sooner we get started, the better I’m going to feel. I’ve been doing nothing for a year but wait for you to come back to me. I am not pushing anything...I am willing to wait for whatever happens...but I’d like to get started if you don’t mind.”

I took the notebook out of my handbag, where I had the seventeen pages clipped together with a red paper clip. I almost gasped as I looked at that first page. I am sure I was blushing...but thought, *here goes*.

“Okay, Jack, ready or not, here it comes.... Option 1 Preferable to Divorce—that’s typed at the top and I have that underlined,” I explained, actually stalling for as much time as possible.

I cleared my throat nervously. *Why was this so hard?* It dawned on me how easy it had been to write this stuff when the only person I intended to see it was my psychiatrist, for gosh sakes. I finally gathered enough courage, and started reading, “Get an apartment down in the Loop area. Start my own home-based business. Have to get a place big enough for both girls to stay with me as often as they like.

“Paragraph,” I intoned while I looked over at Jack, to see if I could gauge his reaction so far...still stalling for as much time as possible. His eyes focused straight ahead, intent on the Eisenhower traffic—busier than a normal Saturday afternoon.

Another nervous throat clearing. *What am I doing? I'm 42 for Pete's sake—and I sound like some 15-year-old doing a try-out reading for a high school play....*

"I'll enroll in one of those water aerobic classes at the 'Y' pool over on Roosevelt Road and take French lessons at the Community College on Western out toward Broadview."

I continued reading. Every now and then Jack would ask me to read louder...so I turned toward him and put the page next to his right shoulder...so I could also glance at his expression when I wanted to.

"I don't think I will allow Jack to visit at the apartment for a while. If he is okay with me coming to the house, maybe I'll come midweek and cook dinner for the four of us. I'll help the girls with the dishes and that way can drive home right after."

I explained, "Then Will had instructed me to write at the end of each option, 'versus divorce' and make comments as to why I thought this was preferable to filing for divorce." I blanched as I saw what I had written, almost scared about what Jack's reaction might be, but determined I read on, glancing up at the inscrutable look on Jack's face....

"I wrote, this is preferable to both divorce and marriage. If Jack won't agree to any of these options and stay married, I will choose one of them and file for divorce. What a freeing experience this has been.

"So you understand, Jack," I started to explain again. "Will told me to just let my mind go and keep filling pages with options. He told me when I was finished just to keep those that I found preferable to divorce. So I had already spent several hours writing. Now I was refining them for him to look over before I presented something to you...that's why I made that last comment about filing for divorce if you didn't agree."

"Can I ask you something, Darlene?"

"Yes," I said quietly, still leaning over toward him.

"How long ago did you write that one?"

"I guess about five or six weeks ago."

"Does it still sound preferable to both divorce and marriage?"

I really didn't want to be open about my feelings just yet. My mind was in turmoil over what had happened at Will's office earlier.

"Jack, I don't want to be honest with you because I am afraid that we might misunderstand where each of us are and get ideas that aren't really true. But I have real hope for the first time since I discovered what was going on. The conflict wasn't just that I was thinking about getting a divorce but refusing to admit it. I discovered the real conflict when Will asked me if I wanted to get past being depressed and I realized that I didn't want to...because I could hide behind it and not face anything. It was later I realized that I thought I didn't want to be married to you any longer."

"Can I share some thoughts?"

"Sure," I responded much more easily; this seemed to be going well.

"First of all, if that is what you really want to do...I won't stand in your way at all. I want you to know that having you just happy and alive again is really great. Seeing you light up and talk with Will made me a little jealous, but I was still glad. I want us to work. If it takes you being away for a while, doing whatever you have to do...it still leaves me hope. I hate the idea of divorce.

"I want to learn to communicate with you. And hearing you read your inner thoughts is a privilege. It really is. I can tell that it was hard for you to read, but it was sure easier listening to you read that than not hearing anything from you for a year.

"I'm sure that—whatever else is coming—I'm going to have to listen to some stuff you want me to change and that's scary. But not half as scary as the thought of having you go through another year like last year. Okay, that's my little speech."

"Jack, I cannot think of one thing I need for you to change. I need to change, for me. I realize after today that you are neither as rigid nor as fragile as I thought. Neither are you as...well, I hate to say it, but as dull as I thought you were. What writing those options did for me was open me up to possibilities. I see that there are possibilities to explore *with you* as well as apart from you.

"I'm going to say something that might hurt, but it really shouldn't. It will just demonstrate how much I needed to change and I already am starting. I told Will that there was no possibility

for our marriage to work. I couldn't stand the thought of having sex with you. I told Will the thought nauseated me." Jack started to say something and I said, "Please let me finish, this is too hard, okay?"

"Yeah, of course, I'm sorry...."

"I told Will that I didn't have any feelings of love for you and doubted I ever had. That's when he started me down the options path. Just as a diversion I guess. But it opened my mind to the fact that I've been living under some self-imposed limits yet thinking that breaking away from you as the answer."

"So, I make you sick do I?"

"You're making fun of me...but do you know, it's a strange thing...it *is* like another power was taking over." I was still leaning toward him and touched his shoulder as I looked up to his face. "I know that I love you. It is going to take me awhile to sort all this out...please be patient with me."

"Darlene, do you realize that it has been a year since you've even let me kiss you? Didn't you hear Will's words this afternoon? I've lived with you in sickness and he said he was sure I could handle living with you in good health...or something like that. Amen, brother Will! Darlene, I love you and want sex with you so bad that I can taste it, but that's your choice. Just know that I am always ready and wanting. If I have to learn something in that department—hey, give me a book...send me to school anything...got it?"

"Jack, all I want to say to you is, how could I have been so far off base?"

"Can I assume, my dear wife, that we are off and walking down the rocky road Will warned us about this afternoon?"

"It certainly seems level and smooth at the moment, doesn't it?" I stretched my neck to kiss him on the cheek.

"Darlene, in my present condition you might cause a wreck.... Aw, do it anyway."

"No sir, Mister," I laughed, "once a year is enough, I don't want to spoil you."

Jack put the car away while I went inside. Rachel had left a note. "Mom and Dad—we're over at Cheryl's. We've been invited to spend the night. Her folks said if it wasn't okay just to call and

they'd bring us back. Pretty please?" I called and told them it was okay...and we'd see them after church.

Jack walked into the kitchen from the garage. I told him that the girls were gone for the night.

"I don't want this to go to your head, but I'd like to go to bed with you right now. No promises for the future, but will you?"

He picked me up squealing and I thought he was going to bump into something and injure us both.

Afterwards, we both drifted off to sleep. I woke up with a start. It was 6:20 already and we both had to get ready to go meet the Barrys—a good 45-minute drive to the restaurant. "Jack...Jack, wake up!" And, well it had been a long time; it's understandable that we didn't jump into the shower for another 20 minutes.

I called Castles and explained that Dr. Barry and his wife would be expecting us to join them at 7:30...and to tell them we'd be about half an hour late.

8

The Dinner, Part One

WILL AND ANN WERE EASY TO TALK WITH; WE told them everything. Yes, even why we were late.

“I didn’t tell you, but there’s an extra charge for that,” Will said with a straight face.

Jack just replied, “Whatever it is, I’ll pay gladly,” and then added, “and to think I was ready to strangle both of you just about five hours ago.”

I just grinned, stupidly. I wasn’t about to admit to anyone just how good it had been. I had been the aggressive one...and most shocked that Jack really got into that.

Things turned quiet for a bit as we all seemed to be lost in our thoughts.

I noticed that Ann was a strikingly good-looking woman with completely gray hair. I mused that if she dyed it a dark color, she could easily pass for being 20 years younger.

I broke the silence by asking Will, “You mentioned a friend that kind of changed the direction of your practice a little. Any chance you’d like to tell us about that?”

Ann said, “A little? How about totally and completely.”

“That’s redundant, dear,” Will said dryly. “Since Ann has this overt reaction about it...why don’t you tell them, dear?”

“Now, that’s a laugh. I’ll start and let’s see how long it takes him to take over.” Jack and I both laughed at the way she said it.

“You have to realize that up until five years ago I was Will’s receptionist, secretary, bill collector....”

Will interrupted, “And that’s where Ann shines...collections. She still handles—”

“Shut up, Will. See, I told you he can’t keep from butting in. May I continue, dear...or do you want to just tell the story?” Will feigned resignation with an impish look on his face and an open gesture with his hands.

Jack and I both laughed at their easy banter.

“Thank you, dear,” she affectionately mocked him and continued.

“We also have a family business I started while Will was finishing his residency. We started with one dress shop and it grew into the four we have today.

“Our youngest daughter operates them totally now, but back then, she just helped while I was at the office. Beth was a chronic asthmatic under pretty heavy medication. I would call her at the store every day to see how she was doing.

“One day, a little over five years ago, I noticed a difference in her voice. There were none of the usual sounds of her restricted breathing. I asked her if she was okay. She told me, ‘Mom, I’m wonderful! I don’t have asthma anymore!’ and told me she’d tell me later, that she had to watch the floor and hung up.

“I was nervous to say the least. I called Joyce, our relief receptionist, and asked her how quickly she could get there. Five minutes later I was on my way out the door; Will was in with a patient so I asked her to tell him that I had some errands to run.”

I glanced at Will. He was toying with his wineglass and looking down at the table, listening intently to Ann’s narrative.

“I was really concerned about Beth—she’s something of a rebel like her old man here,” she gestured with her thumb, while Will just nodded with an amused look on his face, “and, well, I just felt like finding out what was going on. The shop Beth was in, over at the mall in Lombard, was busy, but she had plenty of help on the floor and she was in the back office going over the books.”

“Beth was pretty surprised to see me, but she just looked up casually. ‘Hi, Mom, what’s up?’

“I asked her to take a break with me.

“ ‘Beth, I want to know what’s going on,’ I said.”

“Excuse me, Ann,” I interrupted, “does your whole family just jump right in without preamble? I thought that was unique to Will.”

“Yeah, he has us all trained to be rude and abrupt. I used to actually have social skills.”

“I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have interrupted,” I apologized with a grin at her pleasant sarcasm, “Please continue.”

“Anyway, it didn’t click with our 35-year-old daughter; she just asked me what I meant? ‘What’s this about not having asthma any more?’

“Beth is a blonde and very fair-skinned, she was blushing a bit. I said, ‘Beth, what is going on?’ She just told me again that her asthma was gone.

“‘Look,’ I said, ‘you’ve had asthma since you were seven years old...and we’ve been told that there is no cure from enough specialists that I believe there is no cure.’

“‘C’mon, Mom,’ she says to me, ‘you believe in spiritual healing. God healed me.’

“Then she told me this wild tale—a girl that worked in one of the other stores had told her she had been healed of diabetes. She wanted to know if Beth wanted to meet the guy who supposedly did it. She and her husband, Carl, had dinner with this guy the night before and she was healed.”

“Well, knowing my daughter...the last thing I wanted to do was be negative. She’d just turn off and I would be talking to a stone wall for several days. So I just said, ‘well, I hope it lasts and make sure you keep taking your medication.’ Then she tells me that she’d decided to throw all her medication and inhalers and the other paraphernalia away.

“I kept my cool and just said I had to get back to her dad’s office and kissed her and started to leave. She got under my skin by telling me that it would be nice if I was happy about her being healed. Unfortunately I just frowned at her and said goodbye. Not a very smart thing to do with Beth.”

“May I say something now, dear?” Will asked in a mockingly meek way.

“You’ve been a good boy,” she said, patting Will’s cheek. “Yeah, I’ve almost got a sore throat from your letting me talk so long for a change, please do carry on.”

Jack and I were laughing, enjoying the happy banter of this delightful couple. I was anxious to hear the rest of the story. The waiter brought our entrees; so the story would have to wait for a bit I thought.

I was wrong. Will is never deterred from talking—even with his mouth full. Fortunately he did hold up his hand to cover his mouth to protect us from a view of his mastication.

“Okay, now that my beloved wife has so graciously given up the floor, I’ve forgotten why I was so anxious to interrupt. But to carry on where she left off—she came back to the office just as I was finishing up with a patient. My next hour was free due to cancellations.

“I came out to tell Joyce something and here my wife walks in the door with fire in her eyes. ‘Soon as you get through there,’ she says, ‘you better take some time to talk with me.’ ‘From your present level of tick-off...I guess you mean, *listen*, don’t you?’ She just glared.”

“Like all men,” Ann interjected, “he can’t tell the difference between anger and someone being upset.”

“I can usually, but with you, when you’re upset it comes off just like anger.”

Jack and I were just shaking our heads and grinning at the antics of these two. *Where was this headed*, I wondered. “Will, I asked, is everyone in psychiatry like you?”

“Are all women like you?” was his immediate rejoinder.

“That’s not a fair comparison,” I parried.

“Oh yes it is; I realize that you think that because all psychiatrists have training that has some similarities, it must mean their individual ways of handling life situations is also similar. Not true. Training doesn’t take away from their individual idiosyncrasies.

“Let me give you an example and you tell me if I’m on target with your question. Ann and I used to play cards with this couple in our home regularly. Dick had to use the toilet and the two other bathrooms were occupied by kids taking baths...so I told him to go back to our bedroom and use the one in there.

“He comes back gasping and says, ‘That dent in your bathroom door—what caused it?’

“I said, ‘My fist. Will you play? It’s your turn.’

“‘Whoa, just a minute, Will, why did you hit the door?’

“‘I was mad at Ann, so I hit the door. Would you rather I had hit Ann? Come on, Dick, *play*.’

“‘But you’re a psychiatrist!’ the poor guy yelled.

“The reason I bring this up, Darlene, is Dick had horrible guilt feelings over his propensity to let his anger get the best of him. I remember one time he had kicked a hole in the wall...another time he threw a portable television through a closed glass sliding door. And this was big-time relief for him to find out that I had practically put a hole through the door with my fist.

“The only difference between psychiatrists and other human beings is that most of us know how to cover up our defensiveness. It just means we’re a little cleverer about how we express it. Now, is that germane to your question, or not?”

“Precisely,” I said lamely.

“All right, before I was so rudely interrupted by the only two women present, Ann was all upset about the fact that Beth and Carl had thrown out her medication and other stuff. She wanted me to find out who this guy was and see if he was on the up and up. So I called Beth and told her that her mother had told me she had been healed by God. Of course, she was a bit cautious, knowing her mother had been upset, so she responded with a ‘yeah?’ You know, not quite a question.

“So I just dove in and asked her if it had happened at their church, or what? She and Carl go to the Episcopalian Church in which he was brought up. Their church is very open to that kind of thing...so it was a natural seeming question...even if I was lying through my teeth. So, anyway, she told me that it wasn’t at church, but over dinner the night before with this man, Vic Schneider. She described what had happened.

“Frankly, I got excited. I told Beth I’d really like to meet Vic and asked her if she could arrange it.” Will said as an afterthought, “Ann doesn’t like Vic.”

“That’s not true,” Ann said, vigorously shaking her head. “I just disagree with some of the stuff he believes and says.”

“As I said,” Will persisted, “Ann doesn’t like him.”

Ann, with an exasperated, “Oh you,” and took her napkin and tried to force it into Will’s mouth, while he cackled and fended her off.

9

The Dinner, Part Two

ANYWAY, I FORGET HOW WE GOT IT ARRANGED, but we had dinner with Beth, Carl and this guy Vic Schneider, who was divorced and showed up by himself. Here's my daughter looking healthier than I've seen her for years...no sign of wheezing or anything like that."

"Yes and she looks younger today than she did five years ago," Ann joined in.

"Yeah, that's why it is so difficult for me to understand why you still don't like the guy."

"Barry," Ann said, "One more bit of that and you'll wake up in the morning separated from one of your vital appendages. And I don't mean your nose."

"Okay, okay," Will cackled, with his eyes watering, "I quit."

"Anyway, it turned out that Vic had been the pastor of a church down in the St. Louis area. Got tangled up in some extramarital affair and lost his wife, kids, his job at that church and was defrocked, or whatever you call it, from his denomination.

"I asked him how he got started, and he said something that really got to me. He explained that he didn't heal anybody—God did the healing, he'd just come to the place where he knew how to be the vessel.

"Then he answered my question; somebody had given him a copy of a manuscript that was offered free on the Internet. It really made him mad, he said, so he corresponded with the author, telling her that the guy she had interviewed was all wet. She wrote back, gave Vic this guy's e-mail address, told him to contact him directly, and ended her message with a pleasant, 'God bless you.'

"I was interested in what had made him angry...his answer was amusing.

" 'Well, Jesus said that the truth will set you free. It did, but first I had to really get pissed off about it! It was quite a while

before I got up the nerve to write this guy and tell him off about his spurious theology.’ ”

Will continued, “I asked him what the main thing was that got him angry and he replied that it had to do with a couple of interpretations of Jesus’s teachings that didn’t square up with his theological training. In particular, Jesus said that anyone who believed could perform the same miracles that He performed. Beyond that, the guy had made this broad, sweeping statement that the traditions of organized Christianity actually were a denial to what Jesus taught.

“Anyway, he started corresponding with this guy by e-mail and said it was like the guy could see right through him...he was very loving, but incisive. The upshot was that Vic got on a plane and went to stay with this guy somewhere down near Jacksonville, Florida.

“Then Vic said something that really perked up my ears. He said he’d had dinner with this psychiatrist friend of this fellow he was visiting...and that the psychiatrist told him about patient after patient that had been instantly healed after years of treatment.

“ ‘Like my daughter?’ I asked him.

“Vic just said, ‘Oh, asthma is simple. You get into some mental illnesses and you get into some pretty bizarre stuff.’ ”

Will continued, “I asked Vic, ‘Did Beth tell you that I was a psychiatrist?’ It was obvious that she hadn’t, so I thought that might be a nice little shock.”

“Yeah,” Jack said, with a big grin, obviously happy he was able to contribute to the conversation, “You’re pretty good at that Will.”

“Oops, I guess I had that coming,” he replied with a cackle that I was no longer feeling irritated by.

“Vic just looked at me straight on, not a bit fazed by my profession, and merely said ‘interesting.’ Then he asked me if my orientation was analytical or behavioral. I gave my standard response, ‘Purely behavioral in approach.’

“Vic just nodded politely. I asked him if he’d mind meeting me for lunch some time...that I’d like to talk with him. Well, it went from lunch to arranging a flight to meet his friends in Jacksonville.”

“Typical Dr. Barry approach to things,” Ann interjected. “Lord and master here had me cancel all his appointments for a week and flew the coop with Vic. And just to prove that he’s all wet about how I feel about Vic, they extended their stay to two weeks and Will came back a totally changed man.” She hesitated and when nobody filled the vacuum she continued, “For the better I might add.

“That trip added years to Will’s life and changed the practice, our marriage and the way we think about things.”

“Will has already explained how his relationship with Vic changed the practice...but how did that encounter change your marriage and the way you think about things, Ann?” I asked.

“For starters, Darlene, he came back committed to no longer being ‘the doctor.’ ” Ann even made finger quotes around “the doctor.”

“I hate to admit it, but I was a snob. I liked being the doctor’s wife. Since I was heavily involved in our stores and the practice at the time, I wasn’t active socially with any of the other physician’s wives, but there is a certain feeling of social standing. He comes home from Jacksonville, resigns from his position as Medical Director of Eastside Psychiatric Hospital, then makes the sweeping pronouncement that he’s changing his practice to entirely short-term care and would be referring all the rest to the other eight psychiatrists on staff at Eastside.

“Will didn’t consult me about this stuff...he just announced he was doing it. At first, it hurt. After all I was an integral part of the practice at the time.”

“How did you cope?” I jumped in sympathetically.

“At first, I didn’t,” she admitted. “But when I saw how happy he was and how patients that he’d had for years—I mean ten and twelve years—were meeting with Will and Vic and getting well. Off of meds and dependence on the great doctor here...it was thrilling.

“He became fun to be with. He had more time. He didn’t need me to do all the stuff I’d had to do, like transcribe his dictation tapes, set appointments and all that and we hired Patty, giving me the free time as well. He takes only the patients he wants and has a ball with them. We travel together and enjoy.”

“And the difference in the way you think about things...?” Jack left the question hanging.

Ann looked over at Will, but he just motioned with his hands for her to keep going.

“Well, you’d have to know our background. We both grew up in Central Baptist downtown. Met there, went together from the time we were kids and the church was the center of our lives. About ten years ago we got tired of driving all the way downtown to go to church. Since midweek activities were out of the question anyway because of the practice and the stores, we started going to this community church out here.

“Will comes back from Jacksonville all filled up with enthusiasm for what this psychiatrist and this other guy—Vic’s mentor, I guess you’d have to call him—had to say. It just made lots of sense. Will and Vic make it sound like going to church is evil (at that Will just rolled his eyes, but said nothing) and I don’t agree with that. But we believe, really *believe*, that all things are possible with God now.

“When you see people like one patient Will had for almost fifteen years.... She was on heavy medication, had three bouts in the state hospital for electro-shock treatment, which Will was trained to believe in, and I just thought it was the treatment of choice for certain mental illnesses. She came in for her regular visit and Will got her to agree to let Vic join them.

“You couldn’t believe the noise and carrying on! You could hear her all the way out at the reception desk...and we had the office sound proofed. You never would have known it that afternoon...anyway she and her husband are our friends now. I always liked her, but, you know, she was just kind of spooky when she’d go off. She’s been well for five years and they are really fun to be with.

“Jack, I know I’m not exactly telling you how our thinking has changed....”

“Oh yes you are, Ann,” Jack interrupted. “What a mind-blower...this whole day has been a mind-blower.”

Just about that time the waiter brought the check. As Jack reached for it, Will grabbed it.

“C’mon, Will, this is for professional services. I owe you—besides, this has been about the best day in my life,” Jack said, putting his arm around my shoulders and drawing me close to him. “And I couldn’t imagine a more pleasurable time...even beats going to a Bulls game.” Jack was an avid basketball fan—especially the Chicago Bulls; he’d played center at Northwestern University.

Will held the check away from Jack...who sincerely wanted to pay. “When I manipulated you guys into coming to dinner I really thought we were going to have to go through some things...therapeutically, so to speak... How was I to know you were going to get laid the first time in a year?” He cackled. “You’ve sat there all night listening to Ann and me. That is therapy for us. These kinds of times we usually expect to do all the listening. I want to do this again and get to know you guys a little better.”

“Amen to that,” Ann added.

“We’ll go Dutch next time. But this time is on us—thanks for listening.” He ended with his cackle.

I was beginning to love it—that crazy laugh!

10

The Worm Turns

THE NEXT TWO WEEKS WERE LIKE A SECOND honeymoon. Jack came home whistling or singing; we were a close knit family again. It was like a huge weight was off the girls who had suffered terribly while I was going through depression. I had realized it at the time, but just barely.

I was almost embarrassed because I was so hungry for Jack. Our intimate times in bed were like out of an R-rated movie I had seen once...and secretly wished it could be that enjoyable for me. It was! And Jack was just as eager. I wondered if it was “right” for us to be like this at our age. Then I would just put those thoughts aside and seduce my husband or let him seduce me. It didn’t matter who did what. Just so long as it happened!

I took all my carefully typed alternatives for divorce and put them in the fireplace and watched them burn. Jack and I didn’t discuss them. We had intimacy, we had all the communication either one of us needed; I couldn’t conceive of why I had ever thought divorce was an answer to anything. I could not imagine how I could have ever been nauseated by the thought of having this tall, handsome, loving, caring sexy man inside me—ravaging my body and I his. Thinking about it now gives me chills of anticipation. I will attack him the moment he walks through the door I am visualizing with a grin...but that’s now.

I had to go through something else first.

Jack had called Will one night and asked him if he was a basketball fan; Jack’s firm had season tickets to the Bulls. The four seats were just off of the mid-court stripe, about fifteen rows above the floor. It was interesting to listen to my husband’s end of the conversation. Jack said he’d check with the gal at the office and see if he couldn’t get a game with the Lakers, Celtics or the Knicks. He hung up after telling Will he’d get back to with the

dates...and that maybe the “girls” could plan where to go for a late dinner afterward.

I was contented more than I had ever remembered being in my life. I was getting ready for bed...and could just feel the anticipation of “knowing” Jack in the “Biblical sense” in about ten minutes. I couldn’t wait. I looked at myself in the full-length mirror and was so glad he liked my legs. *For a 42-year-old mother*, I thought as I turned from front to side, *not bad, not bad*, as I ran my hand over my bare bottom. I’m so glad I’ve never had to fight a weight problem as my sister and mom do. The slight pouch at my waist Jack had assured me was perfect as he began to rub it affectionately and now is an integral and regular part of our foreplay.

I jumped into bed, pulling the covers over me. *This is getting ridiculous*, I laughed to myself. *I am shameless*. The night before, Jack had remarked how beautiful I was as he ran his hand gently up and down my inner thigh. I trembled as I thought about it.

He walked into the bedroom and said how great it was talking to Will and how much he was looking forward to getting together with the Barrys again.

“Jack,” I said, “will you just hurry up and come to bed and do your duty?”

He laughed easily and said, “Whoever thought we’d get like this? I would not have dreamed of us being like this. Maybe we should have another session with your psychiatrist...to get us to another level. My problem,” he said with a short laugh, “is I cannot conceive of another level where I want to go.”

I kicked off the covers to show him that I was completely naked and to tease him with what I hoped would be a provocative pose and said, “Will you please shut up, get undressed and come take care of me?”

“I’m coming, coming,” he said happily....

“Not yet, not yet, you idiot!”

We collapsed laughing as we pressed together...the rhythm of our continued giggling as he quickly entered me—we kept giggling to the end and the convulsions of laughter did something to us both as we held each other close and shouted together with release at the same time.

“Oh, no, that was too quick,” Jack said.

I looked into those beautiful eyes of his and said, “Oh no it wasn’t. Because now you will have to take your time and think of ways to please me while you get your vigor back up.” We giggled contentedly as we just held each other in a moment of afterglow.

He began to do things to me that I never thought he would be capable of...or that I could possibly enjoy. Little did I know. We didn’t finish until almost midnight. I remember being so contented and happy as I fell asleep with my head on his chest and he holding me gently...the joy and wonder of bare legs intertwined.

I woke up feeling panic. I looked over at the digital alarm clock 9:23 in large accusing red numbers. What on earth! I jumped out of bed, threw my robe on and rushed down stairs. Jack had already gone to work; I hadn’t heard him leave. The girls had already left for school and I had slept through it all.

Jack and the girls are usually rowdy in the morning. Once, about two or three years ago, they banged on the door of the little bathroom down the hall that Jack used for getting ready for work to spare me. The girls had their boombox going full blast out in the hall, as they were swayed back and forth giggling to an old tape of the song “You’re So Vain.” They finally got his attention with the banging and he opened the door, irritated by the interruption to his thoughts...until he saw them doing their swaying dance in unison and heard the words to the song. He roared in laughter at them.

That is not an untypical scene of the Adams family in the morning. Jack and the girls actually yell and giggle at each other almost as a sacred ritual. *Why had I slept through it? Did he “shush” them as his habit had become during my year of depression...so I could sleep in?*

I called his office. He was on the phone so I just left a message with Jan, his secretary, for him to call me back when he had a minute. I rarely called him at work, so I hoped he wouldn’t think something was wrong.

Five minutes later the phone rang.

“Hon, is there something wrong?” The concern in his voice was obvious.

“Jack, I’m sorry, I didn’t want to disturb you, but I didn’t wake up until almost 9:30 The house was empty and I kind of

panicked. How did I sleep so late? Especially through the noise you and the girls usually make?”

“You were sleeping so peacefully; I knew if I woke you I wouldn’t be able to resist trying to resume our activity of last night...ahem...” he pronounced this latter meaningfully, “and I had to be here for a planning meeting first thing. So I told the girls you were sleeping and let’s just let you get some rest for a change.”

“You sweetie, how did I ever get such a wonderful man? I know I went to sleep about midnight...so that’s over nine hours. I never sleep that long.”

“Hey, this is the guy that makes you sick, remember?” He said with a perceptible grin even over the phone.

“Don’t remind me! Now that we’re passed that, you are turning me into a shameless, oversexed hussy.”

“So, everything is okay and I don’t have to worry about you?” he asked lightly.

“Oh, Jack, I am so happy. Last night was wonderful. Are we ever going to settle down? I mean, I’m not counting, but we haven’t missed a night since the night we were late for dinner because of it.”

“Are you complaining, Dar?”

“No complaints on this end,” I assured him.

“Okay, sweetie, it’s back to work or I’ll be late getting home. It is really stacked up today. Glad you called—love you.”

“Love you too, darling.” With that I refilled my oversized mug with my favorite Starbuck’s blend and carried it carefully up the stairs to go sit on my balcony and just be lazy.

Life, I thought. *So many twists and turns*. What would the future be like? To think I almost destroyed it with divorce. How could that have happened? It still didn’t make any sense to me. In fact, the more I thought about it the more it was a complete puzzle. While our life certainly had not been like what was going on right now—I’d almost certainly have to refer to the present as “marital bliss,” though I had no intention of talking to anyone about it—the past hadn’t been all that bad. Certainly routine. I had missed working when Jack and I decided that we did not want the girls raised in day care any longer and we had no problems living on his

salary alone. I had settled into being a homemaker and making that my profession for the time being.

I had been relatively content. Never thought about being deprived of anything. Had fleeting guilt feelings about the poor and the growing and increasingly publicized homeless problems, when I had it so good.

Why? Why had it happened? Was there something to be learned from the entire episode? Certainly I had learned about unlimited possibilities from my sessions with Will...but that didn't answer the question that was nagging at me. I certainly wouldn't prefer any of the options to divorce I had so carefully written out, to our current and wonderful interlude.

Just as with remembering my mild guilt feelings over having it so good compared with all the poverty and the people who were homeless...I thought a bit guiltily about having such great experiences with Jack now that I was over my being depressed.

Wow, I thought, if it hadn't been for being depressed maybe I never would have discovered how much I liked sex...and with my own husband! As I examined that thought, I realized I had never felt deprived before. I certainly would not want to return to the mundane and perfunctory sex life we had had in the past. But I had not been given to fantasy or had not had any need to experience a relationship with another man.

Then why? What caused the onset of that whole episode that had lasted for an entire year?

This is ridiculous, I thought. What difference does it make? It's passed, I am happy, Jack is happy, the girls are happy...why go through all this introspection over something that is over and done with? Just forget it and enjoy. *Yes! That's it!* If I'm going to worry about something, why not worry about all the housework I needed to get done. I had at least three loads of laundry to do. The upstairs needed to be vacuumed and the kitchen floor needed to be stripped and re-waxed.

I love housework and have never felt a loss about not working "outside," even though I had missed my job at first. *Get busy,* I told myself as I almost gagged on the last swallow of coffee that had grown cold in my cup. "Yuck," I said out loud, as I started down the stairs to the utility room to get started on the laundry.

I took a break at about two and opened the fridge to get a diet soda. I sat in the breakfast nook... All of a sudden the feeling of a dark cloud came over me. Just like it had before. I shook my head and said, no way! The feeling disappeared. I thought, with just a bit of fear, *now that's strange*.

I went back in my mind comparing the feeling with the way that I had lived that whole year. It was the same thing. How did that happen? Work is what I needed to get back to...and everything will be fine. I emptied the remainder of my soda into the sink and rinsed the can and put it in the bag to recycle.

I walked back to the utility room where I kept the wax stripper. And stopped in my tracks. The thought was overwhelming. "Oh no, it's back!"

The cloud was there...dark and foreboding. I couldn't think. I was scared. I didn't know what to do. I couldn't think of anything to do. *I'll kill myself before I go through another year of this*, I thought. How could this be happening to me? Suddenly I didn't care. *What's the use?*

I could not think of anything positive. Just the oppressive darkness in my head.

11

Back To The Doctor

FEELING DETACHED, I CALLED WILL'S OFFICE. When I asked Patty if Will was available, she told me he was with a patient, but he'd have a few minutes to call me in about an hour. I didn't wonder that I didn't care. The darkness was there; life was meaningless.

When Will called with his usual, "What's up?" all I could say is, "It's back."

"What, Darlene? Would you repeat that?"

"It's back," I said dully, feeling slightly irritated with him.

There was a pause on the line. Finally Will said, "Can you come right in, Darlene?"

"I suppose," I said.

"C'mon, then, you may have to wait for a few minutes, but get here as soon as possible."

I just hung up the phone and went to get dressed.

Driving by his office, and seeing no parking spots on the street, I realized I would have to go back to the parking lot. I started thinking about ways to take my life...it seemed like a relief and the only solution. "You can't tell Dr. Barry about that." *Was that an audible voice, or just a thought?* I asked myself.

As I entered Will's reception area, Patty said, "Hi, Darlene, Will told me you were on the way in. Have a seat.

I didn't respond, just feeling utter dismay over the darkness I was experiencing. I jumped a bit when Patty said, "You can go in now, Darlene." Where had the time gone—had I fallen asleep?

"Does Jack know you're here?" Will began without preamble.

"No. It just happened."

"What just happened, Darlene?"

"Things have been going well ever since our dinner with you and Ann," I blurted out, "and now this."

“Now *what*, Darlene?”

“The darkness. I want to commit suicide and I think I am hearing voices. The most recent one was to not tell you that I was thinking about taking my life.”

“Are you frightened by the thought?” Will asked, from the usual slouch.

“No, I just think it is the only way to deal with it. I am not going to go back to living like that.”

“Couple of quick questions. You and Jack been getting along?”

“Like never before. Like a honeymoon, even.”

“Okay, I’m going to say a few things and you just listen. I suspected something on your first visit. For me it is confirmed. If you remember, I told you that any patient that I work with has to take the responsibility for their own choices of therapy. You and Jack becoming our friends doesn’t change that. I’m talking to you as a friend, not a doctor. But I do have some legal responsibilities imposed on me by the State of Illinois.

“First of all, five years ago I would have ordered a full physical, a cat scan and other tests, to rule out the possibility of any physical problem. I wouldn’t do that under any circumstances now, but you have to understand that if you want that...then I have to refer you to somebody else right away...like today...as in *now*.”

“I don’t want to go to anyone else. If you can’t help me, then I will just do what I have to do,” I said, not realizing how it might have sounded and not really caring.

“I didn’t say that I couldn’t help you. You just have to take the responsibility for some choices. Referral of course is one. And any competent psychiatrist would not go any further without getting some tests done to rule out a physical problem.

“If you remember my daughter Beth...the thing that Ann and I learned is that in spite of specialists’ pronouncements that certain things are incurable—they can be cured...just not by physical means.

“I remember about two years ago a woman with a brain tumor—irreversible nerve blindness caused by chemo therapy—had been given just weeks to live at the most according to her doctor. She was totally healed, including getting her sight back.

Her prescription glasses were no good to her anymore, because her sight was perfect.

“I met her...Marline and her husband Rob...and know this to be absolutely true. Her daughter and son-in-law had gotten my friend Vic involved. In the course of things Vic and I had worked with some of Marline’s and Rob’s friends and saw all kinds of healings take place.

“That’s the reason I don’t order a cat scan or other tests. A physical problem can be dealt with just as easy as an emotional problem. Now Vic is kind of a kook. He believes that certain kinds of diseases and illnesses are caused by demons or evil spirits. I’d like to get him involved if you are willing to talk with him.”

I felt a spasm of fear. And an almost overwhelming desire to get up and get out of Will’s office. He must have noticed it....

“Darlene, tell me what’s going on right now.”

“I’m afraid to the point of wanting to get up and leave.”

“Yep, that would figure. Can I give Vic a call and see if he is available? Or do you prefer leaving? It’s up to you.”

“Call him, I guess....”

Will walked over to his desk and spoke into the intercom. “Patty, will you find out if Vic Schneider is available? If he is, have him tell you how soon he can get over here and let me know right away.

“Darlene, if he is available, do you mind if I call Jack? I would like him involved.”

“Yes, please call him. I don’t know why I didn’t call him in the first place.”

“Well, I can see that you and Jack have worked through quite a bit.... Interesting.”

“I wouldn’t call it work,” I said, “I just know that I want him here with me.”

The intercom buzzed. Patty announced that Vic would be there in about 45 minutes. He thanked her and asked me if I knew Jack’s office number off hand.

Will got Jack on the phone right away. “Hi, Jack, Will Barry.” Will cackled at something Jack had said. “Jack, Darlene is here in my office and she would like you to be here with her.... No, relax, let’s just call it taking care of some unfinished

business...and Jack, don't worry it has nothing to do with you. But I suggested to Darlene that you be here...and she definitely wants you here with her. Now, this isn't an emergency...and in my experience Darlene is about to get totally free and soon. My friend Vic will be here in about 45 minutes.

"Anyway, can you be here by then or preferably sooner? Good, see you. By the way, you are in for a shock or two...but all good. Nothing like the last time. (Cackle). Just something I guarantee you have never seen or thought about in your life before."

Back with me, "He's on the way. Still scared?"

"No, and now that I know that Jack is coming I am very hopeful again. This has been strange, Will. Can I tell you what happened?" Will said something like "please do," and I filled him in on what happened when I had felt the dark cloud come over me again. "What is interesting to me is the difference from before. As soon as you mentioned Jack's name I realized I wanted him here with me. Whereas when I first came here I wanted nothing to do with him.

"Before you mentioned him just now...I didn't even consider him. And we've been so close this passed two weeks—I can't wait for him to come home at night...something like a schoolgirl, I guess. Does that sound strange to you?"

"Darlene, it would sound strange if I didn't understand what was going on. Part of what you are going to learn this afternoon is how to deal with the dark cloud and other things if anything like it ever happens again."

The intercom buzzed. Will picked up the phone and said, "Yeah. Just give me a second. I'm going to have Darlene wait in the group session room. When Vic and Jack Adams get here have them go in there. When Vic gets here just give me a quick buzz on the intercom. I'll come out for just a second...okay? Thanks."

"Darlene, my next appointment is here. So, I want you to wait in the next room—I use to use it for group therapy. Patty will have Jack come in there with you if he gets here before Vic."

"Oh, Will, thanks again," I said feeling so grateful for him.

"Darlene, we are all in this together just like brothers and sisters...so just relax. You're in for a treat. Vic is going to teach

you some practical things to deal with garbage if it ever occurs again. Okay?”

I just nodded, wondering at this crazy turn of events. *What a roller coaster!*

The door opened and in walked Jack, looking worried. I jumped up and let him hold me in his arms. I felt his strength and it was so good. I backed away and held his upper arms. “Jack, I’m so sorry. I didn’t know what else to do so I called Will. And he told me to come here right away.”

“What happened, sweetheart?”

We sat down and I shared everything with him.

12

Enter Vic Schneider

WILL ENTERED WITH A TALL, WELL-DRESSED man in a business suit, about Jack's and my age I guessed. Will had us all sit down as he made the introductions. "Listen, I have to go back in with my patient. If you can just chat for about 20 minutes, I'd like to come back so that we can all be involved in this together. I am very interested to hear your reactions to this one, Vic." With that, he was up and out the door.

Vic started by saying, "Why don't I give you a little background about me...and then you can tell me about yourselves...if you're comfortable about that." Jack and I nodded our agreement.

"I was the pastor of a church in metropolitan St. Louis. My wife, Cindy, and I had grown apart. She was seeing another man and I another woman. We were living together just for the sake of appearances so I could keep my job. She was seen with the other guy—in a rather compromising situation—by one of the church members who came and told me about it. I thanked the woman, perplexed as to how to handle it.

"Anyway, I confronted Cindy about it...and asked her to be more discreet. I didn't handle it well apparently and we got into a big fight. She proceeded to call the woman who had seen her...called her a busybody and worse...and told her words to the effect that her pastor wasn't so pure either.

"The long and short of it is that I was immediately fired and given two weeks to vacate the parsonage and my study at the church. My denomination was notified and I was notified formally that I was no longer associated.

"Cindy took the kids to her mother's in Tulsa and filed for divorce. She got sole custody of the children. Her first husband was killed in a helicopter crash...I was the stepfather and the kids resented me, so that chapter of my life ended.

“I have a teaching credential in Missouri so I applied for a substitute teaching job. I also got a job selling encyclopedias by pre-set appointment. Other than being embarrassed about losing my church and my association with the denomination and the reason for losing both, I was fairly happy.

“My dad was a developer in the Los Angeles area. My mom died when I was in high school. Dad died of a heart attack about eight months after I lost the church...and I was named as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy that was part of a buy/sell agreement between my dad and his partners. It is one of those things to protect partners from any heirs wanting to take part in the business. I got almost \$750 thousand tax-free—it’s all invested and I live off a trust that is managed by an old-line investment firm here in Chicago. I quit both jobs in St. Louis and moved up here.

“I more or less stay on call for friends like Will—and do promotional work gratis for some causes close to my heart. All in all, I stay busy doing what I want to do.

“Has Will told you what our relationship is and what I do?”

“We had dinner with Will and Ann after a session here in the office,” Jack said. “They both told us about you healing Beth of asthma—”

Vic interrupted to say, “I didn’t heal Beth, Jack, God healed her. It’s the same distinction that Jesus made. He said, ‘I didn’t do the works you’ve seen me do, the Father in me did them.’ He also said that anybody that believes in him will do the same things. That’s all and it is very simple.”

“I guess I need to say something,” I interrupted, “Before Will had Patty call you, Vic, and before he called Jack, he told me that you were a kook. He claimed you believe that some diseases are caused by evil spirits or demons and said he’d like to get you involved in working with my problem.”

“Yeah, he always introduces me that way...a kook who believes in evil spirits.”

As Jack opened his mouth to speak, Will walked in. “I’m through for the day...so let’s get with it. What have you guys been talking about?”

“Well, I just got the first shock that you warned me about...Darlene was just telling us that you invited Vic here

because her problem is caused by evil spirits. I didn't think psychiatrists believed in such things."

"Oh, I've always believed in them, Jack, just because the Bible talks about them and I'm somewhat of a student of the New Testament. Frankly, I was always afraid of the subject until Vic took me on that trip Ann told you about to Jacksonville and I talked with that psychiatrist down there and another friend of Vic's. I saw some stuff that woke me up to the reality of demons. They are real...but nothing to fear if you understand the dynamics."

"Excuse me, guys," Jack said. "Do you mind if I say this sounds weird?"

"I thought so too, Jack; of course my introduction was a bit softer than yours. I did warn you—perhaps now you understand why I thought it was so important for you to be here with Darlene so you can witness whatever happens?"

"All I have to say is I'm glad I already know you and trust you, Will...and know you by reputation, Vic. This is unsettling."

I was sitting there quietly wondering what was going to happen. Will's remark about Jack being here "to witness whatever happens..." was still ringing in my ears...*this is me, you guys—hold on here...*I was thinking nervously.

"If nobody has any objection," Vic said, "I'd like to just show you something in the Bible. You got one handy, Will?"

Will pointed to a bookshelf.

Vic thumbed through some pages and finding what he was looking for, pointed to a page and asked Jack if he minded reading out loud...and warned him he would be interrupting him from time to time. Jack started reading,

"And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and kneeling before him said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly; for often he falls into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him."

"Hold it just a minute there, Jack, what's that next to last word?"

"You mean 'Heal?' "

“Yes, The kid’s dad was expecting his boy to be healed by Jesus’s disciples...in other words he had faith. Right?”

“Sure looks like it to me,” Jack answered.

“Go on,” Vic said.

“And Jesus answered, ‘O faithless and perverse generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me.’ ”

“Sorry, to interrupt again,” Vic said, “but it’s really important that you get this. The words in the original actually say, ‘You bunch of faithless perverts...’ that is literally what Jesus was saying! Now to whom do you think he was addressing those remarks?”

“Looks like his disciples,” Jack answered.

“Keep that in mind...” Vic said, “because it is very important. Okay, keep reading.”

“And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured instantly.”

“Okay, what happened?”

“It looks like Jesus told the demon to get out and he did; and the boy was healed because of it.”

“Bingo,” Vic said. “No mumbo jumbo, no religious nonsense, he just got rid of the demon and that took care of the problem. Right?”

“This is amazing,” Jack said, “I’ve read the Bible all my life and stumbled over this passage and just never paid any attention before....”

“Hold tight, it gets better.”

I was sitting there listening to all this, absolutely spellbound...fascinated.

“Keep on reading,” Vic urged, “if you don’t mind.”

“Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, ‘Why could we not cast it out?’ ”

“Let’s hold it there for just a second...okay? Two things I want you to notice... His disciples had obviously tried and believed they should have been able to cast this demon out. Would you agree?”

“Sure looks that way.” Jack nodded emphatically.

“Then, why do you think he called them a bunch of faithless perverts?”

Vic then answered his own question. “I’ll tell you why; he *expected* them to have been able to do it. They had cast out demons previously and they had expected to be able to cast this one out, but let’s read on just a bit.”

“He said to them, ‘Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.’

“Let’s stop there for a minute. They asked him why they couldn’t, and he tells them ‘you don’t have enough faith’ and if they had enough faith, basically, they could have done it. Do you get that out of it, Jack, or am I making it up?”

“It sure sounds like a reasonable conclusion to me,” Jack agreed.

“Okay, read verse 21.”

Jack looked at the page for a moment.... “Uh, there isn’t a verse 21.” Jack had a quizzical look on his face. “It skips to verse 22.”

“What? Let me see that!” Vic virtually grabbed the Bible out of Jack’s hand.

“What on earth translation is this? Barry, what are you keeping this half-baked translation around for? Get rid of it.” Vic threw it over to Will, shaking his head. “That must have been translated by my old denomination...sure goes along with their theology. Do you have another version around, Doctor, dear...?” Vic asked with mock impatience.

“Will a J.B Phillips do?” (a Bible translation that had come out about 1960).

“That’ll work,” Vic replied.

Will was only gone for a second and brought another Bible and handed it to Vic.

“There we go...just read that verse,” Vic said as he pointed to the place he wanted Jack to read.

“However, this kind goes out only with much fasting and prayer.”

“Good grief,” exclaimed Vic, “We sure had to work to get there. Look, bottom line, in order to do what Jesus did and said we could do...takes preparation. He told his disciples they didn’t have enough faith to get rid of this particular demon. Some demons are more difficult than others to get rid of...take a higher degree of faith. That kind of faith can only be achieved by much fasting and prayer. That’s the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Stop just standing there, Will, tell Jack and Darlene what you know about fasting.”

“It’s true, you guys,” Will said. “I had always heard that fasting wasn’t necessary...and I remember some teacher at Central Baptist, talking about how dangerous the practice is. Then I went down to Jacksonville with Vic; the psychiatrist there told me he used to have hypoglycemia and had always said it was impossible for him to fast. He has fasted for over three weeks. Water only...no juice no tea or coffee, no supplements...water, period. My first fast was for only 72 hours. Then seven days—then two weeks.”

“What has it done for your faith, Will?” Vic interrupted, “that’s the point.”

“Oh yeah, sorry...increased it tremendously. When I pray now, I understand how to get results.”

“Darlene and Jack,” Vic asked, “didn’t you think Will was just a little amazing about what he does?”

“I’ll say!” I finally jumped in, very excited and filled with anticipation. “From the very first, I thought he could read my mind.”

“What he did...came about after he started fasting. Am I right, or am I wrong, Will?”

“There’s no question about it.” Will said firmly.

“Okay, Jack and Darlene,” Vic explained, “I had you read that just so you’d see that we are equipped through much fasting and prayer to get rid of the problem you have. It is no big deal...just as Jesus did it with this young boy, we are going to do it with you and you will be cured instantly. What’s more important is you are going to know what to do if the problem reoccurs. Do you feel any less unsettled about demons now, Jack?”

“No...I mean yes...that is, I feel totally comfortable that you two didn’t just get off a space ship. It makes perfect sense.”

Vic turned to me, “Darlene, tell me what happened today...that brought you back in to see Will.”

I went back over everything that happened. When I told all of them about how I was sitting at the breakfast nook having a soda...and the feeling of darkness came over me... I told them how I had said, ‘no way!’ out loud...and that it went away for a moment.

“Then what happened?” Vic asked intently.

“I walked across the kitchen floor and I had the feeling again. I had this thought, ‘oh no, it’s back.’ ”

“Bingo. I’m going to explain a couple of things to you, Darlene...”

“Wait a minute, Vic, hear this one,” Will interrupted, excitedly, “when she called me she said, ‘it’s back’ and I knew it was a spirit talking and I asked her to repeat it...and she did...that’s when I told her to get down here right away.”

“How did you get rid of it in the first place, Will?” Vic asked.

“The divorce thing was the clue. She was obviously being lied to...and I felt like I wasn’t supposed to get into the demonic thing. I was given a way for her to get in touch with the truth, and it was amazing. She broke right through. Then surprise of all surprises...her husband turns out to be this bright guy who cares; he was spiritual and totally committed to her. So I went through my routine of having them come to dinner with Ann and me—and dang if they weren’t late for dinner because they had a sexual encounter for the first time in a year....” Will actually slapped the side of his knee at that and did his perfect cackle.

“You are impossible, Will Barry!” I said as sternly as one can while laughing.

“Here’s the dynamics,” Vic said authoritatively. “Darlene, you were being controlled by a demon for a year. Will showed you the way out and you took it. Jack, in the spirit realm, demons are very legalistic and live by the rules. Even when you don’t know the rules, but employ them anyway.

“When Darlene said ‘no way!’ That was it...it couldn’t control her. Another one was dispatched...I know this sounds weird, but it’s how it works, for now just trust me so we can keep

moving forward. The replacement used the only power they really have...that is, to lie to our minds. You had just had a fright by experiencing the oppression of darkness again. When the reinforcement came it hit your brain with the thought, 'Oh no, it's back.' This is very, very common. It really has no right to be there...the Bible refers to it as a stronghold. The stronghold was broken when you reunited with Jack.

"So the replacement got you to voice, 'oh no, it's back.' You accepted the lie and were right back in the middle of the dark cloud. Do you notice that you are not in it presently?"

"For sure," I agreed, "I was just wondering about that."

13

The New Recruit

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, IT COULD JUST BE WILL'S or my presence. We don't allow demons to manifest in our presence. I know that sounds weird—"

"No," Jack interrupted, "it isn't weird. It's right on. I understand several things that I have never understood before. Do you mind if I ramble for a moment?"

Vic said, "Please, be our guest."

"Well, I couldn't quite understand the power I was sensing in Will the day I first met him. I understand it now. I have heard people talk about following Jesus all my Christian life...and I just thought they were full of it, because their lives didn't show anything. I've been stumbling around trying to live the best I know how...and just being a religious prude.

"I meet Will who uses language that I avoid...and yet it comes out of him purely. I don't drink and generally don't approve of people who do. Yet..." Jack turned to Will, "you swear, you drink and you have more demonstrated love in your little finger than I have in my whole body. Both of you...and I see it is because you are determined to do what Jesus says to do and you believe you can do it.... Well, I believe if I can spend some time with you two...I can do it too."

"Oh, Jack..." I was bawling uncontrollably. My lover, my man, my everything, saw what I saw in these two...and was committed to being like them? It was overwhelming.

"Hey, Will, what do you know, another recruit." Vic pulled a card out of his side jacket pocket and said, "Give me a call, Jack, let's get together. Now, lady, if you are through emoting...I have something simple to tell you. Ready?"

"Yes," I said determinedly.

“I want you to say a few things after me. If they are things you cannot say for whatever reason...let me know and we’ll work through it. Okay?”

“Okay,” I said feeling more confident than I had all day.

“God, I want your will and nothing else.

“I take back all the ground I ever gave up to the enemy.

“As you alone, Holy Spirit, reveal yourself to me, I want you to guide and direct every moment of my life.”

Vic paused after each of these sentences so I could repeat them.

“Darlene, what are you going to do if you feel a dark cloud come over you?”

“I will tell it that I belong to God and that it has no business in my life. If it persists, I will persist longer.”

Vic laughed uproariously, wagging his head from side to side. “It always happens, it always happens....”

“What do you mean?” I was thoroughly puzzled at his reaction.

“Darlene, you got that directly from God. I always tell people they don’t need me...and they don’t. When I was a preacher I spent all my energy trying to get people to need me and be dependent upon me. What a joke. You were just cured instantly. You rebuked the demon and he is gone. Remember, you have the authority over your own life. Keep it!”

Somehow I completely understood what he had just said. “I have a question, that has been bothering me...for several days...” I was stammering hesitantly. “This is embarrassing to ask...and I hope Jack doesn’t kill me for asking...”

“We’ve been indulging in sex ever since I got past my depression...and, well, it has been almost like what I imagine some tawdry novel to be. It’s like, well...every night...and I can hardly wait for Jack to get home...and get through dinner so we can go to bed.” I stopped, not knowing what else to say.

“So,” Will said, “What’s your question?”

“Is what we’re doing wrong?”

“Vic just gave you the answer. You don’t need us to answer any of your questions. God’s own Holy Spirit is always available to you for answers. Ask Holy Spirit...not us.”

Vic added, "I can tell you both this: Be willing to give anything and everything up to God's best for you. You were in conflict over your new sexual experience this week. Conflict is what allows the enemy's agents to have a field day. You are free, Darlene. Go and enjoy your husband. If God wants you to slow it down, God will show you. You don't need any man to tell you."

"Oh, no," Jack quipped, "that goes for me too?"

Will cackled, Vic grinned and Jack laughed with them—I just said "men!" in mock displeasure and grabbed Jack's arm and pulled him toward the door—we were headed for home and I knew we were headed for bed!

14

Yet Again...but...

WE RUSHED STRAIGHT TO THE BEDROOM, GOT undressed and climbed right into bed. *What was different?* I asked myself...after we were through and just holding each other.

“Jack, did you notice something different just now?”

“Yep.”

I got up on my elbow to look at him. “What?”

“I’ll tell you...” He kissed me gently and put his hand on my breast. Then grabbed my shoulders and gently pushed me down on to the pillow. “We, my dear, are much more relaxed. To me, it was just as passionate as it has been for the last couple of weeks.... But it was much more just being together because we love each other...instead of...” He paused for a long moment—obviously searching for the words he wanted. “I guess I’d have to say ‘lust.’ Does that make sense to you?”

“Oh yes. I’m ready to do it all over again as soon as you’re up for it.” I giggled at my own joke, “But it is more of an extension of the love I feel for you—rather than wanting to be ravaged—I guess that’s the only way I know how to put it.”

Jack looked into my eyes for a moment, and said, “Hmmm, and now I’m going to ravage you.” He started kissing me on my ears, my neck, and my mouth with both hands on my breasts and then started kissing me there too. I no longer cared about this intellectual discourse we had been having on the subject...I just got lost in his loving caresses, in what he was doing with his mouth.

But it was different. I no longer *needed* sex...I just wanted my husband and enjoyed what he was doing to me. I was so much in love...how could anything be any better? As we pressed together I said, “Oh Jack, I love you so much....” The second time it was slower and peaceful. We held each other as we both

participated in that wonderful rhythmic movement that brought us to conclusion.

We slept. I slowly started to wake up...to see my beloved with his eyes wide open, staring at me from his place on his pillow. He reached for my hand and we lay there just holding hands without a word. Finally he said, "Dar, do we ever have to get out of bed?"

"Only to eat dinner, I guess."

"I *am* getting hungry...what would be the best act of love for you right now. Fixing dinner for your old man...or getting up and going out for Chinese?"

"The best act of love for me right now," I replied, "is for you to call the Twin Dragons and get it delivered."

Just then, we heard the girls come through the front door. I jumped up and put on my robe and stuck my head out our bedroom door and yelled down to hold off their usual question, "what's for dinner, Mom?"

"Hey you guys, your dad is ordering Chinese to be delivered. Anything in particular you want?"

They both started at once calling out their favorites. "Tell them to hold on," Jack said, "I'll come down and make a list."

When the food arrived, we sat down at the table. Jack asked if they would like to hear what happened at our visit to the psychiatrist.

They both easily agreed and looked genuinely interested.

Jack told the story, including what had happened to me so accurately that I didn't feel any need to interject.

"We haven't told you much about what has been going on.... We went out to dinner with the psychiatrist; his name is Will—he refuses to allow anyone to call him doctor—and his wife, Ann.

"They told us about their youngest daughter who is about 35...." Jack went on, describing the whole story as related by Will and Ann—including the part about Vic. Then he explained about Vic and Will scaring him to death talking about evil spirits as if they were real...and saying that is what has been causing your mother's problem for the last year.

Debbie looked a bit troubled as she watched her father telling the story. Rachel just stared down at her plate. I wondered at the wisdom of Jack telling this without a little more background.

Then Jack told them how Vic had had him read out of the Bible. Jack got up and got his Bible out of the den. He read the same passage...and explained it just as Vic had.

The girls were both quiet when Jack finished. He asked them how they felt about the whole thing.

Debbie said, "Mom, isn't that a little scary thinking that a demon could be what caused your whole problem?"

"Well, as I've thought about it...there is a lot more to it than that. When Will first brought it up this afternoon before he called your dad to join us, I was a little bit shocked. But when they talked about their own experiences and listening to your dad read the part in the Bible he just read to you...it made total sense. The neat thing...is to know that it is gone and how to deal with that kind of thing if it should ever happen again."

"Good grief, Charlie Brown," Rachel said. It made me smile.

"What are you thinking, dear?" I asked her.

"I'm just wondering what people at church would say about this stuff."

"What brings that up, sweetie?" Jack asked her.

"Dad, that stuff is right in the Bible and, you know—I bet not half of the people or even Pastor Ken have ever even thought or heard about it."

"Well, Rachel," Jack said in that easy way he had with both girls, "I've been in church all my life, your mother and I have both taught Sunday school...and we certainly have never heard about it before. I remember reading that part about the little boy having epilepsy, but it went right over my head.

"One of the reasons I am bringing it up," Jack continued, "is to tell you guys about two things that happened to me today. One, is listening to the conviction your mom has that she belongs to God and only wants God's will in her life." Turning to me, "Am I overstating that, hon?"

"No, and I have never said that or even thought that before today, but it is absolutely true. Why would anybody want anything that our loving Father God didn't want? Listen to me...I am

sounding like some evangelist or something,” I added, surprised at my own words.

“Preach it, Mom! This is really neat,” Debbie said with no little enthusiasm.

“This sure beats church stuff,” was Rachel’s contribution.

“The other thing,” Jack continued, “is that I told Will and Vic that I wanted to spend time with them. To learn more about this fasting and praying stuff...and what they know about following Jesus.

“Girls, I was brought up to believe that living a Christian life meant not to drink, smoke, swear or be dishonest and go to church regularly. Vic and Will both use some rough language. I don’t know about Vic, but Will drinks alcohol. Yet I was really moved to tell him that it was obvious that he was a very spiritual and loving man; they both are...and I want to be like them.”

“Does this mean you are planning to become a preacher or missionary or something, Dad?”

“I don’t really know what it means yet, Raitch,” Jack said, using his pet name for her. “I just know that something is happening to both your mom and me and I wanted to share it with you.”

“Hey, Dad, if you become a missionary, can we go to India? That would be a gas,” Debbie said in her usual form.

I didn’t know where this whirlwind was taking us.... First the bond I was having with Jack, sexually and otherwise; now this spiritual thing...and his involving the girls in what was going on, and their easy acceptance. *Okay, God, I thought, what’s next?*

Little did I know what was coming next...that very night.

The girls had a young people’s group to attend at church. A friend’s mother was picking them up and would bring them back afterward.

After they had gone, Jack asked if we could go upstairs for a while to talk. We left the mess on the table and went up together.

We lay there on the bed holding hands and going through everything that had happened that day...he was especially excited about how the girls had handled everything.

He was lying on this back, his hands behind his head on the pillow...and then eased his arm around my head and drew me to his chest. We kissed and started caressing...and he gently undressed me. I almost climaxed as he pulled my panties down. "Take your clothes off, mister," I ordered—and we were at it again.

Afterward, as I was up on one elbow running my hand through the hair on his chest. "Jack," I started giggling again, "Which do you think it would be the most difficult to tell about to our friends at church...about what happened at Will's office today, or our new exercise regimen?"

"You, my dear, dear wife, are becoming a comedian." As we both laughed, he said, "I can't imagine telling them about either.

"Dar, one of the things that really impressed me about Will and Ann at dinner was the casual way they handled the fact that we were late because of our lovemaking...and his later comment about me 'getting laid' was outrageous, but really just natural and comfortable.

"Then this afternoon when you asked them about our sex life... I have to tell you—I did want to strangle you! But they just told us to take it to God in such a natural way, without any kind of judgment whatsoever. What did you think about that?"

"Jack, that goes with my question; I know I made a joke about it...with 'exercise regimen' and all. But Will and Vic, and even Ann too, are so relaxed about how they talk about God... Nobody I know at church, including Pastor Ken, is relaxed about any of that kind of thing—I cannot imagine even trying to broach what has happened to us with them. Yet, Will, Vic and Ann are just so matter of fact about it all."

"I don't have a clue about how all this is going to turn out, Dar, I just know that I am trusting God to lead us step by step. Sex and all...and you and I don't have to worry about any of it. Right?"

"The only things I'm concerned about right now, are the ants attacking the stuff we left on the table. If you think you can still walk...how about helping me clear it away?"

It struck me as we went down the stairs how easy life was when you made a decision to let God control it. I realized that there would be tough decisions and questions soon enough...but right at

that moment happiness flooded my mind and heart. Little did I know what was rushing toward us.

15

A Phone Call Changes Things

THE PHONE RANG JUST ONCE BEFORE I PICKED IT up. I glanced at the clock just above the archway going out to the family room...8:20. "Hello?"

I recognized the deep booming voice immediately. "Hi, Darlene, this is Dr Winslow. Is Jack around?" *What's this all about?* I thought. *Everyone at church always refers to him as 'Pastor Ken' and that's generally how he refers to himself. In fact, I don't ever remember him calling himself 'Dr. Winslow.'*

"He just ducked into the bathroom, Ken, can I have him call you right back?"

"Well, this involves you too, actually. We have a bit of a problem here and I was wondering if you and Jack would mind coming by the church and talking with me for a few minutes?"

"I'm sure we wouldn't mind, but I'll ask Jack as soon as he gets out. Can you tell me what this is about?"

"If you don't mind, I'd prefer talking to you when you get here. If Jack has no objections, just come on by my office. If you can't make it just give me a call and we'll set another time. Is that suitable for you, Darlene?"

"Sure, no problem...I'm sure we'll be down shortly."

What on earth is that all about, I thought. A "bit of a problem here" yet he wouldn't tell me what it was. "Hey, Jack, did you die in there?" I yelled.

"Be right there," he called back through the door. Jack, like every other man in the world, or so I've heard, uses the bathroom as a library. I was anxious to tell him about our strange call.

He came back into the kitchen where I was just finishing wiping down the table. "We just had a phone call from Pastor Ken. Actually, he announced, 'this is Dr. Winslow,' in that deep voice of his. He says there's a bit of a problem and he asked if we could come right down to the church."

“What’s the problem?”

“He wouldn’t tell me...wants to wait until we get there. He was very formal.”

“That sounds a bit ominous, along with ‘Dr. Winslow,’ ” Jack replied, “You ready to go?”

“I wonder what’s going on,” Jack said for the third time since we got in the car for the 10-minute drive to the church.

“Jack, you are always telling me to wait and figure things out when we get there and hear it. Turn the lecture on yourself, hubby dear.”

“Yeah, yeah, you’re right...but I can’t help wondering.”

“We’ll soon know, I guess,” I said, as we pulled up next to the back door on the church parking lot.

We walked into the church office and knocked on the study door. There was no answer, so we leaned on the counter waiting for Ken to show up.

“Sorry, Mr. and Mrs. Adams,” he said as he came through the door from the hallway. “Hope I didn’t keep you long.” Jack assured him that we had just arrived. *Why is he being so formal? ‘Mr. and Mrs. Adams and Dr. Winslow’—seems a bit late to pull that on us,* I thought.

We went into his study and he closed the door. He fussed for a moment with some things on his desk, then went through the motions of rubbing his hands over his ears to push his hair back. Finally he looked up and said, “We have a problem.”

Jack and I didn’t utter a word...just waited to hear what was coming. It was obvious that ‘Dr. Winslow’ (I just couldn’t bring myself to think of him that way) was extremely uncomfortable.

“The high school kids were having their meeting down in the basement...and I like to pop in and lead a little testimony time. Just to get the kids in the habit of sharing what God is doing in their lives.

“Your oldest daughter said she was thankful that God had healed her mother of having depression for a year and that she had gone to a Christian psychiatrist who had cast the demons out of her that had caused it.”

“Good for her,” Jack said.

Ken was taken aback by the comment. “Is this your understanding of what happened?” Ken looked tensely from one to the other of us.

“Not exactly,” Jack said, “but it’s close enough.”

“We’re convinced that was the cause, but there’s a bit more to it than that,” I said.

“That’s certainly a relief,” Ken said with a smile and visibly relaxed.

“What are you saying, Ken?” Jack asked with what I thought was just a touch of hostility.

“I’ll tell you exactly what I’m saying.” Ken leaned forward. “Our church has the doctrinal position that a Christian cannot be possessed by a demon and at the same time have Holy Spirit. Darlene, do you believe that you have been demon-possessed?”

“Ken, I don’t know what that means. All I know is what I went through for a year...and now whatever it was is gone. I do know that the psychiatrist and his associate are men of God and their explanations of involvement of demons in what went on made sense to me.”

Jack offered, “May I show you a passage in the Bible they referred to that really made it clear for me?”

We were shocked when Ken’s manner and voice took on hostility. “Don’t presume to teach me, Mr. Adams, concerning matters about which you obviously know nothing. Please instruct your daughters that there is to be no more discussion about demons in this church.”

“I would think, Ken,” I parried, “that you’d be thrilled that somebody had been healed by God and that a teenager was bold enough to share it.”

“I would have been thrilled if that is what had been reported—instead of hearing that her mother had been demon-possessed and some psychiatrist had cast the demons out of her.”

“I don’t know quite what to say...” I almost stuttered about what was happening.

“That is exactly my point. I don’t want you or your family saying anything about demons. If this happens again, I’m afraid I will have to ask you people to go to church elsewhere,” Ken said with finality.

“Would you mind visiting Dr. Barry with us? I really believe you are getting the wrong impression...there is no need to threaten us...but I think you would enjoy meeting him and it would probably be helpful for you to understand my treatment.”

“I am sorry it has come to this, but I have no choice but to ask you to leave the church,” Ken announced as he stood up.

“What?” Jack practically yelled.

I just reached out and grabbed his arm. “C’mon, darling, this is obviously not going anywhere. Let’s go home.”

Jack gently took my hand away, and said quietly, “Just a minute.”

“Ken,” Jack said, “Are you sure you want this to be your final word?”

“I have no choice.”

“You have plenty of choices. One is to be reasonable and see if there is a way to talk this out.”

“I have nothing more to say. The by-laws of the church give me full authority in matters like this. I am asking that you and your family leave this church and do so without any fuss.”

“Gladly. Sadly, but gladly. You have your mind closed to something God did that is beautiful...and instead of finding out what actually took place you are hiding behind some interpretation that you are placing on it. I would rather not be here under those circumstances. Let’s go, Darlene.”

We walked out. When we got into the car, Jack asked, “What did you make of that?”

“Strange,” I said...“actually a bit eerie. It was just like it wasn’t Ken talking.”

“I thought the same thing. We’ve been going there how long now? About eight years? I have never ever seen him act that way before. I always thought he was reasonable and articulate. How does it feel to be ex-communicated?”

“Jack, we’ve gone through so much change in the passed couple of weeks. What’s next...and what are we going to tell the girls? I’m at peace with what just happened. It is almost like a natural progression forward. Just wondering how to handle the details.”

16

The Girls Cometh

WE HEARD THE GIRLS GIGGLING AND A CAR driving away as they came in. “Hey you two,” I called to them, “have a good time?”

“Yeah, okay,” one replied.

“Hey, Colleen’s mom said she thought she saw our car in the church parking lot. Were you guys there tonight?” Rachel asked.

“As a matter of fact we were,” Jack said. “Dr. Winslow asked us to come down about 8:30. Do you girls have any idea about why he called?”

“I do,” Rachel said, with that serious look she had that so much reminded me of Jack. “He came down as usual and asked if any of us wanted to share something that God was doing in our lives. I didn’t realize it would upset him...I just told him about what you had told us over dinner tonight, Dad. He didn’t say anything, but it was kind of obvious that he wasn’t very happy. Was that what he wanted to talk about?”

Rachel and her sensitivity, I mused. Debbie joined in, “Oh, do you think that was his problem? He sure got a big frown on his face...but I didn’t think it was about what you said. He’s usually happy when any of us say something during those times...why would that bother him?”

“Can you remember what you said, Raitch?” Jack asked. I knew he was trying to keep the tension out of his voice...but was failing.

“Dad, I’m really sorry. I guess I shouldn’t have said anything.”

“Raitch, when we got there the first thing Dr. Winslow said was something like our oldest daughter said she was thankful that God had healed her mother of being depressed. That her mom had gone to a Christian psychiatrist and he’d cast the demons out of her that had caused it. Is that basically what you said?”

“I don’t remember exactly, Dad, I’m really sorry,” she said defensively.

“Honey,” Jack said, “The thing I said when he told us that— was something like, ‘Good for her.’ Trust me; that *really* bothered him. Your mom and I more or less got into an argument with him. Your mom even told him that she thought he would be glad that a teenager would be bold enough to share what God had done.

“So, please, Raitch, don’t be sorry. It’s what happened, it’s the truth and I’m glad that you are excited enough to talk about it. We need to understand, I guess, that other people don’t want to hear it. I sure didn’t when Will or Vic first brought it up.”

“What bothers me,” I jumped in, “is that when I offered to introduce him to Will so that he’d understand about my treatment firsthand and what went on, he told us he wanted us to attend church somewhere else. When your dad offered to read the same passage in the Bible that he read to you girls at dinner tonight, he got on his high horse. He said something like, ‘Don’t presume to teach me...’ and then said to instruct you girls not to say anything more about demons in the church.”

“That just doesn’t make sense,” Debbie said. “It’s right in the Bible and we are at a church that teaches that the Bible is God’s word.”

How does a fifteen-year-old girl get right down to the bare facts? I thought.

“Well, girls,” Jack said with a look on his face that showed concern about how they were going to take what he was about to tell them, “we’ve been asked as a family not to go to church there any longer.”

“Yippee!” Debbie blurted out. Jack and Rachel both stared at her.

“Why are you so happy about that?” I asked her.

“Mom, church is boring. I had fun listening to dad reading the Bible and that stuff about what happened at your doctor’s, but I hate going to church.”

“You’ve always seemed to enjoy the activities, Deb, aren’t you going a little overboard here?”

“Dad has always told us to make the best of it ‘cause we were going and that was final.’ ” She did a good job of mimicking

Jack's voice when he was being stern with the girls. Then she giggled and said, "I'm just making the best of this, okay?"

My daughter. What a way to break the tension. We all laughed and Jack laughed so hard he even got tears in his eyes.

"I'm going to miss my friends and stuff like camp," Rachel finally said.

"You can still see your friends, Rachel," I countered.

"Mom, how can I face them when we've been kicked out of church. Besides, the only time I ever see them is at church," she said in that calm, serious way of her father.

"Oh, honey, I'm sorry about this...I don't know what to do...." I drifted off, overwhelmed by yet one other shift in our lives.

"Mom," Rachel said, "I'm with Deb. Church is a drag...there are just a few things that I'll miss, that's all. It's really no big deal. Colleen is the only one I'll miss...but I see her at school anyway. She hates going to church as much as Debbie and I do."

My, my, my...what we don't learn when seeming troubles jump out at us, I thought.

"Can we sleep in this Sunday, for a change?" Debbie asked.

"Tell you what," Jack said, why don't we take a drive into Indiana...there's a restaurant about an hour and a half from here called Ranch House and a couple of the guys at the office have been raving about the Sunday Brunch there. What do you think?"

"Sure beats church." Debbie said, which brought the whole topic to an end for now...and we all agreed.

"This is amazing," I told my family. If somebody had told me I was going to be kicked out of my church—even yesterday—I would have been devastated. Now I'm just looking forward to stuffing myself—and, if your father doesn't object, and if they serve free champagne I'll try a glass for the first time in my life!"

"Hmmm," Jack looked at me, "Really ready to kick over the traces, eh? What do you think, girls? This should be a family decision...your mother wants me to approve of her becoming an alcoholic...what do you think?"

"Can I have some too?" Debbie jumped right in.

“Okay, okay, I’ll pass on the champagne,” I said, not feeling a bit deprived, but thinking it might not be the appropriate time or place; it just wasn’t that important to me.

“Okay, ladies,” Jack announced, “It is time for bed. What a day, what a night! I think it’s been great!”

“Me too,” Rachel said.

Debbie ran over to her dad for her nightly hug and kiss. Rachel waited her turn...then we “ladies” trooped up the stairs as Jack did his usual last minute puttering and turning out the lights.

“Jack,” I started as he climbed into bed, “do you think things will ever settle down?”

“Golly, Dar, the last time you asked me that was about our sex life. This is kind of fun...especially considering the fact that the girls seem totally with us. What’s continual turmoil when we’re having so much fun, eh?”

With that he turned out his light and grabbed me and hugged me....

“Oh, Jack, not tonight,” I groaned, “I’m too exhausted to move.”

“There’s your answer to the question if we’re going to settle down, Dar...typical female response to typical male overtures. I guess we’re settling down,” Jack said with a fake sigh. “But what I have in mind does not require any movement on your part,” as he started kissing my ear and said softly, “hey, my beloved, you can even sleep through it if you want.”

In the end, I moved. I couldn’t believe how *much* I moved...and I was so relieved that we hadn’t “settled down.” *Maybe we never would*, I thought as I drifted off to sleep.

17

Interlude Again

OVER BREAKFAST, JACK CASUALLY MENTIONED that he was going to call Vic and try to set something up for lunch and asked if I wanted to go along. I told him that Carol had invited me out to Wheaton, and I supposed I should keep the date with her. “Just be ready to give me a full report when you get home.”

I went to Carol’s office. Cherie, the girl at the front desk, called Carol and reported to me that she’d be right out. She’d no sooner said it than Carol appeared. She told Cherie that she’d be gone for about two hours.

Uh oh, I thought...she isn’t going to take any evasions from me this time...she wants some hard information about what’s been going on. She drove us for about five minutes to a little French restaurant I’d never heard of before. The booths were very private and the atmosphere was very quiet and quite nice.

“Ronald,” she said to the waiter, “just bring us some water for right now. I want to interrogate my sister...and I am going to starve her until I hear every disgusting, intimate detail of her life. So once we have the water please leave us alone for awhile. Okay?”

“Most certainly, Madame,” he answered with a delightful French accent. I made a mental note to bring Jack there sometime.

“Darlene, you look ten years younger. You are beautiful and you are glowing. Are you having an affair or something? C’mon, what’s going on...remember, you’re going to tell all me this time.”

“Let’s see, where shall I start. Well a good place might be that Jack, the girls and I got kicked out of our church last night...for good...the Pastor told us never to darken the doorstep again.”

“What? You’re kidding!”

“No, I’m not...and I realize that I can’t tell you about that without telling you why...and I can’t tell you why until I tell you the whole story of the last two weeks.”

“Please do, I’m all ears,” she said as she put her elbows on the table, her head in her hands, sitting there looking with rapt attention. So I told her everything. Yes, including Jack’s and my newfound pleasures in bed. My sister and I have always been able to talk about the intimate details of our lives including what went on in our respective bedrooms. I had always been a bit envious about her and Paul’s relationship. When I got to that part of the story...she said, “ah, that explains the glow.”

“I have to tell you, Darlene, I’ve always felt bad for you...because I thought Jack was so reserved. Sounds like he’s coming out of his shell,” she said and then apologized for interrupting.

“Two weeks of marital bliss, no depression and bang, yesterday the depression came back and I panicked and called Will. I described what had happened and he told me to come to his office as soon as possible.

“Carol, brace yourself...I don’t know if you are ready for this.” She was still sitting in almost the exact same position as when I had started. Her eyes narrowed as she continued to listen; “Will talked with me for a few moments and basically told me that he believed evil spirits or demons were causing my problem.”

Carol sat up straight and put her hands down on either side of her on the bench seat of the booth and looked right at me with her mouth open, saying nothing.

I told her about Vic and how Jack had reacted in shock about the evil spirits.

“I guess so,” Carol interrupted while nodding her head up and down slowly.

“Vic and Will explained how it works and read a passage out of the Bible and totally convinced Jack and I as to the truth of what they were telling us. Pretty bizarre-sounding though, what?”

“Well, the people that recommended Dr. Barry to us in the first place are a bit far out in their religious beliefs...so I guess in one way I’m not surprised. But Paul never said he even mentioned

demons or anything like that. Paul got over his problem very quickly, of course.”

“That was the thing that bothered me about this,” I said. “Paul’s bout with depression was totally understandable. In his 50s, being fired for the first time in his life...didn’t believe he could find another job and all that...pretty understandable. There was simply no plausible reason for my problem...and then wanting a divorce made no sense whatsoever.

“Anyway, that session with Will and his friend yesterday led to Jack telling the girls and reading the same Bible passage to them. They went to young people’s meeting at the church last night and Rachel was sharing with the group that her mother had been healed of depression and a psychiatrist cast out the demons that were causing it.

“Dr. Winslow, the pastor, called us and asked us if we’d come by...” and I told her the rest of the story.

“My baby sister excommunicated from her church. I always knew you’d come to no good,” she commented dryly. “And the girls and Jack are really okay with it?”

“Oh yes,” I told her some of the remarks that Debbie had made particularly. “Okay,” I interrupted myself, “I’ve told all, now feed me!”

She didn’t say anything. Just caught Ronald’s eye and motioned him over. “I have lots of questions, my dear sister, but I think I’ll let the shock wear off a bit first. You really do look like a million dollars, Darlene...and it’s so good to see you happy again. That’s really all that counts.”

We both ordered a quiche and salad. We ate quietly. As we started our sorbet, Carol shook her head...“Why aren’t you exhausted?”

“I was pretty much last night...but I feel great today.”

She drove us back to her office and we kept our thoughts to ourselves. My sister and I have the kind of relationship that we can sit for hours, side by side and never feel any urgency to talk. We’ve also been known to talk 12 hours non-stop as Paul and Jack would remind us.

We got out of her car next to mine...hugged each other...and then she said, "Do you think you guys would mind sharing your story over dinner some night with Paul and me?"

"We'd love to. Figure out your schedule and give us a call." I saw her in the rear view mirror standing there looking at me drive away. I waved and she waved back.

I drove home wondering what was happening with Jack and Vic...and wishing that I had been able to take Jack up on his invitation.

18

Jack and Vic

JACK LATER TOLD ME ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED. He had reached Vic on the phone shortly after he got to the office and Vic was delighted. They met at Vic's favorite place, The Flame.

"Vic," Jack started, "as I told you yesterday, I really want to spend some time with both you and Will. But something happened last night about which I'd like your opinion." He told Vic about sharing with the girls what had happened and reading the same passage from the Bible that Vic had had him read...and about the girl's easy acceptance of the fact that their mother's problem had been caused by demons.

Then Jack told him what had happened at the church culminating with our expulsion.

"How do you feel about that?"

"Rather strange that the guy wouldn't even talk about anything with Darlene and me. I'd say he acted more threatened than anything," Jack told him.

"It is very typical. I hate to admit it, but in my church I would have acted similarly. First of all, it was threatening when what I used to refer to as a layman thought he knew more about anything spiritual than I did. Next, very few people are ready to hear that the same demons described in the Bible may be operating in today's world.

"My seminary training focused a great deal on how to control the flock, so to speak. Keep decency and order in the church. That as Christ's under-shepherds we had to be alert to anything that might cause disturbance or division and stamp it out quickly. Somebody talking about demons would certainly fit in that category.

"I have talked to guys who received their training in Pentecostal seminaries that are generally more open to healing and

other works of Holy Spirit. Demons are generally a taboo subject, and the focus for pastoral training was still very much on how to control the people in the church.

“There are some other dynamics that get into the picture as well. I know that Will told you about my friend in Jacksonville, Florida. I first heard about him while I was still a pastor. I’d gotten some material given to me by a member of the church that really set me off.

“He had left the organized church primarily over the singular issue of church hierarchy. Jesus told his disciples and everyone else by extension that they should not allow themselves to be referred to as spiritually superior or as having any spiritual authority over anyone else. The passage is really quite clear. Don’t refer to anyone by any title that would imply such things. You have one Father and He is in heaven and you have One Leader and Teacher, the Christ! You are to minister to one another on the same basis of equality as are brothers and sisters equal.

“I wasn’t ready to hear that at all and really blasted him. It wasn’t until quite a while after I was fired that I was at all ready to hear what he had to say. And then it made so much sense I asked him if I could come to Jacksonville to see him. He invited me to stay in his home as long as I wanted.”

Jack asked if he could interrupt and pulled out this little Gideon pocket New Testament he’s carried around since he was a child. He asked Vic to point to the passage to which he was referring. Vic showed it to him; Jack was amazed. “No wonder you and Will won’t go to church. Is this one of the things that Ann referred to that she didn’t agree with you over?”

“Ann thinks that Will and I have gone overboard. It’s a simple decision for me, Jack. Jesus clearly said not to do something that organized Christianity insists on doing. They, as did I, use some of Paul’s writings in the New Testament in defense of the practice. My friend in Jacksonville has a whole teaching on the subject that really puts it in perspective...and doesn’t at all discount what Paul wrote, but disagrees with how its interpreted. I agree totally now—I sure didn’t when I was in the system—and my friend in Jacksonville explains why. I believe he’s right on. But let’s not get off into that...you’ll never get back to work today.”

Jack asked Vic what he would do if he were Jack....

“About going to church, you mean?” Vic asked. “Pray about it, Jack, and get your own answers. Ann thinks that I disapprove of her going to church. That’s between her and God. Jesus promised that Holy Spirit would come and guide us into all truth. Evangelical Christianity has convoluted that into meaning that the Bible will guide us into all truth provided the right teacher or leader is interpreting it for us. Different situations fit different needs of different individuals. Get your guidance from Holy Spirit.”

“Nuts,” Jack said, “I do have to get back to work. Is there any time that we can get back together again?”

“Will and I were talking about that after you and Darlene left yesterday. Do you think it might be possible for you to get some time off work and make a trip with us down to Jacksonville?”

“Wow, that would be great. Can you give me a week? That’s the rule in the firm—I travel quite a bit anyway on company business, but all time out of the office other than emergencies has to be scheduled a week in advance for vacation time and business.”

“Will probably will need that much time as well. Let’s give him a call.” Vic pulled out his cell phone. “Hi, Patty, is the man available?” Vic looked at Jack and said, “What do you know, this must be ordained, she’s putting me right through.

“Hi, old man,” Vic started and got into a brief conversation with Will...then finally, “Hey, Will, I’m sitting here with Jack Adams. We just finished lunch and I told him about our conversation about maybe going down to Jacksonville together. He’s all for it, just needs a week to schedule it with his office. What would be your schedule?

“I’ll set it up with Brad—do you guys want to see if your wives want to go along? Well, pop the question to Ann and see if she wants to go. If she does, why don’t you get her to give Darlene a call.”

Jack said that he really wanted me to go even if Ann couldn’t come along. Vic agreed, but was hopeful that Ann would go too.

Jack called me and said that Ann would probably be calling, and then went on to tell me he wanted me to go to Jacksonville with them...even if Ann couldn’t go. There was just too much

going on and that he felt whatever he was going to learn, he wanted me there with him.

I was ecstatic and began making plans for the girls while we were gone.

Ann called about two hours after Jack had called...said that Vic was picking up the tickets and had already called Jack at the office with the itinerary. She was happy we were going together as she had never been to Jacksonville either.

Part II

New Beginnings

1

Flight Into Faith

WE WERE BOTH EXCITED ABOUT THE TRIP. JACK told me that Will was paying for the tickets and Vic said there was to be no argument. We would be leaving a week from the following Monday. The plan was to stay for ten days as houseguests of Vic's friend. Vic said the house was huge and we'd have our own suite with a deck overlooking the Atlantic and a private stairway right down to the beach.

At the airport, Will, in typical fashion, handed both Jack and me a separate booklet of the same title with the remark that it was our preparation reading for our stay in Jacksonville. "My hope is that you both finish it on the flight and make some notes and discuss it together so that we can all talk on the hour or so drive out to Brad's."

"Will, don't you think we could say 'hi' to one another...before you start in on your agenda?" Ann said with her usual pleasant sarcasm.

We laughed, shook hands and chatted for about ten minutes. Jack finally eased poor Will's tension and announced, "Well, I'm going to get started on my assignment," and sat down in the waiting area next to the departure gate. I sat next to him and we both began reading.

The title was "*Leapfrog*," it was an interview of the man with whom we would be staying near Jacksonville, Brad Cullen. Vic leaned over and said, "This is what I read and got so angry about...enjoy."

I was fascinated and couldn't put it down. I noticed that Jack was making notes as he went along. They called our flight and I took Jack's copy and put it into my handbag along with my copy as we got into line and listened to the easy conversation of Will, Ann and Vic.

“Hey, this isn’t fair,” I said...“you guys sound like you’re on a vacation and you have Jack and I working.” I quickly added, “It is really good reading...I can’t put it down. Of course, Jack is attacking it engineer-fashion, making notes.”

I was amazed at how comfortable we were all together; I felt so close to the three of them. Also I was realizing that Jack and I were on track toward a whole new adventure...and felt secure in the fact that God was behind it all. This was such a strange thought for me...God had always been reserved for church, kind of an abstraction and a duty-focused object. Now He was in us and around us...why couldn’t I put it into words?

Jack and I settled into our seats together and I was impatient to get past the safety messages. *Why did they have to go through all the talk and demonstration about the seat belts?* They had long before made us strap in...oh well...I just wanted to get back to reading without distraction.

I was immersed in this the most fascinating thing I had ever read. How on earth was I ever going to discuss any part of it intelligently? The author, Jeanne Stockwell, was obviously changed in the process of transcribing Brad’s answers to her questions. There were so many different issues and they were all new to me.

I laid the manuscript down and just sat in kind of a wonderment, thinking that I’d have to read it several times before it all sunk in. Jack startled me by saying, “I see you’ve finished. Anything jump out at you that you want to discuss?”

“Jack, I’m in a state of overwhelm. How can I talk about any part of it? All of it is just so new.”

“You know, Dar, I don’t know whether I am anxious *to* meet Brad...or anxious *about* meeting him. I thought Will could see through me—but this guy is so in tune. The old me...would be on guard all the time about anything I’d say. Yet he seems just like Will and Vic in that he is judgmental about nothing.”

“I know, and he speaks so matter-of-factly about so many things that are...well,” I was groping for words, “baffling on the one hand and yet he makes them so simple. Does that make any sense? His statements about some of the Bible passages....” I continued groping, desperately wanting to talk some of this out.

“It’s like when Vic explained that part about Jesus being able to cast out the demon causing epilepsy in the little boy when his disciples were unable to do it. And later at home when you explained it to the girls...it was so simple to understand.

“Okay, okay, Jack,” I interrupted myself as I began to think about one part in the book and quickly thumbed the pages. “Here it is in chapter 18, talking about this baptism in Holy Spirit and what it really means...to be taken over to the point that you lose your own identity and others see Jesus in you. Did that part get to you, Jack?”

Jack smiled and he opened his book to show me all the underlining and notes he had made on that chapter. We continued to talk about the book and the impact it was having on us.

“Then the part,” I started talking excitedly again, “where this Jeanne Stockwell talks about spending four hours or so making her knuckles sore by knocking on her desk demanding that she get God’s Spirit to know what to do about her involvement in this book...and she got clarity. For the first time I understand something Will said to me, that if I didn’t have clarity I would be living my life ‘half-assed.’ ” I glanced at Jack for a split second remembering his difficulty with “barnyard language.” He didn’t have any reaction at all...he just wanted to respond to something else.

“I don’t know if those passages Brad was quoting about speaking in tongues in that same general area meant anything to you, Hon, but it cleared up bunches of questions for me.”

We continued to talk about this section and that, then the announcement came over the loudspeaker that we were on our final approach into Jacksonville. I thought, *well, meeting Brad Cullen and whatever that was going to mean in our lives is rushing at us at about 200 miles an hour!*

We retrieved our bags with a minimum of fuss and Vic was talking animatedly to Bob, Brad’s driver who was putting our bags into a large green van I found out later belonged to Brad. Brad was waiting for us at the house, Bob explained. Vic made the introductions and we climbed in.

“Okay, guys,” Will started right in, “did you get all the way through the book?”

“Here we go,” Ann quipped dryly. “End of normal conversation and off to Will’s races. Go get ‘em, sweetie.” He ignored her, and we were so anxious to continue the discussion that her remark barely registered.

“Will,” Jack responded, “we both read it all the way through once and realize that we are going to have to read it several times again. I have to tell you that Darlene and I have had a rather animated discussion for the last hour and a half of the flight about several different sections.”

“What stands out the most to you, Jack?” Vic asked.

“I guess the way Brad interprets the Bible in such understandable ways for me. But also some of his stories...such as the couple he visited out in the country that were formerly gay...his no male or female thing about God really stretched me for a bit...but I saw that he was right on.”

It was obvious that Jack was beyond his discomfort about anything in the book and was able to clearly and succinctly talk about his reactions and excitement about learning something new.

“What about you, Darlene?” Vic continued probing.

“As I told Jack, the way he makes things easy to understand. I made reference to that passage you had Jack read in Will’s office and that he later read to our daughters and they so easily accepted—all the mystery was gone about demons, somehow. I don’t understand everything and don’t feel the need to, I just accept the reality and our ability to effectively deal with them. In the same way, the part where he talks about when Holy Spirit comes upon you that you lose your own identity and people see Jesus in you. He made that so simple and easy to understand when it seems like it should be so mysterious.”

“Excuse me, honey,” Jack interrupted, “but that part about how the term ‘being saved’ actually means being joined together again with God, that whole experience that both he and the author went through, recognizing that they were spirits occupying human bodies.... That was a shock, to say the least. What do the three of you make of that part?”

“For me, I’m just totally open to it...the names thing bothered me a bit at first,” Will answered.

Ann said, “When I first read that I literally threw the book across the room. I thought they were both out of their minds!”

Vic said nothing; he just sat there, with a not unpleasant look on his face as his body moved to the motion of the van.

After a few minutes of silence, he asked, “Are you beginning to see that we are all in this together as equals...there is no seniority here at all. We all learn together and God teaches us different things through each of us. Isn’t that right, Bob,” he called out to the driver.

“Sorry, Vic, my mind was elsewhere....”

Vic repeated what he had said. Bob, looking at us in the rearview mirror, just held his extended right thumb upward and nodded and smiled enthusiastically.

We finally turned into a long circular driveway and I was overwhelmed by the view of a huge English Tudor mansion sitting right on a bluff overlooking the ocean, the beach stretching either way as far as I could see.

“Just go on in and let me take care of the bags, if you don’t mind,” Bob said easily.

“Are you sure?” Jack asked.

“Very sure, Jack, we want you to get started with whatever God has for you...and my call is to get you here and take care of some details. I’ll be in later to join you; relax.”

This is amazing, I thought. Such people, all of them. So caring, so simple, so matter of fact...yet so dynamic and so individual. Accepting of one another and us, totally unreserved and unaffected in the midst of a setting that was almost opulent, though tasteful.

“Hey, hey, look who’s here!” the tall thin man cried out in greeting with a huge smile. He was wearing faded blue jeans, a plain white tee shirt and a pair of thongs. His hair was as white as Ann’s.

Brad hugged Vic and Will and held out his hands to Ann and said, “Finally you decide to grace our presence...so glad you came, Ann,” as Jack and I stood there waiting. Then he turned to us and said, with his hands outstretched, “And these must be our new friends Darlene and Jack,” shaking our hands. “So glad you were able to come.” I was immediately drawn to the fact that when Brad

Cullen talked to you he was with you completely, as if you were the only person in the world at that moment.

“Come on in and look around and get comfortable with your surroundings,” he offered. “Vic, if you don’t mind, why don’t you take over the room assignments so Bob will know where to put the bags. Then let’s meet in the solarium...say in thirty minutes. Okay?”

Even though we had been given an advance description of the house and what our quarters would be like we were unprepared. A large bedroom with a king-sized bed, a separate sitting room and a large tiled bath with a round hot tub on a raised platform with separate shower and a tub, all in a well-cared for, immaculate, sand-colored tile. The sitting room was situated so that we could look both north and south along the deserted beach. The sun was going down and it was a bit foggy.

“Let’s live here,” Jack quipped.

Bob brought in our luggage and we put away our things. We finally walked down the stairs to find everyone else was already there. Brad said, “I hope your room is okay.”

“You’re kidding,” Jack said. “We’ve decided to move in.”

“Great!” Brad said, sincerely and enthusiastically. “Glad to have you.”

“If you welcome everyone like that,” I said, “You’ll soon be overcrowded.”

“Perfect,” Brad, said, “Then God will just have to give us another place.”

This man couldn’t be this relaxed all the time. Gracious, handsome...I wonder if he’s married?

Will explained that he had given Jack and I a copy of *Leapfrog*.

“I guess you know a little bit about our kooky theology then,” Brad said easily.

“According to the book,” Jack said, “you don’t have a theology, Brad.”

“That certainly *should* be true...but the fact is, the minds of these body bags we live in are always trying to put things into neat little doctrinal and theological pigeon holes. The difficulty of that, of course, is once the mind takes over and gets things neatly put

away in pigeon holes, inevitably they get covered with pigeon droppings.”

Will cackled at that and said, “When did you come up with that one, Brad?”

“Actually I stole it from an e-mail response to *Leapfrog*. It was from some church guy accusing me of being doctrinal...and then going on to attack my pigeon-dropping covered opinions.”

“I did notice,” Jack said, “the only people who seem to get upset by the book—at least from the reactions that were printed—are church leaders. After the experience Darlene and I had recently of being kicked out of our church,” Jack quickly re-told the story that only Vic had heard before.

“Sounds like something you and I would have done, eh Vic?” Brad remarked quickly.

“I said the same thing to Jack over lunch the day after it happened to them.”

“It is interesting,” Brad continued, “no matter how inclusive we try to be, and I believe in inclusiveness—after all, God is certainly inclusive—we are always accused of being separatists.”

“I’ve thought about that quite a bit,” Jack responded. “Ever since we met Will and Vic and have begun to understand just a little bit about how little we know,” Jack hesitated and shook his head with a grin. “Darlene and I openly express that all we want is God’s will...it threatens people. Then I realize that I would have been threatened as well. We aren’t trying to foist our new-found, whatever you call what we’re going through, on anybody else, but it just happens and it’s like we are being thought of as arrogant or uppity. If anything we are just, as Darlene said after her first read of *Leapfrog*, in a state of overwhelm.”

Vic said, “That’s the neat thing about being totally open to Holy Spirit, we are all in a state of continual overwhelm, because we are all learning something new every day. One of the reasons that Will and I wanted you to come here is because you will find that Brad always refuses to be thought of as anyone special. I believe this is excellent training ground for you as you begin your new walk. Because that’s what it will always be...a new walk.”

“That’s why I wanted you to read the book before we got here,” Vic said. “Not to put Brad on a pedestal, but to experience

equality. Because my life has changed so drastically since I met Brad, the danger is to make him a focal point. He refuses it. I wanted you to see that firsthand, because I know you experienced the same thing with Will. This is just an expansion of that experience.”

“You said something that really highlighted that in my own mind,” I said, “when you said to Bob in the van something about us all being equal. I noticed that with Will from the beginning and then later the same thing in you, when you said I didn’t need either of you. It is such a freeing experience to know that I can go to God directly and that while I welcome everyone else’s input...I don’t depend upon any of it.”

“Perfectly stated,” Brad said. “I hope everybody is hungry, because Vangie has prepared quite a spread. When the only ones here are just Bob, me and the others on the house staff she keeps it pretty simple. Having guests allows her to get creative...and she goes overboard. Let’s wander over to the dining room, shall we?”

2

We Eat Together

THE SPREAD WAS EVERY BIT AS VARIED AND delicious as had been our Sunday Brunch with the girls.

Over the meal, we met the house staff. Vangie, the cook; Bob—who we later found out handled the household finances and overall supervision of the rest of the staff; Bernice, the housekeeper; Armand, the groundskeeper and Colin, the overall maintenance and ‘fixit’ man—all joined us for the buffet. Brad insisted that everyone on the staff, including Vangie, came together at meal times. This, of course, meant that every meal was a serve-yourself buffet kind of affair.

“One of our rituals,” Brad explained to us, “is to spend a moment or so of silence at each meal to tune into God’s presence and whoever feels led shares an insight or says some sort of blessing over the food. After the evening meal we always have a fresh baked loaf of bread with some butter and preserves and we have some red table wine and celebrate the presence of Jesus.

“So why don’t we just hold hands around the table and see what God brings us...”

I was thinking how comfortable this man could make people feel by being so relaxed about things and explaining their daily habits in a manner so a guest didn’t feel like a nincompoop. So when the thought hit me very strongly, “tell them that you sense My presence,” I almost gasped. *Why not...?*

“I don’t know what is expected and I hope I am not being out of line, but I just had the strongest impression to share that I feel the presence of God...so, I guess, thank you, Father, for this meal...and thank you for impressing that on me. I am sorry,” I said, “I’ve never ever said grace or prayed at a meal before, so I really am not practiced at this sort of thing, but I feel so free about it...”

“That’s exciting,” Ann said, “Thanks, Father, for sparing us from one of my husband’s longwinded prayers.”

We all laughed including Will, whose cackle could be heard above everyone else’s laughter.

Colin said, in his heavy Irish brogue, “Well, now, Will, we can easily see why you’ve left the lass at home for all these years.” Will’s cackle again was the loudest of all the laughter.

When it came time for the bread and wine, I was amazed at my feeling of comfort that Jack would handle it perfectly.

Bob walked around the table and poured the wine out of a three-liter jug of inexpensive California red table wine...and Armand picked up the platter carrying the loaf of bread Vangie had just baked and cut several slices and passed it around the table.

Colin said, looking straight ahead with his eyes wide open, “Thank you, Jesus, for your promise to always be with us and according to your own words to remember you every time we have bread and wine. We also remember your words that the bread is your body broken for us and that the wine is your blood shed for us. I toast you now.” As Colin said these last words, he raised his glass as everyone else did in a toast (including Jack, I noticed) and took a sip.

“Here, here,” Brad said...and everyone else chimed in with, “here, here.” For the remainder of our stay we had wine and bread in this fashion after every evening meal...but what was said and who said it always varied. After several days I began to understand why certain things became ritualistic traditions. I was so impressed by Colin’s words and toast and Brad’s “here, here,” that I wanted it repeated and nothing ever felt quite that good to me. Then I discovered something else about taste and rituals. It was Jack’s least favorite! I soon realized *how* we did it wasn’t the point, the point was to simply tune in to what Jesus had said to do and there was something almost magical about it.

As soon as we were finished, Armand, Bernice and Vangie left for their homes. All the staff except Colin and Bob lived off the premises with their families.

“Let’s go in and enjoy the fireplace,” Brad said after a while.

3

We Learn Together

WE TROOPED INTO A LARGE ROOM THAT HAD massive beams crisscrossed beneath the ceiling, and a large fireplace with one of the most realistic simulated-log fires I had ever seen. Several chairs were arranged in a semicircle facing the fireplace.

“What’s on anyone’s heart?” Brad asked. “Oh, and by the way,” he interrupted himself, “for Ann, Darlene, and Jack, we have no agenda in the evening. Perhaps that’s why some of our best discussions take place here. Silence is golden and we’ve learned to appreciate long periods of it; we’ve also learned to appreciate hours of non-stop conversation. We never know what to expect, we only expect that everyone comes with a focus on Holy Spirit, prepared to share whatever’s going on. We try not to impose any rules whatsoever. But we’re feeling our way in this area as well.” Brad fell silent.

“Brad,” Ann began, “you almost seem to try to get rid of ritual by making getting rid of it into a ritual—if that makes any sense.”

“Yeah, it does make sense, Ann, and I’m aware I do it. I’m also glad you felt free to bring it up. Ritual can be deadly, and the other side of the same coin is non-ritual. It is so easy to get into the stuff of habit.”

“Well, my training has always been to question everything that is going on in any situation.” Will added, “That too, I’ve found, can wind up just being a mental exercise that leads nowhere.”

“Is it okay to talk about that book?” Jack asked.

“The man said ‘no rules,’ ” Vic answered, “and those are the rules. Or something...”

Will groaned, “Come on, Vic, you can do better than that.”

Vic just grinned, with a shrug and his hands held upward and outward.

“Your discourse,” Jack continued, “on Acts 1, verses 1–8 and your whole handling on the subject of ‘languages not learned in the natural way,’ I think is how you phrased it, it has me intrigued. I remember your advice to Jeanne Stockwell when she asked about it, you told her basically not to worry about it, but just to keep on demanding that Holy Spirit would give her the perfect set of gifts for her. Am I putting that right?”

“That’s about the way I think I wrote it—it’s been quite a while. But why?”

“Well, I know it’s been about five years since you wrote that, and I was wondering if you had any more, or any different insights.”

“Let’s see.” Brad looked around and then said, “If this is something that some of you would prefer not to get into at the moment—Jack and I and whoever else can talk about it later.”

Ann said emphatically, “I’d love to hear you talk about it.” Everyone else chimed in their agreement.

“Why don’t you get the manuscript then, Jack, instead of my trying to remember what’s in it.”

Jack walked swiftly up to our room and was right back with it. “I know right where it is, Brad,” he said and opened it to the place and handed it to him.

“Ah, here it is,” Brad said, “I wrote it on the heels of Jeanne asking this question.

“ ‘One question comes to mind; is it of any value to ask or demand to be able to speak in a language I haven’t learned by natural ways?’ And just above that she had repeated an old saw that in my mind is a distortion of the truth, ‘I remember reading somewhere how it is dangerous to want anything...because you might just get it.’

“Okay, here is exactly what I wrote:

Jeanne, I’ll leave that one between you and Holy Spirit. I’ve said it all with, “I thank God that I do.” Why not just continue demanding to receive more of God’s own Spirit and let God put the perfect package together that is tailored for you personally. I know

many highly spiritual people within whom Jesus can be seen operating who do not speak in ‘other languages.’

“So what is the purpose of you bringing it up, Jack?” Will asked.

“My interest is that you pointed out that Paul had written that speaking in tongues is man talking to God in a way that goes beyond his understanding, and you quoted Paul when you say, ‘I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all.’ ”

“And...” was all Brad said.

“My original question was, do you have any additional insights or think about it any differently?”

I noticed that Ann was very intently waiting for Brad’s answer; I was too.

“Jack, at that point in the book I was strictly answering Jeanne’s questions. Whereas before I had tried to give answers for her readers in general. Some people are simply afraid of speaking in tongues. Jeanne had made the point that she felt she could trust God not to give her a serpent when she was asking for an egg, quoting from the eleventh chapter of Luke.

“I guess basically I’m at the same place. I object to doctrinal arguments on either side of the issue. Paul does say to earnestly desire the gifts; he wound up speaking in tongues. I don’t know anyone who does speak in other languages who doesn’t believe that it is an enriching and rewarding experience—but Paul made it clear that it was between him and God. Let’s get some others involved in this discussion.”

“I’d rather switch gears,” Ann said after a long silence.

Silence is okay, I mused, remembering Brad’s introduction to what we would be doing tonight and also remembering how not too long ago, prolonged silence in a group like this would have made me uncomfortable.

“I’d like you to get into Sunno and Novi,” Ann said. “I was telling Jack and Darlene at the airport this morning—when I first came upon that section I threw the whole book clear across the room. The only negative reactions I’ve gotten from friends to whom I’ve given copies also revolve around that particular place in the book.”

“Burn it, Ann,” Brad said simply, “it isn’t worth getting upset over.”

“I violently disagree,” Bob said with more intensity than I had yet heard him speak. “I’m not saying that the introduction of Sunno and Novi into the book wasn’t threatening to someone with my background—that is, if you can’t square it with the Bible dump it. One thing I learned through you, Brad, from way back, is that Jesus said Holy Spirit would lead us into all truth. The fact is, you guys were hearing directly...to just discard what you got by saying ‘burn it,’ I believe is quenching the Spirit of God!”

“Gee, sounds like the beginning of a church split,” Will put in with a grin.

“I guess I don’t understand the problem,” I said.

“The issue is that orthodox Christians almost universally have an apoplexy over that section,” Vic said in reply. “It does go a bit to the issue of the question you were asked, Brad. ‘Who is your God, the reader’s?’ ”

“I was simply saying,” Brad said evenly, but calmly, “that it was a visitation to Jeanne and me. If it’s a stumbling block to others, let them throw it out, burn it, whatever. We were told not to publish it and never did. People are still circulating it, but I haven’t had a question or an e-mail about it for a long time...and I still have the same e-mail address that’s on the manuscript and check it regularly, so it’s probably a moot point anyway.”

“Perhaps not, Brad,” Will said, “perhaps it is still a matter of ‘let them who have ears hear.’ ”

Colin said, “I still give the manuscript out all the time; mostly people seem freed up by reading it. May I see that for a moment?”

Brad handed Colin Jack’s copy. “Yes, here it is,” Colin said, “I want to read this.

Here is what I suggest; with your new understanding of who you are, go back to using your physical identities, but don’t revert to depending on the minds of the bodies you occupy. Rather than writing a book which would have an ending and would require you to write sequels, simply start circulating your e-mail addresses and let people write their questions and

comments. Answer each one individually and I will show you which to include in your dialogue between Jeanne Stockwell and Brad Cullen. Watch what I do with this, many will come and you do not need to worry about publishing or support. I will provide. Remember, I AM with you always.

Colin sighed and said, "I am one of the many who has come. I didn't come to you, Brad...I came to Holy Spirit and He is guiding me. I don't have to justify that, explain it or anything else. Vic and Bob also came as a result...again, not to you, but to Holy Spirit himself. One of the things I learned through you is what you referred to as 'Bible bondage.' Bob and I have talked about this together. I still read the Bible all the time—probably as much, if not more than anyone in this room. But it is not the defining truth for me, Holy Spirit is the defining truth."

The force with which Colin spoke was enriched by the preciseness of his speech in that delightful Irish accent.

"It seems as if I stand admonished by the brethren and company. Good stuff, Colin and Bob both. I guess I'm willing for people to do whatever they want; it's between them and God."

"May I say something?" I asked no one in particular. "I am intrigued by something you all seem to say that is helping me understand this 'equality' I have heard about ever since I first met Will as his patient. You all say that you have learned *through* one another. What I am seeing is that God can speak through each of us. Rather than any of us having a corner on the truth, we can just share what we are receiving at any given time. That allows me to throw a whole lot of religious garbage in the dumpster."

"I agree," Ann joined in, "and it also allows me to hold on to some of my religious garbage while I'm mulling through some of this stuff that Will and Vic have been into. Just being here with you people has been a huge help. But I wasn't ready for a lot of it—and what Colin and Bob have just said as been enormously helpful. It's amazing to me that ever since Beth was healed of asthma...that I have still resisted so much. I just want to say that I am glad I am here though I really can't explain why."

"I feel a lot the same way, Ann, at least with what I think I'm hearing you say," Jack agreed. "In some ways I have seen such

amazing stuff with Darlene and her breakthrough—and meeting all of you. But it is hard to just dump my belief system all in one fell swoop. Yet I want to move on.”

“I think what you are both saying is very important,” Vic said thoughtfully. “Do you have that pocket New Testament of yours with you, Jack? I’d like to read something and share what helped me get through some stuff and finally be able to listen to what Brad was saying instead of just reacting to it. Here it is, last part of Hebrews 5 and into chapter 6.” Vic began reading, “ ‘In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!

“ ‘Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.’ The first thing I saw when I stumbled onto this passage is that as a church pastor I wanted ‘my people....’ ” Vic paused for a moment then repeated ‘my people’ with his fingers made into quotation marks, “to stay on what I was feeding them, jars of Gerber’s baby food and bottles of baby formula...then I woke up to something even worse. That’s all I had! Baby food...how on earth could I teach anyone anything?!

“It was a shock, but listen to this.

‘Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so.’

“That’s what is so great about what both Bob and Colin just said. Getting Holy Spirit to guide us step by step and not depend upon anything else. Especially the things I learned yesterday, last week or last year. I like the way J.B. Phillips translates this part in Hebrews 6, not laying over and over the foundation truths. No, if we can, let us move on.”

“Okay, Vic,” Brad joined in, “may I add something here?”

“Of course.”

“This gets to the core of my saying to Ann, ‘burn it.’ I really agree with what all of you are saying. I just don’t want to get hung up on what I wrote five years ago and turn it into sacred writ. What is Holy Spirit saying to us today? What I learned yesterday is yesterday’s food. Yesterday’s manna. The Israelites had to learn the hard way that the food God gave yesterday spoiled quickly and got maggots in it. God help us not to rely on yesterday’s food.”

“Wow,” Will was obviously struck by what Brad had just said. “Here I am trying to get everyone indoctrinated by feeding them what you and Jeanne wrote several years ago....”

“Here’s what I’m seeing,” Jack said. “Will, part of the reason you are so effective as a psychiatrist has to do with your training and your 30 years of experience. There’s no question that you’ve dumped a lot of it and are allowing God’s Spirit to guide you. It’s the same thing with both you and Vic, Brad...your training gave you a basis from which to move on. To me the point of the author in the passage Vic just read is not to keep regurgitating the same old stuff over and over, but to move on.

“In my profession, I still have to rely on basic math in order to move on to newer designs and concepts. This manuscript,” Jack held up for emphasis, “may be old hat to you, but I’m telling you I believe it was an instrument to get Darlene and I—well, especially me—beyond where I was.”

Colin broke in, “Yes! Exactly. I can tell you that I learn something new from the Scriptures every day. But it has to do, I believe with how Holy Spirit has shown me to approach them and anything else I read. Jesus said to the Pharisees, ‘You search, study and handle the Scriptures because you think that it is in them that you have eternal life...when all the time they point to me, but you refuse to come to me to get that life.’ I’ve often thought of taking this manuscript and having discussion groups around it, but then I realize it would just turn into a dead thing to replace dead Bible study. The point of what we do is to come to Jesus—not to the Bible, not to Brad, not to Will, not to Vic—or anyone of us.”

Bob put his thumb in the air in approval and shouted, “Yes!”

“There it is!” I yelled. “I’m excited to be here, not because of any of you, but what I learned through Will was that I could go to God directly. One of the things that helped me so much, Will, was

your insistence on my not becoming dependent upon you. Then to meet Ann at dinner that night, as she insisted upon being herself and not allowing either Vic or Will to be her source of truth.”

“But I have a confession to make,” Ann said thoughtfully. “In resisting what they both were saying, my growth was stunted. What I’m learning here tonight, and it’s how you set the tone, Brad, is come with a focus on Holy Spirit. That grabbed me earlier, and that was my prayer as I came into this discussion tonight.

“I told Holy Spirit that I wanted to learn tonight, and as Darlene said earlier, I also understand what *through* one another actually means. I am aware that right this moment I am being taught by Him and that as I share what I’m getting from Him, each of you are hearing what He has to say to you. But it is directly from Him. The point for me is not to resist what any of you say, but to listen carefully to what Holy Spirit is saying through you.”

“That is really good stuff, Ann,” Brad interjected. “The neat thing about being taught through someone is that it is pure. We all have a tendency to pollute what God is saying by inserting our own opinions. The power of what is happening right now is not just what we are saying, but that what He is saying through us can be received universally by all of us in our own way.”

“That brings us back to this equality thing you talk about,” I said, amazed at what I was learning.

“Exactly,” Bob said. “As soon as any one of us wants to wear a mantle of ‘leadership’ Holy Spirit’s input is diminished significantly. One of the most exciting passages in the Old Testament is when Aaron and Joshua came to Moses and said that one of the groups was prophesying. And by the way, Jack, this might be of interest to you—in the Hebrew it is clear that they were also speaking in languages that they had not learned. And Aaron and Joshua had stopped them from doing it.

“Moses’s reaction was classic. He said, ‘You stopped them?!? I would that all of Israel prophesied...’ Aaron and Joshua were typical of so many in leadership, stifling what Holy Spirit is doing.”

“You aren’t being critical, are you...?” Brad asked lightly.

“Yes,” Bob admitted.

“Wait a minute,” Jack said, “that is exactly what happened when Darlene and I were asked to leave our church.”

“And,” Brad added soberly, “it was a good thing all around. You needed to be kicked out so you could move on. He needed to get rid of you because a lot of people there, including him, just weren’t ready yet to hear what you were experiencing. It wasn’t a bad thing, it was a perfect thing.”

“Exactly,” Vic said, “Just like Ann...it wasn’t time for her to hear Holy Spirit through me for whatever reason. Now it is...and now it is time for me to hear Holy Spirit through her. And I don’t know about you guys, but I’m headed for the sack.”

With that we all got up to go to bed. It was almost 11:30—*how could one night go so quickly? How could I have learned so much in one night?* Something else was brand new. For the first night since we were late for dinner with Will and Ann—Jack’s and my physical contact...was going to sleep merely snuggled together.

4

Tuesday Morning

IT WAS STILL DARK AS I AWAKENED, REALIZING Jack was already up and gone somewhere. There was a coffee maker and a microwave in the sitting room. I made a pot of coffee and began reading the manuscript again. I found myself skimming through it, amazed that most of it no longer held my interest, only because I had already retained it! I was looking for something, though...*what was it? Ah...chapter nineteen...here it is*, I thought. *The exchange between Brad and Jeanne Stockwell.*

(JS) For me, trust has become a leap of faith into the abyss I've referred to as God. If anyone had told me just a few weeks ago that I would be saying that I am demanding that God tell me something and I am going to continue demanding until I hear directly from God...I would have thought they were out of their minds! I remember reading somewhere how it is dangerous to want anything...because you might just get it. This is what trust is all about for me...My perfect Daddy/Mommy is not going to give me a serpent when I ask for a fish. I want God's truth and I am no longer afraid to demand it from God...and know that I will have it! Is this amazing or isn't it? Did you think it would happen to me when we started this project? One question that comes to mind, is it of any value to ask or demand to be able to speak in a language I haven't learned by natural ways?

BC: Jeanne, I'll leave that one between you and Holy Spirit. I've said it all with, "I thank God that I do." Why not just continue demanding to receive more of God's own Spirit and let God put the perfect package together that is tailored for you personally. I know many highly spiritual people within whom Jesus can

be seen operating who do not speak in “other languages.” As to your question, “Did you think it would happen to me when we started this project?” My answer is simply, it always does. I have met people in situations...mostly in business, that are practically atheists...who have had dramatic life changes by doing exactly what you are doing. Getting past the mind of the body we occupy and demand and keep demanding God’s own Spirit to guide us.’

She had knocked on her desk for four hours until her knuckles were sore and she had received clarity. *Why couldn’t I do the same thing?*

I was sitting next to a small end table with a lamp setting on it. The chair I was in was very comfortable. I started tap, tap, tapping on the table while saying, Father I want more of your Spirit. I want more of your Spirit. I kept this up for some time until I felt drowsy and just drifted off to sleep.

I woke up with a start as Jack walked in the door from out on the deck. “Hi, stranger,” I greeted him sleepily, stretching.

“Hi yourself. Is that coffee I smell?”

I pointed to the pot and he poured himself some.

“Okay, where have you been and what have you been doing?” I interrogated him.

“Walking on the beach...probably for a little over two hours. What woke you up?”

“Oh, I woke up wanting to read something out of the manuscript. It’s kind of funny, Jack, I thought I was going to have to read it several times, but I found myself skimming through and realizing that I had retained it all. I was looking for the part where Jeanne had her breakthrough from knocking on her desk. I tried it on this little lamp table and put myself back to sleep,” I said with a laugh.

“Dar, I had the most interesting experience. I was talking to God out there saying over and over that I wanted more of His spirit and wanted to be taken over completely. I told Him that I wanted to move on—out of the basics and into His own realm. All of a sudden I had this almost overwhelming desire to sing to God. I started in just kind of shouting...I’m not much of a singer—as if I

need to tell you.” (Jack is one of those people that cannot carry a tune if he could find it). “Anyway, I heard the most beautiful music I have ever heard and I started singing with it and it came out in some kind of other language.

“I didn’t want to quit and tears flowed as if I was weeping, but the only thing I was feeling was peace and the most inexpressible happiness I have ever felt. I wanted to come back here and wake up Brad and ask what it was. I knew what it was; I guess I just wanted confirmation. Instead I asked what it meant and I immediately heard, ‘this is your first step and it is only the beginning.’ Dar, I understand why these people are so different. I’ve experienced the presence of God!”

“Oh, Jack, I feel left behind. Like why did I fall asleep? I’m excited for you, but I want some kind of breakthrough for myself.”

“Honey, my Dad is your Dad,” Jack said, “and He has something that is just right for you. And if you keep seeking you will find. That’s what Jesus promised and he doesn’t lie.”

“Good grief, Charlie Brown. We’re both starting to sound like evangelists or something.”

“That may be, but what I just said is the truth. This is why we are here, Dar. Not just for some mountaintop youth-camp experience that goes away when the camp is over. I know that our being here is the beginning of something that will last the rest of our lives.”

“I sense that too, Jack, and I know you are right. You know what? I’m going to take a little walk on the beach by myself for awhile. It’s funny...I was thinking yesterday how I wanted to take a walk on the sand with you—and we will—but right now I want to be alone. It’s like unfinished business.” I got up and we hugged for a moment, then I slipped on a jogging suit and my running shoes, walked out the door and down the stairs onto the beach.

I don’t know what I was expecting, but nothing happened. I must have walked for two and a half miles before I finally turned around. The sun was up and it was getting hot! Why on earth had I not worn a bathing suit under the jogging suit? By the time I got back, I was bathed in sweat.

Jack wasn’t in our suite when I got back so I took a shower and wondered if I was somehow blocking whatever it was that

would be my breakthrough. I kept telling my Father I wanted more of His own Spirit. I was knocking on the walls of the shower. I heard a voice or had a thought, I don't know which. "Darlene, I want you to listen." I was at attention!

"I'm listening," I said aloud. Then I remembered the night before when we were at the table and I had been "instructed" to say that I sensed His presence and said a "blessing" over the meal.

"Continue to seek Me and you will not be disappointed. Keep on knocking and keep on demanding for the obstacles to be cast down that are in the way of you receiving everything I have for you. The word you need to hear is UNTIL."

I saw this big neon sign with pink letters spelling out UNTIL in my mind. Then I knew. I was being shown that I, like Jack, was just beginning and there was much more. But I also had been given faith that if I kept on knocking, demanding and looking for the breakthrough, nothing would deter me. Because it was my Dad's desire as much as it was mine. "Who needs to sing a song in Chinese?" I yelled. "I got what I want—the faith to keep on seeking, demanding and knocking for ever more of His presence and power UNTIL...whatever it was He had for me was completed." I was whooping and hollering in pure joy at the discovery.

"Hey, you okay in there?" Jack was shouting at me.

"I'm wonderful!" I shouted back. "Take off your clothes and jump in the shower with me," I yelled playfully. I told him afterward that I had thought we might be losing that part of our life, "but it looks like not..." I giggled happily, "Oh, Jack, this is all so exciting."

"I heard you yelling in there," he said, "anything you want to share?"

"Not yet, sweetie," I responded, "I'm trying to process it—but I am excited. What you said earlier is so true...this is just the beginning and for the rest of eternity." We walked down to see if we could find everyone.

"Hey, here they are," Will called out. "Brad, I forgot to warn you about these two. The first night Ann and I had dinner with Darlene and Jack they were 20 minutes late. They admitted it was because they couldn't get out of bed. You guys still on the

honeymoon, for Pete's sake? Ann, send them a separate bill for sex therapy."

"I'll gladly pay double," Jack said.

"Make a note of that Ann, let's get it while he's still willing."

"Knock it off, Will," Ann responded, "you're embarrassing Darlene."

Will kept right on, "Nah, that's the same glow she showed up with at dinner, don't you remember?"

"Will," I said, with as serious a face as I could muster, "You are incorrigible." He just cackled.

5

Making Sense of It

THERE WERE JUST THE SIX OF US, WILL, ANN, Brad, Vic, Jack and I. I assumed correctly that all the others were busy with their normal day. I missed Colin and Bob and realized that we were becoming closely connected with them as well.

“I’d like to see if I can kind of muddle through something with all of you, if I may...” I said, not knowing quite where I was headed, but wanting to talk it out. They just looked expectantly at me. “Jack came back from a long walk on the beach and shared a breakthrough he should describe to you. But first, I want to get out my reactions to it and share what happened to me as a result.” I told them what had happened and my happiness for Jack, then shared my disappointment about his leaping forward and my not getting anything. “I went for a walk on the beach for about an hour and a half, still demanding—and getting nothing.”

I then described what happened in the shower and the realization that I was receiving a big dose of faith to continue demanding, and got the word UNTIL. I described the picture I had gotten of the giant neon sign. “Okay, okay,” I said with the excitement I was feeling. “I couldn’t quite put it into words before.” I was rushing ahead with a torrent of words, “I have the assurance of having received the baptism of Holy Spirit—and I have not spoken in tongues, yet, and I am not worried about it. Maybe I never will and it doesn’t make any difference. That’s what I couldn’t say upstairs, Jack.

“Walking in the Spirit is such an individual thing, and I was disappointed at not having your experience. I also felt guilty about being somewhat jealous. But the amazing thing is that it is what drove me to continue on until I received this assurance. It’s almost that the reassurance itself is the sign for me of being baptized into His presence....” I hesitated. “I’m sorry that I am going on and on, but it has been such an incredibly exciting experience.”

“Can I say something to you, Darlene?” Vic asked.

“Of course,” I replied somewhat chagrined that I had talked so much to say so little.

“This is exactly why Will and I wanted you guys to get away and be here. Not that being here is essential to what happened to you, but the emphasis among the staff and Brad is that the walk in the Spirit of God is an individual thing. The fact that you cannot quite put it into words is marvelous. Nobody can make a doctrine out of it. We can all agree that the process is merely doing what Jesus instructed, but in your own individual way.”

“I’ve got it,” Will interrupted with his patented slap on the side of his knee. “Brad, let’s turn Jack and Darlene’s suite into a shrine. We can hold seminars about what is just the right way to knock on the shower walls and yell. People would come from all over the world. It could be a miracle of the Lourdes kind of thing,” he finished with his cackle, not noticing everyone was only slightly amused by his joke.

“And that would be perfect,” Brad said seriously. “We’re not going to do it, of course, and while you are joking, that’s how traditions and doctrines are born. But out of those traditions people learn, people react and Holy Spirit uses it to further His own cause.

“I am so guilty of being anti-tradition,” Brad continued, “that I make anti-tradition into a tradition. That’s what Ann brought back so forcefully to me last night; I make a ritual out of non-ritual. What I was just shown from your joke, Will, is that Darlene’s experience is exciting and I am so glad that it happened here. But it’s Darlene’s experience—neither to be venerated nor disdained. She sees it—and correct me if I’m wrong here, Darlene—for exactly what it is. It was her own revelation from God that she has been baptized with and into His Spirit. But even this is process and merely one forward step.”

“Oh thank you, Brad,” I said, “that is exactly it. I can look back and see God’s handiwork even in the midst of depression. I know He didn’t give me the depression and I know that I didn’t need to go through that to get to here, but it was part of the process. I don’t want to idolize any part of the process. I just want to move on with more and more of Holy Spirit and keep knocking, demanding and seeking and never stopping. I had gotten into a real

rut in my thinking, and this is what I'm being shown. I was thinking that if I hadn't been depressed, I never would have met Will, Ann and Vic. Had I not met them, I wouldn't be here...and so on. I understand this morning like I've never understood anything—God uses everything, and to get hung up on any of the events along the way is missing God.”

“Exactly,” Vic said. “And getting hung up on anything along the way is the perfect definition of idolatry. I believe you said it once, Brad, when we started corresponding and I was throwing all kinds of Scripture at you in defense of my position, ‘If the Bible doesn't lead us to God and His love then the Bible is nothing.’ You, Bob and Colin call it Bible bondage; I'd call it Bible idolatry. As a Bible thumper I always decried experience and said that we need to be able to square everything with what the Bible says. What I'm learning through Darlene is that experience doesn't need to be rejected or worshipped, it is just part of the process. So is the Bible, so is the manuscript that Will gave to Jack and Darlene. None of it is sacred, it is all just part of the process.”

Ann changed the direction of the conversation with, “I'd like to hear what you experienced on the beach this morning, Jack.”

“Well, I'm glad we had this conversation. The experience was great and I'm going to share it, naturally I'm excited about it, but I'm even more excited about what happened to Darlene and this discussion that her experience brought us.” Jack described again what had happened to him on the beach. “I'm not sure what it means, singing in a language that I haven't learned by normal means. I just knew it was a breakthrough into the realm of God.”

Brad responded, “What just struck me about your experience is something Paul wrote as a corrective to some believers in Corinth, but it is also an encouragement that we don't often hear expressed. Paul said I will pray in tongues, but I will also pray with my mind. I will speak in tongues but I will also speak with understanding. I will sing in tongues, but I will also sing with my mind...and you described it perfectly as a breakthrough into the realm of God. Paul wrote to his young protégé, Timothy, to stir up the gift God had given him. In the original language it is pretty clear that it means to practice the gift. My encouragement to you, Jack, is to do just that—practice singing in the spirit, often.”

“Now that’s exciting to me,” Jack said. “I have been hung up as Vic just expressed on squaring everything with the Bible. I’m getting cured of that, but it is still nice to know that what happened to me does have a Scriptural basis.”

6

Going Beyond Making Sense

I HAVE A QUESTION,” SAID ANN. “I GUESS IT’S FOR all for you. After listening to Darlene and Jack, I realize I want to pursue knocking, seeking and demanding. I was just sitting here realizing that I didn’t have to walk on the beach or go take a shower, I can pursue God right now while I’m here with you. But where does it end? I mean...well....” It was evident that Ann was at a total loss for words.

“Ann,” Brad said softly, “Where do you want it to end? I’ve mulled over the same question ever since I started on this path. Does continually demanding more and more of God’s Spirit just become routine? Or as Darlene is discovering is it the beginning of a never-ending, continuously deepening process. The answer for me is that it will ultimately lead to transcending this life.”

“Now you’ve got me scared, Brad,” Ann said, with her face set in a rather hardened expression. “I was wondering when the real you would emerge. I’m only half kidding. When these two,” pointing over to Vic and Will—“came back from here the first time, there was such a dramatic change in Will that I thought he must have gotten involved with some cult or guru.

“Of course Beth’s healing was always the stabilizing factor; I couldn’t deny the reality of that or of Vic’s involvement. Then the dramatic improvements in Will’s patients really made me relax. Then I read the manuscript, which was encouraging until the names Sunno and Novi were introduced...and I threw it across the room. Here I am being drawn further and further into the web of total acceptance—and yet I’m sensing this resistance again, and I believe Holy Spirit is drawing me.”

“But I got to you with the word ‘transcend,’ right?”

“Yes,” she responded—looking at Brad quite intently.

“Can you articulate what’s happening inside? Can you describe your feelings right now?”

“Holy Spirit,” Ann said with her eyes looking upward, “I want only your will, I do not want to resist you at all. Guide me in this process...wow!” Ann exclaimed. “I can answer your question, Brad, I was feeling panic and fear. What is happening at the moment is rather astonishing and at the same time really wonderful. When I just asked for guidance, I had an incredible flash. I was afraid of losing control and was shown it was the same problem I had when Will came home the first time. I resented the fact that he was changed and was making all kinds of changes in his practice without consulting me. It was a control issue. Because of my resentment, hurt and anger it gave the enemy a stronghold and that was where my fear was coming from. This is incredible.”

“So now what are you feeling?” Brad continued to probe.

“Absolute peace—total feelings of trust and love for you, Brad instead of suspicion.” She stopped and looked over at Will and Vic. “Can you guys forgive me?” she sobbed.

“Oh, dear, of course,” Will said. “But there is nothing to forgive.” Vic nodded his agreement.

“Oh yes, there is. I’ve been mad at you both for five years,” Ann’s voice was still trembling and her face wet with tears, “and I couldn’t admit it. And you can just jolly well forgive me, because that was what I was just told to do, ask you to forgive me. So shut up,” she ended with a soft smile.

“Now, can we talk about this transcending stuff?” Ann wiped her eyes with the heel of her hand, and offered a wan smile. “Wait a minute, I just want to say one more thing. I really appreciate you guys,” she said to Jack and me, “for being so open about what is going on in your lives. It has made it so much easier for me. Okay, enough of that,” she said with a quick shake of her head and a bright smile. “I’m ready to tackle anything.”

“So,” Brad started, “how do the rest of you feel about this innocent little word transcending?”

“I’m not sure what it means,” I said.

“Well, the definition of the word,” Brad explained, “means to go beyond. In the sense that some Eastern religions and new-age folks use it, it means to pass into the next life without going through what we think of as death. That’s how I’m using it as well. Let me explain how I got to this point in my thinking. Jesus

basically said that anyone who believes in him will never die. Christians tend to water it down by suggesting that the spirit will never die. Paul certainly indicated that, as did John in The Revelation, talking about the ‘second’ death. I’m not so sure.”

“Wait a minute, Brad,” Jack interrupted, “isn’t this really an extension of how you explained the first eight verses in Acts? About when Holy Spirit takes over an individual, he or she loses their identity and actually becomes a part of Jesus somehow. My experience this morning was transcending this life and moving into the realm of where God is. I was in the presence of God and knew it.

“Why stop there? Why not continue on and keep continuing on; why be hung up on having to die? Ann, that’s what I was getting out of your fear. Demonic thoughts wanting us to be trapped in these body bags. Vic told Darlene and I that the only power demons have is to lie to our minds. You stopping and telling Holy Spirit you wanted His guidance stopped them in their tracks!”

“That’s where I am with it,” Brad said. “Like everything else, the minds of the bodies we occupy want to hold onto the physical and not let go. All too often we look at understanding something in the physical realm as ‘spiritual enlightenment.’ The experiences that both Darlene and Jack had this morning are true examples of enlightenment because they cannot be explained in intellectual terms other than by those who would attempt to discount them.”

“I feel like what I am learning here,” I added, “is that we all have already begun transcending. And as we continue to demand more and more we will progress—there it is!” I interrupted myself. “The giant neon sign UNTIL. Until we pass from death; that is, the physical life we hang onto so desperately, unto real life, as Jack expressed it, living in God’s realm. His experience on the beach is just a foretaste of being able to move totally into that realm and doing it without so-called dying.”

“Let’s add to that a bit,” Will interjected. “The doctrine espoused by most Christians is that the flesh, since it is corruptible, cannot enter the kingdom of God, and they use Jesus’s words about ‘unless a seed falls into the ground and dies,’ to justify their position. The resurrection is NOW. Eternal life means literally no

beginning and no ending. Transcending is the result of continuing on, yes big capital letters UNTIL.”

“You guys have all gone crazy,” Ann quipped, “and sorry to say I am with you. Why was this so difficult to put my mind around earlier, yet now is so easy to accept?”

“Because you are not accepting it with the mind, Ann,” Vic told her, “you are seeing it in the spirit.”

“I want you all to realize,” Brad said looking up and away from everyone, with a tone of wonderment, “this is so far beyond what my own understanding has been. This is transcending and we are experiencing the beginning of it together. What I am seeing is that transcending means leaving our intellectual understanding and opinions behind.”

We all sat there for several minutes drinking in these last words.

Then finally Brad said, “Why don’t we meet in the solarium around 5:30—if that is all right with everyone?”

I told Jack that I wanted to take a nap, and that I hoped afterward he would go walking on the beach with me. We agreed to do both.

“I can hardly wait until we can share all of this stuff with Rachel and Debbie,” I said to Jack as we strolled, arm in arm, barefoot on the beach.

“I was thinking the same thing,” Jack said. “They are totally ready for it, which is exciting. You know, Dar, I didn’t think we could be any closer than we’ve been since the depression is gone. Being together spiritually...is really unity. I can’t explain it any better than that. We are one.”

I just nodded as I pulled in to be closer with him.

7

Unity

WE WERE FIRST TO ARRIVE IN THE SOLARIUM.

Will and Ann walked in just a few seconds later...hand in hand.

“How are you guys doing?” Ann asked.

I told them how excited we were about sharing everything we were learning with the girls and how we knew they were ready for it.

“What’s amazing to me,” Ann said, “is how much closer Will and I are. Being together spiritually just fills in all the gaps.”

Will nodded, and added, “I had no idea what I was missing with us being on separate pages spiritually. ‘Amazing’ is exactly the appropriate word for what’s happening to us—unity.”

“What’s amazing to me,” Jack said, “those are exact things Darlene and I were just saying on the beach—including the word unity. Another thing is the unity all of us seem to have in the Spirit. I’ve got to tell you that I was so excited that you two seemed to like us and accept us that first night at the restaurant and I just knew that we were becoming friends. But the oneness we are experiencing—not only with you guys, but with everyone here—is totally uplifting. I’ve never experienced anything like it. Goes way beyond any kind of friendship, no matter how close. We are one in the Spirit; I’m at a loss to articulate it any differently.”

“I feel the same way, Jack,” Will agreed. “I think Brad and Vic are feeling it as well. We’ve all broken new ground together with this whole thing on transcending. It is like seeing this open door with a bright light on the other side of it at the end of a long, dimly lit hallway and we are all walking together toward the light.”

Just then, Vic and Brad came through the entryway.

“Greetings,” Brad said with a smile, looking more relaxed than ever. “Vic and I have had quite a conversation together on the beach that we both want to share.”

“You too then. I bet we can tell you what it was about,” Will said quite seriously.

“Really!” Brad said, he and Vic both had curious and openly expectant looks on their faces. “Tell us about it.”

“Would the word ‘unity’ encapsulate some of what you’ve been discussing?”

“It would indeed,” Vic said, “that is exactly the word.”

We had an animated conversation for the next several minutes about this even broader evidence of what we were all feeling and experiencing together.

“You know,” Brad said, “we’ve all used the word equality around here for several years, related to unfolding revelation as well as status. But I have to tell you that I have really felt alone in seeing that transcending beyond death, without going through the death experience, was entirely possible. Frankly, I was reluctant to talk about it until Ann opened the door for me this morning.

“Then each and everyone of you, one at a time, were seeing things about it that I had not seen before. It was like I had been trying to put together a jigsaw puzzle with the picture face down and you all came along and turned the pieces right side up and began to assemble them for me. It’s such a relief not to be struggling alone with it anymore—especially since I couldn’t even see with what I was really struggling.

“Then to feel the camaraderie with Vic out on the beach and wanting to come back and share what we were experiencing and then come back here and find out we are all experiencing the same thing at the same time—”

“As an engineer,” Jack broke in; “I work with plans all the time. In the spirit realm I’ve been totally out to sea. All my life I have believed that the Bible was God’s diagram and the key to understanding. I carried it around all the time and read it as a spiritual exercise and a discipline so to speak, but it wasn’t at all clear as a plan.

“So many things have come together with the Bible—particularly with Vic’s help and reading the manuscript. But, Brad, the picture-puzzle example you just gave is directly from God. I can see now that only Holy Spirit can show us what to do and how to do it, and do it together. I never thought I would say this, but the

Bible can actually be a stumbling block and detriment. As Darlene and I were walking we both had the idea at the same time that we were going to be able to share all of this with our daughters and that they were ready to accept everything that we've learned. But God just showed me through you how it works.

"We are not alone, and when we form opinions and try to prove them we shut Holy Spirit out of the equation. Spirit is Spirit and cannot be understood with the intellect. The more trained the mind is in any area, the more difficult it is to break out of thinking into real knowledge."

"You are describing what I had to go through as a psychiatrist exactly, Jack," Will said. "And you're right about the picture puzzle...amazing."

"Yes, that is really helping me understand what is happening," Ann added, "and I can't begin to explain it, but I don't need to because we are all seeing it together."

"It has so many applications!" My excitement was getting the better of me. "I'm thinking back to the depression episode I went through and that is exactly what Will's help for me was. I was struggling to put a puzzle together with the picture facing down. Thank you Spirit for what you are giving us! So simple, yet so profound."

"I have shared transcending with Bob and Colin and they, like me, have accepted it as a concept," Brad explained. "Colin really embraces it and believes he will not go through physical death. Bob and I have been somewhat on the fringes with it. I am really looking forward to their being involved in our discussion after dinner tonight."

"Do you people realize," Ann said, "we've been here barely 24 hours? We're scheduled to fly back to Chicago a week from this coming Friday morning. At the rate we're going, we may fly back all right, but it won't be on an airplane."

I thought, *she may just not be kidding!*

Dinner and sharing the Lord's Supper again was no more mundane than it had been the night before. I just knew what to expect in general so that it wasn't all new to me.

We said our good nights to Armand, Vangie and Bernice and I wondered about their families, and we all drifted in by the fireplace.

“Ah,” Bob started off; “I can see that something significant happened in our absence, Colin.”

“I felt it the minute we sat down to dinner,” Colin agreed. “What’s going on with all of you and how dare you leave us out?”

Each of us told our own story, including Will and Ann’s breakthrough into a much closer relationship. Jack’s Holy Spirit baptism. My assurance of it and the huge gift of faith; and then the word transcending.

Brad enthusiastically shared the concept of the upside-down picture puzzle, interrupted by Colin’s staccato Irish, “That’s rich, rich, rich.”

“How long have we been talking about transcending conceptually—and here the six of you have a breakthrough in the Spirit. This is passing from death unto life. We talked last night about moving on. I’d call this ‘moving on’ big time,” Bob said.

“Yes,” Will quipped, “Ann thinks we are moving on with such rapidity that when we fly home it will be without the aid of an airplane.”

“Have you yet considered that transcending may actually mean exactly that?” Colin posed the question simply, yet each of us caught our breaths in unison.

“Oh my, here we go again,” Ann sighed.

“We Christians have avoided the subject forever,” Colin continued. “We are a bit smug in this household because we know and experience healing and other miracles all the time. But our smugness belies our unbelief in this area. If we are going to transcend, thought-travel must be seriously considered and discussed. We’ve left ‘astral projection’ to those who dabble in the occult when it is in the core of Paul’s writing and experience. It is obvious that Jesus practiced it. I tell you we are unbelievers! We need correction in this area. Holy Spirit, enlighten us, I say.”

All from a man I had considered to be a simple mechanic with an Irish brogue. Such depth and so matter-of-fact about such a topic!

“You know what really troubles me here, good people?” Ann was at it again. We were all waiting to hear what would be next.

“The fact that I’m not troubled by it. Had I heard this stuff last night, Colin, I would have been on the first plane out of here.”

“That’s why God times things the way God times things, Ann. Neat isn’t it?” Bob asked softly.

“To think that just a few weeks ago, I was struggling with the idea of demons,” Jack added, “and when I taught my daughters a bit of what Vic and Will had taught Darlene and me, the girls got us thrown out of church by repeating it. Talk about God’s timing!” Jack exclaimed, with a totally serious look on his face. “If poor Dr. Winslow heard what I’m already believing now, he wouldn’t have just given us the boot—he’d have burned us at the stake in the church parking lot!”

8

What Next?!!

“**C**OLIN, YOU’VE OBVIOUSLY GIVEN THIS A LOT of thought,” Will said. “Based on our conversation with Brad, this is new to all the rest of us, including Bob and Brad. Since none of us are running out of the room shrieking heresy, heresy...why don’t you spend a few minutes getting us up to the speed at which you’re flying.”

“Not so, actually. I’ve not thought of it at all until just now. I admit that I have broken through into the belief that I will not die, but transcend, or perhaps translate, or even go through a transmutation process. May I have that New Testament of yours for a minute, Jack?” After just a few seconds of page turning, Colin said, “Ah, here we are...Second Corinthians, chapter 12.

‘I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know a man in Christ who 14 years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses.’

“Why that passage, Colin?” Brad asked.

“It just came to mind,” Colin explained. “It is a good example that Paul dealt with ‘out of body’ experiences in a very factual and matter of fact way. Here he is saying this fellow went into another dimension—fact, then curiously he says he doesn’t know whether he did this in his body or outside his body. Ann, which way are you going back to Chicago—in your body or outside it?”

“Why isn’t this kind of thing discussed openly among Christians?” Will asked.

“Simple,” Bob immediately responded. “Because they want to keep going over and over foundational truths *about* Christ instead of moving on *in* him.”

“To answer Brad’s question, why that passage,” Ann said, while carefully and deliberately nodding her head, “to get me beyond my horrid habit of resisting things I need to hear and learn. There goes the picture puzzle, right-side-up again. There are so many things that are just there in truth...and, Colin, you really hit the nail on the head with your thing about we have left this kind of stuff to people who dabble in the occult. I suppose we will be accused of dabbling in the occult. Holy Spirit, guide me passed worrying about what other people may think and especially guide me passed resisting You. Are you guys sure we can handle another nine days of this?”

“Counting the days, are we, dear?” Will asked.

“Well, Brad, did you think your little word on transcending would take this kind of turn tonight?” Vic queried.

Brad answered, “I want to use Colin’s word smug. I knew we’d have a great time this week, but did I think I was going to have a huge, huge breakthrough of my own on our first morning together? No. I smugly thought you’d bring your friends down and we’d watch them with wide eyes see things we take for granted. Lord, forgive me for being so smug. Why I didn’t block this experience is only a demonstration of His love and mercy. Did I think for a moment that our dear brother Colin was going to blow us away tonight? Not for a minute. I smugly thought that Bob and Colin would be the ones to be blown away by our breakthrough into unity.”

“Equality, dear brother, remember equality,” Bob said lightly.

“It is interesting how I limit God,” I said. “I was feeling sorry that Bob and Colin weren’t there to share the experience we had this morning—and obviously they didn’t need to be there. Here they’ve added to the experience that I felt they’d missed out on.”

“I confess that I felt the same thing, Darlene,” Will said.

“Holy Spirit is saying to quit reveling in what we’ve already learned. We need to move on.” Bob said this almost urgently. “The time is short and we need to get past discussion and more on to experience. Shall we agree to be obedient to the order to march forward?”

“Yes, I’m getting we should start anticipating and expecting some definite lessons in this area of transcending that we have ignored forever.” Vic implored, “I intend to do some intense knocking, demanding and seeking that I be moved in whatever area God’s Spirit wants me to move regarding transcending. Enough talk; time to employ faith and be obedient.”

Brad stood up and stretched his hands toward the ceiling. “It sounds like we’ve got our marching orders. If you don’t mind can we all meet in here around 7 a.m.? I’d really like you two to be with us, Bob and Colin.”

“Amen to that,” said Ann.

The rest of us voiced our agreement. Colin and Bob agreed to join us.

9

Wednesday Morning

WHEN I WOKE UP, JACK WAS ALREADY UP AND gone. Just like the day before, I hadn't heard him. We had gone directly to bed both deep in our own thoughts. I was telling my Dad over and over that I wanted more of His own Spirit for clarity about transcending and anything else. I was troubled and couldn't quite understand it. I found myself demanding that any and every obstacle to my knowing and being in my one and only perfect Dad's will be cast down. My vague anxieties evaporated as I heard, "Now you understand the peace that I have promised is not the peace of the physical plane and cannot be received from anything on that plane."

As I pondered those words I drifted off to sleep.

Stretching, feeling refreshed after my deep sleep, I walked into the sitting room and saw the green digital numbers of the clock on the microwave—6:40! I was going to either have to set the alarm tonight or ask Jack to wake me when he got up. Jack had his own internal clock and could always mentally set it to get up any time he wanted. He required much less sleep than I did.

I took a quick shower and got dressed. I found myself vaguely troubled again. "Dad, I want only what you want and nothing else. I know it is your will that I be immersed in Your own Spirit." *Where were such words coming from?* They were truth, even ultimate truth, but I had never been taught how to pray like that! I also noticed the same peace come over me with which I had fallen sleep. *Ah, being at peace is Your will. Being at peace is the result of having Your Spirit.* "You will have much more if you desire it," I heard.

I went down the broad, carpeted stairs into the large entryway and out toward the solarium. I really didn't want to be with anybody right now; I wanted to pursue the thoughts I was having. I wondered at having no fear at hearing the voice...or were

they just thoughts? Was it actually *hearing*? Everyone was already there except Ann. It wasn't quite 7 o'clock yet and no one was talking. I sat next to Jack and he put his arm around me with a gentle, yet firm squeeze. How I loved the feeling of his strength. But I was learning to love the strength of the presence of Holy Spirit even more. Yet it did not diminish what I felt for Jack; in fact, Holy Spirit enhanced my feelings for Jack! *This is amazing*, I thought, *my physical senses have been intensified*. My mind drifted to our new found sex life, and I understood. Before I could follow that thought Ann walked in with a cheery, "Hi, everyone. What a somber group."

"Yeah, until you showed up," Will said dryly. We all laughed.

"This is interesting," Brad stated. "I came in about ten to six and Jack was already here. We just nodded to each other and as everyone else came in the only word spoken before you came in, Ann, was Bob who barely whispered 'good morning' and we've all been lost in our own little worlds since."

"I'm sorry I barged in here like that. Really," Ann looked around.

"It was perfect, Ann, in fact, absolutely perfect," Bob said, with unusual authority. Everyone agreed, and I mused, *yes it was perfect, why?* We all fell silent.

Finally Will said, "I'd like to share some thoughts I've had. The admonishment we received last night through Bob, Vic and Brad and certainly confirmed in my spirit was that it was time to quit talking and resting on our laurels, so to speak, but to get busy pursuing clarity on transcending. I believe I am being instructed to say something." Everyone was at attention. *What was going on?* We seemed under a different kind of order; we'd all been serious since we arrived in the solarium. There had always been banter before, and we were with an unspoken purpose to find God's purposes together. But that morning there was an intensity that wasn't there before. *Ah....* I understood.

Will continued. "I was shown vividly that God has brought us together here to move on into things we should have been doing as a normative experience long ago. Through Colin we heard Spirit's admonition that we were unbelievers. Through Brad we

heard that we have been smug. I was shown how in the last five years, because of our breakthroughs in healing and deliverance particularly, we've grown lukewarm. We have become as complacent as those in the organized church who refuse to move on with God and out of their traditions. Through Bob we heard that the time is short. I confirm all of these words, but especially that the time is short.

“What that means on the physical plane I don't have a clue. But Spirit is saying that the time is short for us and we need to move forward with an intensity that cannot be energized by smugness and complacency. We need for a time to separate unto God alone. We can come back later and celebrate, but I've been shown that our celebration is premature.

“We have a battle to fight and it is to tear down the idols of our worship of where we've been and to turn from those idols to Him. We need a time of individual battle and preparation without any distraction. The word I've been given is desire. De-Sire—‘Of the Father’ is the root meaning. Our perfect Father has in His heart that we come to Him for the energy that is needed.

“Transcending—in the sense of it as we learned through Colin—is His will, also and most certainly transcending our worship of where we've been. I was shown in a dream last night that Jack's indescribable experience of moving into God's realm and hearing and singing along with it in an angelic language was itself, for Jack, the first step toward transcending in the sense of what the occult terms as astral projection. Darlene's experience of pounding on the shower walls until she had a breakthrough into a gift of faith to continue on was her first step of the same thing. Through her we heard and saw the neon sign UNTIL.

“For me, this time of separation is to be one of fasting and intensely demanding for the desire to know and be in God's perfect will relative to all the aspects of transcending. I'm not laying that down for anyone else, but it is what I've been shown to do. I will not be seeing much of any of you for the next two or three days at least.”

“I know I am supposed to speak as well. Whether it is just for me makes no difference.” I was speaking in the same authority with which both Bob and Will had spoken. “I heard Spirit this

morning telling me that I would receive much, much more if I would desire it. I understand for the first time why fasting is so important. As Will has so blatantly referred to Jack's and my newly-found mutual attraction for each other in bed...I understand also how Spirit's presence and power has intensified my feeling for my husband. I am free in it and it is wonderful. I do not *need* it. Like food it is mine to enjoy and experience, but I do not need it.

"I have come to love all of you intensely because I am in the presence and power of God's own Spirit, but I do not *need* to be with you as I felt I did on Monday and Tuesday. I am not only free to be with you and love you; I am free to be apart from you for a time. I did not want to be here this morning because I am learning much from Spirit and I want and need to continue in that without distraction. He is giving me words to pray that I have not learned by natural means.

"This allows me to understand speaking in tongues and the importance of it as well as the importance not to get off in the emphasis of it. Not to worship it or any other experiences...no matter how great or otherwise enlightening they may be. They are from and of the presence of God in His own Holy Spirit. He has shown each of us rather powerfully that our focus must be on Him. As Will said, I am not laying this on anyone else, but for me I need to be apart from all of you for a time. I won't be around at meal times and I probably will not be seeing you for a few days. The time is short. You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all of your heart. My desire is that you desire Me." These powerful words were not mine and yet they came through my mouth. I had to leave the room and get away to be with Him.

10

Alone, But Not Alone

I GRABBED MY WALLET FROM MY PURSE AND stuffed it into my fanny pack, grabbed my old gray sweatshirt with the hood and walked down the steps onto the beach. “Do not get ahead of where I want you to be,” I heard. “Oops, sorry,” I said aloud as if to a friend. Then I understood—this *was* my Friend, my only Friend in this realm for the time being. “Will there be others on this journey?”

“Focus on Me,” I heard and freely, without effort began talking with my Friend in a language I didn’t understand...but understood. I was speaking terms of love that were so far beyond anything I had ever known. I was overwhelmed by the joy of knowing I was in the presence of God. Nothing else mattered. I could entrust my children, my husband and everything else in my life to God. I needn’t worry about them or anything else. I was comforted by the fact that I knew that Jack was also with this same Friend at the same time, yet experiencing Him in his own way, not worried about our being apart for this time.

I understood these things while talking and listening to Him in our own special language. I had been off in another place, and now I was back standing at the bottom of the stairs. *Out of my body? In my body? What difference did it make?* “Now what?” I asked. “Follow Me,” I heard. I knew I was to head south. “Where are we going?” I deliberately formed the thought, knowing my Friend would hear me.

“For now, you need to take a step at a time without knowing where you are going. You need to learn how to trust Me in this, so that I can fulfill your desire to be used by Me.”

“Do other people have this kind of experience?”

“Some do, but not many, because of the fear planted in them by their enemy that overcomes their desire.”

“Is this experience important to people?”

“Do not concern yourself with others. It is important to you and you desire it. Walk in it. Walk with Me, but not ahead of Me.”

“You said that to me before. How will I know if I am ahead of You?”

“You will not hear My voice. It’s that simple.”

I understood the implications of what my Friend was saying to me. My life was to take a turn of always being in tune and hearing. If I didn’t hear Him I would be missing Him. It went far beyond what I had learned through Will’s maxim about living without clarity is living half-assed. Living without getting my Friend’s continual direction was living apart from Him, and I was getting my instruction for this new kind of living. I must have walked for five miles. I came to an inlet so that I had to turn around and go back. I saw a road off the beach and onto the highway that ran along the beach.

“Take this.”

I walked to the highway and stopped. I noticed several small places of business across the way. An automotive shop, an art studio and off in the distance a motel sign.

“Go there.”

I walked up to the motel, a nondescript, older, but clean little place across the road from the beach. The vacancy sign was lit.

“Get a room.”

I walked into the office and heard a bell ring in the back somewhere. A dark young man—with an accent that left no doubt he was from India—asked if he could help me.

I told him I wanted a room and paid for one night with my American Express Card. He gave me the room key with #17 on it. I walked out the door and asked silently, “Now what?”

“Go lie down and see where I take you.”

“Here I have this gorgeous suite of rooms with my husband back at Brad’s and You’ve led me to this little dump?” I said with a laugh as I settled down on the bed fully clothed.

“Would you prefer going back there? It is your choice.”

“I choose to be learning whatever it is that You will teach me,” was my immediate response.

“You could learn My lesson there, but as you already know there are too many distraction there for right now. I would not

leave you, but you have chosen to be alone with Me and this is a perfect place. Close your eyes. Do you remember the airport terminal in Jacksonville? Go there now.”

I was walking around looking at the shops. The aroma of food from several of the airport restaurants found it’s way to my nostrils. *I am hungry*, I thought. “Can I eat in this state?”

“In what state is that?”

I became immediately aware that I had the same clothes on that I had been dressed in on the bed back in the motel. “So I’m not out of my body?”

“Let’s go back to your being hungry. Did you forget about your commitment to learn about fasting?”

“Yes...I thought that this was somehow exempt from that rule.”

“It was your choice and your rule. Do you want to break it?”

“I want to do what you want me to do.”

“It doesn’t quite work that way. I am with you by your choice. There are certain things you want to accomplish. I have come to enable you to accomplish them. You are free to choose anything you want to do. It simply is not expedient for you to do them if you want to achieve your desires. Eating right now is definitely not expedient if you want to have your breakthrough into transcending.”

“But I’m already here and at the same time I am at the motel. Isn’t this transcending?”

“This is just the tip of the iceberg. You need to ask yourself how far you want to go?”

“I want to go all the way.”

“Then it is definitely in your best interests to know that you can go without food. The only way to really know this is to experience it. Intellectual knowledge would be like knowing you could speak in other languages you have not learned, but never having experienced it.”

I immediately saw the truth to this. “Is this why I wanted to disassociate myself from everyone at Brad’s this morning, including Jack?”

“Yes. Remember how you understood why Jesus said that certain kinds of demons could only be driven out by somebody

who prepared through an intense time of fasting and prayer. You cannot lose your former attachment to the physical realm and especially the seeming need to experience death until you are able to 'die' to all these other notions that have been foisted upon you by the enemy. The quickest way to accomplish this is to fast for a time from food and sex."

In a flash I understood the lies fed by demons to "experts" who insisted that abstinence from both food and sex was dangerous. Having gone without sex for a year taught me that I didn't need sex. Having learned to truly get lost in my husband sexually, however, raised the specter of temptation. "I see it now.... I also see that I needed the experience of going without the intimacy and joy of sex with Jack... Will we be able to get back to that?"

"Will you go back to enjoying food?"

"I see it now...."

"Remember that Jesus was called a drunkard and a glutton by the religious of his day. He knew how to enjoy wine and good food. He also knew that it had no hold over him, because he could go without it at any time. This is what you are going to experience right now."

I was back on the bed in #17. I was hungry and I had a headache. "What do I do about the headache?" I asked aloud.

"It will go away. Some use these as signals to turn and eat My food."

"What is Your food?" I asked. Then I understood. I focused on my Friend's presence and power, and slipped ever so easily into talking with Him in our private language. Immediately I understood that I was eating and drinking divine 'food' that nobody else could know or understand. I awoke. The headache was gone. It was completely dark out. The hunger was back in full force. "Now what?"

"I want to show you something, come."

I got off the bed and felt lightheaded. "That's not pleasant," I said with feeling.

"It will pass."

"Now where?"

My Friend led me up to the next intersection. As I looked down the street I saw an all-night convenience store about two blocks away. When I entered, I saw the clock on the wall. 12:15 in the morning...I almost gasped at the time that had elapsed. Then I saw a shelf loaded with one-gallon plastic jugs of drinking water. "Get two." I heard. By the time I got back to #17 my arms were tired from the weight of carrying the water.

"What do you notice?"

I'm not hungry or dizzy, I thought. Then I realized that drinking water would somehow be good for me during this process. I poured it into the little Styrofoam cup on the dresser. It tasted wonderful. I had three cups before I put the cap back on the jug. "Now what?" I asked, and immediately knew I was to get back on the bed. I was in the sitting room, looking down at Jack who was lying on the floor fully stretched out, face down with his little red covered New Testament gripped in his right hand. I was tempted to reach out and touch him.

"Look at your feet..."

I looked down. Surprised, I saw that I was dressed in some kind of a light-colored, ankle-length robe and that I had no shoes on. *Oh, out of body*, I thought. At the airport I was apparently in my body and could have even eaten had that been my choice. Here, I was to observe, but I would not be noticed and my presence would not be felt. Instantly I was back on the bed.

The telephone rang. That same Indian accent, "Madam, will you be checking out?"

"Give me a minute and I will call you back." I wanted to be back with Jack and the others. I had certainly had enough of this motel. "What should I do?"

"It is your choice."

I knew instantly that if I wanted to get beyond dependence upon the physical I could not go back just yet. I walked up to the office and paid for another night and told him that I would not need the room cleaned. My back was sore from being on the bed for so long.

My Friend and I walked on the back streets. I knew that I wasn't supposed to talk to people, but didn't understand why at first. Then I realized that this was another bit of "fasting" I had to

learn, to ignore my propensity for being friendly and saying “Hi,” whenever I saw anyone. I was amazed that people didn’t even look at me. My social habit was just that; I saw that I had required the response to my greetings and it was a form of manipulation of people for self-gratification. I was amazed that yet another tie to the physical world had been exposed. It had been as important as eating had been. But one easier to discipline myself to avoid for the time being. I was hungry again. The aromas coming from a Dairy Queen were almost overwhelming. *I could eat a hamburger right now....*

I savored the thought...and realized immediately the source. “Get away from me! It is not time yet.” I said with defiance. “Why didn’t You help me in the handling of that one?” I asked in my thoughts. Immediately I remember the Spirit speaking through Will, saying that we needed a time of individual battle and preparation. I saw it. I had been given the weapons and the ammunition. I was outfitted for battle and needed to have the experience of waging it myself.

I walked back to #17 and had several cups of water and settled down onto the bed again. I woke up feeling disoriented. It was dark again. I wondered if Jack was thinking about me or wondering where I was. I thought of some of our times together in bed. *How I miss that*, I thought...I felt a sensation in my groin. I wanted Jack! I wanted relief! I had not felt quite that way since I was a teenager. I put my hand under the jogging pants and pressed and rubbed and thought of the ways I had masturbated when I was younger. Oh, how I wanted Jack at this moment...this was a poor substitute, but harmless.

“No!” I startled myself with the outburst. “Get away from me.” I struggled with the feelings and the desire a moment longer. I realized for the first time what temptation was all about. You are not really tempted until you have a purpose to abstain from something. I knew that I needed to conquer this one and what the source of it was. I didn’t grow up with any hang-ups that manipulating myself for sexual relief was some kind of a sin. It just never occurred to me. My battle right now had to do with overcoming the ties to the physical so that I understood that the physical didn’t rule me, I must rule it. Back to the thought that

someone had expressed at Brad's about being a spirit living in a body bag. "So, where are You in all of this?" I asked aloud.

"I am always with you."

"And had I gone ahead and taken care of the urge, I would have been ahead of you and not heard your voice."

"You will remember this and your lesson is complete. Go to sleep."

Still fully clothed and still on top of the bed. Going into my second day without a shower...*what a bum*, I thought contentedly as I drifted off. It was cool and just barely dawn. I drank the remainder of the water. I went into the bathroom and wrestled with the thought of calling Brad's to see if somebody could drive down to pick me up. "What should I do?"

"Your choice," I heard.

I wanted to walk. I couldn't wait to get back to Brad's to share some of my experiences. The airport...watching Jack lying on the floor of the sitting room. I saw a figure walking toward me in the distance. He was tall...walked like Jack...as we got closer...I ran toward him and he lifted me off my feet.

"Where have you been?" he asked with a grin on his face.

"Oh, Jack...there is so much I want to share. But now that I'm with you—do you think we can jump in the water and get in up to our necks so that nobody could see us and get it on?" We laughed and he swung me around and around a couple of times. We reached the bottom of the stairs up to our room.

"Everybody is going to be in the solarium at noon," Jack said.

"What's been happening while I've been gone?"

"This will be the first time we've met as a group since Wednesday. I saw Brad and Colin earlier, when I sauntered down to see if anyone was around. They had seen Will a few minutes earlier and agreed that we'd meet at noon. I sensed you'd be down on that end of the beach...at least I hoped so. I've really been at peace about you being gone. I did start to worry once; I asked and was told you were getting an education and to forget about you for the time being."

“Jack, Thursday morning about 2 a.m., I saw you lying face-down on the sitting room floor, with your little New Testament in your right hand. Did I really see you...or was it a dream?”

“Aha,” Jack mused, “sounds like you’ve had an out-of-body experience too.”

‘Too.’ Sounds like I’m not the only one. “Yes,” I replied, “and an in-the-body one as well.” I jumped into the shower, staving off any temptation to invite my husband to join me. He called in to me that he’d see me downstairs.

11

Back Together Again

IT HIT ME WHEN I ENTERED—FRIDAY NOON. THE last time I had seen any of them was Wednesday between 7 and 8 a.m. I had lived a lifetime since then. I was so anxious to share, and to hear what everyone else had experienced. I was so glad that both Colin and Bob were present as well.

Brad said, “Who’s going to be first?”

“I’ve certainly had a wild ride, so why don’t I,” Vic started off. “First of all, I just couldn’t get Colin’s dissertation on the twelfth chapter of second Corinthians out of my mind. And the fact that Paul obviously accepted that a human being could make a supernatural trip both in the body and out of the body. In my quest for a breakthrough in this area...Colin, what you said about us being unbelievers in this area stung and is absolutely true. I told Spirit I wanted examples of both...but only in the power and presence of God’s own Spirit.

“You guys know how spooky I get about occult kinds of stuff. I’ve seen instances where people have dabbled, as Colin put it, in the occult and it opened them up to being under the control of demonic powers. Anyway...I’ve taken four trips so far. Three out of body, which almost seems like no big deal in a way, because it is just the same to me as a vision or a dream. Real in the spirit realm, but not readily translatable into the physical.”

Oh how I wanted to jump in and tell Vic about my out-of-body experience of seeing Jack on the floor upstairs, and that Jack had verified it and therefore it had been translated into the physical. I suppressed my enthusiasm for when it would be appropriate for me to share.

“My in-body experience,” Vic went on, “was the thrill of my life and I know I am going to be doing it again and again. Spirit carried me to St. Louis. I was upstairs here in my room Wednesday night, about 8:30, on my face on the floor. All of a sudden I was at

the home of a couple that had been members of my church in St. Louis.

“They were very supportive of me when I was fired. The woman was the one that had given me the manuscript of Brad’s interview in the first place. I had sent them a long letter after I’d come down here that first time and told them I now agreed with everything in the manuscript.

“I had written that letter from a hotel in Chicago when I first went up there to find a place to live, so didn’t have a mailing address as yet. I never got back to writing them again. I’d forgotten all about it. My first consciousness of where I was—was at their front door at the same house where they lived back five years ago out near Maryland Park about 20 miles west of St. Louis. I rang the bell and there were about 15 people having a gathering of some sort. Hal and Dot Reynolds are the couple I know.

“Hal opened the door and Dot spotted me and yelled, ‘Vic!’ Then to the rest of the group, she was saying with all kinds of excitement, ‘This is him! This is the man Hal and I were just telling you about!’

“Dot was literally jumping up and down and came over and gave me a hug. I spoke to that little group for about 30 minutes, purely in the power of Holy Spirit about ‘The Time is Short.’ I don’t remember much of what I said, but afterward I told them all that I had to be going and walked out the front door. I was on the walkway headed toward the sidewalk and the next thing I knew, I was back on the floor upstairs on my face.”

“Wait a minute, Vic, how did you know it was an in-body instead of an out of the body experience?” Bob asked.

“Two reasons, Bob. First of all, it was cold out there that night, and all I had on was the same open-neck blue pullover and the same pants and sandals that I had been wearing on the floor here. It was cold out on that front walkway. The skin on my arms and my feet were still cold when I was back on the floor upstairs. I got off the floor and put on some socks and a sweatshirt for a while.

“Now here’s the kicker...I started wondering about Hal and Dot and if this experience wasn’t some kind of a message to me from Spirit to contact them. I called information in Missouri for

Maryland Park and got their number. I decided to wait until the morning to call. It was 7 a.m. there. Hal answered the phone. I was about to tell him that I'd had a dream about them and was wondering if they were okay.

"Before I could get the words out, Hal told me that when I had left the night before the entire group was overtaken by weeping. They made a commitment as a group to go on a fast and seek God as to what to do because of the shortness of time. Hal said, 'Vic, I don't know why you came by, but it doesn't make any difference—trust me, Holy Spirit brought you here to kick this little group out of our complacency.' "

How on earth do you top that story? My experience was wonderful, but walking around an airport terminal getting hungry from the smell of the Burger King and Taco Bell hardly competes with what happened to Vic. I was excited and humbled at the same time. Determined to share my experience, but Vic's experience was such a demonstration of the possibilities God was opening up to us all!

Jack took the words right out of my mouth. "I know we are not here to compete with each other, but I'm so glad you went first, Vic, what a mind-blowing introduction to this discussion. Later that same night, actually about 2 a.m. to be precise, I too was on my face on the floor.

"I had been a bit troubled about how all of you use the word Spirit interchangeably with God. Not a big thing...but I reverted to my Bible bondage and was telling God I wanted a passage of Scripture. I had my pocket New Testament in my right hand, like this," Jack took a second to demonstrate what he was saying, bent over hitting the floor with the heel of his hand, holding the little book between his thumb and forefinger, "while hitting the bottom of my hand on the floor. Ever since you exposed us to the passage about supernatural travel, Colin, on Tuesday night, I have been..." Jack paused groping for words. "Well, it reminded me of when Vic showed us that passage that cleared things up about demons and our ability to deal with them.

"So I wanted a passage that would put my mind at ease about the names Spirit and God. While I was demanding to know if there was such a passage, I literally heard what sounded like an audible

voice say, ‘Second Corinthians, 3.18.’ I want to read it to you now....

‘We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.’

“I mean, listen to that,” Jack could hardly contain his excitement as he re-read the last two verses with emphasis. “Now the Lord IS the Spirit...and again ‘ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.’ Maybe this passage doesn’t sing out at you like it does to me, but here Spirit specifically gave me what I desired.

“He is the Spirit...the Spirit is Him...how much plainer could it be? Here it is, Christ, Lord, Spirit all in this one passage. I keep seeing that I’ve been so bound up in my religious upbringing and tradition, and the way out is trusting Spirit and going to Spirit for the answers to everything!”

“What sings out to me, Jack,” Colin said, “is your excitement about it. It is infectious. The true meaning of enthusiasm by the way...God’s Spirit within having outer expression.”

“Oh, and,” Jack’s excitement was bubbling over again, “when I met Dar just awhile ago down on the beach...she asked me if I had been lying face down about two in the morning that night. She wanted to know if she had actually been here or if it had just been a dream—I sensed that she was there at the time, but figured I was just missing her and forgot about it. Anyway, I’m sure my wife has quite a story to tell us as well.”

I said, “yes, but,” and I told them I sensed that it wasn’t quite time for me.

“Oh good,” Ann burst in. “I know I’m supposed to share right now. This is the first time I have ever gone without food. I haven’t eaten anything since dinner on Tuesday night and I’m still not the slightest bit hungry. I told Spirit that I wanted faith. I wanted to be able to cast out demons and I wanted to be able to lay hands on the sick. I want it all...I want to be able to float around the hemisphere like you guys are doing, too....” We all laughed at yet another of Ann’s colloquialisms.

“I’m tired of referring people who need healing or are being bothered by demons to somebody else. Vic has told me forever that I need to be doing these things as well. I will. I know it.” Ann was so excited and talking so fast that I really had to concentrate to keep up with her. She continued, “Darlene’s breakthrough the other morning in the shower was just what I needed to hear. I’ve had this cockamamie idea that only men could operate in faith. I know totally that that is not true now.

“Brad, this too is transcending. I heard loud and clear the Spirit’s admonition not to revel in what we’ve already been doing, but the fact is that I haven’t been doing anything to revel in or be smug about. I haven’t even believed half of the things you guys do around here. I’ve been hanging onto Beth’s healing and how Vic and Will have been used by God to make differences in people like Darlene and Jack. And then, back to the manuscript again, Colin, leapfrog.

“Darlene sailed right over my head—when here I’ve been exposed to this stuff forever. I can also see why you guys resist church. I’ve been a spectator, and when I stopped to realize it just last night as I was knocking and demanding for more of God’s own Spirit, I saw that I was a spectator of a mere ritual that was just a shadow of the reality of the power and presence of God. I guess you can tell that I’m a bit excited...” she trailed off.

We all laughed, and Will, after the laughter subsided, said, “My darling wife. Do you have any idea of the encouragement and support you have been to me? Yes, I am so thankful we are finally getting on the same page with what Holy Spirit is doing and all of us wanting more and to move on, but you need to understand how thankful I’ve been to God for giving you to me.”

We all had tears in our eyes at that one...Ann too.

“This is so interesting to me,” I began. All of us are going through this experience in different and very individual ways. Here Ann is still not hungry and had no ill effects from fasting. I practically have had to fight hunger the whole time. I had a headache for awhile, dizziness and lightheadedness that Spirit had to assure me would pass. But I see that I needed to experience these things so I could learn the lesson about being freed from the ties the physical realm has over me.”

I told them all that had happened; the out-of-body visit to Jack while he was getting his Scriptural reference and my in-body visit to the Jacksonville airport and what I learned from both experiences. I even shared the sexual urge and how I was taught a huge lesson as a result. I shook my finger at Will at this latter and said, “And don’t you say a word, mister.” Everyone laughed, including Will with what I now considered his delightful and lovable cackle.

“But the main thing I learned,” I finished, “was that we have a Friend who is always there to meet these individual needs we have. What this has done for me is to realize that we are all God’s kids. All the feeling of resentment over Dr. Winslow getting rid of us has been dissolved into the knowledge of what I learned through you, Brad, that very first night...that all of it was perfect. Ken Winslow is a child of God who just happens to be on a different path than we are on. The same Friend that is calling me to follow Him is calling Ken Winslow and I say, ‘Daddy, thank you for showing me that so vividly and bless Ken Winslow mightily!’ ”

“Here, here!” Brad said.

Colin said, “Holy Spirit is gently urging me to bring a bit of teaching here and highlighting it with another passage. This is especially for Ann and Jack, but a reminder to all of us. We certainly need to speak blessing over those who are on different paths. But we need also to see the dangers with which those paths are fraught.”

This man and his impeccable diction with that wonderful Irish accent—creating its magic with all of us again, I thought.

“Ann,” he continued, “you referring to yourself as being a spectator, watching a mere ‘shadow of reality’ was right out of the

heart of God.” Colin turned to Jack and held out his hand, “If I might borrow your little book again, my friend.

“Here it is, and you must remember that Paul is giving an instruction to his young protégé, Timothy, and clearly believes he is delivering a command of God.

“ ‘having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.’

“If my memory serves me correctly,” Colin paused and looked upward with his eyes momentarily, “yes, thank You...it does serve me correctly...this last sentence, ‘Have nothing to do with them,’ in the original is ‘turn your back on them as if in hatred.’

“I don’t believe for a moment that Paul is saying to hate anyone, but he *is* telling Timothy to act as if he did and that act is to walk away. Darlene and Jack, you were spared the ignominy of having to take the action yourself; it was done for you. Ann, I believe you are being shown the action you need to take in the face of those who have the form—your ‘shadow of reality’—of godliness but by their actions are denying God’s power.

“Again, we must speak words of blessing upon them and love them as God loves them...but we must also stay out of harm’s way, of being a party to denying God’s power.”

This man speaks in such authority...and yet is so humble, I thought, not for the first time.

“This brings me to share what I’ve been seeing this last couple of days,” Bob entered the conversation. “Transcending is not only becoming something other than what we’ve been, it is also leaving behind that which is without value. Colin has for some time seen that we need to get beyond our clinging to the death of these body bags we occupy as the only means of getting to the next stage of our existence. To put it in different words, we need to ‘die’ not only to death, but to all other forms we think of as reality.

“Darlene is seeing that she can enjoy what is here in the physical—please correct me if I’m making too large an assumption here, Darlene—and, in fact, that being in and of the presence of Spirit enhances and heightens the enjoyment of the physical. The real her, however, needs to be in charge and not the body bag.”

“Yes, that is what I am seeing, Bob,” I agreed.

“Here is what I am seeing,” Brad said, “and I’ve written a little piece on it that I will give to all of you. Transcending, as we are seeing and experiencing, is certainly going beyond where we have been. It is also becoming what we have not been. Transcending goes beyond leaving behind death and other physical things to the dead among us. This is what Jesus meant when he told the man whose father had died, to let the dead bury the dead.

“Transcending goes beyond even taking charge over these body bags. Transcending is being with, in, and a part of God as we were in the beginning. This is the picture of *Elohiym* the plurality of the God of the first chapter in Genesis. This is who we in this room are. Perhaps all humanity is not. I do not have clarity on this point as yet, but Spirit assures me that as we continue to progress toward being one with Spirit that we will have clarity and will know all things.”

“Brad, forgive me for being a smart-ass,” Ann interrupted, “but I’m just on the verge of seeing what Will started to experience after Beth’s healing and he hooked up with Vic. Now you’re off onto some higher ground and I’m wondering if I will ever catch up.”

“Ann, today is Friday,” Brad responded. “You have been here since Monday, what differences have you gone through since then?”

“I’ve taken so many twists and turns that I’m an entirely different person,” Ann said almost whimsically.

Brad went on, “What we learned from Spirit through Bob on Tuesday night is that we must not revel in the past. What you’ve learned and experienced this week and are experiencing even at this moment is already past and what you must not do is celebrate it or get stuck in it. It is a part of you. Now accept it and move on. Okay?”

Ann looked dumbstruck with her mouth slightly open. “Wow. Of course, I see it perfectly now. How silly...I mean *really* silly. I’ve seen this week how I’ve been resisting Spirit in the past about all these things I am now learning. And now I was getting smug about learning them and—and resisting all over again. Utterly ridiculous!”

“It is silly and ridiculous,” I added. “It is so easy to get caught up in the enormity of a new experience. Being in the body...out of the body...is just another shadow of reality. These experiences are all a part of us, and as Vic saw earlier he will be doing them again and again. But what I’m seeing is we will be doing them in the recognition of our true identities. No! Wait a minute,” I interrupted myself.

“Not *identities*,” I emphasized the plural, “we are not separate, we are one! Therefore, the experience is meaningless if it is Darlene or Ann doing anything because it isn’t Darlene or Ann any longer. It is God or Elohiym...”

“Or Christ, God, Lord, Spirit,” Jack chimed in. “It is no longer ‘I’ and therefore nothing to celebrate, or be smug about. It just ‘is’...and we just ‘are.’ ”

“I’m just seeing why Jesus said I AM,” Vic said.

“Exactly,” Will said, “I AM.”

“Wait a minute, am I hearing you correctly?” Ann asked. “You guys are saying ‘I AM,’ because you are recognizing your identity, I mean you are saying I AM as you?”

“I AM, dear, as are you I AM,” Will told her.

“Well, thank You, Spirit, for moving us from death to life,” Bob said.

Brad said, “And I, as Brad, smugly thought I was going to teach you all something and provide you with a paper about it no less.” He shook his head in that self-deprecating way that seemed so unique to him.

“I AM,” Colin provided the final note of the evening for us as we all understood transcending together at the same time.

12

From Unreality to Reality and Back Again

I'M GOING TO BREAK MY FAST TONIGHT. SHALL I tell Vangie to put on a spread, or do some of you want to continue fasting?" Brad asked. We voted one and all for the spread.

"Any reflections?" Brad asked as soon as the eight of us had gathered around the fireplace after dinner.

"The breakthrough into I AM consciousness, as I've come to think of it," Jack started, "places our experiences not as *from* God, but as a part of God."

"How are you seeing that?" Colin asked.

"Participation in the work of the Spirit," Jack responded. "For example, Vic's visitation to St. Louis wasn't Vic. Those people saw Vic because Spirit manifested as Vic and used his body. What I am seeing is that it wasn't even Vic's choice to go to St. Louis. It was Spirit's choice. In that sense, Vic wasn't even Vic. When I sang in the Spirit on the beach it wasn't as Jack at all. Spirit was doing the singing. Proof of that happened this afternoon. Why don't you tell them, Dar?"

"I'm clearly seeing what you are saying, Jack." I looked around the room shaking my head and holding my hands in front of me with my palms turned upward as I explained that Jack and I hadn't even discussed what he had just said and that I too was hearing it for the first time.

"What happened is that Jack and I went for a walk on the beach and I asked him if there was any way he could sing in the Spirit again. He closed his eyes looked out toward the ocean, opened his mouth and the most beautiful sounds you can imagine came out. It was definitely in another language. The tone was so pure and the language was..." I struggled for words that would express what I heard and felt. "Soft, mellow, velvety...smooth,

even soothing; it was beautiful and yet that word is totally inadequate.”

“Let Him sing through you right now, Jack,” Colin suggested gently.

For several minutes, Spirit sang through Jack.

Ann said, “I still have chills running up and down my spine. How could we ever describe how beautiful that was? I was literally transported right into the throne room of God. I don’t know what that means, but that’s where I was. ‘Other world...’ I guess you could say.”

Colin said, “What is amazing to me is that I knew Darlene was going to have Jack sing some song or another to demonstrate how horrible his natural voice is; Spirit told me not to permit it and spoke to you through me. It is like a double dose of the same truth. A comparison would have been obscene—the most beautiful human voice, whether male or female, could not reproduce what we just heard.”

“And a perfect demonstration of the thesis of participation you were presenting to us, Jack,” Brad pointed out.

“I AM consciousness, participation with God...we could start a whole new church with those labels,” Bob said.

“Pull-eeze Bob,” Vic said grinning. “I believe there is some group that already calls itself by the name of I AM Consciousness, believe it or not,” he added.

“Shortly after Jeanne Stockwell had her breakthrough during the writing of the manuscript,” Brad said, “we were told what our names were in the spirit realm. Later we were told to go back to using our physical identities with our new understanding of who we are, but not to revert to depending on the minds of the bodies we occupy.”

“I am already seeing something in that regard,” Vic said. “For example, in a participation mode I do not have to concern myself with saying the wrong thing, like ‘casting pearls before swine.’ I simply get into the same mode as I do with healing and be God’s vessel in all areas of what we call life on the physical plane. The difference is, ‘Vic’ is simply no longer doing anything. ‘Vic’ is gone. In a practical sense that’s why ‘Vic’ cannot die—‘Vic’ has already ceased to exist.”

“What finally dawned on me this afternoon,” Ann said, “is this whole attachment to the physical is an illusion. God is reality and the enemy’s strategy is to get us to concentrate on the illusion.”

“Yes, and mistaking the illusion for reality is doubly tough in the sciences,” Will said. “In Med School—stuff like biology for example—looking at the supposed ‘reality’ of cellular anomalies through a microscope seemed to prove the reality and the presence of disease. When Vic started to expose me to the work of demons, it was difficult to resolve the reality of what I had seen in a microscope. Until I realized that what I was seeing was the result of what demons had done. The cure, the reversal, was to get rid of the real cause of the problem which is spiritual and not treat the illusory disease.”

“Of course,” Brad interjected, “what exacerbates that very issue is that people will urge someone to go to the doctor for a perceived problem. The doctor correctly diagnoses the disease and proves its existence with tests. The patient is cured through standard medical treatment...and the thought of a demonic origin is scoffed at. The ‘proof’ was not only in the diagnosis and lab work, but the fact that the patient was cured.”

“It is even more difficult for the family of a physician. Part of the reason I resisted the reality of demons for so long is that I suffered though medical school with Will,” Ann said. “I believed everything he was learning, and for someone to begin to cast doubt on what I thought I knew was not at all appreciated. It was why I was so angry with my daughter for throwing her meds and stuff away after she was healed. I can remember the whole discussion of asthma being caused by demons. After having Will’s colleagues—specialists in the disease—telling me how it was caused and that there was no cure, it was very difficult for me to give up such acquired knowledge. Transcending is getting past all this stuff. I AM.”

“Holy Spirit guide us from here,” Colin spoke softly.

Immediately after Colin’s words: BANG! A loud pop came from somewhere in the room, then a crackling sound like electricity. The lights went out and there were these beautiful

purple flashes something like a strobe light produces, but far prettier and softer, accompanied by the continued crackling noise.

After several minutes the noise and the purple flashes finally subsided. The house lights came back on. We looked at each other dumbfounded.

“That was a happening,” Ann said. “Does anyone have any idea what it was or what it might mean?”

No one spoke for several minutes. “I have no frame of reference,” Brad said. “I can tell you that nothing like it has ever happened in this house before. Let’s first make sure we all saw and heard the same things. Will, can you describe what you just witnessed?”

“Small flashes of a deep purple light, almost like it was being painted with a brush. And a crackling sound like there was electricity in the air, which seemed to coincide with the flashes of purple—as if it was an energy charge of some kind.”

“Everyone else see and hear basically the same thing?”

Again, no one spoke.

Finally Colin said, “Purple cloth, I believe, was a sign of wealth among the ancients. The robe the Romans put on Jesus when they hung him was purple.

Vic said, “I do know that whatever it was came immediately on the heels of your saying ‘guide us, Holy Spirit,’ Colin.”

“Spirit, we do not want to interpret this with our minds, where are you in this?” I asked, aloud. I heard the same voice I had heard in the motel saying, “The purple light represents My presence among you. The crackling sounds represent your individual reflection of my energy in each of you. The loud sound you heard was My bringing this from the unseen realm to the physical plane. Not unlike the phenomenon that creates the sound of thunder.”

“Oh, so simple actually, ” I said. “I’m quite new at this, but I’m wondering if anyone else heard what I just heard?”

Bob jumped on me verbally, “New at what? And what did you hear, Darlene?”

“New at asking my Friend where He is in this. New in hearing His responses, it has only been this week. And new in how to go about finding out what others in the group are getting at the

same time. You heard me ask the question and I was immediately given the answer; I wanted to see if anyone else got the same thing. It's hard to put into words...." I trailed off.

"You put it into words perfectly, Darlene," Brad said, in that gentle, reassuring way of his. "What I heard our Friend say was that the purple was to manifest his presence on this plane, so we would see with our physical eyes without being too distracted from the unseen realm, and the crackling noise was our individual energy responses. The initial loud bang we heard was his entrance from the spirit realm into the physical, and that it was something like the same kind of vacuum that causes a thunder clap."

"Oh Brad," I said, almost overcome that what I had heard was confirmed by someone else. "That is such a confirmation of what I got...expressed a little differently, but what I've learned in the last couple of days is that He is talking to each one of us so that we can individually understand. But what you heard was almost exactly what I got. Why is that so reassuring...? It's almost as if it shouldn't be, you know, dependent upon another human being."

"Not at all, Darlene." Colin intoned, "Everything we've received this week, as we've made these tremendous advances, has been confirmed each step of the way by one another. We are learning to walk corporately, so to speak, as well as individually. In this way we are seeing the oneness, as we indeed are, but as individual parts.

"I believe we needed this little extraneous demonstration that was just given us so we can begin to see how much we haven't seen yet and how much more we will see as we begin to experience and express this I AM consciousness. In this demonstration we were spectators, but not at some humanly contrived 'shadow of reality.' We just now experienced together the real substance and ability of Spirit to move upon those who are willing. We have had only a foretaste of what is ahead for us.

"Imagine having the same experiences as Vic had in St. Louis, but instead of just being the mouthpiece of Spirit, imagine also being accompanied by the signs and wonders we've just seen. There will be a lot of resistance from those who already think we are fringe lunatics, who will blaspheme against Spirit and say that what we are doing is of the enemy. That is the enemy's own

strategy, to give himself credit for what Spirit is doing and to bring discredit to Spirit. It is nothing to ultimately concern us, but certainly, in the battle to come, we must be aware of our enemy's tactics."

"I am seeing," Jack said, "what is meant by 'the time is short' in an entirely different way. Spirit operates in this moment, in this NOW moment as you explained in the manuscript, Brad; this *is* eternity right this moment. The time is short in which it can be received. We must grab it in this NOW or it will pass us by. Transcending means getting out of the complacency that is caused by focusing on the illusion of physical 'reality.' When we get glimpses as we have this week, we need to jump on them and demand the breakthrough to see more and more. The enemy would have us stop short. This manifestation we just saw is only a small example of the possibilities."

"I must share with you," Brad added, "that in this week I have seen the most significant breakthroughs in myself in years. I don't think it is coincidental that we are here together. We have six days left that we scheduled to be together. I have some consulting work scheduled for the week after next. First in Calgary, Alberta, then on to Montreal, then to the U.K."

"I can postpone these engagements if we all want to prolong our time together. I know you have your practice to get back to, Will, and your work, Jack—so what I am proposing is that each of us pursue Spirit to see what is next...and if we should look even to making some significant changes in our lives. I leave that with you—prevail to get some direction and why don't we all meet in the solarium around 10a.m.?" Without any further discussion we all got up and left.

"Where are you in this one?" I silently asked my Friend.

"Hon, I'm getting that we should be open to anything and just tell Brad that in the morning," Jack said as we walked into the sitting room.

"Spirit," I asked aloud, "Is this your answer to my question?"

I heard very clearly, "yes."

I just nodded to Jack, then said, "What a week. And to think that this is only the beginning. We've just barely scratched the surface. Jack, I want to go to bed and sleep."

“Me too,” he said laughing easily, though obviously as tired as me.

Part III

A New Life

1

The Vision and the Response

I HAD A VIVID DREAM. THE GIRLS WERE HERE with us, seeing and sharing the same things we were. I saw a for-sale sign on our front lawn in Illinois. I saw a building in Jacksonville where we were meeting with many other people, all participating together in some activity that I couldn't quite understand or see clearly. I heard the loud popping noise and heard all the people squeal in delight as the purple flashes and the crackling sounds happened again, but in a much greater display throughout this large building than they had been in the room with the fireplace at Brad's. Jack and Will were standing there with their hands raised and blue and orange flames were coming out the end of their fingertips. I looked over at Ann and saw that her fingers also had this same kind of flame coming from the ends of her fingers. I looked around and saw Brad, Colin, Bob and Vic also with flames coming from their fingertips. I started to panic—*why were they all having this manifestation, but I was being left out?* Ann laughed and said, "Darlene, look at your hands." Yes, I was experiencing the phenomenon as well.

I woke up abruptly to see that Jack was already wide awake, both hands behind his head on his pillow, staring at the ceiling. "Sweetheart," I told him, "I just had the wildest dream; it is still so clear in my mind that I can see every detail." I described my dream.

"What do you make of it?" he finally asked.

"No, I want to hear your interpretation," I insisted.

"Oh, it is very simple, Dar. It is a confirmation of what I knew when I woke up quite a while ago. I am to quit my job, sell the house and we are to move here with the girls. But we are to do so only if all the others agree to it as well. If any of them—including Brad—does not see it as you just saw it and I just know, then we are not to come."

“They will, Jack, it is what we are supposed to do.” I made us a pot of coffee and we sat there quietly for some time just sipping at our cups.

“I’m surprised that neither of us are excited or troubled about the thought of being uprooted,” I remarked. “Plus, I’m not one bit upset about leaving our home or worried about you leaving your job. I know we are going to be shown, step-by-step what to do.”

“I do see the girls being excited about it. It will be an adventure to them, but they’re ready for it,” Jack added. It was time to go down.

We all entered the solarium about the same time.

Ann said, “Will, Vic and I are moving here, but we are agreed that we will only do it if you are ready to move also, Jack and Darlene.”

Jack said, “I got that we weren’t supposed to move unless everyone agreed.” He then described my dream.

“Gentlemen?” Brad directed this at Colin and Bob.

Colin replied for them both. “Bob had a similar vision and came out to the shop and shared it with me. We both are simply at peace that what we are supposed to do will unfold. It does sound like some sort of gathering-place is in the offing though, doesn’t it?”

“I was seeing this last night,” Brad said, “while we were still sitting out by the fire. We are to demonstrate to others what God has been showing us this week. Here are some logistics I see and you can tell me if you agree. You are all to return to Chicago tomorrow and take care of the details of leaving. I sense this will be a lot easier than either of you—Will and Jack—imagine. The way is being prepared for both of you to leave the Chicago area. Vic is always ready—right, Vic?”

Vic nodded and said, “no problem.”

“I will move up my trip to Canada and London to Monday and be back two weeks from today. Bob, if it’s all right with you, I will leave it to you to work out with the Adams which part of the house they and their daughters will occupy. I would imagine the south wing, because it has three bedrooms and two baths. That way you’ll have an office, Jack. I assume the suite that you and Ann are in now will be okay, Will?”

“Fine, fine, no problem,” Will and Ann both quickly nodded their agreement.

“This house is owned free and clear. The taxes are significant, but I can do enough consulting via phone and e-mail to take care of all our needs, including food for all of us and utilities and salaries for the staff.”

“Sounds like a whole new dimension on ‘the time is short’ theme,” Ann suggested to our laughter.

“Darlene and I have not discussed this, but I can see that we can just sell the house furnished. My feeling is just to turn over the proceeds to you Brad.”

“Ann and I have already discussed the same thing,” Will added.

“We’ll set up some sort of organizational structure to accommodate the finances for everything and everybody,” Brad said simply. “Bob has handled my finances ever since he’s been here; I’ll let him work out some kind of proposal for how we meld this all together and we’ll all sit down together when you guys get down here and work out the kinks, okay? It appears that we are all in this as a family, and I have had no feelings of any personal ownership of the place since Barbara left.”

Hmmm, I thought, that’s a story I want to hear.

“Colin and Bob are both here because they are called to be here, and as you notice there are no bosses among us. You all are now coming because you are called to be here, so we share as the Spirit leads us in unity and equality. Does that sit well with everyone?”

“By the way,” Bob said finally, “there is plenty of dry, clean storage space here, and so whatever you feel like dragging down here can be easily accommodated. We’ve also got enough computer equipment so that your daughters will also be accommodated in that department for studies and the like.”

“The important thing is just to let Spirit lead us in everything. The word I’m getting is don’t get ahead of Him, and everything will work out perfectly,” Brad finished.

The four of us (Vic had opted to stay behind for a few days to help Bob get things set up for us) were able to book our return flight back to Chicago—Midway on Sunday Morning...on the same discount airline by which we had flown down. We had to make a plane change in Nashville, but other than that, there were no hitches, and our scheduled arrival was just five minutes passed noon.

We had called the girls the night before to let them know we'd be home between 1:30 and 2 p.m. and to be ready for a long, late lunch at Solomon's—one of the entire family's favorite restaurants. We told them to brace themselves for some news, but refused to give them any details except that it would be a surprise. We were able to sit on the same row as Will and Ann on the return flight, so we had some rather animated conversations about the upheavals in our lives in just the few days since we flew in the other direction toward Jacksonville.

"Who would've believed we were going to be living together," Ann mused with a shake of her head. "You guys feeling okay about everything?"

"In the natural, Ann, I'd say I was numb. But I just know it's right and it is perfect. So, yeah, I'm okay. What about you, Jack?"

"Perfect," he said without hesitation.

"There you have it," I said. "You've been awfully quiet, Will. What's going on in that head of yours?"

"If you want to know the truth, I was thinking that just a few short weeks ago you came into my office with divorce on your mind. 'You've come a long way baby.' " Then he cackled loudly so that several people turned around to see the cause of the noise. Jack just took my hand and we smiled at each other.

"Ladies and gentlemen, please fasten your seatbelts, return your seatbacks to their upright position and stow your tray tables for our landing at Chicago—Midway," came the announcement. We got our luggage, hugged our friends/now housemates and made arrangements to call each other. We were home—to our soon to be non-home.

All the way to Solomon's Debbie and Rachel kept up a barrage of, "C'mon, Mom, c'mon, Dad, tell us." Now we were seated and had our water glasses in front of us....

"You're kidding," Rachel said softly. "Yippee!" Debbie practically yelled, right after Jack had blurted out, "Well, girls, we are selling the house and moving to Jacksonville, Florida; right on the beach."

"What about school?" Rachel asked.

"Honey," I answered slowly and carefully, "that is just one of the many things we have to figure out together. If you're interested, maybe we can look into a home tutoring plan on the computer with one of the universities."

"Cool, Debbie said.

2

The Arrangements

ALMOST IN STORYBOOK FASHION, THINGS FELL into place. The president of Jack's firm took his resignation in stride, and assured him that he always had a job there if he wanted to return. Jack's management style would make the transition a simple one.

One of the things Jack and I agreed upon was that I would call a realtor on that Monday. I was getting out the Yellow Pages and starting to feel my way into making a list when the doorbell rang. Through the curtain I saw a nicely dressed woman peering up our driveway. When I opened the door, she said she hoped she hadn't come at a bad time, but she was a real estate agent and just wanted to leave me her card in case we were ever interested in selling our home.

"Is this the one?" I asked my Friend and was assured that it was.

She came in and did what she referred to as a standard market appraisal. She went around the house, took pictures and showed me the price ranges of houses of this kind and the average length of time it took to sell relative to the price.

"You're kidding me!" she exclaimed, when I told her we'd prefer selling our home furnished. "How soon would you be willing to move?"

I stammered at her excitement, not knowing quite what to make of it. "As soon as possible, actually. We have a place to go in Florida and we'd like to leave as soon as possible."

"You are not going to believe this!" She looked amazed. "I was holding an open house yesterday over on Farnsworth, just six blocks to the west, and this couple came to look through the house. It's a nice home and within their price range, but they need something right away and that one would take at least 60 days to close. He is being transferred back here from Holland where

they've lived for three years. They told me if I could find a nice house in this general area that was furnished and the people were ready to move they would buy it and worry later about whether they would stay in it or resell. Your house fits their requirements to a 't.'

"Their names are Buckle. I told them they were dreaming, but I'd keep my eye open and that I'd do a computer run on the multiple listings this morning. I called Mrs. Buckle about half an hour before I came to your door, Mrs. Adams. I told her that there was nothing furnished, or that could be available immediately in this area, because it is an upscale area, and things just didn't move that quickly. I asked her if I could keep looking—though I told her not to hold out a lot of hope.

"She told me that I didn't understand the power of prayer and just said if I did find something to call her. Before I call her I'll need to get a short form preliminary-listing agreement signed. It's just a formality that shows you and your husband will sell your home for the price you've agreed—including the furniture and everything—to the Buckles and it protects me as the selling agent."

I just asked my Friend quietly if I should do this and got a "yes."

Linda Stapleton, the agent looked like she might faint when I told her, "Just write it up and I'll sign it," without asking any other questions. We took care of the paperwork and Linda asked if she could use our phone.

"Mrs. Buckle," I heard her, "maybe you are going to make me a believer in however it is you pray. I just listed a home about a half-mile from where I met you yesterday. Mature landscaping, well cared for, immaculate condition and...*you* will probably believe it...I still don't...it is furnished and the people are willing to move immediately. When would you like to see it?" Linda turned to me, "Would two this afternoon be all right with you, Mrs. Adams." I nodded. "Shall I pick you and Mr. Buckle up at about 1:30?" she asked into the phone. "Oh, I see..." her voice became quite subdued, "I'll see you at 1:30 then." She put the wall phone back in its cradle.

"Mrs. Adams, I hope this isn't a waste of time. Mrs. Buckle told me that her husband was busy, and that he had left the

decision up to her. That almost never works out,” she said with obvious disappointment down from her emotional high of just moments before.

“Now, Linda,” I said lightly, with a smile, “Don’t forget the power of prayer.”

“Yes, of course,” she said politely, obviously not at all convinced and not at all impressed with my attempt at humor.

Promptly at 2, they pulled into the driveway. Linda was being somewhat typical in her walking around the yard, pointing out the obvious. They finally came to the door. Mrs. Buckle was well groomed, good looking, about my age and about an inch taller than my own five foot seven. “How do you do,” she said with a warm smile and hand outstretched. “I’m Celia Buckle.”

After a moment of Celia’s and my chitchat, Linda said, “Let me show you around, Mrs. Buckle.”

“It won’t be necessary. We told you we’d take anything that was furnished in our price range in this area. This is hardly just ‘anything.’ Make up an earnest money receipt and I will give you a \$10,000 deposit. The price is acceptable.”

Linda’s mouth dropped open and she looked from me to Celia and said, with her hands and arms spread widely, “Really?” She sounded totally incredulous. I couldn’t help it. I burst out laughing and so did Celia.

“Oh, Linda. Please forgive me for laughing, but you looked so disbelieving.” Celia put her hand on Linda’s shoulder. Celia and I both had tears rolling down our cheeks as we continued to laugh uncontrollably.

“Me too...” I was trying to speak through trembling lips. “I mean that I’m sorry for laughing too, it’s just you look so shocked and so surprised.”

“Well,” Linda started to laugh too; “it’s just that I’ve been in real estate for 16 years and I thought I had seen it all. But nothing like you two!” We all laughed again as all walls of any further attempt at formality came crumbling down.

“Now, Darlene,” Celia had finally regained control, “this is under the condition of being completely furnished...meaning kitchen utensils, linens, towels, everything except for personal items and also immediate occupancy. Are you sure you want to sell

under that condition and that you are not being rushed into doing something that would not be comfortable for you?”

What a warm, wonderful person, I thought. Why should I be surprised? When our Daddy puts something together, why shouldn't it work perfectly? I assured her that it would be fine.

She handed Linda her check, walked over to me and hugged me, and we both thanked each other as Linda stood looking perplexed. “Oh, Linda, take me back to the motel before I collapse all over again. Get that look off your face.” Celia said grinning. She had said it so warmly and in such a caring way that there was no way that Linda could take offense. Turning to me, she said, “So nice to have met you, Darlene, and the best of everything to you.”

“And the same to you,” I said. Linda assured us that she would take care of everything. I closed the door after them and just said thanks to my Friend out loud.

I called Jack. “My dear sir, are you ready to move?”

“You don't know how ready, Dar. Andy just left my office and told me that he'd make me a deal. If I'd be sure to be available by phone for the next 60 days, I could leave any time and he is going to continue my salary for two months. Is that good or is that good?” Before I could answer, he continued, “You know, Hon, it was so good I thought it might be a trap, so I asked and Spirit gave me the go ahead. So if you will just hurry up and do your part and get the house on the market we can pray it gets sold quickly.”

“There is a problem about that, Jack,” I told him seriously.

“Oh no, what's the matter?” He sounded really concerned.

“Well, we can't put the house on the market, Jack,” I said slowly. I was dragging this out as long as possible, savoring every moment. “It's already sold.”

“You're kidding—how soon do we have to get out?”

“I don't know exactly, but the deposit check and earnest-money agreement that I accepted and signed says on condition of immediate occupancy. The realtor handling it will be calling me after a while. The people want to move in, we want to move out and it looks like it can probably be arranged with proper legal paper. Like now. So get your butt home and let's celebrate.”

“Have you called Will and Ann yet?”

“Good grief, Charlie Brown,” I giggled, lapsing into my daughters’ favorite saying, “I just sold the house and called you. Hey, what if they’re available for dinner...you want to?” He agreed.

I called Ann. She told me that a former patient and her husband had told them that if they ever wanted to sell their house, they’d like to make an offer. “They just left, Darlene, it’s sold—furniture and all. Will just sublet the office to a law firm in the building that needs the space for expansion. So other than arranging to refer a few of his patients, we’re out of here. Sounds like our part has been divinely arranged. How’s it going with you guys?”

“Would you believe we have a similar story and Jack wanted me to call you to see if you were up to celebrate with us?” She put the phone down to go ask Will; when she came back we decided on an Italian place about half way between us.

Over dinner we made the decision to drive down to Jacksonville in two cars with Will and Ann. By the following Tuesday everything was complete and in order. The realtor’s legal staff took care of all the various waivers so that the Buckles could move in and we could move out worry free.

3

The Trip, First Leg

WE RENTED A ONE-WAY TRAILER IN WHICH TO take our personal belongings, so the girls wouldn't be crowded into the back seat with the luggage. We got together with Will and Ann the night before we left to plan our trip. We decided to take it easy and make the 1100 mile trip in three legs, with our first stop near Lexington, Kentucky and another somewhere close to Atlanta, Georgia. That would get us back to Florida in plenty of time to sit down to one of Vangie's great meals!

The girls were, naturally, very interested in what brought on this sudden change, so we shared everything that had happened to us at Brad's as we were driving. They kind of just took it in and absorbed it without very many questions or noticeable reactions. For Jack and me—and Will and Ann too—the trip was like putting our new-found reality on hold. How could that be? How could supernatural travel, the various insights we had, the marvelous demonstration of light and noises be a fading memory? Then I understood; the question itself was misdirected and foolish. I decided that I would get everyone involved in discussing it over lunch. We had learned that the time is short, and Jack had been given a very clear insight as to what that meant. I reached back to the recesses of my memory to pull out what Spirit had said through him.

"I am seeing," Jack had said, "what is meant by 'the time is short' in an entirely different way. Spirit operates in this moment, in this NOW moment as you explained in the manuscript, Brad; this *is* eternity right this moment. The time is short in which it can be received. We must grab it in this NOW or it will pass us by. Transcending means getting out of the complacency that is caused by focusing on the illusion of physical 'reality.' When we get glimpses as we have this week, we need to jump on them and demand the breakthrough to see more and more. The enemy would

have us stop short. This manifestation we just saw is only a small example of the possibilities.”

I didn’t know about anybody else, but my problem was grounded in the fact that I had become immersed in the mundane details of the so-called practicalities of living on this seen plane. Instead of taking everything to my Friend, I was using this mind of the body I was occupying. Spirit had been directing us through the sale of our homes, relieved us from the concerns of business down to the minutest of details. And instead of continually going to Him, I was even now allowing myself to be on a downer because we weren’t living in the eternal—that place of transcending—but focused on the cares of this world. *This is a perfect example, right now, stuck in this car driving six hours a day and spending the rest of the time stopping for food, gas and sight-seeing.* I had been totally focused on the physical.

We were on the I-74 heading east, just shy of the I-275 loop that would take us around Cincinnati and onto the southbound I-75 that would take us all the way down through Lexington, Atlanta and finally into Florida where we would intersect with I-10 and go east to the Jacksonville area and down to our destination at the beach.

“So,” I asked Spirit, “how do I get into that other consciousness instead of being focused on this stuff?”

“You just did,” I heard. “I am with you always. I have not left you, but you have allowed the mind of the body you occupy to take over the direction of your thoughts. By coming to Me just now, your consciousness has returned. Reality is here.”

“Okay, then,” I continued talking to Him, “why can’t we have supernatural manifestations right now?”

“What do you want to see?”

“Something that will get all of our minds focused back on you,” I said, “an open discussion.”

“That is not how it works. Remember how Ann saw that she was being a spectator of a humanly-contrived shadow of reality? She came to this point of awareness by much concentration through fasting and prayer. You are bothered at the moment by your focus on the mundane of the physical. The ego, the intellect of the body you occupy, wants to contrive a solution. The solution

at which it arrived was to get everyone involved in a discussion. That is the same kind of a shadow of reality.

“You are having a small glimpse of reality and want to gather everyone together to preach a sermon on the topic, so to speak. Do you see that? A discussion is just engaging the ego states of others and moves you even farther from reality because you see it as an improvement over the spectatorship of church, yet it is another version of the same shadow.”

“Yuck,” I said.

“Now, you are allowing the ego to play at self-condemnation from which there is no escape. It will rattle all around from the urge to do *something* to blaming itself for not doing the *right* thing. I AM here because you have called on me and know that I AM always available.”

“What can I do in this moment then that will have an impact on my family and also on Will and Ann?”

“First, you must take your focus off of them. The reason that everyone came to a transcendental moment at Brad’s is that each person individually came to Me with desire. As of now, Jack and Will are both concentrating on driving. Debbie and Rachel are thinking about what living in their new surroundings will be like. All of you to one degree or another are waiting to have something recaptured by gathering together in that house on the beach.

“Change the focus of your desire onto you, yourself transcending. Taking hold of this moment *for this moment* and living in the consciousness of I AM. You can only do this for you—not for them. As you transcend you will see ways to bring transcending to them. You must first remove yourself from the ego state and into the eternal now of the unseen realm. Otherwise you will be a blind person trying to lead another blind person; both will fall into the ditch. Will you see this?”

I sat there focusing on my real identity, I AM. As light flooded back into my being I decided to pay a visit to Will and Ann. I left the body of Darlene and was immediately with Will and Ann in their car. I was hovering over them and finally ‘landed’ on the seat behind them. I decided to just focus the white light of my presence toward both of them. After a moment in their time (I realized that I was in a timeless, eternal state) Ann spoke.

“Will, why is that we have these flashes of this transcending consciousness and then we revert back to the concerns of the physical realm. It is strange, but I am thinking about what Jack said that Friday night just before we returned to Chicago. It is as if I can hear his voice right now—let’s see, it went like, ‘I am seeing what is meant by “the time is short” in an entirely different way. Spirit operates in this moment, in this NOW moment...this *is* eternity right this moment. The time is short in which it can be received. We must grab it in this NOW or it will pass us by. Transcending means getting out of the complacency that is caused by focusing on the illusion of physical “reality.” When we get glimpses as we have this week, we need to jump on them and demand the breakthrough to see more and more. The enemy would have us stop short. This manifestation we just saw is only a small example of the possibilities.’ ”

Ann went from quoting what had been said through Jack into a mode of demanding that we were all learning to do. “Holy Spirit, I want you to take over my thoughts.”

“It doesn’t work quite like that, Ann,” I said, aware that she couldn’t hear me with her physical ears. “It is your choice to transcend into I AM consciousness. Holy Spirit is always with you. He is your Friend and because you have come into this realm with your desire for transformation, you have transcended from the physical realm to the realm of Spirit.”

“Will, I just had the most beautiful thought just now—right from Spirit, I know it!” Ann said with no little excitement. “We have the choice at any time to transcend into I AM consciousness; it is where I AM.”

I knew my job was finished and I immediately returned to the body called Darlene. I asked my Friend why I couldn’t be out of body in this car with my family.

“Because of their attachment to the body you occupy. There will come a time when you will all recognize your true identity, but you have much practicing to do before you can get to that point.”

“Wait a minute,” I thought as things became clear to me, “this is a discipline...a process.” I became aware that Jack was looking intently at the rear view mirror, and then he turned the

right indicator on. “I guess Will and Ann want to stop and get gas and eat at the next exit.”

I turned to see them behind us and Ann and I exchanged waves. “I’ve kind of lost track, where are we?”

“We just got onto the I-75 south of Cincinnati,” Jack said. There was a Ramada Inn at the exit with a large white banner advertising their \$5.99 buffet. Jack pulled into the parking lot and Will parked just a couple of spaces away.

As Jack got out of the car he called over, “Hungry, huh?”

“Well, not all that much, but Ann just had a happening of sorts and I thought it would be a great time to share. This okay for you guys?”

“Sure,” Jack responded.

I just said a silent thanks to my Friend, knowing what was coming next. Once inside, we chose a huge corner booth.

“Okay, you got us here, Ann,” Jack said, “what’s going on in that head of yours?”

“Before you start, may I?” I asked Ann.

“Of course.”

“Debbie and Rachel,” I started, “I want you to focus in on something and it is an example of what happened to us at Brad’s and why we are moving there. The reason I wanted to say something first, Ann, is I know some of what you are going to say. Because I was with you right there in your car back before we got onto the loop coming around the edge of Cincinnati.”

I had everyone’s attention with that one. “You told Will that you remembered what Jack had said about ‘the time is short’ the Friday just before we left to go back to Chicago and you quoted what he had said almost verbatim. Then you said, ‘Will, I just had the most beautiful thought just now—right from Spirit, I know it! We have the choice at any time to transcend into I AM consciousness; it is where I AM.’ Do you know how I know you were saying that, Ann?”

“You just said it, Darlene, you were in the car with us.” The girls were looking back and forth between Ann and me. Debbie had her mouth wide open and both of them were wide-eyed with astonishment.

“It actually goes beyond that, Ann. Spirit was speaking those words through me. You couldn’t hear my voice, but you sure registered the thought and then told Will.”

Will said, “and here I was telling you guys that Ann had a happening!”

“She did,” I pointed out. “Remember we only have one identity and that is what we are moving toward with transcending. In fact, that recognition *is* the transcendental state.” I shared with them my frustrations with getting bogged down in the physical, and how I wanted to get us all into a discussion and Spirit reminded me of Ann’s breakthrough—of the humanly-contrived shadow of reality.

“I was shown that if I engineered a discussion together with all of us, out of the frustration of the intellect of the body I occupy—and I was shown that this is the ego state—it would be just another shadow of reality in a different form. I was shown how to get out of the unreality of the ego state back into our true identity. I came and sat between you two in the back seat and simply focused the white light of I AM on you. And Spirit began talking through me to you, Ann.”

“Whoa, Mom,” Debbie said, “you were in our car during the whole trip.... So—”

I held up my hand to interrupt her, “Remember when your Dad read that passage out of the Bible to you about demons, and how it cleared it up for you? Well this lovely Irish man named Colin read a passage about supernatural travel; your Dad and I both experienced it, and the man that’s been working with Will, Vic, had a very exciting experience that was verified. He traveled from Jacksonville to St. Louis, and we’ll share the details of that later. The point, Debbie, is that you two have some catching up to do.”

“I guess,” Rachel said, shaking her head.

“I’m sorry, Ann, I didn’t mean to go on and on.”

“Darlene, it is perfect. Will and I just both realized we needed to make the choice to get out of the physical and into our true consciousness again—we wanted to stop together and share I AM.”

“Perfect,” added Jack, “I AM.”

We drove the rest of the way to a spot about twenty miles past Lexington and stayed the night at a Holiday Inn.

4

The Trip, Second Leg

IT DAWNED ON ME THE NEXT MORNING; ONE OF the best ways to bring Rachel and Debbie up to speed was to share the manuscript. After giving them our copies, we took to the road fairly early. Will, who was familiar with Atlanta, wanted to avoid the horrors of rush hour by getting through it by 2 p.m. and spending the night near an area called Stockbridge, several miles south of Atlanta.

The girls were busy reading and asking some questions until we reached Chattanooga, Tennessee. Jack said, “The main reason I was glad your mother suggested you two read the manuscript was the point made by the lady who was interviewing Brad. She kept demanding, seeking and knocking until she had a breakthrough. Your Mother and I did exactly that—kept demanding and knocking until we got our breakthroughs. Your Mom didn’t get to the point of being able to go out of the body as she did yesterday until she spent several hours knocking and demanding.”

“Dad,” Rachel asked, “when we stop, would you mind reading that passage Mom talked about? The one the Irish guy read about this out-of-body stuff.”

“Yeah,” Debbie chimed in, “I want to hear it too.”

We stopped at a Denny’s just north of the Georgia border for an early lunch; Will and Ann were pleased to hear that the girls had questions.

Jack waited until we had ordered and then began reading.

“I know a man in Christ who 14 years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—”

Jack took a few minutes when the girls asked where the third heaven was, and for the rest of us speculate as to what that might mean. Will said he had seen and read enough commentaries to

convince him that it was an obscure reference, but some people made a big deal out of it. He also made a quite convincing point that there were other passages that made it quite clear that other writers in the New Testament made reference to supernatural travel.

“Anyway,” Jack continued, “The point that Colin made was that the author of this passage was obviously convinced that supernatural trips could be made and sometimes they were inside the body and sometimes outside.”

“So what? We already know that because Mom does it.”

“Good point, Deb,” Jack said. “My religious upbringing practically insisted on having everything justified and verified by the Bible. I guess it just isn’t your hang-up. It certainly helped me get past some of my resistance to the thought of doing it. The point that Colin was making is that Christians tend to discount this kind of thing. It is called astral projection in occult literature. Because of some of the dangers of witchcraft—which the Bible speaks of as well—anyway, Colin’s point is that if you’re a person like me that needs some Biblical reference—there it is.”

“I have a question,” Rachel interjected. “How come you guys were saying that it’s just a matter of choice to go into this other dimension, but the thing you had us read this morning says you have to knock and demand until you see it happen?”

“I have one answer for that, Rachel,” replied Will. “The example that Jesus gave of this was that you cannot enter the spirit realm unless you enter as a little child. A little child is persistent and repeats ‘I want, I want, I want’ until he or she gets whatever it is that they keep hollering for. Adults think they know better and give up because they’ve been beaten down so long that they think reality means that getting anything on the spirit plane is impossible. Once you break through, then it’s a matter of just choosing because you know it’s already there.

“Am I making any sense?”

Debbie said, “Yeah, it’s like a science project in school where we had to bend a piece of metal back and forth until it finally broke. The experiment was to help us learn something about molecules or something. I don’t remember what the deal is about that, but if you keep bending and bending it will break. So it

seems to me that it doesn't matter if you're a grown up or a kid—just keep bending it until it breaks. Once it's broke you don't have to do it any more to know you can, but you know that if you need to do it you can.”

“That's too deep for me,” Rachel said.

Will immediately picked up that Rachel was not dismissing the topic, but rather had a simpler way for her to think about it. “How would you express it then?”

“I know it's true that you can travel outside your body, because Mom did it and we know she did it, because she told you and Ann what you said in your car. What I was confused about is that it sounded like—when Ann and Mom were talking about it—that all you have to do is make a choice. But in order to get to the place that you can just choose, you have to break through. Oh...I see what you mean, Debbie. Yeah, I got it now. Duh....”

“Rachel, don't put yourself down, I'm almost 50 years older than you and I'm just now getting some of this stuff. And half the time, after I think I've got it, I lose it again!” Ann grinned at my younger daughter with her trademark impish expression.

“This is a whole different subject,” I said, “but until this moment I didn't understand why Brad particularly—and maybe the rest of you—refer to ‘the body we occupy’ as opposed to calling it ‘me.’ It's such an important distinction. If I believed that my real identity was this body bag called Darlene—or even that my real identity is these girls' mother, or Jack's wife—it would be far more difficult for me to travel out of the body.

“What triggered my thinking along these lines is Rachel saying that she knows you can travel outside your body. Am I saying this so anyone else can understand it? See, if it's *my* body then I am my body. If I occupy this thing then it is no big deal to leave it when I want. When I went back into our car from your car I asked why I couldn't do the same thing in our car with Jack and the girls. I was told it was because of their attachment to my physical identity; they couldn't let it go.

“As we continue on this path, it seems to me, the more we remind each other we are not what we see, the more we will progress toward interacting together in the spiritual rather than on the physical plane. The real us cannot be seen and the reason we

chose to occupy these bodies in the first place is so that we could experience stuff on the physical plane. When Vic went to speak to that group in St. Louis he took that body with him. When I went to the Jacksonville airport I took this body with me. Where does this fit in with all of it?"

"Thanks a bunch, Darlene," Ann was choosing one of her quips to slow things down so she could fully understand what was dawning upon her. "I just about get a handle on something and you come up with another curve to everything."

"That's life in the fast lane, my dear," said Will, checking his watch. "Hey we need to get in the fast lane and get past Atlanta—traffic hits after 2."

We paid our check and left. That evening, we dropped into the lap of luxury—Will had a discount coupon for a brand new hotel, so Jack and the girls and I were able to stay in a suite with separate bedrooms.

I was quite ready to enjoy the physical realm with my husband. I told the girls meaningfully that we were going to lock the door and they were not to disturb us.

5

The Trip, Third and Last Leg

WILL SUGGESTED THAT WE HAVE THE LIGHT continental breakfast that the hotel provided and save room for lunch at a place in Valdosta, Georgia—about three and a half hours away. “It’s been there for about 40 years,” he told us. “They serve all the catfish you can eat...broiled, fried or deep fried. For those that don’t like catfish,” he added when he caught the look on Rachel and Debbie’s faces, as they hate fish of any kind, “they serve all the chicken you can eat—barbecued, fried or steamed. It’s the greatest!”

“Can we sit at a separate table to eat our chicken?” Debbie asked. “I hate fish. I told Mom once I’d run away from home before I’d eat fish.”

“Gee, Mom, can we have fish soon?” Rachel asked in her dry way.

Debbie responded by punching her older sister on the arm. A small skirmish was under way. Jack simply said, “Girls...” which is all it ever took to settle them down.

“Yeah, knock it off,” said Will, “or we’ll force-feed you fish!”

“Mom and Dad,” Rachel started as soon as we were back on the highway, “there’s something I don’t quite get. You don’t have to knock and demand any more because you are already experiencing things like being able to go visit Ann and Will in their car, right?”

“Maybe not about that, but the way we’re progressing there are probably going to be other things for which I need a breakthrough.” I replied.

“Okay then, say that you do start knocking and demanding...what will you do?” Rachel persisted.

I thought I understood where she was going with this. “You have to remember what the promise is all about, Sweetie,” I told

her. “The promise is that if we knock and demand for more of our Dad’s own Holy Spirit for a specific situation, and we keep knocking and keep demanding until we see it come to pass, we will have it.”

“But this is so simple and it’s right in the Bible.... How come we’ve never heard about it before?”

“Hey,” Debbie added, “Dr. Winslow chucked us out for that other thing you said, Rachel. He’d have a kitten or two over you telling the young peoples’ group how your mother flies back and forth between cars going down the Interstate.”

Jack burst out laughing and shook his head. “Way to go, Deb,” he managed to say in between chortles.

“Seriously, you guys,” Rachel persisted, “it still doesn’t make sense why Dr. Winslow was so afraid of that. Deb’s right, he’d have kittens. When you begin to understand things and how simple they are, it just makes me wonder why a church would stop all of this.”

“You have to remember what our battle is against, Raitch. Remember what caused your Mom’s problems. Unseen agents of the enemy. Sorry to do this to you, but here’s some Bible stuff again.” Jack reached into a pocket and brought out his New Testament and handed it to Rachel in the back seat. “Look up the verse in the sixth chapter of Ephesians, somewhere around verse ten, the one that says something like, ‘we don’t struggle against flesh and blood.’ Read it out loud.”

Rachel took a few minutes to find it. “Is this the one? It’s verse twelve.” She read, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

“Yep, that’s the one. What’s it mean to either of you?”

“I’m not quite sure....” Rachel said.

“Me neither,” Debbie added.

“It’s pretty simple. In these bodies,” Jack explained, “we are in a continual battle or struggle. But our war is not with human beings, including our own bodies—our war is against the rulers of demons who have authority over all kinds of systems. There are even spirit rulers over religions.

“Think about it for a minute. Why would a spirit want the people in a church not to know about the things we’ve been learning? If we don’t know them, we don’t know how to fight. Or worse, we don’t even understand that there is a battle going on. The more ignorant these rulers can keep us, the easier it is to keep us in virtual slavery. That’s why they put fear into Dr. Winslow and other leaders.

“But we have to remember that it isn’t Dr. Winslow or other leaders who are our enemies. They are being unwittingly controlled by these spirits who actually have authority over the area of religion. It is these spirits who are our enemies. Do you see that?”

“No wonder I didn’t like church,” Debbie said. We all laughed lightly. I had turned sideways on my seat so that I could watch the girls as Jack had been going through this; Debbie was shaking her head decisively. “No, you guys, I’m serious. I somehow understand it in a whole different way. I’ve been telling God I want more of His Spirit over and over ever since we read that thingy yesterday.

“What just clicked for me is when I heard Dad say that we are to keep knocking and demanding *until we see* that we have received. I already see that I am able to understand things differently than I did before. I didn’t like church and I knew Rachel didn’t either, but I really do understand why I didn’t like it now. There really is an evil force that is making it seem like it is good and it isn’t...really....” She tapered off, wanting to understand for herself the truth of what she had just said.

“Holy mackerel, Debbie. Do you have any idea what you just said?” I asked her, dumbfounded.

“What do you mean?” She asked in absolute innocence.

“I’m not sure that I can put it into words, but in a flash as you were talking, I understood the whole behind-the-scenes working of the enemy in the spirit realm. It has to do with evil masquerading as good. Which is what you just said!”

“I believe what your Mom is trying to say to you, Deb,” Jack broke in, “is that Holy Spirit was speaking through you and teaching all of us.”

“I know that’s true, and it’s a great feeling,” Debbie said. “It isn’t like you know something and feel good about it because you think you’re smart. You really know, and you know that it came from God—so that if somebody wanted to argue about it, you just let them think whatever they want, because you know it doesn’t matter.”

“You mean like you don’t have to prove anything?” Rachel asked.

“Yeah, that’s it,” Debbie replied with more understanding.

“You know,” Rachel had that serious, thoughtful look of her father’s written all over her face, “it really is amazing that neither Debbie or I have been afraid of any of this ever since you read that stuff to us, Dad. Then I went to church and blabbed about it. I knew that what I was telling the other kids was the truth...even when Dr. Winslow looked at me funny.

“You know...” she too was grappling to understand and be understood, “like, I’m not having any thoughts that my Mom’s a weirdo who thinks she travels in outer space. I think Debbie and I have it really neat for having you guys as parents.”

I said to my Friend silently, “Oh, thank you.” As I faced forward again I could see nothing through the tears that flowed down my cheeks. Jack reached over and patted my knee.

“Rachel, thank you for saying that. We are so fortunate that you chose us to be your parents,” Jack said.

“Wait a minute, Dad,” Debbie said. “We probably *did* choose you and chose each other. If we are really spirits living inside these bodies, well, you know, that makes all kinds of sense.”

Good grief, Charlie Brown...a fourteen year old, I thought, then I understood. “Jack, the spirits that rule over the education system are the same thing as what goes on in the church. We think of learning as a good thing. Everything we have learned makes us focus on the physical plane as the reality, when it is actually an illusion planted and planned to keep us trapped in living on this plane.

“Here we are, as a family, exploring things that would seem preposterous to most people. And as Debbie just said, it doesn’t matter—you just know that other people are not able to understand...at least just yet.”

“You know what, Mom,” Rachel said, “it won’t be too long before we realize how stupid it is to spend three days in a car—we’ll be able to travel as a family and won’t need planes, cars, or anything.”

“I’ve been thinking about that for three days, Raitch,” Jack told her. “If we believe the promise that nothing is impossible—that’s the promise and what we have begun experiencing is just the tip of the iceberg. We need to move beyond our unbelief in so many areas. You guys are going to be excited about the people we’ll be living with because they also are wanting everything that God has for us.”

“And they are going to be excited about Debbie and Rachel living with them,” I pointed out.

Will and Ann were ahead of us so he could lead the way to the Chicken ‘n Catfish Barn outside Valdosta. His right turn indicator was flashing. The restaurant was a long narrow affair that looked as if every time the business grew the owners had hired some amateur carpenter to add another section. There were five such sections and the interior emphasized each and every one of them. The exterior of the building was painted bright red with white trim, but it didn’t hide the uneven way the old building had been strung together.

It was only 11:40 and already it was so busy that we were told we’d have about a ten-minute wait. We watched the bustle of the table servers carrying large metal platters of catfish and chicken.

Debbie teased Will, “Hey! Rachel and I are supposed to learn how to fast sometime and you keep taking us to these all-you-can-eat places.”

Will cackled. Ann quipped, “This kid is exactly what you need, Sir Barry.”

Jack just rolled his eyes with a barely perceptible shake of his head and said nothing.

As soon as we were seated, Will looked at Debbie and said, “Are you seriously thinking about going without food?”

“Mom and Dad did it, and I guess you guys did too. Rachel and I have been talking about it, huh, Rachel,” Debbie added to get her sister’s agreement. Rachel nodded.

We shared with Will and Ann the conversations that had been going on in the car. “What is so exciting to me,” I said “is to realize that God keeps his promises. Age makes no difference; we’ve been hearing insights through Debbie and Rachel that have been every bit as exciting as what happened that first week at Brads.” I told them about how Debbie had been knocking and demanding and had spoken with such authority that she knew what she was saying was from God and not her, and knowing that Ann would relate to it told her specifically what Debbie had said about the church.

“You know, girls, this is why it is so important to be together expecting God to break through. I’ve spent the last five years rebelliously going to church and could see nothing wrong with it. Now I see that it is a huge wet blanket and that we all need to be together like this encouraging one another in the pursuit of God.”

“Let’s get out of here,” Will told us when we had all finished eating. “I’ve never driven in Jacksonville but I’ve ridden around with Bob enough to know that it is a worse nightmare for traffic than Atlanta.”

Two hours later we were lost. After so many days on the Interstate highways we were totally unprepared for Jacksonville. The I-10 simply petered out and spilled us onto a seemingly endless state road that went on forever. It was a maze of traffic lights and huge intersections going off at angles in every different direction. We had followed Will on a right turn that he shouldn’t have taken. Pulling the trailer through all this traffic was making Jack a bit tense.

Will motioned for us to pull over and stop in the parking lot of a small shopping center. He told us we had missed the turn-off. Every time previously he had flown here and Bob had picked him up at the airport. He was pretty sure that if we just followed Florida 10 that it would eventually take us to the A1A Coastal highway, which we would have to follow south toward St. Augustine.

Will said with a wry smile that all he had to do was figure out how to get back on highway 10 and went into one of the shops to get directions. When he came back out he said that he had called Bob. We were a little over an hour away from good meeting place

in Ponte Verde; at that point we'd only be fifteen minutes from the house and he'd lead us in.

"That's a relief," Jack said as we started off again.

Debbie said, "We'd better move up this schedule on learning how to travel without cars and stuff."

It was an hour and ten minutes before we saw Bob standing by the big green van. Will honked his horn and waved; Bob jumped in the van and we were off behind somebody that knew where he was going. It was amazing that nothing looked familiar until finally we turned into the driveway. The trip was over, we were home.

Bob, Will and Jack went to take care of unloading the trailer. Vangie met us at the door and gushed over the girls and said she hoped that we weren't too hungry yet because dinner was a couple of hours off yet. Debbie assured her that we had all over-eaten just three hours before.

Ann and I took the girls for a tour of the house. When we finally got to the south wing, we saw that Bob, Colin and Vic had divided the large bedroom the girls were going to share into two sections, each with its own queen-sized bed and desk with a computer. They were amazed and happy with their new home...and I was relieved.

In walked Bob, Will and Jack grunting under a load of suitcases and boxes. I told them just to set it all on the floor so the girls and I could sort things out. Will told Ann that their trunk was next and they'd be right up with it to their place upstairs.

Jack finally came back in and said that he and Bob were going back up to Ponte Verde to turn the trailer in, and asked the girls how they liked their new digs.

Debbie said, "I don't think you could call it 'the shack at the beach,' Dad."

"No," he agreed with a laugh, "I don't think we could."

6

New Beginnings

JACK AND BOB RETURNED AFTER AN HOUR, bringing Colin, who had gone to Jacksonville to find parts for the generator. The house had an emergency electrical system powered by a large diesel engine that came on automatically whenever there a municipal power failure. That was never as uncommon as you hoped along the coast—particularly during tropical storms.

Debbie greeted Colin sassily. “Say something, Mom says you have a beautiful Irish accent.”

“Well, I see that you have a bit ‘o your mother’s charm, little lass, and both of you have claimed her beauty as well,” Colin poured it on for their benefit.

He practically fell on the floor laughing when Rachel said, “Isn’t that what is called Blarney?”

“All right,” Colin said with his palms raised toward the girls, “I know when I’m up against my match, -and you two are it. But it really is nice to meet you both and I am so glad your parents are back as well. See you at dinner,” he said as he walked out after hugging both Jack and me warmly.

Bob said, “I heard from both Vic and Brad today. I pick Vic up at the Jacksonville Airport tonight. He is scheduled to come in at 8:10. Brad gets in from London tonight and lays over in New York until morning. I should have him back here by by early afternoon tomorrow. He said he hoped we could all be together for dinner, and our usual time afterward. I’m going to order Chinese delivery—if that’s okay with all of you.

“Vangie said that dinner for tonight will be ready right at 6,” Bob continued, “so that I can leave for the airport in time. Will and Ann are going with me, and you are certainly welcome to come along.”

“We ought to get the girls settled in,” I replied.

Bob looked at us warmly, "I am so glad you are back. I don't know what God has in store for us, but I suspect it is going to be far beyond our greatest expectations. And mine are pretty high," he finished.

Dinner was the normal buffet so that Vangie joined us as well as Bernice and Armand.

Colin explained to the girls what we did at dinner time, making them just as comfortable as Brad had made us that first night. Bernice and Armand added their 'welcome back' speeches to us and their sincere and genuine approval of the girls being with us.

"One of our rituals," Colin explained to the girls, using almost the same words Brad had used to explain to us that first night, "is to spend a moment or so of silence at each meal to tune into God's presence and whoever feels led will share an insight or say some sort of blessing over the food.

"After the evening meal we always have a freshly baked loaf of bread with some butter and preserves and share some wine and celebrate the presence of Jesus. So why don't we just hold hands around the table and see what God brings us?"

It was through Rachel that Spirit finally spoke. "I am supposed to say a blessing over the dinner. Since I'm the shy one, you know this isn't me." She looked almost transfixed, with her eyes directed a bit upward and away from the table. "God is going to move over us all in more powerful ways than any of us have ever known. We are going to witness wonders even at this table as we learn more and more to concentrate on God's food rather than what we put in our mouths. I am with you."

Ann said, "There's a new beginning."

It amazed me as the bread and wine were served and Bob spoke some words that neither of the girls even looked our way about the wine. They just sipped at their wine glasses and were caught in the moment as were the rest of us.

When we finished, Bob, Will and Ann made their exit to go get Vic after again inviting us to go if we wished. Instead, we walked down the long hall to the south wing, entered the large room that had been designated as the office and sat together. Jack

and I on the large comfortable sofa and the girls each chose a chair. Debbie sank in a large lounge with her feet swung over the arm and Rachel sat rather primly in a small upholstered chair.

“Jack,” I started, “did you think that we would slip back into the rhythm of things here so easily?”

“No, I sure didn’t,” he responded.

“What do you mean?” Debbie and Rachel asked at the same time.

Instead of giving them an answer, Jack asked a question. “What are you two feeling about being here?”

Debbie answered first, “Like I belong here. As if I’ve been away a long time and am glad to be back home.”

Will this girl—no, mature young woman...no longer even belonging to me—never stop surprising me? The answer was, of course not; she wanted only to be taken over by Spirit and the transformation was interesting to say the least.

Rachel said, “I am glad to be here. When you first told us we were moving here, Debbie was all excited, but I wasn’t. I didn’t want to leave Jefferson High or my friends. Now I’m excited too. It’s like how Christmas Eve used to feel when I was a little kid. I couldn’t wait to open up presents so it took me forever to fall asleep.

“Now I can’t wait to see what happens each minute, but I’ll sleep okay tonight because it’s a different kind of excitement. Kind of like being relaxed at the same time because I know we’re supposed to be here. How do you guys feel about being here?”

“You just summed it up for me perfectly, honey—excited, but relaxed,” I said.

“For me,” Jack said, “it’s like understanding I’m part of some grand purpose that I can’t quite see yet. I think we are going to learn some things in the next few days that will open our eyes to more than we even bargained for. And all good.”

“I don’t know about anybody else, but it’s been a long day and I want to go to bed,” I volunteered.

“Got my vote,” Jack said and kissed his daughters good night.

“Love you, Mom. Love you, Dad,” *How could these two beautiful women sound so much like little girls?* I thought.

“Jack,” I said as we climbed into bed, “please, oh please, make love to me.”

“Is that an order, my beautiful bride? I thought you were probably too tired—so I was trying to figure out a way to coerce you into initiating this bed.”

My body yearned for him. As we came together I asked, “How is it that I can feel so at one with Spirit and so at one with you at the same time?” He agreed with a “hmmm.” Feeling him inside of me as we got into a slow easy rhythm together, I said to my Friend, “This can’t be wrong. Can it?”

As we both started to sense the pinnacle rushing toward us simultaneously, I got my answer through my husband. “Oh Darlene, this is so right and so perfect. I love you....” As he trailed off, his ecstasy joined mine perfectly as he held me tightly with that last excited thrust of energy.

“How can I be saying ‘thank You’ at the same time,” I asked my Friend, and felt Him smiling at me. As we held each other, savoring the gentle softness and ease of mutual massage during the serenity of the afterglow, I asked, “Jack, do you realize that I actually am free to pray in gratitude during orgasm?”

“Dar, I always used to feel a bit guilty about sex, kind of a throwback to masturbation as a kid, I guess. But now I know this is of God. And, in a way, that’s such a contradiction because we are learning that we need to focus on Spirit rather than on the physical—”

“Jack!” I exclaimed, “I am seeing that we are not missing God in sex, because we both are free and recognize His presence instead of separating ourselves from Him.” Then I knew. “Jack, I just became pregnant, and it will be a boy—God’s child.”

“Do you realize that I knew that at orgasm?” Jack asked. “I sensed it totally, and you just confirmed it. The thought should frighten the daylights out of both of us at our age; yet all I know is that it’s perfect timing.”

“New beginnings,” I mused. “You realize that as the baby develops we’re going to have to cool this a bit—so let’s get it while we can,” I giggled as I rubbed him and kissed him and he responded physically just as he was responding emotionally in that totally absorbed way he loved me. We playfully and prayerfully

started all over again; and in the end, we mused together in contentment, “new beginnings.”

7

Saturday

ANN KNOCKED ON THE OUTSIDE WALL OF THE south wing. “Hey, Adams family, Vic’s going to take us for breakfast down in St. Augustine. Be ready in a half hour—or else!”

Bob, of course, had to pick up Brad at noon and Colin was repairing the generator, so the rest of us piled into Will’s car. Ann sat between Vic and Will, while Jack and I squeezed snugly in the back seat with the girls. Vic gave us the grand tour of the quaint and pretty little historical town. He explained that Bob had owned his own little tour bus company here before he had hooked up with Brad, and that’s how he’d learned the highlights.

The girls fell into the same easy camaraderie with Vic that they already shared with our other new friends. Ann and Will had shared with him our combined miracles of getting free from our ties in Chicago on the way from the airport the night before. And Vic had shared the similar miracle of being able to sell his condo immediately. It was so good to see him and have him back among us.

I started to share about my pregnancy, but checked in and got a “not yet” response. Which was fine with me.

At about 4 p.m. Will said, “Hey, we’ve got to get back for Chinese and to welcome Brad back home.”

“Always the man with the agenda,” Ann teased.

Vic said, “Some things never change, Ann—his agenda and your mouth.”

We all howled with delight. Thinking back to the night before with Jack, I thought, *how can this new life of ours be so much fun at the same time as moving with such dramatic force into the realm of Spirit presence and power?* “Thank you,” I said again to my Friend.

Brad greeted us with smiles and hugs, then he told the girls that he understood that they’d gotten ahead of the resident

Irishman. Ann quipped that “those two could get ahead of everyone.” Brad told the girls that both Bob and Colin had said they were a welcome addition to the family. For a change Debbie was just as subdued as Rachel, and merely said a soft “thank you” as they both basked in the total charm of Brad Cullen. Out host finished by saying, “Bob tells me we’re going to have Chinese delivered—so I’ll see you in the dining room at 6 o’clock sharp.”

Everyone pitched in to help clean up after the bread and wine, and we all went in by the fireplace. We spent several minutes catching Brad up with how the sale of our properties was miraculous, literally—and yet another example of how people leapfrog when they begin demanding more of God’s own Spirit. We also shared what had been happening with the girls and their insights, and the happening of my out-of-body visit to Will and Ann. All six of us contributed to the narrative about what happened during our three-day trip down here—everyone was obviously taken by the maturity of the girls who had grown so much in Spirit and intellect in just four days.

The four single men sat there nodding through this and it suddenly struck me: *why are these four all single? Bob, Brad, Colin and Vic, how long and why?* Four of them now living under one roof. “Ask,” I heard.

“Excuse me for being so dense, but I just asked and got an okay.... In fact, it is important somehow for all of us that we get into the discussion.” I knew I was showing my discomfort at asking, yet also knowing I was being obedient to Spirit. “It just dawned on me that the four of you are single. In the natural you are all attractive, sensitive and intelligent...you are also all understanding of your true identity—a month ago, before we met, I would have termed it ‘spiritual.’ Uh, I guess, without beating around the bush anymore...why are you men all single?”

“If you are asking if it is a conscious group thing, or if the four of us are each committed to celibacy—the answer is no,” Brad answered me first. “I understand why you were told to ask, Darlene, because we’ve had a glimpse of where we’re headed together. All of us here in this room,” Brad gestured to include each of us, “are on the same journey, so it is important that everyone know each of our stories.

“I was married for 20 years and my wife, Barbara, left me and moved to Lisbon, Portugal almost ten years ago. I have not heard from her since. She was convinced I was chasing other women during my business travels. Our two children, Sara and Ray, are married and both live in Southern California. We write and phone and keep in touch by e-mail; they have not heard from their mother either. I am totally open to whatever God has in the area of being with a woman again, but I’m not looking and really don’t see it happening. I’ve been consciously celibate for almost seven years...and it works well for me.” He waved his hand with palm upward to indicate that one of the others should share.

Vic spoke next. “When I first came down, Brad shared with me his celibacy and I prayed about it and it was a conscious decision for me as well. I am open to a relationship with a woman, but it will have to be someone very special that God sends my way. At this point in my life she would probably have to be sent as dramatically as my trip to St. Louis in order to get my attention.”

Colin said, “My story is simple. Maggie died two and a half years ago...she died the day before our 31st anniversary. I’ve pretty much determined that I want to remain single. I’d be a bit like Vic—I’d have to be hit over the head with a dramatic event to believe that I was supposed to get together with another woman. At my age celibacy isn’t much of an issue; every now and then I have to sternly say ‘down boy’ but that’s all it takes.”

“Yeah, I understand that one,” said Ann with one of her standup comedic one-liners. “I have to say that to Will every now and then too! You’re right, Colin, it’s the age, works every time.”

“Ah, the woman is back with us,” Colin said with mock disapproval.

Again I had the thought, *What a joy to be with these people.*

“That just leaves one of us, doesn’t it,” Bob said finally. “I’ve never talked to Brad, Vic or Colin about it—and I hate to sound like a real dummy—but I’ve never given it any thought before that all four of us are single. It’s an obvious question, but for me it’s real simple. If it happens, it happens, but I’ve learned to ask about every little detail of my life and to do nothing until I get an answer. Just as you told us about asking if that realtor was the one that Spirit brought you, Darlene. Same, same. Now, Brad, I

want to hear what you've got up your sleeve about why we needed to have this conversation and why Darlene was told to initiate it."

"Well, remember the vision you had, Bob, and shared with Colin. Darlene saw the same thing in a night vision or a dream and Jack confirmed it; Will, Ann and Vic came to the same conclusion that they were supposed to move here. The vision," he continued, "was that we'd be sharing with many people. Darlene and I both saw a similar picture of a warehouse affair somewhere in the Jacksonville area with many people coming from all over the world. A place where the same kinds of manifestations of Spirit would occur that took place right here—only in a larger display.

"What I've seen every time I ask is that we are going to be involved with many people coming to Jacksonville and we are going to be under close scrutiny and asked many questions. I'm being shown that this core group simply needs to understand everything about each other to keep things uncomplicated by tales about us that simply aren't true. We have been impregnated by Spirit with a vision and for a purpose that will begin to unfold as we pursue the answers."

"Now," I heard as an audible and loud voice.

"What?" I answered, aloud and abruptly, shaken out of my reverie, and immediately knew.

The others—including my daughters and husband—were looking at me inquisitively. I said, "It is simple. I was just caught by Brad's terminology that we have been impregnated by Spirit with a vision and a purpose. I've wanted to share this because it is so exciting on several levels, but every time I've asked if I could talk about it I've been told, 'not yet.' I wasn't asking just now, but I heard a loud 'NOW!' And it took me a second to comprehend that now I am supposed to share it.

"I am pregnant. It happened last night and Jack and I both knew it when it happened. We were told that it is a boy and it is God's child."

It took a moment for everyone to digest, of course, then, "Surely not immaculate conception," Ann said.

We all roared—with Will, of course being the loudest.

Colin in his richest Irish brogue yet said to Will, "Can't you control this woman?" We all laughed even harder.

Will said, “Of course, on the tip of my tongue was another wiseacre remark about these two and their romps, for which my disobedient wife has still not billed. But this is quite significant, seriously,” he paused for a second, “being birthed in us as a group is the new beginning. And this child is God’s sign of the newness of His mark upon all of us.”

All of a sudden, Will’s face shown with a radiance that literally and supernaturally glowed in an indescribable way. He had a triple-forked flame flickering brightly in vivid blue, purple and bright red above his head. Out of his mouth came these words.

“I tell you that you will mark this event as the sign of My new beginning on each of you. As the woman swells in preparation for birth, you will swell in number. You will see mighty things and this child when he is 16 years of age will take his place among the mighty men not seen for centuries. I say to you that he will be as Elisha was—the embodiment of a double portion of what was in the prophet Elijah. Many miracles will come at his hand, but before this and in preparation for this—all of you here now, witnessing what I am doing among you at this very moment—will wield the miraculous more than any other group has ever manifested because you have one Leader whom you have acknowledged and it is I AM.”

We sat there stunned. Vic said somberly, “I was told to test the spirits just now and did. What we just witnessed was of Holy Spirit, but what I was told was that we would be accused by the organized church of being led by evil spirits and that their blasphemy against Holy Spirit would bring much upheaval. We must not be deterred and must understand now, more than ever before, that the enemy will move on the organized church to discredit what God is doing among us and it will be the preparation for the final battle.”

Brad said, “I am told to share with you something. Rachel and Debbie are going to be empowered to teach young people. We are all to know with clarity the teaching they will deliver in order that we will be very supportive of them as they do the work Spirit is preparing them to do. And girls, you are going to be guardians to your new little brother and you will help nurture him to manhood, which will be fully manifested in him at age 16.”

At that, Debbie began speaking softly in an indescribably beautiful language that none of us had ever heard or could understand.

Rachel interpreted, “These sisters are without pride or arrogance, but are filled with My own love which is a pure love. Because of their beauty and grace many will come to Me, yes I AM, because I alone am imparting what only I AM can give and by no other.”

I said, “I was just shown that as Jack and I are given to a deep enjoyment of the physical expression of love and that the child who is to be named Daniel was brought into being as a result of that expression of love—that Rachel and Debbie will never know nor want to know that kind of love. They are set aside as brides of Christ in the truest sense and will be spared of and protected from sexual desire or the desire to be with men. I am being shown that what Jack and I have is a pure thing given by God and not to be compared. I am shown that the deliberate celibacy of Brad and Vic is the mirror image of Rachel and Debbie and is being used to give birth to their divine celibacy.”

The girls had the same glow on their faces as Will had had, but without the flame. The rest of us were silently weeping.

Brad said, “I was instructed to write and give you each the Elijah/Elisha message that Debbie and Rachel will be teaching in the power and presence of Holy Spirit.”

“Mom,” Debbie said, “remember in the car yesterday when I was shown that we just know because we know and there is no cause for pride, because the knowledge doesn’t come from the minds of these body bags we occupy. This is it and it is so simple and perfect.”

Rachel added, “You would think that we would be disappointed because we are not going to produce grandchildren for you, but I am not disappointed in the least. It is what you said earlier, Brad, we’ve been impregnated with a vision and a purpose.”

Colin said, “Oh but you will produce grandchildren for your mother and father...the grandchildren of our true singular identity, I AM, as the truth dawns upon them from your teaching in power. Many will be released from being trapped in their ties to the

physical realm and be made aware of the unseen and thus ‘birthed’—that is, brought from death unto life.”

Brad excused himself for a moment and came back with two pages stapled together for each of us entitled, Elijah/Elisha. He explained, “I wrote this on my laptop in the U.K. a couple of days ago. I think you will see that it is somewhat of an introduction to what happened here this evening. If none of you object I will make my famous French toast in the morning with some marmalade I bought at Heathrow airport yesterday. If 10 a.m. is all right for everyone, let’s meet in the dining room, then afterward we can go into the solarium. I’d like to briefly go over the Elijah/Elisha paper and then see what Spirit wants to share with us.”

With that we went to our separate living quarters. It was amazing that with all we had heard and seen that the girls were totally natural. “Good night, Mom and Pop...love you,” they said almost in unison. Then Debbie added, just as she was closing their bedroom door, “Hey you guys, limit the romping...you’ve got serious reading to do.” As she closed the door we heard Rachel say an elder-sister corrective, “*Debbie!*”

We collapsed on the bed in totally therapeutic, uncontrollable laughter. Finally, I was able to gasp, “where does that kid get that stuff?”

Elijah/Elisha —from Brad

I wrote about this first when I was still in the organized church. I had a vision one night that what kept us from moving on into a place of overcoming was making the wrong comparisons. We tended to compare ourselves with other people. Usually the comparison I made would consist of “I’m not as bad as so and so.” What held me back even more was comparing myself with someone whom I thought was more highly spiritual than myself.

Why was that even more detrimental to my progress on the path to higher spirituality?

Then I saw it. The only one who came to set an example for us as a man was Jesus. Once I saw the

truth of that, all kinds of Scriptures “popped out at me.”

The clincher was Jesus’s own words. “Everything you have seen me do, you will do also, if you believe.”

What did Jesus do? Walked on water, turned water into wine, raised people from the dead, healed the sick, cast out demons, gave sight to people even born blind...etc., etc.

This was the comparison, the only comparison that I should be making.

As I meditated on this and prayed for clarity, I was scheduled to speak two days later at a Bible conference in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. I knew Holy Spirit wanted me to use this as my theme. I saw that I was not prepared! I had been used by God to heal diseases and knew what my authority was regarding casting out demons. And therefore—in comparison to most other folks in the organized church—I was okay, in my own eyes.

Okay, I said, I see how I am totally lacking when comparing myself to Jesus. I was on my face praying and pounding on the floor that I wanted clarity to know what I should say.

I heard “consider Elisha.” I had heard of Elisha and remembered that he had attached himself to Elijah as a servant of sorts. Elijah? Anyone who has ever gone to church or Sunday school or Sabbath school has heard of Elijah—one of the great miracle-working prophets of Israel of all times. I looked up Elisha in a Bible Concordance and found several references.

The second chapter of II Kings tells about how God was preparing to take Elijah up in a whirlwind—not to die, mind you, but take him off this physical plane in a whirlwind, passed and excluding death. Now you know where I got part of my theology about ‘translating’ instead of dying. The narrative has Elijah telling Elisha to leave him. Over and over this was the

scene, “get lost, kid.” Elisha refused to go—until finally, Elijah asked him what he wanted.

Elisha said, “I want twice as much of Holy Spirit as is in you.” We need to note this, underline it in our minds. Here was one of the greatest prophets since Moses, and Elisha had the audacity to want double the amount of Holy Spirit that was operating in Elijah. Elisha kept badgering him that this is what he wanted. Finally Elijah said to Elisha, “Okay, you have asked for something quite difficult, far more difficult than you can imagine. But here’s the deal, if you are with me when I am taken up and you see me go, then you will have what you want.”

And it happened exactly like that. Elisha would not leave Elijah’s side nor could be distracted from keeping his eyes upon him. The following is quite interesting. Remember, Elisha demanded to get twice the amount of Holy Spirit that was in Elijah. As I went through I & II Kings I saw that Elisha performed just about exactly twice the number of miracles that Elijah had performed!

I asked Spirit, “what am I supposed to learn from this?” I heard, “Tell them to compare themselves to Jesus. You are trying to be a great conference speaker. Stop! This only causes wasteful comparisons of themselves to you. Go in humility. Go in My presence and power and tell them to compare themselves to Jesus. Then be like Elisha. Attach themselves and refuse to take less than twice the same amount of My own Spirit operating in Jesus. You go demanding this and see if you are not hidden in Me and that I AM glorified.”

It happened. That was just about the last speaking engagement I took, because I was shown that the church did not want this message. I was to remove myself, as you’ve all heard, from the organized church.

It is so simple; the destiny that Jesus proclaimed for us all, IF we believe, is to demand and keep demanding to be able to do what he promised anyone who believed in him can do. Everything he did and even greater things than he did. This is our mission. I believe the reason that we are being moved to live with one another is to become what Jesus said we could become and share that message with others he sends to us.

Are we ready?

Brad

I finished reading Brad's poignant, but powerful little paper and realized this is what God prepared him to do. I understood why Brad was a man of such power and yet so filled with humility and almost magical attraction. It also made me understand more than ever the frustration he had had with the organized church. And now he was passing the mantle over to two teenage girls to take this message in power to young people! I could hardly wait until morning for the French toast and hearing how everyone else was reacting to this...especially my daughters!

8

Sunday

I WAS BARELY AWAKE UNTIL I FELT JACK STIR beside to me. “Are you awake?” I asked.

“My dear, I’m wide awake; I mean, I’m talking *wide* awake. Dar, we are in Florida, living on the beach in a mansion. Our daughters are being turned into some kind of prophets; you are pregnant with our third child by the name of Daniel; at 16 he is going to become some great man. I cannot believe I could’ve ever fallen asleep last night...yet I slept like a baby! Dar, I’m an engineer...I worked for the same company for fourteen years. What are we doing here?!!!”

Jack continued acting awestruck. “I mean, Dar, at 42 you’ve either been transformed into this gorgeous sex goddess I cannot get enough of—or I just woke up to what I had. I have two beautiful daughters who have just been declared to be nuns, and they are ecstatic about it. One of our lovely daughters told us not to have a romp last night; excuse me, but to quote you, ‘good grief, Charlie Brown!’ ”

“Are you through, sweetheart?”

“Yeah, I think so.” He took my hand and squeezed it gently.

“Tell me again about being a gorgeous sex goddess that you can’t get enough of...”

“Why is that so wonderful?” he asked afterward, with a contented sigh. “Why is all of this fitting together so perfectly, with everyone seeing and knowing their own part, Dar? That’s what I woke up thinking. I really don’t know what I’m doing, yet I know I’m supposed to be here. Hey, maybe just to be your male sex slave. Jack the stud, do you think?”

“Works for me, sweetie,” I responded, planting a long kiss on his mouth and hugging him tightly.

“My life isn’t compartmentalized anymore,” he began sounding awestruck again. “I used to have this church-part me and

the engineer-part me and the husband-part me and the father-part me; now it's just one guy all rolled up into one, totally and wholly dependent upon God. And I am on the most exciting joy ride any guy could ask for; yet, at the same time, it is more than a bit bewildering."

"Jack, I want to talk about that paper that Brad gave us last night. By the time I was finished reading it through the first time, you were snoring."

"What is it that you want to talk about? It seems really simple to me and it is the same thing that has undergirded us all since we started down this path. Demand and insist that we get more of Spirit—keep on demanding and knocking until we see it come into being. The Elisha—Elijah part really got to me. I'd never even heard of Elisha before. It made great sense, and I really see what made Brad who he is.

"Reading it also freed me up from looking at Brad or Vic as anything other than guys just like myself. I need to compare what I am doing with what Jesus did as a man and keep making that comparison instead of looking at any other man. That will drive me to keep knocking and demanding.

"And that's another thing, my religious focus on Jesus was never on him being a man, but that's what I saw in this. Jesus was our example as a man. I know you want to talk, hon, and I keep on rambling, but somehow I have to get this out. Here is one thing I am going through—Brad and Vic, both of them celibate. I'm free as a bird with everything I could ever want in the sex department and being assured that it is a pure thing. There, that's what I wanted to say!

"Our sex life is just as pure and just as God-given as Brad and Vic's celibacy. Our daughters have not only already accepted their own celibacy—they're happy about it. It is all just so amazing! Oh, and one last thing, this is it—it is all a gift from Spirit—all of it. Yet there is the necessary discipline of bringing the mind into focusing on continually demanding for more of Spirit to do the things we're supposed to be able to do. Wow...." He trailed off, "I guess I'm finally finished and ready to listen to you...."

“Oh Jack, that was wonderful...it was like you sharing your body with me in what we have been given together. Do you realize what a privilege it is to hear what you are going through in your emotions, seeing what you’re seeing. Oh Jack, just one more time before we get up? Then we can talk.”

It was perfect again.

I giggled finally and said with a long sigh, “maybe I don’t have to talk after all,” then quickly added, “but I want to. If you can believe this—I saw something right in the middle of this pleasure. There’s a feeling of ecstasy in having you inside me and us being truly joined in spirit as well as the physical side. Jack, I can’t explain it, but I understood—we are never to take what we have for granted. It *is* a gift, a marvelous gift; a gift every bit as wonderful as what Rachel and Debbie have been given.

“I remember what I received from Spirit last night. What we have is pure and not to be compared. What we have is not to be sought after either, or held up as an example for others. It is a gift, period. When we come together, Jack, it is worship. I know that sounds ridiculous....”

“No, Dar, no. That’s the point with all of this. It *is* a gift and to deny opening the gift and sharing it with each other would be like throwing it away. We love God—and there is no other way to say it—by loving one another. Rachel and Debbie are loving God by enjoying their gift of celibacy. It cannot be explained any more than we can explain the phenomena of what we saw and heard last night. Try to describe for anyone what seeing Will’s face and the flame over his head looked like. Or Rachel and Debbie and what we saw and heard through them.”

He stopped talking and put his hands behind me and entered me again. A wonderful sensation of his pulling me toward him as he pushed toward me; we worshipped and were lost in the unspeakable joy of the gift that could neither be explained nor compared with anything else. It was simply received and acknowledged.

I looked at the clock afterward and saw that it was only 7:40—perfect...we wouldn’t be rushed to make our breakfast date. I couldn’t help giggling again. “Now can I talk?”

“You can do anything you like, you beautiful creature.” Jack ran his hand over my head gently as he looked into my eyes, and it was the perfect extension of what we had just been through. The understanding that we had been given to each other, the depth of the love we both felt—all of it was indescribably wonderful. His look toward me bore unbridled affection mingled with contentment in the warmth and glow we both felt afterward.

He smothered my face with gentle kisses, then from my ear down my jaw to my neck, around to the back of my neck, my shoulders, then my breasts, my arms, my hands. “Oh, who wants to talk,” I murmured and then understood the divine energy that enabled us to do this over and over without tiring or being tired of it. That divine energy also gave the understanding that abstinence was also splendor for those to whom it was given. Again, it could not, should not be compared and must not be demeaned.

As we joined once again, I reached new heights from the sensation that we, my husband and I, were one in union with God as only we were meant to be. Cascades of emotion and physical sensation blended with pure spiritual understanding as I was carried away by wave after wave of sensual, but also divine rapture. Instead of being afraid as I might have been—of losing control of my body and emotions—I allowed myself the purity of my husband taking over my body. I willingly and gratefully gave it to him and at the same time felt him being a part of me.

As the finality of it overtook me, I understood the creativity and cause of little Daniel just being formed inside of me the great man to be. I gave over to orgasm and felt it in every part of my body; even my toes and finger tips, those areas that normally were not a part of the experience, were involved. How could he be doing this to me so gently, so perfectly, so lovingly, yet with such forceful thrusts that had just the right combination of tempo and ever increasing intensity that brought me to the heights, and then let me down again ever so gently? Again, the answer was because this was the love that had created our son Daniel who was to be blessed of God mightily.

As we finished in that wonder of being at the same place and time in absolute togetherness, instead of separating we stayed joined for several minutes. I knew that he was totally absorbed in

me, as I was in him and that we were free to be absorbed because it was the gift—the gift of love and creativity.

I finally whispered into his ear, “now can I talk?”

He laughed uproariously and summed it up perfectly for us, “Thank You, oh thank You, our wonderful, perfect Daddy who loves us!”

“I guess what I wanted to talk about was Brad’s paper. As a mother, Jack, I felt protective and even a little momentary resentment that Brad could just take what he had been given years ago and foist it on the girls as their responsibility. Yet I know it’s right. Do you see what I mean, though?”

“Sure, but with me I guess it’s more selfishness. I used to think I was going to have to get one of those automatic attack rifles and defend my daughters’ honor and keep the idiots away from them. And well, you know, at the same time kind of looking forward to the good parts of them growing up and starting their own families. That dream is shattered, but just to see them experiencing such rapid growth and spiritual insight—it is totally beyond my understanding at the moment, and it’s a wonderful thing.”

We finally got ready for breakfast and as we walked by the girls’ room saw that they had already gone in. After we finished clearing away the breakfast things, we gathered in the solarium. We simply sat there quietly together for several minutes, most of us looking at the Elijah/Elisha paper.

Colin finally broke the silence. “Elisha really is the perfect template for anyone wanting to move onward. Religion talks *about* Jesus being beyond and above us. Jesus is telling us to do what he did as a man. For some reason this paper made me understand Jesus’s frustration with the religious of his day.”

“What struck me,” Will added, “is the simplicity of Elisha refusing to take no for an answer. Elijah said you are asking for a hard thing, but if you don’t take your eyes off me you can get it. We have to want to do what Jesus said we could do badly enough to do what he said to do to get it—and that is to obtain the same Spirit that was operative in him. How do you get it? By continually knocking and demanding UNTIL we see the breakthrough, then

not stopping there. Because he said we'd perform even greater miracles than he performed."

"It is like so many things that have happened to Debbie and me on the trip down," Rachel said. "I am amazed that I am not amazed. To be told that this message of Elijah and Elisha is Debbie's and mine to—um...deliver, I guess you'd call it—would have been totally impossible to believe just yesterday. Think of it, we have been given a gift to remain virgins. I'll bet most people will think we are cheated. Yet Debbie and I are excited about it because we understand it.

"It is impossible to explain, but we've been shown we don't have to explain anything; most people aren't going to know about it. In the back seat of the car on the way down here, Debbie kept slapping her hand on her lap and for her was pretty quiet most of the trip. When she told Mom and Dad that she had been telling God that she wanted more of His Spirit ever since she'd read the manuscript of Brad's interview, I understood why she was having such insights and why she had been slapping her hand on her lap. She almost blew us all away with how she could all of a sudden explain things with...well, like, pictures you could see in your head.

"Well, that was the cause of me starting to knock and demand and just keep it up. What I am trying to say is that what happened last night to us, we can say is a gift—and it is—but it is also a result of doing what Jesus said to do. Which is also a gift. Do you see what I am saying? We understand that we have to keep demanding for more and more, and as we do we will get more and more of God's Spirit.

"The reason we are going to give the Elijah/Elisha message to other kids is because we understand that kids are trapped in making all kinds of dumb comparisons. The church tried to give us other comparisons that were even dumber. When I got us kicked out of the church by telling the kids about how Mom was healed of depression because a Christian psychiatrist showed her how to get rid of the demons that had caused it, they wanted to hear it. But Dr. Winslow didn't want to hear it. Some kids will listen about Elisha and understand—some won't. It's not for us to worry about, but to just tell them."

Debbie was holding up her hand and saying, “And, and...like last night, when I was speaking in that other language and was clueless.... No, that’s not right. I kind of understood what I was saying but I didn’t understand the words, and then heard Rachel say it in English.... I mean, don’t you see? We just have to keep telling God we want more and more and we will tell them like we said things last night, because Spirit says them and we probably won’t even have to think about it.”

“What we are seeing here,” Bob said, “is a perfect demonstration of Rachel and Debbie speaking the language of their peers.”

“Yes,” Ann added, “It is really exciting to me, girls, how Spirit speaks through you to us on our level, but I just saw so clearly how young people are really going to hear Spirit through you. And that the message that was given Brad is so perfect for all of us, no matter what our ages.”

“Darlene and I had an interesting conversation about our daughters this morning,” Jack said. “What I am understanding is that they truly do belong to God and they understand that. And just as they understand that they don’t have to worry about the delivery of the message, I don’t have to worry about being a parent any longer. They are in the hands of our perfect Daddy who is going to orchestrate everything perfectly.”

“It would be so easy to make a misstep,” Brad was finally speaking. “The mistake of men has always been to believe they have been given an insight and want to go share it with the world before it has matured in their own hearts. One of the reasons I wanted to gather together this morning was to see how Spirit was going to begin to unfold what is next for us. Spirit has brought us together miraculously and in demonstrations of His own presence and power.

“I am being shown that we will have some sort of an organizational structure, but if you remember Spirit’s words last night—we are going to see much miraculous work among us because we have one and only one Leader—I AM. The temptation is to form a hierarchy; I have been shown over and over that this is not to be. How will it work without human leadership? We have

just been given several clues. Did we have to orchestrate anything last night or this morning? No. We just had to show up.

“We must remember that we have had more significant breakthroughs in the last week than I have ever witnessed in my whole life. It is because together we are separately seeking more and more of Spirit and we are each getting individual manifestations that are significant, and even spectacular. But the manifestation of Spirit when we are together is breathtaking.

“Spirit gave us to see through Ann the deadness...and in fact...*deadliness* of the shadow of reality masquerading as the church. We have been shown that we are neither to be leaders or spectators, but participants. WE ARE,” Brad paused, “our identity is I AM. This is not blasphemy, it is our destiny and the destiny of all those who become participants with us. We heard last night that our ranks would swell and that Darlene’s pregnancy is a sign of the already growing and developing organism that is becoming ‘us’ in capital letters and being prepared for birth.

“I have seen over and over men getting a glimpse of the horror of the spectator spirit prevalent in the so-called church. After getting a glimpse, they start up something new based on the glimpse, and the light is so dim that nothing comes of it. Another shadow of reality is what is called the home-church or fellowship movement. What Spirit has shown me is that the same spirit that was ruling the former church rides on the backs of those who move into homes and that nothing is different but the form; it is still the shadow of reality. I am not being critical at all, just sharing what I have been shown.”

“In Acts,” Colin said, “we see what has been referred to as the ‘early church.’ It has been held up by many as an ideal to pursue. We see Spirit working in us just as He did at Pentecost. What we must see is what happened when Jesus’s disciples became Apostles and allowed themselves to be swayed into doing the very thing that Jesus told them not to do—assume roles of leadership and spiritual authority. This must not be so with us.”

“I am receiving,” I said, “an interesting vision that I am told to share and it is the picture of how a spirit of tradition can take over and bring to ruin what was originated by God’s own Spirit. I was shown that Jack and I could be given excellent and logical

sounding reasons to abort the baby Daniel. Reasons that the medical system would not only find acceptable but would use in support of such an abortion. I will explain something to you in a moment that is absolutely amazing and it will astound you. But I'm being shown to first give you a view of how the ruling spirits of religion work and why they are so deadly. Debbie and Rachel, as we have already been shown, will operate in the power of Spirit for the mission they have been given.

“The spirit of religion will in the future cause a memorial to be made of two beautiful teenage virgins and it will be used to create yet another, dead and useless religion devoid of real power. The picture is like that of a child king in the middle of Africa, based on a tradition and now part of the culture. It has no meaning other than the symbol clung to by the people and fostered by those who use the tradition to keep power.

“We have seen diverse understanding among us. Celibacy and sexuality for example are both gifts from Spirit. We've been told not to emulate or compare either, but to simply recognize and acknowledge God's Spirit in both. The spirit rulers over religion have historically caused and will cause again the emphasis on the gift and create yet another shadow of reality. In us has been birthed the I AM consciousness. The danger of that label is that in the naming of it is the end of its being in reality and a holding to the tradition takes over.

“We've seen that church membership is an abomination. But non-membership is just as much an abomination. Church buildings are an abomination, but the same spirit rules over those who have left the church building to go into homes. The abomination is neither the building nor the home, but the spirit behind both as they become movements and traditions.

“What could cause the abortion of our I AM identity is submitting it to the normal tests the system uses to legitimize an organization within the system. This must not be. Hierarchical leadership is not the only issue, but either hierarchical leadership or naming will ultimately lead to the other.

“The thing I am to tell you that will astound you is that Daniel is a Down's syndrome child and that in his early organ development he will have a severe congenital heart condition.”

Ann gasped and started to speak, I merely held up my hand and continued.

“Were I to have the normal tests during pregnancy for a woman my age, what I have just said would be proven. What I have just been shown and instructed to tell you is that if we allowed those tests, because his problem is so severe, we would be convinced by medical experts to abort. Because I am not to have the usual tests and for that reason he will be born not only normal, but he will have signs obvious to us of his being advanced mentally, physically and of course spiritually at birth.

“Anti-abortion is a religious thing and has nothing to do with what I am being shown. Just as my belly begins to swell is a sign of Daniel growing inside me, the swelling of our ranks will be a sign of our singular identity growing. We must not submit to the organizational tests of the system for it will cause it to abort. A structure will be given and the birth of the identity will be perfect, just as Daniel’s birth will be perfect.”

Brad ended any chance of further comment or possible argument to what I had just prophesied with, “I am going to fast for the remainder of the day. Please remember that this house is your house. The refrigerator and freezer are well stocked; so take good care of yourselves.”

Debbie put an exclamation mark to the ending of this time together by announcing, “Rachel and I already decided that we were going to fast at least for 24 hours and kind of get lost together.”

“Here we go again,” Ann said, “Spirit of God lead us in this; move on me.”

9

The Routine

WE SETTLED INTO THE DAILY ROUTINE OF THE house. The girls were introduced to Armand and Bernice when they arrived at ten a.m. on Monday. We decided to put off any decisions related to their schooling for the time being. They were such a curious mixture of Spirit and being just girls—enjoying the beach and their new surroundings, but not for a moment forgetting the call on their lives. They became quite independent of Jack and me, yet loving and attentive. They were a mother’s delight. It was intriguing to see this curious mixture of I AM consciousness blended with their humanity. But then we all are a curious mixture of the same thing.

Brad asked Jack to pray about getting involved in consulting projects in which his engineering and management skills could be utilized, an indication that both of them were a curious mixture of Spirit and the physical realm as well. Their business relationship developed rapidly and quite well. Jack spent a considerable amount of time in the office/den and on his computer. As Bob handled the finances, including the billing for the business, he also spent time in consultation with Brad and Jack. The three of them had an easy professional relationship that they each obviously enjoyed.

Ann and I spent a lot of time together. Bob asked if we’d like to get involved in some of the shopping chores, which became a fun part of our own routine. Ann and I grew as friends and Spirit gave us many insights together; again, a curious mixture of Spirit and the physical.

One rather surprising aspect of our new life was the relationship that developed among Colin, Vic and Will. They decided that they would spread the maintenance chores among the three of them under Colin’s talented tutelage and supervision. Will and Vic both enjoyed using their hands and things that Colin had

been putting off began to get done. These three were also a curious mixture of I AM consciousness and the physical.

Our evening meals deepened the relationships among all of us, and our relaxed yet intensely varied abilities combined to let Spirit speak and act through us. There were many manifestations of Spirit's presence and power around the fireplace each night that could hardly be called routine—yet they were expected all the same. It was thoroughly surprising and exciting.

Part IV

Realization

1

The Routine is Altered

AFTER ABOUT THREE MONTHS, A RESTLESSNESS grew among all of us. Unspoken, but intensely felt, was the desire to move on to what God was calling us. To be in the mundane of daily routine seemed like a trap.

I was not yet showing appreciably; I had gained almost no weight and there had only been about two weeks of mild morning sickness. While carrying Rachel, I had been continually sick for almost the entire final seven months. I ate continually and craved all kinds of crazy food combinations like watermelon, crab legs, cheddar cheese, stuffed green olives and pickles—topped off by cookies ‘n cream ice cream. I’d gained 55 lbs.

By this time in my pregnancy with Rachel I had *looked* pregnant and *felt* pregnant. With Debbie I gained just 20 pounds and experienced morning sickness only briefly and didn’t look or feel pregnant until well into my seventh month. With Daniel I was feeling healthy and normal. I was absolutely committed to not seeing or being seen by doctors...and no tests. At first Ann nagged at me a bit that I should be seeing a doctor. I finally challenged her with, “Look, Ann, you pray. You really tune into Spirit and if Spirit tells you I need to go see a doctor I will ask again to get whatever you get confirmed. Otherwise cool it!” She did ask, and was told to just be with me and watch how God brought Daniel into being, perfectly.

Vangie told us one morning that Armand’s wife was a highly experienced midwife with over 400 births with no complications. Jack and I met with her and felt comfortable that Daniel could be—and, in fact, was supposed to be—born in the south wing of the house in our bedroom. We asked everyone to tune in to see if we were on track.

Finally, one night during our time around the fireplace, Debbie gave voice to our feelings. “We’re supposed to be in a time

of preparation, yet we are so caught up in everyday living that it feels like we are going nowhere. I mean, I like it here and really like all of you, but we are supposed to be *doing* something.”

Colin said, “Vic and Will and I have been talking about the same thing. We are all far too comfortable. Holy Spirit, we know better than to decide to just do something. We want you to guide us and direct us; I thank You that we are going to be shown whether to just cool our heels, or that it is You giving us this sense of urgency to get on with things.”

With what happened next, it was like Spirit had just been waiting for us to choose to move on. Ann stood up, a glow on her face and the now somewhat familiar tongues of flame flickering above her head. Her eyes were wide open and she was looking slightly upward above us all.

“You have become complacent. Which of you has been obedient to the call to continually knock and demand that My own presence and power be upon you? The answer is not one of you. Leave this room without speaking. Go to your places of sleeping and focus on I AM alone. Do not stop demanding that My own presence and power be upon you, and you will see the changes that are ordained to be. I AM.”

We were each struck by the stark command. I understood that this is what each of us wanted. What would tomorrow bring? Then I realized that I was not to ask, but to demand to be overtaken by Spirit, and not stop UNTIL. Then I knew the changes tomorrow would be significant, because that was our collective and individual choice.

I went to sleep quietly, but firmly, tap-tap-tapping my pillow, saying “I want more of Your own Spirit, Daddy,” over and over and over. I felt silly—then I realized that was a tactic of the enemy. I was being obedient and I was not going to stop UNTIL; I woke up. I didn’t know what time it was and was determined not to concern myself with it. I went back to tap, tap, tapping and demanding more of Holy Spirit. I heard, “I am here with you.”

I asked, “Why did it take so long?”

The answer was bold, immediate and abrupt. “It took so long because all of you have been distracted by the illusion of the physical. This is not a rebuke, but given to help you understand.

Remember what you learned about strongholds? Hear me in this. When you give permission to the enemy to set up camp, I cannot move on your behalf. I am blocked because his agents have the right to be there.

“Your goal is to transcend. You experience a tiny bit and then like mice you go scampering back to your little lairs. Transcending is getting beyond the battle because it is getting beyond the physical. Do you see that it is a choice? I am going to give you each an oral exercise to help you into the consciousness of your true identity. This will help you avoid allowing your identity to fade into an opaque view, caused by your enemy’s fog of illusion. Several times each day you will say firmly and with great intensity, ‘I am in and of the will of God. Your presence and power are upon me. I want and have nothing else and no other thought or feeling shall find a permanent place in me. I AM.’

“For you, the mother of the mighty modern Daniel, you are to speak this on his behalf as well. Focus your light upon him and say to him, ‘Daniel, this is for you.’ Place your hand upon him as you repeat these words over and over until these words are the reality of you and him as one. The other discipline I will reveal to each of you is when you greet one another, and ask the mundane and trite of one another, ‘how are you? Care, really care, for I AM cares; yes, loves. Understand that this is an important moment and gives you opportunity to proclaim who you are. You are to say ‘perfect.’

“There is a reason for this; when you lose your focus on your singular I AM identity you ‘naturally’ revert to saying how you feel. To say ‘fine,’ or ‘good,’ or ‘better,’ or ‘not very well,’ is to allow the enemy to speak through you. You are to say ‘perfect!’ In this way, others who have ears to hear will be introduced into the I AM consciousness. For I AM perfect in every way. As an introduction, if someone questions you about saying you are perfect, you can say this: ‘God lives inside of me and I have decided to let God do the talking.’ This is the beginning of transcending to the one identity and refusing to allow the enemy to control your speech and the mind of the body you occupy. You will go back to sleep now and wake up remembering everything I have said.”

Jack and I began stirring at dawn. “How are you, sweetheart?”

His response was a sleepy but resounding, “Perfect!”

“Jack,” I asked, “why did you use that word? I have never heard you respond to that question in that way ever before.”

“It’s simple really,” Jack responded. “We are back on track and I know it. It doesn’t just feel good, it is absolutely right on track; it is perfect.”

I shared with him the word I had received from our Friend, and Jack merely said a simple, quiet, yet emphatic, “yes!”

“How could we have gotten so far off base?” I asked him. “We had far too much of an understanding of our transcending into our I AM identity to fall into such complacency.”

“Yes,” Jack answered, “that is the exact word that came through Ann. We let our guard down and the enemy infiltrated us without our even being aware. Let’s go into the kitchen and rustle up a cup of coffee, shall we?”

We were surprised to see that the girls were already up and out of their bedroom. As we went along the hallway out of the south wing we heard the buzz of conversation. Everyone else was already there!

“We’ve just been comparing notes,” Brad said as we entered the dining area. “How are you two this morning?”

Jack answered immediately, “We are one and we are perfect!”

“Now there is something Spirit just said through you, Jack.” Colin said. “We’ve just received additional instruction. When we are greeted as being grouped together we are to bring the focus to our unity and equality.”

“Yes,” Vic added. “We’ve known this intellectually for a long time, but that puts a bright yellow highlighter to our understanding. Jack, were you aware of what you were saying?”

“Only after the fact,” Jack answered truthfully. “I recognized immediately when the words came out that we were back on track. We are one, and I AM is perfect. We are back in the state and process of transcending.”

“I am in and of the will of God. Your presence and power are upon me. I have and want nothing else and no other thought or

feeling shall have a permanent place in me. I AM. The thought came to me, again,” Brad said, “of just how breathtaking Spirit is when we are together.”

“Jack and I were talking about the word complacency and how by not being alert we’ve allowed the enemy to set up camp in our midst.”

“The scriptural, ‘taking every thought captive to Christ’ comes immediately to mind,” Colin intoned, somehow underscored by his brogue.

“I want to share something from my training and the so-called mental health profession,” Will said. “It is a good reminder to each of us. To say, ‘perfect’ in the midst of that culture would bring on joking exchanges about being in denial. But being in denial—denying the *illusion* of allowing feelings and the triteness of societal niceties to control us—is exactly where we want to be. Denying the enemy access to the minds of the bodies we occupy is exactly where we want to be. I don’t know if everyone heard the same thing, it seems so, but I heard, ‘so that those who have ears to hear will also be introduced to the I AM consciousness.’ ”

“That’s what I heard too,” Debbie said. “This makes things so simple. I had to memorize that verse a long time ago that Colin just brought up about ‘bringing every thought captive unto Christ,’ but I never really understood it. I just now saw a picture of a soldier being brought in as a captive, and our battle or war isn’t against flesh and blood. Thoughts really are things—they are the ammunition that the enemy uses in his guns to shoot at us. It is so simple.

“ ‘I am in and of the will of God. Your presence and power are upon me. I want and have nothing else and no other thought or feeling shall have a permanent place in me. I AM.’ I didn’t understand awhile ago when I heard that transcending means taking us beyond the battle; now I do. By drowning ourselves in these words, the bullets of the guns of the enemy can’t touch us. It’s something like an invisible shield put up around us.”

“Yes, I now understand the phrase, ‘putting on the whole armor of God.’ ” Colin added. “That is what transcending into I AM consciousness is all about.”

“I’ve learned several things in the past few hours. Perhaps it would be better to say I’ve been reminded of several things,” Brad said. “First, it is tragic that we have allowed three months to go by because not one of us did what we have all been called to do—that is, to keep demanding and knocking for more of God’s own Holy Spirit. If we are not transcending on a daily basis, what does that tell us?”

“We need more of Spirit. There is no other way to break through. And I am being reminded right now that there are no additional conditions on the promise. We keep on knocking and demanding—we get more. We are conditioned to think we have to improve before our Daddy makes good on His promises. Not so. We only have to keep on knocking and demanding UNTIL we see the results. Our improvement comes from that action; isn’t that exciting? Wow!”

“Second, I don’t want to lament about the waste of time.... Let’s make good use of this as a reminder not to let it happen again. It is our choice and from what Spirit has told us, any one of us could have gotten us back on track. That’s good news. It’s a choice any one of us can make at any time.

“Third, we must, *I must*, stay alert—otherwise the enemy infiltrates us and distracts us. I personally have so enjoyed the synergy of our new partners on a practical level that I forgot why we were brought together. The business end is great—Jack’s contribution has been phenomenal. But what I need Jack for is to keep me on my toes in the realm of Spirit; the business will take care of itself...always has. Some of the things Colin was getting edgy about because he didn’t have the help or the budget are now being taken care of because Vic and Will are helping. We do need to keep the property up. But more importantly, Vic and Will were brought here for synergy in the power of Spirit. Same with Darlene, Ann, Rachel and Debbie. Again, it is perfect because we have learned our lesson.

“I am going to suggest something and let’s all take it to Spirit now—together and individually. I remember a group up in North Carolina that had a powerful move of Spirit by coming together and eating only one meal a day, around 3 in the afternoon. They got together every morning before getting to their business,

and last thing every evening they gathered again. Ask about it. They referred to it as a perpetual fast.”

“Sounds like you’re succumbing to another ritual, Brad,” Ann said. “Spirit, I do not want to resist anything that is going to keep us on the path for which you brought us together.”

“I’m hearing ‘yes.’ ” Rachel said; Jack, Will and I all agreed almost in unison.

“I am hearing that the same as with everything else, we must be in unity in this,” Debbie said. “Eating only once a day is no big deal...in fact we’ve made too much of a deal of eating. We have other food nobody else can see.”

There she goes again...a fourteen-year-old who has more maturity from Spirit in her than most adults. *Thank You, oh thank You! I just felt a movement! Is he supposed to be moving around in me this soon?*

“I am seeing a key; it is a giant, bright gold key—it has the word UNTIL stamped on it,” Bob said. “Let us never again stop short. We’ve all expressed being somewhat frustrated with getting captured by the mundane. Spirit gave Darlene to see it as a giant neon sign, I’ve just seen it as a key. Keep on demanding and knocking *until* we see; that’s the message we’ve been given. That’s the reason we were all brought together. I have to tell you how excited I am that you are all here....

“Hmmm...anyone want to interpret a word I was just given? Gofa...?”

Debbie started giggling—gleefully is the only apt word. “I know what it is, Bob, I got it too. And I know what it stands for—don’t hit me, anyone—it stands for ‘get off fat ass’ and demand and knock and don’t stop until we have a major breakthrough.”

“Can’t blame that one on me,” Ann said.

I was amazed at the depths to which this word gofa had penetrated our collective consciousness. Gofa UNTIL...none of us were laughing—we were moved.

“Debbie,” Brad said, looking at her intently, “I know you will not be offended by what I’m about to say; I don’t know why, but I just know you won’t. Years ago my daughter Sara said something that blew me away; some woman asked her where our family went to church. I think she was about seven at the time, and

Sara told her, ‘Oh, we don’t go to church, we *are* the church.’ She picked that up in the Spirit. I had not heard the term in the way she used it before.

“In describing the incident to somebody else I remember laughing and saying, ‘out of the mouths of babes,’ and it just struck me the same way with you. I heard the word gofa when you and Bob heard it; I was in midst of testing the spirit because I got the same interpretation that you got. Now, explain to me why you are not offended with me comparing you with a seven-year-old...!”

“That’s so easy, Brad,” Debbie said patiently, as if she herself was explaining something to a child. “Because Rachel and I know that in this whole call that Spirit has on our life, we get to remain as kids. I know that I have a lot more understanding than many adults, but I also know that it is nothing to get a big head over because the understanding and the pictures just come over me. In many ways I am even younger than seven. I love it, it is not a bother to me. Rachel and I are not bothered by what all the rest of you are bothered with. Uh...I’m seeing a picture, but don’t have the word....”

“You mean ‘adult responsibility,’ Deb?” Jack asked her.

“Yeah. Rachel and me, well...we just know that we are going to be doing what Spirit wants us to do, ‘cause Spirit is going to do it in us. Gofa is a silly word, but it really isn’t. Spirit is telling us that continually knocking and demanding is the one thing we can’t be lazy about.”

“Something just crossed my mind,” Ann mused. “About 20 years ago, Will went to one of those continuing-education things he was required to attend. It was held at some lake up in Wisconsin and he took me with him. One of the psychiatrists presenting was discussing suspended development—or maybe it was arrested development—where through some trauma a child will just quit developing emotionally.”

“Wait a minute, dear,” Will interrupted, “his paper was on arrested development, but what you were just given is beautiful. Debbie is suspended in childhood; how wonderful, no wonder you enjoy it, Debbie.”

“Yes,” Colin added, “Jesus said, ‘except you enter as a little child you cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’ ”

“See,” Rachel said, “most of you have had to unlearn so much to become like children; Debbie and I haven’t had to unlearn anything. Somebody talked about us being mature the other day; we’re really not mature in the sense that most people mean that term. Spirit is our maturity. We can go out and play in the surf together all day long and know that our real Daddy is with us. I love you, dad, and you know I do, but my Real Daddy is Spirit.”

“Oh my,” Ann sighed, expressing what we all felt, marveling about what was going on in these two girls who were my daughters, but not ‘my’ daughters.

Brad said, “This brings me to something else that I’ve been reminded of in just the last several hours. For years I have understood that I didn’t have faith in the sense that a lot of people talk about faith, although I am growing in it. What I have is an understanding of my authority as a believer. I take authority over demons and understand the rules under which my authority exists. And I am very careful not to exceed that authority.

“When I first left the organized church, a lot of pastor types would call and ask me to come and pray for one of their people. I would annoy a lot of them because I would say something like, ‘I don’t do what I do by praying for anyone. If a problem is caused by demons I cast the demons out.’ I would often be introduced as a man with the gift of faith. I have used the expression forever that yes, it is a gift, we just have to know how to unwrap it and Jesus gave us the key—”

Brad stopped mid-sentence and thought for a moment before resuming. “Oh, oh...this is new—I haven’t seen this before; I’ll let Colin, Vic or Bob do a word study on this one. It doesn’t really matter because I’m seeing pure truth from Spirit here—the benchmark passage of Scripture that I have used and what turned Vic around—and for that matter got you Adams people happily booted out of church—Matthew 17, the boy with the epileptic-like seizures who was cured instantly when Jesus rebuked the demon that had been causing them. The faith that Jesus was referring to—that it takes to do that—isn’t the same kind of faith that is referred to as a gift. It is authority. Vic and I have both earned that authority. Talk about getting kicked out of a church, this would

really do me in. I understand what I am saying here. Are you seeing this with me, Vic?”

“Yep,” Vic quickly agreed, “I’ve never seen it before though; there are so many people who have refused to enter into the discipline that provides the authority that you are talking about.”

“Ah, my dear friends,” Colin again entered the conversation in those majestic Irish tones. “Had you said this just yesterday you would have offended my good Irish Catholic sensibilities, and I emphasize that with an ‘indeed!’ Here is what Spirit is showing me; it is like you both earned your degree in the Jesus method of getting rid of evil spirits—and I know exactly what you are saying.

“The both of you have specifically fasted and prayed more extensively than any other men I know; and I, like so many others I’ve watched come and go, leave it to you to do what I am unable to do. I too have passed it off as a gift. It does seem a bit like we are playing with words here, but Spirit is assuring me that this is no such wordplay, but rather a truth that has been hidden. I see that I can also get my degree so to speak by doing the same thing that you both did.”

“Yes, I’m also seeing it for the first time,” Bob said.

“Yes, I too,” Will spoke in agreement. “I always leaned on Vic in my practice; I told my patients that I had this kook friend who believed that certain mental and emotional problems were caused by demons. And...well...I just felt that Vic was the one that had to do it. The more I fasted and prayed the more my faith grew, but I never had the sense of authority that you two just talked about. I’m seeing that it’s just like going to medical school—it takes a ton of desire, commitment and discipline, and in that sense it is earned. It isn’t a mental thing, it’s spiritual; but authority is the key.”

“That’s really weird,” Debbie said. “You remember, Will, when I gave you a bad time about always taking us to all-you-can-eat restaurants and I asked you how Rachel and I were ever going to learn to fast? Then you asked me at that catfish place if we were really planning on going without food. Well, ever since Dad read that passage from the Bible to us and explained what Vic had said, I’ve known it was something you had to do to get to the point of

being able to cast out demons, and that it wasn't faith in the normal sense. I wouldn't have known to use the word authority, but it's like the word is singing its truth. Those are the words I'm seeing."

"That brings up an issue that might help us communicate the truth of what we are saying," Colin interjected. "Debbie just spoke with authority, and in that sense it does seem like a gift. For example you have a gift of seeing pictures, Debbie, and describing what you see in a way that conveys what Spirit is showing you. I can also tell that you are driven to pursue this authority we are talking about. I agree, Brad, that it is not a play on words, and authority is the perfect word; I don't think we need to quibble about the issue of gift versus earning. What is not a gift? This is the point that I see; we all agree, I would think, that the Scriptural truth of not being able to boast about what we've been given is still intact."

"Well stated and an excellent corrective," Brad said.

2

A New Phase

WE SLIPPED EASILY INTO THE PERPETUAL FAST that Brad had introduced, while maintaining our ritual of wine and bread for the Lord's supper. Fasting helped us focus on our newfound sense of urgency to continue demanding and knocking for Spirit's preparation and receiving and getting "Spirit's plan," as we referred to it. Debbie continually reminded us of her view that the perpetual fast was not a replacement for the kind of fasting that would usher in authority. She also was used by Spirit to remind us that our daily goal was to transcend into I AM consciousness. I was simply not thinking of either of them as my daughters any longer. They were special children of God.

We all began to see the absolute folly of thinking of God in gender. God was Spirit, Spirit was God as had been so clearly revealed to Jack in the Bible and to Brad before him. Ann saw the discussion as immaterial and said so. Colin and she had several conversations about the issue that brought into sharp focus that things of the mind simply did not matter. These were the kinds of issues out of which religious doctrine was formed, and were distracting from what and where Spirit was leading us. Spirit was definitely leading us; everything that was happening within our group seemed to stimulate a greater and greater sense of urgency to be prepared. Meanwhile, Daniel grew and was beginning to be quite active inside me. I definitively was appearing to be pregnant.

How was the birth of this child going to affect us? Spirit had something to show us in this regard. We had settled into meeting back at the fireplace at 7 p.m. each evening. Spirit was moving in our midst with ever increasing intensity and signs of His presence. He had shown us that while he was indeed genderless, that referring to him as 'him' and 'he' was an appropriate thing, because He is a person. I still cannot explain it, but He is my closest Friend. Ann has really helped us all in this regard; not to

get bogged down in discussions about calling Spirit ‘he’ or ‘she’—we’ve gotten past that—and settled into referring to Spirit as ‘him.’

Debbie was in a trance-like state, her eyes closed. She began speaking again in that beautiful language. Rachel’s eyes were also closed as she interpreted. “The child will be birthed in three months. In you this night is birthed My plan. Colin, Bob, Vic and Will are to go into the city. Yes, tomorrow. You will see the building I have selected. It will be seen by you to be shimmering in a golden light. You will make arrangements to acquire this building. You will tell the owner that your Master has need of it and he will understand. He will also be the first of many in the swelling of your ranks as I have foretold.

“Many will refer to this building as a place of miracles. You will not put a name of any kind upon it. I will show you what to do, step by step, and this will begin tomorrow. I AM your only leader and teacher and guide. I AM instructing you to say I AM...I say to you watch, yes, keep your focus on Me.”

As Debbie and Rachel opened their eyes, we all looked at one another and saw the beautiful and eerie flame above each of our heads, the colors were gold, blue, purple and red. The language that had only been spoken by Debbie previously was now being sung in unison by each of us; there was a harmony like that of a choir that overlaid our voices. The sound was indescribably beautiful. No emotion seemed to accompany our singing; it was a sign of the purpose and the plan that only Spirit knew yet into which we were being intricately drawn.

As the sounds and the flames slowly faded, Brad said, “I don’t know what the rest of you experienced, but all I know is we have given birth to the child of Holy Spirit and it amazes me that I feel nothing...no emotion whatsoever. I cannot even say peace, for that is an expression of a meaning that I am totally unsure of. I am not bewildered, or overawed. I just am...I AM.”

The rest of us all spoke these words in the same level tone without human emotion. “I AM.”

It had begun. I saw that the birth of Daniel was only to be symbolic. While Daniel would be a mighty man and come into his own at the age of 16 even that event would be symbolic of the greater birth and development of what Spirit would do among us.

“Well, Colin,” Bob said, “I guess we don’t have to plan what the four of us are going to do in the morning. We’re driving together into Jacksonville to see what we are going to see.”

“Let’s meet together in the Solarium in the morning at 6:30. Is that okay with everyone?” Brad asked. No one spoke. Each of us—with our thoughts going unexpressed—went to our rooms.

The morning was uneventful. The four chosen for the excursion into the city left around 8 o’clock. *What would they have to tell us when they returned?* Jack and Brad were off together in another part of the house when I went in and asked the girls if they wanted to go for a barefooted walk on the beach with me. It was a beautiful day....

Debbie said to Rachel and me, “Are you guys going through the same stuff I am? I mean, I almost never stop saying, ‘I want only Your will, Spirit of God, I want more of you. More, more and more. It’s like for right now that is my only purpose in living, yet here I am at the same time enjoying my Mom and my sister? Uh, I guess that was a question....”

Neither Rachel nor I responded for several minutes. We were now walking hand in hand three abreast in easy togetherness. Finally I broke the silence. “Yes, Deb, that’s about all I think about, and I keep seeing small signs that my consciousness is becoming nothing but I AM.”

“That’s what I was going to say,” Rachel added.

“You know, girls, I don’t even think of you as my daughters any longer. And you are far more than friends, more like fellow travelers.”

Again, we shared a long and totally comfortable silence, as we three enjoyed the company of our Friend and each other. Daniel started to make some significant moves, so I had them both put their hands on where he was poking and shoving. “That’s it, little brother,” Rachel said, “do your exercises.” We laughed easily...what a day!

Three o’clock rolled around, and we all gathered in the dining room for Vangie’s once-a-day spread. Brad announced that Bob had called him from Jacksonville and said that they would be

eating there, but they'd have some pretty interesting news tonight around the fireplace.

It was a very pleasant time together as we got to know Bernice, Armand and Vangie a little better. Spirit gave Vangie a beautiful insight about things to come and Daniel's development, and she was given words for the blessing of the food. During wine and bread Jack and Rachel were given some significant insights that moved us all. It was an intimate time and nice, but I found myself missing the other four men who had become such an integral part of my life and wondered what they would have to tell us that night.

I was unprepared for their unbridled excitement. Bob gave a rather detailed account of the drive—most of which I didn't follow as he and Brad talked about various landmarks. Going on North U.S. Route 1 where it heads west for awhile (as if that makes any sense) then crosses the main railroad tracks and some river or another...and then took a right on some avenue or another...all made sense to Brad as he was following Bob's narrative of their drive. Bob talked about how Spirit told him point by point where to turn. "And then we saw it—"

Will interrupted, "Did we *ever* see it! Here's this gray warehouse and office building probably only about ten years old and it's, like, lit up in a gold fog. It was something else. We all saw it at the same time. And of course, friend Bob, here, simply says, 'well gentlemen, I guess this is it.' "

Colin shook his head and said, "There was a huge banner hanging down along the front of the building saying 'for sale or lease, will remodel to suit.' "

Will jumped back in. "As Bob pulled into the parking lot, we saw these two fellows standing by a pickup truck—one of them waved us over to where they were standing, and asked if he can help us."

"So I just asked him if he was the owner," Bob said.

"And you wouldn't believe what kind of an accent he had when he said yes," Will interjected.

"Yeah, he sounded exactly like Colin," Vic chimed in. "We all piled out of the van and Colin and he got into a conversation about where they were from and how long they had been in the

states and so on. So Colin finally stops with the Irish *mélange* and asked his brand new friend Michael Patrick (here Vic spoke in a perfect imitation of Colin) if he'd be so kind as to give us the particulars on the building. When he asked for what purposes we wanted the building, I realized I had forgotten what Spirit had told us to say. As I opened my mouth, 'our Master has need of it,' just rang out."

"The guy turned white as a ghost," Will interrupted excitedly, "and took a big ring of keys out of his pocket and motioned us to follow him into the building."

"We no sooner get inside this big open area," this time it was Bob, "than he stops and looks at us. He says 'I woke up this morning from a dream...there were four men standing right here where we are and one of them said 'our Master has need of it.' Now, what's this all about. Are you men Christians by any chance?'"

Will said, "It just came out of my mouth—'we try to avoid the term.' And he says in perfect Colinese, 'Do ye now...' and proceeds to tell us that the building has been vacant for four months and that he was convinced that God had some use for it. Then he asked, 'And what use do you think God has for this building?' Then he says, 'No...hold on for a minute,' and he goes back outside and gives this other guy some instructions. He drives off in the pickup and Michael comes back and says, 'I hope I'm not being presumptuous, but may I buy you lunch? I assume you wouldn't mind driving me to the restaurant, and then dropping me off at my office afterward?'"

"He took us to Lanigan's and we all ate mutton stew, for crying out loud," Vic said. "It was actually quite good. After three hours he said that he would give us a lease on the building provided we met certain conditions."

Will jumped back in, "the primary condition was that the building was to be exclusively used for whatever God was calling us to do, and he wants to be included in whatever that is. Month to month lease with a thirty-day escape clause for either side. Are you people ready for the terms?"

"No, Will," Ann with a rasp of her usual witty sarcasm, "we prefer being dinked around with your nonsense."

“Okay, okay, dear,” Will responded in mock defeat. “His primary concerns are that we allow him to pay all the utilities and taxes on the building and make any improvements we need as his ‘contribution to the project’ is how he put it. We get the building totally rent free—standard damage repair clauses and so on. He needs the carry forward loss, whatever the dickens that means, Bob understood what he was talking about and they struck the deal.

“He was so prepared by Spirit—not only from the dream he had this morning, but just the dissatisfaction he and his wife have felt with the lack of purpose in their spiritual direction. His wife has been praying that the building would be put to whatever best use God would have for it. She even had a picture in her mind of many people gathering there for healing and deliverance. Again these are his words.”

Everyone was caught up in Will’s excitement of the direct involvement of Spirit in the transaction. Brad was very subdued. Finally he said, “I don’t think we can do it.”

“Why on earth not, Brad?” Vic was completely perplexed.

“The terms are unfavorable,” Brad said with a huge grin, then broke into laughter over the dumbstruck looks on all our faces, “Gotcha!”

This kind of humor was so uncharacteristic of Brad that he caught us all in his little joke.

“We told Michael the kinds of things that had been happening to us,” Bob said. “We wanted to make sure that there was no misunderstanding about anything. We even told him about the upcoming birth of Daniel and the fact that Jack and Darlene’s daughters were called to be virgins. Colin started it off perfectly by telling him there were some things he needed to know and understand. He flinched every now and then, but then would get excited. He wants to know if we would mind inviting him and Pauline, his wife, out to join us around the fireplace. They will be here this evening.”

3

The Swelling of the Ranks Begins

MICHAEL AND PAULINE ARRIVED RIGHT ON time, with smiles and relaxed attitudes. They each carried a copy of the *Leapfrog* manuscript as Will had urged them to read it prior to joining us this evening.

“We should have known—the man with the agenda,” Ann quipped after introductions.

“Oh, it is wonderful,” Pauline said. “Michael was a bit put off with some of the things you had said at first at lunch. He told me about it, and some of it did sound rather strange.” She paused and glanced at me meaningfully and then at Rachel and Debbie, “But this—” she held up her copy of the manuscript, “just settled it for us both. With Michael’s dream this morning, he was very much prepared, but this—” tapping on the manuscript, “was exactly what I needed.”

“I felt that this would be an interesting thing to hand out to selected people we know as an introduction to your group,” Michael said. “Especially after they told me that God instructed you not to have a sign on the building or to put a label on yourselves. After Pauline and I both read it, well, it made the things that seemed somewhat offbeat perfectly clear. I mean, let’s face it, had I not been prepared by the dream this morning with the exact words that Vic spoke, I might otherwise have thought you were some kind of cult.”

“Michael,” Jack said, “believe us when we tell you we know exactly what you mean and the *Leapfrog* manuscript helped us as well. Every step we’ve taken forward has been accompanied by miracles that are not dissimilar to what happened to you today.”

“Speaking of having the appearance of something cult-like,” Ann said, “what will people say now that there are three among us that sound like they just got off a spacecraft called ‘Aerlingus’ (Ireland’s national airline)—we could pass ourselves off as the Irish potato famine gang.”

“I have to apologize,” Will interrupted dryly, “for my wife—her brand of humor has been a source of much anguish—lo these many years.” The Patricks were introduced to Will’s cackling and our ability to laugh easily at Ann’s pointed barbs.

“I feel like I am supposed to say something,” Pauline said rather forcefully. “One of the things that has been bothering both Michael and me for the last few years—and, well, especially the last few months—is the fact that the organization in which we were involved seemed to more and more be watering down the message of truth in order to supposedly reach out to others. The *Leapfrog* manuscript clearly puts into words what I have felt. Holy Spirit must guide and direct. It took a burning bush to get Moses’s attention and obviously you folks have had several of your own burning-bush experiences...and we want to be a part of what you are doing, which is simply following Holy Spirit.

“I’ve never thought of myself as rebellious, but I have grown so tired of human leaders who in the name of Holy Spirit want to control things according to their own religious backgrounds. The words that leaped off the page this afternoon, Brad, were your, ‘rebellious against whom?’ ”

“Bob, Colin and I,” Brad said, in his easy way of explaining things without dominating, “for several years now have been the core of our little group here. We have not known where we were headed, but we kept getting certain kinds of basic insights. The primary one being that we were equal and that we had, in Jesus’s words, one Leader and one Teacher, ‘The Christ,’ or Holy Spirit.

“Shortly after the *Leapfrog* manuscript was written, Vic came down. He later moved and became an integral part of Will’s psychiatric practice up in the Chicago area as a direct result of Will and Ann’s daughter Beth being healed of asthma. But it wasn’t until Vic, Ann and Will, and Jack and Darlene came down about seven months ago and spent a week of intense fasting and prayer and searching for Holy Spirit’s leading—that we all had some significant breakthroughs culminating in our decision to all live here together.

“The miraculous sale of their properties and dissolving of their business and professional involvements in Illinois—the addition of Rachel and Debbie and the one yet to be born, Daniel—all of us being swept into this equality is what prepared us for the addition of you two.

“Together we were shown—through a ‘tongue and an interpretation’ by Debbie and Rachel in a rather dramatic

demonstration of the presence of our one and only Leader—that we would be introduced to the building He had arranged and that our ranks this day would swell in preparation for the birth. That is symbolized by the pregnancy of Darlene.

“In other words we have been prepared for your joining with us, just as you have been prepared. I seem to keep having to be reminded that somehow the *Leapfrog* manuscript is an integral part of all of this. Finally, we were told that the building would come to be known as the place of miracles. Had we acquired the building in any other manner, we would not be in the unity we sense at the moment. Would it be possible for you two to spend the night with us?”

At this Michael and Pauline looked at each other and nodded their heads—as Michael said, “Pauline said that God had told her we’d be spending the night with you and that we were to come prepared. You know, this whole thing with the building has been in Pauline’s consciousness from before the lease was up with the former tenants. She kept saying that God had a purpose for that building.”

We took a break for a few minutes while Bob showed them the same suite that Jack and I had occupied that first week. When they came back down, Brad asked, “everything all right?”

“All right?!” Michael exclaimed, “It’s so perfect, I said to Pauline, ‘Let’s move here.’ ” Jack and I looked at each other at those exact words he had uttered so many months ago.

Ann did a sing song version of, “Here we go again, folks.” We laughed at the bewildered looks of Michael and Pauline and explained the similarities. Then, as Brad repeated the same words of welcome that he had spoken to Jack that night, Debbie went into that same indescribably beautiful language accompanied by the gold, blue purple and red flame. The words in English came through Rachel.

“With these two I have brought into your midst, the inner circle of 12 I have formed and completed. I signify this by giving you new names. You are no longer to be called Michael and Pauline. I christen you Emmanuel and Elizabeth. You will be speakers of much prophetic utterance which will always be

manifested into the physical within hours of coming through your lips. You are now one with US and transformed into I AM.”

As had happened the night before when Rachel had completed the interpretation, we saw that each of us had the same flame overhead. We sang in unison in that beautiful language, accompanied by the intricate harmonies from some angelic choir we were unable to see.

“You’d better tell them the story, dear,” the erstwhile Michael, now Emmanuel, said to the likewise-former Pauline, now Elizabeth.

“This is a bit overwhelming,” Elizabeth began. “About two years ago a sister of mine who lives out near Fort Worth, Texas, began to get interested in our family history. My maiden name is Hughes; my mother was an O’Brien. Without getting into the whole family tree, in the late 1600s, Cecil Hughes—a many times over great-grandfather of my father—married Colleen MacGillicuddy. Cecil’s ancestry was traced back to Joan of Arc. The Hughes had migrated first from France in the 15th century to Wales and then to the south part of Ireland. Colleen and Cecil had a son named Emmanuel who married Elizabeth Conway. This marriage never produced any children. The couple was devoted to God. Emmanuel was said to have healing powers and Elizabeth had the ‘second sight.’ They were burned at the stake together as witches in Southern Ireland in Cork only a few months after their wedding.”

“The reason this is significant,” Emmanuel interrupted, “is that Diane, Pauline—uh...I mean Elizabeth’s—sister did a whole genealogy map on their ancestry. This little branch of the Hughes family ended with the obscure and childless marriage of Elizabeth and Emmanuel. Shortly after completing this family tree, Diane sent to *my* Elizabeth—I’ve got to stop here and just say that I know we are supposed to use these names. This is strange, but somehow it is significant to what we are experiencing together.

“Anyway, we got this family tree chart in the mail, and Emmanuel and Elizabeth are circled. In the letter accompanying the chart, Diane wrote that she’d had a dream that we were the reincarnation of this Elizabeth and Emmanuel and the reason we were ‘barren,’ as Diane put it, is that God had a specific purpose

for our lives and it was to go far beyond the physical extension of either the name Patrick or Hughes. We were rather horrified at her sister's thoughts about reincarnation theories anyway, and this really set us off in some of our pronounced judgments of her whole fixation on genealogy and other stuff we considered to be of the occult. Frankly, it gave me the heebie-jeebies.

"Last weekend, I was helping Elizabeth clean out the garage; we've been thinking about selling our home—surprise, surprise, right? And we came onto Diane's chart and these circled names, Elizabeth and Emmanuel Hughes. I told her to get rid of it, and she put it in the pile of stuff that was going into the trash."

"That night," Elizabeth again took over the recounting of the story, "I had a nightmare. Mike—uh...Emmanuel and I were being burned at the stake for destroying the chart. I woke up in a sweat, went out to the garage and dug through all that stuff and retrieved it. I took it into our breakfast nook and sat down with a cup of tea and prayed about it. I heard that even if the chart was destroyed, that Elizabeth and Emmanuel would survive. I don't know if any of you are versed in 'testing the spirits'—something we learned in a deliverance training class we attended—but I tested the spirits. This was a word from God."

"Yeah," Emmanuel added to the story, "so she comes in and wakes me out of a sound sleep to tell me about the dream and the whole nine yards. I have learned not to discount my wife's little dramatic interludes, and here we are. Now, then—who is scaring whom?"

"Well," Colin said, "we now have a completed group of 12. I don't know about the rest of you, but I have always resisted placing any significance on numbers. The obvious correlation is the 12 disciples; maybe I need to rethink my whole mindset on numerology."

"It is out of this group that the real swelling of the ranks is going to begin," Ann said with no little authority.

"Wow," I exclaimed, "I swear Daniel just turned over! Reminds me of when Holy Spirit turned John the Baptist over in his mother's womb."

"Wait a minute," Colin urged. "Jack, may I borrow that little book of yours? Yes, yes, listen to this. I'm in the 1st chapter of

Luke. ‘Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord.”’

‘The point is that John the Baptist’s mother’s name was Elizabeth. Now listen to this. ‘When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with Holy Spirit.’

Debbie said, “This is exciting, we’ve been told that Mom’s pregnancy is symbolic and even Daniel himself is a symbol. The real birthing is what is going to be happening at the building...and Elizabeth being added and Holy Spirit causing Daniel to flip-flop.... Don’t you guys see it?” We, indeed, all did see it, perfectly—I AM.

Just before we broke up for the evening, Brad told Emmanuel and Elizabeth about our permanent fast routine, and that we met in the morning in the solarium. Emmanuel told us that the organization they had been a part of until just recently was a network of home churches. They knew a number of people who felt as they did, among which were about 85 teenagers who felt a bit displaced at the moment. That is, that God was calling them to something else. No split or any kind of acrimony was in the people leaving; they were just all praying that Holy Spirit would lead and felt definitively led away from going back to church attendance.

“My thought,” Emmanuel explained, “is to have 200 or so of the *Leapfrog* manuscripts printed and inexpensively bound to give to these people as an introduction to the direction in which we are moving. Would there be any objections to my having that done, at my own expense, of course?”

“I know you are asking the question of Brad, Emmanuel,” Bob answered him, “but I felt Spirit nudging me to provide the answer for a couple of reasons. I think Colin and I—and for that matter each of the rest of us—are better equipped to answer the question. Brad knows he’s not supposed to draw any attention to himself. I hand the manuscript out all the time; as you can see so

does Will. We are all equal. Brad feels no ownership about the manuscript or this property or anything else. It all belongs to I AM and we are equal. The point is that whatever you do is between Holy Spirit and yourselves; we assume that you wouldn't do anything inappropriate. Very few people have felt led to become a part of us. We see Spirit is changing all that. Let's face it—to the world, especially the religious world, we are on the lunatic fringe.”

“Yeah,” Ann interrupted, “to prove it we even have our own resident keeper and psychiatrist.”

“I think it is time for us to individually as well as corporately seek God's face in the use of the building and the manuscript,” Brad said. “Let's meet together in the solarium in the morning and see where Spirit takes us. I do feel the same with you two as I did with the Adams and the Barrys, that you belong here with us and you are certainly welcome.”

“Amen to that,” Colin said. “I hope you Yanks can plainly see that God took pity on me by sending some kindred reinforcements who speak English properly.”

4

The Blending of the New with the Old

AS SOON AS WE HAD GATHERED THE FOLLOWING morning, Emmanuel began. “Elizabeth and I have been part of the home, or house, church movement for almost six years. We see the same spirit infecting house churches as happens in the traditional church.”

With that Emmanuel gave us a verbal sketch of a vision he had about 3 a.m. He introduced what he had been given by saying, “I kept hearing the words ‘avoid the shadow of reality, avoid the shadow of reality.’ Have any of the rest of you heard that term? I have never heard it before.”

Will explained that the term came to Ann regarding the church she had been attending in the Chicago area, and that it was how she saw the traditional church, the shadow of reality.

“Oh yes, well, exactly,” Emmanuel almost stuttered. “It was a whole new term to me, but that is interesting, because those of us drawn to the house church movement are drawn precisely for that reason—what we’ve come to see as the problem of spectatorship. Back to the building, I kept getting the picture of rather large crowds of people all being led by Spirit in a number of activities. One was in singing, and I kept wanting to design something that would allow space for musicians and choirs as well as racks for songbooks. And it was precisely when my mind would go in that direction that I would hear the words, ‘avoid the shadow of reality.’

“I was reassured that there is nothing wrong with instrumental music or group singing, but Spirit wants us to avoid these—uh...trappings—so that we are not distracted by either the intellect or the emotions. Now, here I must confess I can only report this is what I heard, and I cannot explain why.

“I was taken to a place where I heard angels singing and instrumental music that was beyond description it was so beautiful.

There were many manifestations such as we had happen last night when we all sang in unison in another language. And as you remember there was a group of singers—I assume the appropriate word is angels—singing beautiful and intricate harmonies that were beyond the mind’s grasp. At least, beyond my grasp. Well, the very same thing was taking place in my vision this morning.

“In this vision I kept trying to force a circular design of seating so that we could all look at one another when any of us were speaking or sharing as a means to avoid this tendency to become spectators. Again I’d hear, ‘avoid the shadow of reality.’ I then saw the difficulty with home churches; we were running from a perceived problem, but allowing the same thing to dictate our direction. Don’t you see, the shadow of reality.

“Finally, I quit struggling with trying to design the interior of the building and simply said, ‘Okay, You do whatever You want to do—which you know, I thought was rather generous of me—and until I see clearly what You want *me* to do—I’m going to leave it alone.’ ”

The humor of Emmanuel giving God permission was appreciated and the irony was not missed. It was becoming obvious that Emmanuel was not a simple person. We were lost in a general conversation for a few minutes until Brad brought us back to focusing on what Emmanuel had seen with the comment that he was convinced the vision would give us a clue as to the direction the building was going to take, and the point was to get the direction from Spirit and not from our collective experience whether perceived as good or bad.

“I heard a noise,” Emmanuel began again. “It was like a click when somebody turns on the switch to an electronic amplifier or speaker. I was in a kind of fog so that I had difficulty seeing anything in the physical realm, and I was straining to see through the fog. I heard a gentle but firm voice say to me, ‘physically being able to see anything doesn’t matter. Just come to Me and I will show you how to see in the unseen realm which is far more beautiful. For to see in that realm requires not eyes to register images and a brain to process them, no. It requires understanding the very nature of who and what you are.’ ”

Emmanuel had our attention. He had the attention of every one of us. I knew that what I was about to hear would give me understanding on a whole new level. As I glanced about at everyone I noticed that their faces registered what I felt; it was like we were all transfixed into some hypnotic state.

Emmanuel continued, “That stopped me. I had to ask, ‘who am I?’ I heard the words you folks use...I AM. Then it dawned on me that when you say I AM you all say it with an unconscious consciousness of what you are saying related to being in union. Ah...that word is correct, but it connotes a kind of togetherness whereas I AM...just *is*...and transcends the ability of the English language to convey this identity. Don’t you see—now, you must know that I understand perfectly what I am saying, but I don’t see how the rest of you can follow it. Not for a minute!”

“That is not true, Emmanuel,” Debbie quickly corrected him. “I am the youngest one here and I understand totally what you are expressing; you are expressing what cannot be explained, but everyone in this room at this very moment is in and with you. You are in the same process we learned about in a science class once, what a caterpillar goes through when being changed into a butterfly—metamorphosis. It cannot be explained and that’s the point. Spirit is using me right now to tell you to relax and realize that we all are understanding in Spirit not with mind. Please go on so Spirit can show us all.”

“Yes, yes, that is perfect, child,” Emmanuel said with his eyes dancing yet unseeing. “Transcending into I AM consciousness is metamorphosis. Oh my, yes. Not only can it not be explained, it cannot be duplicated or even manipulated. It cannot—it *must not* be approached mechanistically. I now understand Jesus’s instructions and why—as each of you has followed them in this demanding and knocking business—and how it results in an individual metamorphosis into I AM.

“In a sense you are announcing to the universe—” Emmanuel dropped to his knees to demonstrate what he was saying and began to vigorously pound the floor with both fists simultaneously, “I want only what You want, God, that is, to have Your Spirit.” Getting back into his chair he continued, “When you have done that, you have—just as the caterpillar has done—” at

this Emmanuel raised his right hand with his index finger extended upward for emphasis, “gone into the cocoon where metamorphosis can take place.

“I was shown how science has refused to see some of the things of the spirit realm; yet amazingly enough, much of the realm of nuclear physics, for example, is unseen. And get this...” Emmanuel seemed to struggle for a moment to articulate exactly what he had experienced. “I was shown that the words unseen and spiritual are synonyms. This whole thing of the atom, don’t you see,” Emmanuel began to move both hands around each other in a circular motion to illustrate what he was saying. “The picture of the parts of an atom revolving around itself is theoretical and not seen by the physical eye—yet the concept is proven by experiment and nuclear experience.”

Emmanuel paused here, looking up at the ceiling. The rest of us were held in rapt attention and I saw that everyone else, just as I did, felt we were hearing exactly what God wanted us to hear and were waiting with great anticipation for him to continue this fascinating discourse.

“This picture of the atom,” Emmanuel continued, “is the very nature of the creation; much of evangelical religion has refused to see the truth of this part of science. Just as it has for the most part refused to acknowledge other spiritual phenomena such as tongues and healing. Science and religion are both imperfect mediums, but both contain truths. Einstein, for example, did not use mathematics in the usual sense of the term to arrive at the theory of relativity. He described the process as going ‘inside.’ From going inside he saw the formula.

“In a sense both Teilhard de Chardin and Einstein got beyond the enmity between religion and science. Both saw physical and spiritual as one; not in a dualistic sense, but in the sense of union. Science in the past 30 years has virtually proven the thesis that if you leave hydrogen gas alone long enough you will have plants and animals. Christians reject evolution and most scientists reject the theism represented by so-called Christianity. I was shown that these two men with whom I am only vaguely familiar—and there are others—see the truth of Spirit at work in evolution and in unity.

“I was shown that these bodies we occupy contain hydrogen. I was shown that Spirit works through and uses hydrogen. To a large degree, the creative process demonstrated in the use of what Einstein saw was misused in part for destruction rather than creation. Then I was shown that creation requires both timing and destruction. Jesus’s words, ‘unless a seed fall into the ground and die’ is illustrative of this as a fact. Transcending is nothing more and nothing less than moving from the explainable to the inexplicable—the metamorphosis example my young new friend here gave us,” at that he gestured toward Debbie, “and not worshiping either the beginning state or the ending state as ends in themselves.” Emmanuel folded his hands in his lap and was obviously finished, satisfied that what he had said was somehow truth. Ann and Debbie both summed it up perfectly for me.

Ann said, “I understood what Emmanuel just said. I could not repeat it, I could not explain it and therefore the word ‘understand’ is totally inadequate. But I know that I have transcended into equality and unity not with just all of you, but with everything. I AM.”

“See, Emmanuel?” Debbie agreed. “We really did follow what you were saying; even though I am clueless about much of it, it doesn’t matter. I don’t have to know much science to understand that a rainbow is a result of what happens when sunlight hits rain in a certain way. I also know that chasing rainbows to achieve anything physically is a waste of time. But what Spirit just said through you is just like seeing a rainbow. There are things that are caused by two forces, and the result is an illusion. Attempting to explain it adds no value and may in fact diminish its value.” Debbie stopped abruptly. “Wow! I couldn’t even repeat what I just said because it wasn’t I that said it.”

How can this be my daughter? At that moment I again realized that she wasn’t ‘my’ daughter. I needed to see beyond my ownership of Debbie, because, as she had so eloquently spoken it, she didn’t have a clue; yet she knew it was from the Source and just accepted it. I would progress far more rapidly if I would do the same.

“It is interesting that Spirit introduced the names of those two scientists. What are we supposed to be learning from this?” Bob asked.

Brad said, “I was asking the same question a little differently, because I have always seen both men as being far more spiritual than as just scientists. In a larger sense, both men have interpreted the findings of science and changed its direction. Both were largely invalidated by their peers at the first introduction of their ideas. Both are now widely revered as having opened doors that have allowed science to progress beyond its former limitations. Certainly Tielhard De Chardin was the first to postulate that the universe *is* God in a sense that most theologians and scientists fail to grasp. He saw it as a togetherness that transcended anyone’s understanding. But in a far more simplistic way, aren’t we being shown the same thing about I AM?”

“Debbie’s introduction to us, and the humility she expresses are because—as she herself has said—she has the good fortune to have been both transformed from and fixed in childhood and doesn’t get either caught up or lost in adult maturity nonsense. She is just able to simply report what she sees in the Spirit as she sees it, without polluting it through an adult filter.”

“I have to interject something there, Brad,” Jack got into the conversation. “It is interesting that you used the term ‘polluting’ in conjunction with a filter. We have a tendency to think filtration is synonymous with purification. Filtration and purification processes are both known to create problems in the very same sense as the solution they supposedly provide. By eliminating certain microbes in air or water for example, some people are deprived of the ability to build a natural resistance to certain allergies. So a filter often creates the very problems it is designed to solve and can ultimately make people both susceptible and vulnerable to allergy and disease.

“When we go back to the hypothesis that Jesus raised—that we can only enter into God’s realm if we approach it in a childlike manner—we see exactly what the problem with an adult maturity filter *is*. I probably learned more from Debbie spiritually on the trip down, as she was going through her own metamorphosis, than I

had been able to learn from church and the Bible in my whole life.”

“If I can go back to the *Leapfrog* manuscript,” Colin said as he pointed to the copy in Elizabeth’s hand and took it and began to thumb through it. “Ah yes, here it is, Jeanne Stockwell writing as Novi.

Novi: I see. There is no “seniority” here. Spirit is spirit and transcends the process of education and experience. I see the flaw in my previous thoughts about reincarnation. Those thoughts are not relevant. It simply does not matter whether I occupied another body in the “past.” “Past lives” have nothing to do with who and what I am. I am Novi and have always been. I am one with You and have always been. When I chose to occupy the body called Jeanne Stockwell to experience humanity I didn’t lose anything...I just lost sight of who I am.’

“Some people got so hung up,” Colin commented, “on their own prejudices related to reincarnation concepts that they missed Brad’s later comment on what Jeanne, or Novi, had said. Let’s see here... Ah yes, it was in your response to a question, Brad.

This question was addressed to both Jeanne and Brad:

“Novi” seems to have absolute clarity that does not, or did not exist before in “Jeanne.” The offhanded way she discarded whatever previous thoughts she held about reincarnation was nothing short of fascinating. I am interested in any comments that either of you have about the subject.

JS: I used to believe that I probably had a pre-existence as one or more human beings in past lives—in other words, I was somebody else at some point. What I am seeing is that Novi could have observed and experienced the physical world many times over in a variety of people in history. It just no longer matters to me and I don’t feel the need to speculate about it.

BC: That is interesting...because I came to the same conclusion years ago. Most Christians resist the idea of reincarnation almost violently. The concept was certainly threatening to me and for years I refused to get into conversations about it. Until one day I stumbled onto a conversation between Jesus and one of his disciples...they came upon a man who was born blind.

“Why was this man born blind? Did his own sins cause it, or was it the sins of his parents?”

It is obvious from the question that the disciples believed in previous lives...since he was born blind his own sins, if they were the cause, would have to have been committed in a “former life.”

From Jesus’s answer there is no indication that he cared one way or the other about the possibility of reincarnation. He certainly didn’t correct the belief. He merely said that neither the man’s own sins, or the sins of his parents caused his blindness.’

“I hope I haven’t made the point I was trying to make too obscure,” Colin said. “But the vision Emmanuel had this morning takes us back to emphasizing not getting hung up on either our past experiences or our opinions about them. How much more forcefully can we be impressed that these themselves are the shadow of reality?”

Will added, “This brings us to an interesting point. Some of us are convinced that the *Leapfrog* manuscript needs to be somehow an introduction to what goes on at the building and to the group. It certainly seems so to Emmanuel and Elizabeth; and from what Colin and Bob have said and you know my feelings, it is an important document.”

“Let them who have the eyes to see, read it,” Debbie said. “There needs to be no argument. Some people hand out Bibles because they believe that somehow that will introduce the person getting one to God’s realm. For some it does, for some it doesn’t. The pastor of our church used to make a big deal out of the fact that Jesus quoted Scripture. Jesus also said that studying the Scriptures was the very thing that led some people away from God.

It will be the same thing with the manuscript. Use it when Spirit leads to use it. Understand that it may be the very thing that turns some people away.”

“Well, Debbie, finally somebody said something that overcame my own resistance to making such a big deal out of the manuscript,” Brad said.

“Well, Brad,” Ann said, “you have just helped me overcome my own guilt for being so resistant to so much of what Spirit could have been teaching me. Glad to see your imperfections so brilliantly displayed.”

“I’m just glad to see that acid tongue of yours, dear, pointed in another direction besides toward me,” Will said dryly.

With that we all laughed. We then made the general agreement that we would each knock and demand to have more direct revelation from Spirit until we saw evidence that we’d indeed received what the next step should be.

Elizabeth said, “Oh my, how can one person be so slow? In reading *Leapfrog* I saw clearly from your explanation, Brad, that the word in the original translated as ‘ask’ actually meant to demand—I even memorized how to pronounce it because it had such an impact on me...ah - ee - tayo ...and I was fascinated also by the fact that it meant persistently—that is, to keep on demanding *until* we receive. But what you were really saying was to keep on demanding until you actually see the evidence.”

“Excuse me, Elizabeth,” Ann said. “I fail to see how you could possibly construe what you just said as being slow...I should have picked up on that five years ago and didn’t learn it until we moved down here. Enlighten me...how have you been so slow?”

Elizabeth thought for a moment and then said, “Simply that I have heard that passage over and over, you know...to whomever knocks it will be opened...whoever asks will receive...and to whomever seeks will find. It just dawned on me what the seeking is—to keep on looking for the fulfillment of the promise. That is, we all agreed to demand and knock. I just never put Jesus’s words seek and you will find together with what you said about seeing. I’m sorry I am going on about this, but it’s just amazing that I missed it.”

“If I may make a small confession, Elizabeth,” Brad said. “I wrote the explanation over five years ago, and on one level I understood what I was writing, but it didn’t really click in for me as it just has through your sharing.”

“This is what we keep learning over and over, Elizabeth,” Bob added. “Equality...Spirit teaches us something new through one another all the time. I have learned so much through Debbie and Rachel, a couple of kids so to speak, and one of the wonderful things is how excited they are as they too learn the things coming through them at the time. Not only is Spirit teaching us all kinds of truth, but the humility we have is not affected. It is real and is also given.” At that we separated and went to our beds.

5

So, This is the Next Step!

AS I DRIFTED OFF TO SLEEP, I BEGAN THAT incessant tap, tap, tapping on my pillow and demanded to have more of my Daddy's Spirit; I stopped because I felt a slight vibration. It was Jack doing the same thing, probably on the side of the mattress. I started to giggle, and he asked me, "What's up with you?"

"I see that we are both knocking and demanding," I responded, "I feel you hitting the bed somewhere."

"Oops, sorry, Dar," he apologized.

"No need for an apology, sweetie." I quickly assured him, "It's not really bothering me; it just struck me funny that here we are both tapping on the bed as a kind of routine at the same time. Are you demanding something specific?"

"Nope, just for more of God's own spirit," Jack replied. "I figure if I start there then Spirit can just lead me wherever; it's all fine for me."

"Me too, sorry I interrupted," I said and kissed his ear. "I'm going back to work I said," as I turned back over and resumed knocking on my pillow.

I had a vivid dream. I was among many people in a building, so many that we were standing because there was no place to sit. There was a sound of singing that I still cannot find words to describe. The beautiful sound is etched in my mind. Both Rachel and Debbie were among those standing; their mouths were open—but they did not seem to be singing. I didn't recognize anyone else among all the people there. There was a pervasive peace and happiness that permeated the building. We did not expect anything nor was there any feeling of anticipation.

I looked out a large window and saw that there were many more people standing on the outside. Some of them had their mouths open as well. I saw Jack and Will standing out there. I

realized that the sounds that I was hearing were coming from those with open mouths, but they were not singing. The sounds were coming *through* them, but they were doing nothing to cause the sound.

I understood that this was reality. I also understood the shadow of reality that Emmanuel—and Ann before him—had so clearly understood, which had previously eluded me. Teaching, singing, and other so-called worship mechanisms contrived by human beings were what Spirit was showing us to be the shadow of reality.

I awoke from the dream with the settled feeling that I had seen the blueprint for our gathering together at the building. We were coming to stand in the presence of God with no other purpose. We had nothing to offer except ourselves as vessels through which Spirit would teach, heal, sing, provide “heavenly” music and provide other manifestations that could not be duplicated by humans, but could be clearly understood and received in peace and joy. I understood also that was what the word enjoyment was meant to convey; that is, surrounded by an indescribably peaceful joy that was not obtainable by anything on the physical plane, and certainly not so-called worship in the religious sense.

In a flash, I saw that all ecstasy from the physical realm was also a shadow of reality; this included my relatively new-found joy of sex with Jack. I saw at a deep level (that I cannot yet and may never be able to explain) why sex is such a consuming thing and why the enemy has contrived so many ways to pervert it.

Jack was fast asleep; it was only ten minutes after midnight. I got up and put on the loose fitting, baggy sweats that Jack referred to as my beach maternity wear and tip-toed out onto the beach to sit on my favorite log.

Why, I asked my Friend, *are there no seats in the building?* Was this just a dream...or was I getting something to which I should be paying close attention and if so why?

I must have spent 20 minutes focused on this question when I finally saw the answer. This was a means by which many would break their habit patterns of going to sit as spectators and others the habit of being participants in a religious production. He told me

that because many significant things were going to take place in this building that collectively they would be referred to as the “Jacksonville movement.” People would come from all over thinking they would be able to observe spiritual phenomenon. Others would attempt to copy some of the physical attributes of the building including the fact that it had no seating.

I went back inside and took my place on the bed next to Jack, whose slow and rhythmic breathing was hardly discernible. It seemed like only a few minutes later that I was awakened by Jack’s stretching and yawning. I felt fully rested, but Daniel was moving around kicking like a horse that wanted to get out of the barn.

Jack and I chatted as we cuddled a few minutes before our inevitable getting up and about ritual. He responded to my question about whether he had received anything about what the next step was going to be by simply saying that he thought we were in for a surprise.

We were the last to enter the solarium. Everyone seemed a bit more animated than usual in the various conversations taking place.

Colin started immediately with, “I am very anxious to share what I received upon awakening at about 5 a.m. and what I wrote. If there are no objections....” He looked slowly around the room. No one said a word.

“I saw,” he continued, “Emmanuel and Elizabeth inviting several—it seemed like about 50—people to the building for an introduction to us and what Spirit is doing among us.”

Elizabeth gasped. “But that is exactly what I saw too. Emmanuel and I woke up and talked about it right about 5 o’clock.” Emmanuel merely nodded his agreement. “But Colin, do go on, I didn’t mean to interrupt you,” she said, looking chagrined.

Ann quickly assured her that this was part of our routine, to share as things seemed important to express. “I’m having to learn not to stifle Holy Spirit in this regard,” she finished and turned her head expectantly back to look at Colin.

“Yes, and very right,” Colin began again. “I saw two things being given to your little group of home church folks. One, of course, the *Leapfrog* manuscript to give them at the end of the

meeting to take along with them, but first a piece to begin discussion among us and them. I printed copies for all 12 of us; if you wouldn't mind looking at it and seeing if Spirit confirms to you that it is appropriate." With that he handed out the following three pages stapled together.

For Discussion

Why does the religious system called *Christianity* epitomize what one of the writers of the New Testament referred to as having a "form of godliness, but denies the power thereof?"

Is it a given, as some insist, that "behind the scenes" of the religious system operates a ruling spirit hierarchy of *principalities, dominions, powers and thrones*? If this is true, what are the observable human components? Moreover, are these human components merely unwitting, unsuspecting and thereby innocent puppets to these aforementioned and unseen powers in the spirit realm?

What holds this religious system together on the physical plane?

If we start by looking at the microcosm example of a small "church," we recognize that all churches have some things in common. Churches that grow larger are simply amplified organisms of the same genre, but with minor variations, so we can ask the following question:

What are the things that most churches have in common?

1. A human leader who allows her/himself and in many cases even encourages others to refer to her/him by some title that implies spiritual authority and superiority.

2. An audience: a group of member-spectators who come one or more times a week to listen and observe the leader and a select few participants (singers, worship leaders, collection takers, etc.) act out the ritual deemed acceptable and appropriate to all who attend.

3. A building in which the group assembles.
4. A small group comprised of some of the select participants and the spectators that ostensibly and officially has authority and is the recognized ruling body over the affairs of the church.
5. An overseeing organization elsewhere that is most often referred to as a “Denomination” to which the local church is a recognized, official and legally submitted affiliate.

Is there anything wrong with the setting described above? The answer depends upon the perspective of the one who puts relative *right/wrong* or *good/bad* value on such an organization.

There is a rapidly growing “house church” movement in many areas of the world, the participants in which generally point to the above described “church” as being inherently wrong from the vantage point of how Jesus said his church would be structured.

Some of these same home church advocates also point to the “early church” depicted in the opening chapters of “The Acts,” the fifth book in the New Testament, as the ideal template for how Christians should gather together.

Others hold to the premise that the early church was also a departure from the instructions that Jesus gave his disciples.

If we want to take a critical look at the straw man *church* we’ve just constructed it is fairly easy to knock it down on the basis of human frailties alone. It takes only one of two catalysts to form a church. This seems to also apply to most “house churches.”

1. A man or woman wants an audience or a group of students and puts together some form of a church—and invites people to attend.
2. A group of people that believes they need a human being to teach/lead them in spiritual matters

and actively looks for a spiritual leader that fits their criteria.

By some definition of the term we are also a “church.” So, how are we any different?

We probably are not as different as we would like to think, but there is one principle to which we hold as a group: Spiritual equality of individuals with only one leader...as Jesus put it, “The Christ” or Holy Spirit.

So far, we have also had complete unity. In a way, we could easily be described as a collection of rebels. But as one of our number has pointed out with the following question, rebels against what or whom? What has caused us to embrace the One Leader, spiritual equality principle by which we pursue—at least as an ideal—the words purported to be of Jesus as found in the first five books of the New Testament. We believe that the above-stated five point list of the five things Christian churches have in common are actually an antithesis to what Jesus said. In that regard, one striking thing Jesus said is, “What is the point of calling me, ‘Lord,’ if you don’t also do what I tell you to do?” He goes on to say that there is no point at all!

At this juncture we are 12 in number. The oldest in age among us is in the 60s, the youngest are teenage sisters 14 and 15 years of age. We give as much weight to what Holy Spirit says through these girls as we do Holy Spirit speaking through those who are chronologically older; we are far richer for it. It has to do with the recognition of when Spirit is speaking through any of us it is not measured by the personality of the individual.

We all became absorbed in reading until one by one we finished. Will was the first to break the silence, “Per usual, Colin, well stated and probably quite appropriate for the group that Emmanuel and Elizabeth will invite.”

“I am comfortable with it,” was Rachel’s contribution.

“Well, I don’t know how I would have received it during the past five years when I was still insisting on attending church—” Ann added, “and I thought Vic and Will had been hypnotized by the resident guru, Brad here, but it simply sings as pure truth to me right now. I think you had a visit from Spirit this morning, Colin.”

“It’s interesting you should say that, Ann,” Elizabeth commented. “I was just trying to look at it from how I would have felt before Emmanuel and I became so disenchanted with our house church involvement. Purely from human thinking, I’d have to say I’d react strongly. But that’s what I did when I first read *Leapfrog*.” We all agreed and the matter seemed settled.

“The next step,” I added, “seems to be for Emmanuel and Elizabeth to extend an invitation to their friends. I would like to get your reactions to something I got around midnight.” I shared the dream I’d had and pointed out how it paralleled the vision that Emmanuel had shared the previous morning.

“The thing I want you to hear particularly is what I heard Spirit tell me when I asked about the dream. He told me that because many significant things were going to take place in Emmanuel and Elizabeth’s building that collectively they would be referred to as the ‘Jacksonville movement.’ People will come from all over thinking they’ll be able to observe spiritual phenomenon. Others might attempt to copy some of the physical attributes of the building—including the fact that it has no seating.

“But they’ll miss the important thing that will be occurring there: that it is a means by which many will break their habit patterns of going to sit as spectators and others the habit of being participants in a religious production...”

Vic added, “Which is exactly what Ann and later Emmanuel saw in the term ‘shadow of reality.’ ”

“Are any of you getting a sense of when this invitation should go out and when we should expect to have this meeting?” Brad asked.

“I see a huge sign with a black background and the word **NOW** printed in bold white letters,” Rachel said.

“It is certainly what I am sensing,” Bob added.

“Why don’t Elizabeth and I work on a list and rough-out an invitation for the rest of you to look at? Would a couple of hours be suitable?” Emmanuel asked.

We all agreed to gather an hour before our afternoon meal. Meanwhile, Ann, the girls and I opted for a barefoot walk on the beach as Colin, Vic, Will went to look at some maintenance project Colin and Bob had been discussing. Brad and Jack went off to make a conference call to a consulting client with Bob in tow.

6

The Vision Takes Form

WHEN WE CAME BACK TOGETHER, WE HAD ONE thing in mind; to review the invitation that Emmanuel and Elizabeth had drafted, and the list—seventy-four names! Without preamble, Emmanuel handed parts of the stack to some of us to pass around to the others.

From Michael and Pauline Patrick

Dear Friends:
You are invited!

Please review the list of names below. What you have in common with each is that at one point each of you have discussed with Pauline and I our growing dissatisfaction with our involvement in the house church movement. As you know, Pauline has been praying that God would specifically direct us as to the use of our building in the industrial park northwest of town.

Her prayers have been answered rather dramatically! We have become associated and are now living with a dozen people in a large beach home about half way down the coast toward St. Augustine.

Holy Spirit has guided us to make some rather abrupt changes in our lives. We would like to introduce to you the people with whom we are living...and share what has been happening in our lives and theirs and have a time of questions and answers and open discussion relative to what seems to be God's direction in our lives, and whatever else

Holy Spirit might direct as to the course of that meeting.

Following the initial meeting (which will be a casual stand-up affair at the office/warehouse) there will be a catered buffet luncheon where we can sit together and you can each become more closely acquainted with our new friends and extended family in Christ.

Please call Elizabeth on her cell phone for the date and time. In preparation for this meeting we would like to personally deliver a copy of a manuscript that will give you some inkling as to the catalyst of our new living experience. This will enable our discussion to have a somewhat singular focus with everyone having the same information.

Yours, in Christ,

Michael and Pauline Patrick

P.S. The brothers and sisters you will be meeting (in alphabetical order) are:

Ann, Bob, Brad, Colin, Darlene, Debbie, Elizabeth, Emmanuel, Jack, Rachel, Vic and Will.

As had become our habit, as each of us finished reading we quietly waited for everyone to finish before anyone broke the silence.

Finally Emmanuel spoke. "Almost everyone on the list has e-mail capability and we regularly exchange things of a spiritual nature, so the invitation will definitely be read. The only two we could think of that don't use e-mail have fax machines, so even there the communication can be fairly rapid. Make whatever changes you want to make and we are ready.

"My friends at Lanigan's do catering and will furnish the folding tables and chairs, linen and silverware. Everything in that department is simple, it's just a matter of coordinating dates."

We just sat there astonished at the giant leap we were about to make toward the fulfilling of the vision we had been collectively given.

“Does anyone see any changes they sense need to be made?” Will finally asked.

“Two things struck me,” Brad interjected. “I was wondering if we should invite anyone else, particularly the household staff. I was also wondering if we should consider renting a hotel conference room for the meeting—and the catering as well. Just a thought.”

I was about to embrace Brad’s idea, when I heard, “no.”

A split second later, Debbie, Ann and Vic said almost simultaneously, “No!”

“That’s interesting,” I said calmly. “I heard the same thing and was about to share it.

“Shall we put it to a vote?” Will asked with a cackle.

“Thankfully we haven’t grown to that point yet,” Brad said with a huge smile. “I believe we just heard Spirit’s voice, which goes along perfectly with what Colin, Emmanuel and Elizabeth got.”

“Don’t forget Darlene’s dream, Brad,” Ann chimed in. “By the way, I got that the date is supposed to be September 8th.”

Bob pulled out his wallet and consulted a small laminated card-sized calendar. “That’s the second Saturday of the month. That’s three weeks away.... Seems like a long time to wait.”

At that, we all fell silent for several moments. I finally asked my Friend about the 8th and got a yes. “I just got a yes to the 8th of next month,” I said.

“I don’t know if is significant or not,” Jack spoke almost to himself, “but Colin, when you shared the word you received to have this meeting in the first place, didn’t you say that the *Leapfrog* manuscript was to be given *after* we had the discussion on the piece you wrote?”

“I don’t remember actually,” Colin said, “but I know that I am always comfortable with people reading it. And as both Debbie and Brad have said, it will have an impact on some.”

Brad said, “For a change I come down on the side of giving it out ahead of time. I would like confirmation on this one, but I am sensing that this kind of advance distribution to the people that come to this particular meeting is the perfect use for *Leapfrog*.”

“That sounds like confirmation to me,” Will said. “Sure we don’t want to vote?” He cackled again.

“How about we throw dice like the disciples did to see who would replace Judas?” Ann added.

“What’s all this stuff about voting and throwing dice about anyway?” Debbie asked.

“Oh honey,” Jack started to explain, “they’re just poking fun because we usually get some pretty definite and dramatic revelation about any decisions we’ve made as a group, and one of the things that go on with most groups is that they vote.”

“And yes,” Colin interrupted, “one striking example of just how off-base the early church was, they actually cast lots—somewhat the equivalent of the dice used today. And the church today, instead of seeing it for how laughable it is, practically sanctifies the practice of voting—if not throwing dice—to make decisions that need to be made from guidance from Spirit and not with the mind or chance.

“Holy Spirit,” Colin prayed, “You guide us even now in a perfect demonstration of your own leadership.”

“I just heard,” Rachel said quite soberly, “that it is our choice and that we’ve already made it.”

“Which just goes to show, if you stop to think about it,” Brad said, “that we don’t have to be so afraid of voting at times.”

“Yes, I see that,” Ann said. “On those things that might be just a matter of choice, such as what kind of restaurant we want as a group to go to, or the color of paint we want to use....”

“I’m seeing though, Ann,” Elizabeth interjected, “that we can also get into such a habit of thinking that certain things are mundane and we can just hold them up to a vote, and maybe miss Holy Spirit’s guidance that he wanted us to have.”

“Elizabeth, I have to tell you,” Ann responded, “that even as I was saying it I was realizing that what I was saying wasn’t quite right, but I didn’t know why until you just said it. At any rate—”

Rachel stood with her eyes looking upward, “I say to you that the 8th shall be the day. For three days later a significant event will take place that will change how the world thinks about many things. The seeds that will be sown on the 8th will be My own preparation for what follows that event.” Rachel sat down again.

Bob said, “Sounds like we need to busy. Tell me how I can help you with some of the logistics, printing and the like.”

With that the discussion took on the practicalities of who would do what in the organization of the coming of what we began to refer to as the “first gathering” at the building.

I wondered at the fact that no one seemed to be discussing what Spirit had just announced through Rachel. I asked, what is this significant event that will change how the world thinks? I immediately heard that there would be no doubt in my mind. *Can I speak this now?* I asked and got an immediate yes.

“Everyone,” I interrupted their discussion, “I was taken by the words delivered by Rachel a moment ago, and a bit surprised that nobody else seemed concerned. I was just told that there would be no doubt in our minds as to how significant it is.”

“I was told basically the same thing, Dar,” Brad responded. “I was told not to speculate, but the 11th of September, 2001 would indeed be significant.”

With that everyone went back to their planning...and I simply wondered for a few seconds and basically forgot about it.

7

The First Gathering

WE HAD ALL AGREED THAT EMMANUEL AND Elizabeth would host the meeting and start off by explaining in general terms how we had come together and then they would act as Master and Mistress of Ceremonies in whatever way Spirit might lead them. We all became comfortable with what would happen when Emmanuel said, “After all it is Holy Spirit’s show...not ours.”

At 4 p.m., September 8th, 2001—68 of us gathered, standing in the huge reception area of the building. Ann, I and the girls had greeted everyone and made name tags. We were all dressed in casual attire.

Emmanuel began, “You will all get an opportunity to get to know everyone at the buffet up on the second floor in what used to be the company training area. You’ll get to sit down then as well. We decided we wanted this part to be a standup affair so that none of us would be tempted to speak for too long of a time.”

Thank heaven, I thought, since it didn’t take too long for my feet and ankles to swell in nearing the end of my seventh month of carrying Daniel.

He briefly gave the history of Will, Vic, Bob and Colin driving up to the building that first day and some of the rather miraculous things that had surrounded us since then.

“Even more than most of you are used to,” he continued, “we have no formal leadership of any kind in this group. We rarely even know what we are going to do from day to day in the sense of our gatherings together. Our rituals are simply things that have happened and as typical human beings we fall into habit and tradition. You’ll experience one just before we eat and just afterwards that I guess we resist changing, at least it seems that way.

“Hopefully you’ve all read *Leapfrog* by now and have some comments and questions about it. One of the authors, Jeanne Stockwell—a professional writer—was invited, but she had a schedule conflict; she’s down in the Fiji Islands for a magazine on assignment. The other author—the one who was interviewed—is Brad Cullen. Wave your hand Brad so everyone who hasn’t met you yet will at least know who you are.” Brad, with that inimitable charm of his, smiled and waved his hand.

Emmanuel resumed. “Many of your questions and comments will probably be directed toward him. You will see, however, that neither he nor anyone of the rest of us assumes any kind of leadership. This is a good time to spring something kind of crazy sounding on you,” here he paused and looked meaningfully around. “Both Pauline’s and my names were changed through a tongue uttered by our youngest, Debbie, and interpreted by her sister, Rachel. Please, Rachel and Debbie, wave your hand at everyone....”

I was shocked at how relaxed, comfortable and natural both girls acted—it was then that I became aware that there were only three other teenagers present—all three of whom were looking intently at the girls.

Emmanuel again resumed, “We, Michael and Pauline Patrick, were renamed Emmanuel and Elizabeth and there’s quite a story surrounding that, but we’ll get into that later as things unfold. By the way, Elizabeth and I are the only ones that have new names. I say that hopefully to ward off any thoughts you have—as even I did at first—that this group is some sort of cult. I suppose that many will think that....”

“Anyway, as I was saying, none of us assumes any leadership whatsoever. It is impossible to describe how we make decisions that effect the whole family. That’s another thing—that’s the first time I or anyone else has described our little group of twelve as a ‘family,’ but we do live together and have become quite close. Colin, the only other one among us who speaks English properly besides Elizabeth and I—he is Irish too, as you’ll soon gather—” Emmanuel had to stop for a moment to accommodate the hearty laughter from everyone in the entire group. “Colin will pass out a brief discussion paper and facilitate

your questions and comments, and then Brad will take your comments and questions on *Leapfrog*.”

Colin recruited a few people to help him distribute the piece he had written. “Just to facilitate our discussion I will go ahead and read this aloud, so you can hear it in proper English as my new brother Emmanuel so eloquently pointed out.”

The similarity of the speech patterns of Colin and Emmanuel was almost uncanny, and, of course, his comment produced more laughter from all around. The three other teenagers were particularly demonstrative in their expression of glee.

“Why does the religious system called *Christianity* epitomize what one of the writers of the New Testament referred to as having a ‘form of godliness, but denies the power thereof?’

“Is it is a given, as some insist, that ‘behind the scenes’ of the religious system operates a ruling spirit hierarchy of *principalities, dominions, powers* and *thrones*? If this is true, what are the observable human components? Moreover, are these human components merely unwitting, unsuspecting and thereby innocent puppets to these aforementioned and unseen powers in the spirit realm?

What holds this religious system together on the physical plane?

If we start by looking at the microcosm example of a small ‘church,’ we recognize that all churches have some things in common. Churches that grow larger are simply amplified organisms of the same genre, but with minor variations, so we can ask the following question:

“What are the things that most churches have in common?

1. A human leader who allows her/himself and in many cases even encourages others to refer to her/him by some title that implies spiritual authority and superiority.
2. An audience: a group of member-spectators who come one or more times a week to listen and observe the leader and a select few participants (singers, worship leaders, collection takers, etc.) act out the ritual deemed acceptable and appropriate to all who attend.

3. A building in which the group assembles.
4. A small group comprised of some of the select participants and the spectators that ostensibly and officially has authority and is the recognized ruling body over the affairs of the church.
5. An overseeing organization elsewhere that is most often referred to as a “Denomination” to which the local church is a recognized, official and legally submitted affiliate.

“Is there anything wrong with the setting described above? The answer depends upon the perspective of the one who puts relative *right/wrong* or *good/bad* value on such an organization.

“There is a rapidly growing ‘house church’ movement in many areas of the world, the participants in which generally point to the above described ‘church’ as being inherently wrong from the vantage point of how Jesus said his church would be structured.

“Some of these same home church advocates also point to the ‘early church’ depicted in the opening chapters of ‘The Acts,’ the fifth book in the New Testament, as the ideal template for how Christians should gather together.

“Others hold to the premise that the early church was also a departure from the instructions that Jesus gave his disciples.

“If we want to take a critical look at the straw man *church* we’ve just constructed it is fairly easy to knock it down on the basis of human frailties alone. It takes only one of two catalysts to form a church. This seems to also apply to most ‘house churches.’

1. A man or woman wants an audience or a group of students and puts together some form of a church—and invites people to attend.
2. A group of people that believes they need a human being to teach/lead them in spiritual matters and actively looks for a spiritual leader that fits their criteria.”

Colin looked around the room, nodding as he saw some of our guests catching Spirit’s plan. “By some definition of the term we are also a ‘church.’ So, how are we any different?

“We probably are not as different as we would like to think, but there is one principle to which we hold as a group: Spiritual

equality of individuals with only one leader...as Jesus put it, 'The Christ' or Holy Spirit.

"So far, we have also had complete unity. In a way, we could easily be described as a collection of rebels. But as one of our number has pointed out with the following question, rebels against what or whom? What has caused us to embrace the One Leader, spiritual equality principle by which we pursue—at least as an ideal—the words purported to be of Jesus as found in the first five books of the New Testament. We believe that the above-stated five point list of the five things Christian churches have in common are actually an antithesis to what Jesus said. In that regard, one striking thing Jesus said is, 'What is the point of calling me, "Lord," if you don't also do what I tell you to do?' He goes on to say that there is no point at all!

"At this juncture we are 12 in number. The oldest in age among us is in the 60s, the youngest are teenage sisters 14 and 15 years of age. We give as much weight to what Holy Spirit says through these girls as we do Holy Spirit speaking through those who are chronologically older; we are far richer for it. It has to do with the recognition of when Spirit is speaking through any of us it is not measured by the personality of the individual.

"That, as you can see, is the end of this." Colin said, "Any comments or questions you have will be quite welcome...."

"Are you sure this isn't some sort of Irish cult?" A short, stocky and thoughtful-looking man with a thick brown beard, steel rim glasses, dressed implausibly—particularly for how warm the weather was—in the plaid shirt and bib overalls of an Iowa farmer, with 'Dean' printed on his name tag, quipped to more laughter.

Colin quipped right back, "Well, we certainly see that as a positive move in the proper direction, Dean." The lightness of the moment continued.

Dean again spoke, "I did have some reactions to *Leapfrog* that I still want to talk about, but I do have to say that seeing you people and getting a feel for how God has obviously moved upon you as a group has been a huge step in moderating some negative reactions. I do want to tell you, Colin, that it is obvious to me that Holy Spirit inspired you to write this. I don't know about everyone else, but to me, this was needed by those of us who have gotten

stuck in the rut of what I have come to think of as the substitute church. This is like a breath of fresh air.” Dean said this while holding up and gently shaking the pages Colin had written.

An incredibly thin, but healthy looking and quite tall young woman in her late thirties or early forties, on whose name tag ‘MEL’ was printed, said, “You probably picked the ideal group to introduce this,” she paused and somewhat dramatically swept her arm in a circle as she groped for the right word, “new happening. There are only 15 of us in our fellowship, but we have already moved toward spiritual equality, as you put it. I look forward to see if you have been any more effective at rectifying the seeming obvious differences between what Paul wrote about the pastor-teacher function and what Jesus said about spiritual leadership. More effective than we have been so far, that is.”

“May I?” Vic asked of nobody in particular, walking toward the center of the group. “I am a former pastor of a church in the St. Louis, Missouri area. A member of the church gave me a copy of *Leapfrog* to read more than five years ago. At first I thought—rather violently—that Brad was all wet. You people in the house church movement don’t have to go through the thought transformation I did in a couple of areas. But you will hopefully find out today that we really don’t have any corner of doctrine sealed off as sacred about anything. We’ve come to our own conclusions about a number of things, but aren’t trying to impose anything on anyone. We’ve witnessed some rather astonishing manifestations of Holy Spirit in our midst, and look only for Holy Spirit direction in our lives individually and as a group.

“Frankly, and I am just saying this for me and not speaking for anyone else in our little group, I get uncomfortable about anything that tends toward intellectual understanding or interpretation about anything in the Bible that seems contradictory. We ask Holy Spirit for guidance in every area of our communal lives; intellectual differences get left to the individual conscience.

“One of the reasons that some of us like to hand out *Leapfrog* is simply that in it Brad wrote a number of things that made sense to us. Most of those who are still in leadership positions in the traditional church react violently to *Leapfrog*...particularly in regard to what seems as conflict between

some of what the gospels say and what Paul says. I believe that God showed me through Brad that there was not a conflict in content, but in interpretation. However, rectifying those seeming conflicts is impossible.

“Now, Mel, the reason I jumped in here is because I just saw something clearly that I had not seen before. When I was assuming the position of ‘pastor’—‘inappropriately’ as I have now come to believe—” Vic made the meaning of his remarks obvious by forming finger-quotes around the words, “I argued vehemently on the side of the church’s traditional interpretation of what Paul wrote about Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers. After visiting with Brad, Bob, Colin and a psychiatrist friend of theirs, I became convinced that the traditional church’s interpretation was dead wrong. Here’s the point: I cannot even rectify my own conflict; I changed from one position to the other and I am satisfied that’s where I am supposed to be for now.

“One of the things I have learned through Brad is to understand that I might, maybe even probably *will* have a whole different opinion about any number of things tomorrow than I am holding onto so dearly today. And that is fine. I just leave any doctrinal issues that others hold to their individual conscience, and likewise for me. I hope I haven’t muddied the water by interrupting and talking on and on....”

“For me you have just cleared up the whole matter.” This from a quite young-looking man with blonde hair that looked as though he’d washed it and forgot to comb it afterward, with ‘Bill’ written on his name tag. “One of the things that troubled me in *Leapfrog* was your statement, Brad,” with this he turned and looked intently at Brad, “something to the effect that those who left the traditional church to start something else...carried on their backs the same spirit that was controlling the church they were leaving.

“I am even more glad at this moment that I left, but I see the truth in what you wrote. And this whole discussion with Colin and now you Vic...it’s wonderful.” He actually had tears in his eyes.

“I want to add something that may or may not help,” this came from Jack. “Through some rather unique circumstances and before we ever read *Leapfrog*, my wife and I met Vic and another

of our number, Will. Vic shared a passage from the Bible that cleared up some fears and misunderstanding I had about evil spirits or demons. We shared that passage with our daughters around the dinner table one night. Rachel, who is our oldest daughter, shared it at a midweek young peoples' group at the church we attended; the upshot is that we were asked to leave the church."

I was startled to see that several people were nodding their heads knowingly at Jack's remarks. I began to understand some of these went into house churches because they felt forced out of their former churches.

Jack continued, "One of the things that struck me most forcibly in meeting Brad, Colin, Bob, Vic and Will was their understanding that it was perfect for all concerned, for that church and for us. I have totally left behind all need to justify my current understanding or argue about it. There simply is no conflict. The desire for God's perfect will is the central focus of my immediate family and my extended family as well. We have one Leader and Teacher, as Jesus put it, The Christ! End of story for me. If others want to argue about it, or hold a different view...that is between them and God."

"Wow! Thank you for that." The man speaking—Arne according to his name tag, apparently in his sixties with a pure white, full, scraggly beard—continued, "I've been carrying around a bunch of anger and bitterness about the organized church. God used you, my friend, to help me dump it. I've known that I shouldn't be holding on to this stuff, but I was and it has been really holding me back.

"Amazing how you can see something and know it is wrong, but still hold tenaciously on to it. I believe I just received a real insight as to what a demonic stronghold is; and it is cleared away. Holy Spirit, I want the void filled with You!" With Arne's strong exclamation came many nods and many a loud "amen."

Will stepped forward and said, "You will find that we resist all kinds of ritual and as my dear wife here—" with that he pointed to Ann and cackled loudly; I was amused to see some of the people negatively reacting to the cackle, and amused even more at my own thought. *They'll get over it.*

Will repeated himself when he recovered from his fit of laughter. "As my dear wife is fond of saying, we make a ritual out of non-ritual. I am going to suggest something for everyone to consider. What do you say we go up to the second floor and sit around the tables and continue our discussion while sitting down? The pregnant one among us is beginning to look as if the little guy she's carrying is beginning to weigh her down."

Oh thank you, I thought.

"Oh baloney, Will," Ann said. "He's just tired and wants to sit down and is blaming it on Darlene. But what the heck, I'll second the motion even though we are against ever voting in this crew."

"I'll be the second to break the ritual, Ann," Brad added with a wide grin. "All in favor say aye."

"Maybe we could all be more comfortable by saying amen?" Debbie asked to a roar of comfortable laughter.

8

The First Gathering Sits Together

THE TABLES WERE ALL SET AND A WIDE ARRAY of food was prepared buffet-style on five eight-foot folding tables placed end to end. The caterers had already left, with the exception of the catering manager who quickly conferred with Emmanuel to make sure everything was satisfactory. There were 75 chairs placed around the outside of a huge U made by several tables placed end to end.

Emmanuel, reasserting himself as host, said loudly, “Please take a seat everyone, wherever you feel comfortable.”

With that he and Elizabeth immediately sat down on one of the sides of the U, almost in the middle.

After everyone was settled into a chair, Emmanuel stood and said, “One of the traditions of the house we now live in is that before every meal we join hands and silently ask Holy Spirit to take charge of ourselves and everything that takes place at the meal. Usually one or more of us gets an impression from Spirit to share something or speak a blessing over the food; we never know what to expect.

“Just take a minute or so and ask Holy Spirit quietly to lead and direct, and one phrase that somebody said at the first meal Elizabeth and I attended that has stuck is, ‘silence is golden.’ ” With that he sat down again and everyone held hands around the table.

My Friend gave me only one thought, *Watch carefully.*

After several seconds, one of the teenagers—a boy of about 16 named Karl—asked, “Are there any rules about who says something or anything like that?”

“I’m interested to hear why you asked, Karl,” Brad voiced what we were all thinking.

“Well, I said kind of what Mr. Patrick said we should all say...and I heard that I was to say something...and, well...it was kind of scary. I don’t usually talk out much, but the thought was so insistent that I figured I’d better make sure that I wasn’t out of order or anything...and whether I should stand or sit...it’s kind of confusing.”

“Of course it is,” Brad said in a very soothing manner from down the end of the table on the same side. “You know, Karl, one of the things that is difficult for all of us is to be obedient to God when people are around. Because people are often uncomfortable about somebody who gets something from Holy Spirit. What I’ve discovered for myself—no matter how much I stutter or stammer because I’m uncomfortable—it always works best to simply be obedient. My suggestion to you is to take a deep breath and take a few seconds or even minutes to let Holy Spirit remind you what he is directing you to say. He’ll also let you know whether you should sit or stand.”

Karl simply bowed his head and began to immediately speak. “This day is the most important day in our lives, because it is the beginning of what we can see that has already been established where we cannot see it. What is established is that I, yes I AM in the midst of you prepared to do things you have not yet seen nor heard. If you look to Me alone, yes I AM, I will guide you into everything you need to know. Leave behind what you have previously thought and listen carefully to what I say and watch carefully what I Myself do for I AM.”

After several seconds of complete silence, Debbie said, “I’m supposed say to you Karl, way to go!”

I heard an immediate, “confirm with what I said to you.”

“That’s exciting,” I began. “You should know, Karl, that just before you asked if there were any rules, I distinctly heard the words, ‘watch carefully.’ And that’s a direct confirmation of what Spirit just said through you. When Debbie just said, ‘way to go,’ I was told to confirm it with what he had said to me. So, way to go, Karl!”

Several people repeated, “Way to go, Karl.”

“That is neat,” Karl finally responded. “Because I don’t feel good about what I said, but just about the fact that I did what I was

told. And what I learned is that is the safest thing to do, forget about people and their rules and just obey. I don't have to live by any rules; just follow God."

Debbie stood, her face shimmering and shining in a beautifully soft golden fog-like aura around her face, and began to speak in that language that only she spoke. Rachel immediately gave the interpretation while remaining seated.

"Because you have obeyed Me, Karl, and have turned your back on what people may think, I will bless you and you will be a man of many miracles just as was the Prophet Elisha for My own presence and power will be upon you."

"Wait a minute!" Karl exclaimed. "I understood every word before Rachel interpreted it, just the way she interpreted it! I have never been so excited yet so calm at the same time.... It's like I am swimming in a pool of water of God's presence; I can't explain it, but it is wonderful. I just want whatever God wants and I am no longer afraid or nervous about what that might mean."

"Sounds like a baptism in Holy Spirit to me," someone whom I couldn't identify said softly.

Emmanuel stood, "Let's go ahead and get our plates and eat; the food has been blessed. On the far right is the bread, jam and wine we take as the Lord's Supper right after we all finish eating the main meal. Excuse our little ritual, but please don't take any for now. Someone will serve it to you after we clear away the other dishes. Why don't you on that side of the table go first?"

With that the meal began. *How perfectly things are going*, I thought. Most of the people seemed content to just eat; there was only occasional conversation between individuals.

Finally, Emmanuel stood again and asked several men to go into the next room where there were large vinyl tubs to collect the used dishes and silverware and instructed them where to put them and explained that the people from the caterer would come back later and collect everything. Once the bustle of the clean up was finished, Colin, Bob, Jack and Will divided up the serving of the bread and the wine.

When they were seated again, Vic spoke. "Thank you, Jesus, for your promise to always be with us and according to your own words to remember you every time we have bread and wine. We

also remember your words that the bread is your body broken for us and that the wine is your blood shed for us. I toast you now.” As Vic said these last words, he raised his glass as everyone else did in a toast and took a sip.

I was amazed that my favorite “invocation” that Colin had uttered that first trip to Brad’s was spoken word for word by Vic. I also noticed with just as much amazement that nobody seemed uncomfortable with the wine. Even the teens took part in a natural way.

Brad stood and walked to the center of the U-shaped formation of the tables and said, “Several of you have some comments and questions about the interview of me that Jeanne Stockwell conducted by e-mail—we usually refer to as *Leapfrog*. It seems right to go ahead and get that out of the way so we can see what else Holy Spirit has in mind for us.”

Brad just stood there for several seconds until the questions and comments started flowing.

A round-faced, rather heavysset woman named Lorene, with silver hair and long bangs hanging down almost to the tops of her heavily framed dark brown glasses, spoke first. “Frankly, I was troubled by several things, Brad, but the most troublesome was your story about Ray and Joan beginning about page 50. Mostly, it was your ready acceptance of their obvious sexual deviation; you used it almost as a means to back up your theology about God being both mother and father, which at first was a total turnoff.” She stopped abruptly with a shrug.

“Are you saying, Lorene,” Brad began softly, “that the way I handled the whole subject still bothers you?”

“I guess what I am trying to say—and not doing a very good job at it—is that the way you handled it was what got me started being more accepting of something I have been taught was an abomination to God. I was wondering if you were some slick angel of light; and that thought troubles me as well.” Again, she stopped with the same kind of shrug.

“I applaud your openness and honesty, Lorene,” Brad said, “and let me be just as frank with you. If it weren’t for the insistence of some of the men with me—Bob, Colin and Will, mainly—I’d have discarded the whole piece a long time ago. It is

unsettling to me even now, to think that it causes discomfort when there may not be a need. Jeanne Stockwell pointed out that I seemed to enjoy upsetting people with my stuff.”

A short, totally bald man with a bright green shirt and a name tag with ‘BERT’ on it said, “I come from a German Lutheran background, and the thought of God having any female attribute whatsoever would make my poor father turn over in his grave. I don’t remember if you used the verse where Jesus said that God is a Spirit to be worshipped in spirit and truth, but that’s what came to me as I read and almost reacted as violently as Lorene apparently did. As you pointed out it is a ridiculous argument to attempt to put a gender label on God. Forgive me, Lorene, I am not trying to take sides against what you are going through.”

“I didn’t take it that way.” Lorene said and again shrugged as she seemed determined to say no more.

Brad looked at her with a look of total understanding and love, a look that I have never yet seen anyone else duplicate, and said, “You seem to have more to say, Lorene.”

“I just had the most amazing thing happen to me,” she replied with a noticeable trembling in her voice. “I just used a term in a silent prayer that I have never used before, that I have noticed your group uses. I said ‘Holy Spirit, help me and use me here.’ I did that while Bert was just talking. I heard the words—and I am telling you that I heard them just as if somebody was standing beside me—‘it doesn’t matter.’ I know now that it doesn’t matter and I believe that is what you were trying to say, wasn’t it?”

Brad didn’t answer, he just looked at Lorene thoughtfully and nodded his head.

A man named Eddie with a tanned and somewhat weather-beaten face said, “I know from reading the e-mail responses to the manuscript that you have already taken a lot of heat for including your interchange with God that included your spirit names—Sunno and Novi. I wanted to come here today and defend your including them on the simple basis that’s what God told you to do. Who are you or anyone else to question what God says? And about the same time that Lorene heard, ‘it doesn’t matter,’ I heard the same thing. Now if that doesn’t grab you by the backside I don’t know what does. God doesn’t need my defense and you don’t either!”

“Well, with your choice of words you should probably plan on moving in with us, Eddie, although ‘backside’ might be a bit mild for some of our tastes,” Will said.

Mel spoke up. “Brad, you said that at times you have wanted to get rid of the *Leapfrog* manuscript. It seems to me that God is using it to bring some of us abruptly into a whole different understanding. For one thing, I intend to knock and demand until I see definitive changes in my life. I am already excited about telling God I want to get rid of my preconceived ideas and have Him fill Me with his own presence and power.”

“You know, Mel,” Brad responded, “that only proves that God is so far beyond our own ability to reason anything. The manuscript isn’t mine to get rid of anyway; I am amazed at my own continued emotional drive to attempt to control things I have no business trying to control.”

“Perhaps you see why some of us have felt so attracted to come and be with Brad.” I found myself saying without giving any thought at all to my words. I stopped and said, “Please excuse me, I really need to take a second and check out what I am doing.” I didn’t know quite what else to do, so I silently asked my Friend if I should continue or just shut up. I heard, “just be open with what you are feeling right now.”

“Wow, that’s interesting,” I said, looking around at everyone and feeling at one with all of them.

“I am supposed to tell you what I am feeling right now. First of all I feel I am one with all of you and each of you. I’m not quite sure what that might mean to you, but let me share a few things with you.” I saw what I wanted to share as a memory flash and as I started to ask silently if I should proceed, I heard, “I want you to speak to me out loud rather than silently.”

“Okay, then,” I continued, “then tell me exactly what to say.” Again I saw the memory flash. “Am I supposed to share what I am seeing in that flash of memory I am having right now?”

“Please excuse me,” said a pretty young woman with a single braid of reddish-blond hair down to her waist, who was obviously as pregnant as I. Locating her upraised hand, I squinted to read her name tag—the letters seemed much smaller than they were on the others. Nancy was finally visible to me. I merely nodded.

“I just heard that I was to be the spokesperson for the presence of God in a dialogue with you. I have never heard voices before in my life. This is all so wonderful! The answer to your question is yes...tell it all, for I am with you in the telling.”

I sat there amazed because everyone was still looking at me and not at Nancy.

“Isn’t it exciting,” I said, “to watch Holy Spirit at work when we are simply obedient to whatever we are told.” I watched as Brad took a chair and sat down.

“As others have already said, Brad is not our leader. Our Father/Mother God in Brad is our one and only leader. Our Father/Mother God in Nancy and in all of you is our leader. I was told to share my feelings and what I feel at the moment is the unspeakable joy of recognizing that we are all together in this and as Lorene and Eddie were both told that basically nothing matters, but to be in the presence and power of God.

“This journey of oneness started for me about a year and a half ago when I felt the need to go to a psychiatrist that my older sister recommended, who had helped her husband very quickly come back from the brink of being suicidal. I was amazed by him, because he insisted that I call him by his first name and totally avoid the title of Doctor even though he is an M.D. He introduced me to the thought of equality and for all intents and purposes eliminated the usual relationship between patient and doctor.

“His name is Will and if you call him doctor or defer to him in any way, he’ll quickly correct you. I don’t even think of him or Ann as anything but a brother and sister.” I told the whole story from the onset of the depression to our final move to live with our extended family here in Florida. I finished by saying that I didn’t quite know why I told the story, just that I was supposed to.

“I know exactly why Darlene told the story,” Will interjected. “As you’ve noticed, one of the things God has clearly shown us is that only God is supreme or ‘good’ as Jesus posed the concept. I’ve been told by those who are supposed to know the original language that when a man addressed Jesus as ‘good’ master, and he corrected him with ‘no human being is good, only God is good,’ that’s exactly what he was saying. No one is supposed to be held up as being above anyone else; he said this in

the sense of viewing anyone as being higher spiritually than another. When Vic came into my life as a result of my daughter being freed up from asthma and the other obvious changes in her life, I saw it in a flash.

“What I am saying is that I have always thought that I should respect a man who was ordained to be a pastor. Vic showed me that this was the exact opposite of what Jesus instructed; human beings, being what we are, quickly revert to our traditions.

“Vic not only was ordained, but he also wielded spiritual power in the healing realm and I had the darnedest time not referring to him as pastor. Then I saw it—I hope I am not making this too complicated—but I saw that I enjoyed being referred to as ‘doctor’ and here’s the point,” Will paused while raising one finger to emphasize what he was saying.

“Medicine, especially as practiced in the U.S., is a system made by men and politically controlled by money. All of a sudden I came to the realization that it was medical doctors who specialized in the treatment of asthma that had proclaimed the type of asthma my daughter had incurable. Vic merely ordered a spirit to come out of her, during a meal in a restaurant no less, and that was what effected the cure. I saw how ridiculous was our reverence for any man, especially those who had earned their degree by studying a man-made system.”

I was looking around to see the reactions of everyone, wondering if Will was “losing” any of his audience. He had everyone’s almost rapt attention, and I realized he was actually speaking in the power and presence of God’s own Spirit.

“Now I am sure that in the several house churches that are represented here, there are those in which you have recognized leaders...and that you refer to them by whatever other name as pastor. God has shown us that we are not to do that. We have no idea as yet how this building and our particular group of people are going to operate—that is, what kind of a structure we will have—but you need to understand that if you become a part of us, you will not find a leader among us.

“You have already seen Holy Spirit demonstrate through Darlene’s daughters and we all pay attention to Holy Spirit’s leadership whenever that happens. We all give credit to the fact

that God ordains us for his work in the moment. One of the reasons that I hand out the interview manuscript—*Leapfrog*—is because of Brad’s explanation that the real meaning of the original phrase that got interpreted as eternal life, or eternity, means NOW—this unique moment. I am not speaking out of my own ego or intellect, but Holy Spirit is speaking through me. He has ordained us as a group to have this happen as long as we are careful not to attempt to insert a man-made system.”

“Oh my, ” Elizabeth said abruptly, and everyone turned to her. “When Emmanuel and I made the list of those to invite—we simply told God that we wanted his list and to remove all our pre-conceived notions. We did not invite one single pastor—I hadn’t even thought about it until now!”

Brad stood up again, “Holy Spirit has instructed me to say to you that some are not ready to come out of the system. Those who have ears to hear will hear, and eyes to see will see.”

“Yes, and when I was still recognized by others and thought of myself as a pastor,” Vic enjoined, “I reacted violently to *Leapfrog* and wrote a couple of nasty letters to Brad. I have not found even one of my former colleagues that is even remotely open to *Leapfrog*. I had to go through a divorce, which is a humiliating experience in my old denomination for a member—let alone a pastor, and be fired from my church before I began to be open at all to what was in *Leapfrog*.”

Arne spoke up again, “Do any of you have a sense of what is next for this building and the group at large?”

There was a long silence and then Brad finally spoke up from his chair where he remained seated. “We know that events will soon happen that will have an impact on the thinking of people in this country and the rest of the world.”

I received the okay to say what was on my mind. “We have been told not to speculate about what this event will be...but Spirit wants each of you to remember that you heard here that the event will happen very soon, in fact, within three days. Many changes will take place, and *Leapfrog* will become a significant publication for the future.”

“Know this, that nothing much will happen until after the dust settles and that will take some time.”

Three days later we understood both the prophecy that Rachel had uttered some three weeks before and these words that ended our first gathering...on September 8, 2001.

“The Manuscript”

(Appendix)

Leapfrog

An Interview

By: Jeanne Stockwell

Prologue

THE IDEA FOR WRITING A PROVOCATIVE PIECE on religion came to me while I was vacationing on an island in the Pacific. My background is one of attending various churches and coming to the conclusion that they all seemed to present their own particular slant on things—and implied that everyone else didn't quite have the truth put together as well as they had.

What is the truth?

I was sitting by the pool sipping an iced tea when a strikingly good-looking man probably around 40 started a conversation with me. He asked me if I was enjoying my stay, and I said yes, but was also anxious to get back home to work. "I'm John Wilcox," he said with his hand outstretched. "Jeanne Stockwell," I said as I shook his hand.

He asked me what I did for a living, and I told him that I was a freelance writer. He asked me what kind of writing and I told him for the past several years that I had specialized in interviewing people from many walks of life and would submit the finished piece to a variety of publications I thought might publish it.

When he asked me why I was in such a hurry about getting back to work, I told him I had this idea to do a series on religion and I had never written on the topic before.

"Why religion?"

I told him that I had not had a very satisfying experience in my own church attendance and I was going to start looking for people who had positive experiences, but from different perspectives than the mainstream of Christianity. "I think there are a lot of people out there," I explained, "who have interesting experiences to tell that will pique my own interest and should make for a good read and a marketable series."

He looked thoughtful and then asked me if I had ever heard of Brad Cullen. When I said no, he said, "Well, I became a Christian about ten years ago and I ran into Brad in Florida, near Orlando, about a year ago. He had some pretty outlandish things to say and moreover it was like he could read right through me. He

told me what was wrong with my marriage, and actually told me how to pray to straighten it out.

“I had a painful and ugly infection on the back of my left hand that was bothering me and he asked me if I wanted it to be healed. When I said yes, Brad just reached for my wrist and didn’t say anything for several seconds, then told me it was healed. I looked at it and it looked the same to me, but I said nothing. I found him to be very interesting and asked him for his business card. He handed me one with his name and phone number. I asked him if I might call him sometime. He told me anytime and we parted.

“When I got back to the hotel where my wife, Barb, and I were staying, the first thing she asked me was, ‘What happened to your hand?’

“I looked down at it and all the swelling was gone, the red inflammation was cleared up and it was just my normal hairy hand—like this.” He held it out for my inspection and described how bad the infection had looked.

“I took Brad’s card out of my shirt pocket and showed it to Barb, and said, ‘That’s a funny thing...this guy and I got into a conversation’ and I told her what had happened. Then I told her that it had looked the same to me at the time and that was a couple of hours before; I had forgotten all about it until she mentioned it. I told her a couple of other things he had said, and Barb declared, ‘Sounds like you met the answer to my prayers. I’ve wanted to talk about our problems, but didn’t know how to bring it up.’

“I asked her if she would like me to call him and see if he would have dinner with us. She enthusiastically endorsed the idea. I called and we made a date for the next evening at our hotel.”

At that point, John laughed and said, “Jeanne, I’m sorry that I’ve rattled on and on, I hope I’m not boring you with all of this.”

I assured him that I wasn’t bored at all. *How interesting it is that I got the idea for doing a piece on religion this very morning.* It seemed a magical coincidence to meet John and hear the rather odd, but convincing, story about his encounter with this Brad Cullen. I urged him to go on.

“Well, at dinner,” he continued, “Brad kept amazing us with the things he said. For example, he told us we were in bondage to

religion and to the Bible. Jesus never intended the church he founded to be this organized system we have today. Barb and I both got a little defensive, we thought our church back in Montreal was wonderful. Barb told him, ‘Our pastor preaches on healing all the time, and you healed John’s hand.’

“Brad then said the most amazing thing. ‘I didn’t do anything that you couldn’t have done yourself—basically, that’s what Jesus said. Anyone who believed would perform the very same miracles he performed.’ ”

I interrupted and said, “I’ve never heard that one before, do you believe that is true, John?”

“Jeanne, we not only believe it...we do it. Everything that Brad said that night has proven to be true.”

Sensing that maybe I had the opener for the series I wanted to do, I asked John if he could tell me anything else about Brad, and could he give me any names of other people who knew Brad. “Does Brad have a church?”

“No, Brad doesn’t even believe in attending church. He was telling us about the time a neighbor asked his seven-year-old daughter, ‘where do you go to church?’ She answered immediately, ‘Oh, we don’t go to church, we *are* the church!’ He then laughed very loudly, Jeanne, and said ‘Out of the mouths of babes, eh?’ ”

“If he doesn’t have a church, then what does he do for a living?” I asked. “Did he charge you a fee for marriage counseling or healing?”

“He’s a business consultant—involved in helping people with setting up and improving their business operations—that kind of thing. By the way,” John added, “we asked him if he would accept some money from us for some of the help he had given us. He just said, ‘Nope, I got it for free and I give it for free.’ ”

“Sounds like an amazing man,” I said.

“Jeanne, I will tell you that he is more like Christ than anyone I ever met.”

About that time, Barb walked up with the two cutest little girls I had ever seen and John introduced his family to me.

He quickly told her that I was a writer and that he had been telling me about Brad. “Oh wonderful, we’ve been telling him for

almost a year now that he needs to write a book or something. Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could do that for him, Jeanne!" She said this very intensely with her bright blue eyes flashing.

One of the little girls said, "I bet you'll like Uncle Brad."

"I bet I do too, honey," I said with a laugh, wanting to ask about the uncle bit, but it was obvious that John, Barb and the girls had plans to go somewhere. Instead I just quickly asked if I might be able to get a list of people who know Brad and their e-mail addresses. John promised to have it at the front desk by morning. We all shook hands and they went on their way.

Interesting, I thought again, here I get the idea for a series this very morning and this delightful man starts a conversation, and there just might be something interesting to write about this Brad Cullen fellow.

I had a list of 32 e-mail addresses of people John said knew Brad. A rather puzzling note was attached to the list. "Nice meeting you, Jeanne, and good luck with your book or whatever it turns out to be. By the way, you will find that some of these people neither like nor approve of Brad Cullen—but in the interest of good journalism, thought I'd give you a balanced group. Good plan, what?"

Because John and Barb had spoken so enthusiastically about Brad, I had just assumed that everyone on his list would also like him.

Out of the 27 replies I received over the next two weeks, I was surprised at the spectrum. One man who referred to himself as a "man of God" said that Brad was a deceiver, an adulterer and a crook. Then he implied that if I wanted to write a good story on the truth of religion he'd be glad to help me. I wrote back asking for specifics on his allegations of Brad being a crook, adulterer and deceiver. His reply was well written, lucid and detailed—and certainly gave me some pause about Brad Cullen.

Another one was entirely favorable. Not only was Brad Cullen an excellent businessman, but he was totally honest and this particular individual claimed he would entrust his life to Brad Cullen.

How could two men—one a minister of a church and the other a businessman—say such contrasting things about the same person?

On a hunch I wrote back to the businessman, and forwarded the preacher's accusations for his comment.

He wrote back with a startling statement. "I don't know what Brad Cullen says or does to clergymen, but I've met this minister and he seems to be nice man. Unfortunately, he gets venomous at the mention of Brad. There is one other preacher type I also know who is very cool about Brad and yet I don't know of any business person with whom Brad has had any dealings who doesn't speak well of him. Go figure..." is how he signed off.

This was getting more and more curious. One woman wrote, "I consider Brad Cullen to be my pastor." A man wrote, "Brad Cullen is too lazy and too poor a communicator to be effective in business."

All of the other replies were varied and some had some astonishing claims about the healings and other miraculous things that Brad did apparently routinely. Most of them made mention of how he had dealt with them in business. One respondent wrote that he couldn't understand what Brad Cullen would have to do with my writing an article about Christianity. "As far as I know, Brad doesn't even think about spiritual things. In the six weeks he worked with us, we never once had that kind of conversation. I'm a born-again Christian and I talk about Jesus every chance I get; Brad responded to nothing like that."

One man who wrote back from Frankfurt, Germany sent a single-spaced 12-page letter about Brad Cullen! He included that he had been raised in a strict Catholic environment, but tended to follow the teachings of the Buddha now. "If there is such a thing as a Christ-like businessman then Brad Cullen is it," was one of his many lines extolling the virtues of one Brad Cullen.

Who is this man? I asked myself.

I finally wrote a simple e-mail to Brad Cullen:

Dear Mr. Cullen:

I am a freelance writer and want to do a series of articles on Christians that have different views than the mainstream of Christianity.

How I like to enter into an interview process is to ask questions via e-mail for you to answer in anyway you wish. When I am finished I edit it for final draft and send to you for approval and/or changes. I prefer that the subject (you) always be in control of the final piece; in that way we get to the truth from your perspective. Please let me know as soon as possible if this format suits you and if you have the time to enter into a productive dialogue, otherwise I will pursue another interview.

Thanks,
Jeanne Stockwell

Brad Cullen's reply was elegantly simple and to the point.

Please fire away...on the condition that I can reproduce and distribute your final piece without restrictions—just as you write it. I hope I turn out to be a worthwhile subject. Thanks for the opportunity to participate.

I will budget one hour per day to the project until complete.
bc

Who signs their correspondence with lower case initials? I asked myself, and then sighed as I began compiling the questions I wanted to ask this “Christ-like,” “...deceiver, crook and adulterer...” “My pastor...” and finally, “Too lazy and too poor a communicator to be effective in business...” enigma.

Who is this man?

1

The Interview

THIS IS AN INTERVIEW BY FREELANCE AUTHOR Jeanne Stockwell that took place via e-mail correspondence with Brad Cullen, an American business consultant, who has some rather controversial opinions on the subject of Christianity. Brad Cullen makes no claims to any special powers—yet healings and other rather miraculous events are attributed to him by others.

JS: In doing research into your background, I received some rather varied replies. For example, some called you “Christ-like,” one man, a minister called you a “deceiver, crook and adulterer;” a woman referred to you as “her pastor” and another man said that you were “too lazy and too poor a communicator to be effective in business.” One man who was complimentary about you commented that he didn’t know what you did to clergymen...but some he knew didn’t like you very well. One comment I found very intriguing was a man who said he was a “born again Christian” and that you had consulted with his company for six weeks and he didn’t know that you had any spiritual inclinations. Could you just freely respond to these remarks?

BC: Well, I guess I like this format, since I can just answer each question as written. That is quite a bale of hay you’re throwing at me, Jeanne.

Christ-like...hmmm, by what definition? I know a preacher who defines “Christ-like” by his own brand of kindness, gentleness, well-mannered, soft-spoken and so on—certainly not me!

As to being a deceiver, crook and adulterer, I rather like Jesus’s definition of adultery. If somebody looks at another person with sexual lust in their heart, then that “somebody” has already committed adultery. Just about applies to all of us, except those who are so sexually dead that they never have any such thoughts. I

should have added that one to the preacher's definition of "Christ-like"—trust me, sexually dead would be included in his definition.

One of my favorite stories told by Jesus is about the two guys that went up to the temple to pray. He pointed out that the guy who was guilty of being what I'm being accused of here—didn't know what else to do so he beat on his chest and cried out, "God be merciful to such a sinner as I." Jesus said he was the one who went home dressed in God's righteousness, as opposed to the religious guy who was standing there telling God how good he was in contrast. He's still a good Christian, and I, the sinner, after beating on my chest and crying to God for mercy walk home free! Not a bad deal as I see it.

I dearly hope the woman who told you that I was "her pastor" reads your final article. She needs to get her head examined. Anyone who knows me knows my feelings about the word "pastor." Whoever she is, I say to her—go get a life!

As to being a lousy communicator and lazy...guess so. Certainly must have been that guy's experience at least.

As to the "born again" Christian—I generally (not always) avoid talking to people who profess to being "born again." It is certainly a term that Jesus used, but to quote a business acquaintance, "Every time I've ever been screwed in business it has been by somebody who has told me that he is born again." Enough said on that topic I guess.

JS: What do you have against the word "pastor?"

BC: Very simple...Jesus said that people should minister to one another in the same kind of equality as brothers and sisters. He said that nobody should allow somebody else to call them by a title that implies spiritual authority and superiority. He underscored the remark by saying we all have just one Father, we all have just one Leader and Teacher, the Christ. The word pastor means shepherd and that means the rest of us are sheep. Well, Jesus said that there was only one shepherd and the rest who refer to themselves as such were usurping the title and were a bunch of thieves. I didn't say that—Jesus said it. When I quote it, those who call themselves pastors get ticked off. Let 'em—it's their problem.

JS: I guess that explains some of the hostility. The first time I heard your name, was by somebody who said they had been healed at your hand. Could you elaborate a little?

BC: Of course. Anyone can do that. Jesus said that anyone who believes can do the very same things he did. Those “things” come from a word that means very clearly and simply “supernatural.” What’s more amazing is that he said people who believe will do even greater things than Jesus did. What most people also miss is how Jesus said he did these things. He said it wasn’t him that did them, but the Father in him. It’s the Father in us who does the healing. Very simple, very straightforward. A question that needs to be asked I guess is, why is it that so few people who call themselves believers are able to do what Jesus said they would do if they believe? I have a theory about that, but if you want to hear it I guess I’ll leave it up to you to ask.

JS: One person wrote me that you had cast a demon out of her son that was causing asthma. Another wrote that they had seen you cast a demon out of an elderly woman who had been bent almost double for ten years and walked with much pain and she straightened up immediately excitedly exclaiming that she was pain free. That particular person wrote that you had cast demons out of people that had cancer, diabetes, arthritis and so on and they were completely healed afterward and that he had personally witnessed these things. There was one story about a person who had lost all her hair due to chemotherapy and after being healed that her hair came back in its original color—and she had been totally gray for many years. Are all these stories true? There are several other questions about which I would like to have you comment.

Do you really believe that demons are real? If so, what are they? Why do they cause certain kinds of diseases? The man who first told me about you didn’t mention anything about demons...just that you had touched him and that he had been healed. What is the difference between healing and casting out demons?

2

JEANNE, ALL I CAN SAY IS YOU WILL PROBABLY lose a good percentage of your audience with this topic. In my experience most religious people are offended by the notion or mention of demons or evil spirits.

As to whether all these stories are true.... Maybe you should get sworn, notarized affidavits from people who have told you about them. As I have already written, anybody can do it if they just follow Jesus's instructions, so why make a big deal over one man doing it?

I'm going to go way out on a limb here. The problem with Christianity, in my opinion, is that Christians spend a lot of their time talking about who they believe Jesus is and very little time taking seriously about what Jesus said they could and would do.

It is interesting that you ask what the difference is between "just plain" healing and healing that comes as a result of casting out an evil spirit or demon. Interesting because I've never thought of it before. I guess I should have; it is a logical question. Frankly, I don't know. I just know when I sense somebody is under the influence of evil entities, and if I get the go ahead from God's Spirit—I get rid of them. Somebody asked me once if I thought all diseases were caused by demons; my answer then is the same answer as today. I really don't know—I do know that every time I get rid of a demon causing some disease or another that when the demon goes, so does the disease.

I guess that kind of answers your question, do I believe that demons are real? What are demons? My response is, what difference does it make?

The answer some people give is that they are "fallen angels" a part of the original rebellion of Satan—spoken about, I believe, by the Jewish prophet Ezekiel as recorded in the Old Testament.

I've heard other explanations and none of them make any difference. When you have seen and heard them manifest you have

no doubt about their reality. But even saying that leaves all kinds of room for discussion. Some people don't believe in their existence or have all kinds of psychological explanations for the phenomenon. I've had some even tell me that what I do is mass hypnosis—whatever that is. This is really more than I care to get into it as a topic. I like what Jesus said, "Even if somebody were raised from the dead they wouldn't believe." He was talking about the religionists of his day. Rather apropos, no?

3

BRAD, I'D LIKE TO REVISIT THE COMMENT YOU made about why most Christians are unable to do what you are apparently able to do and say that anyone who believes can do.

BC: Jeanne, those words didn't originate with me. It has been more and more amazing to me to see people who say they believe in Jesus Christ and the Bible to reject what the Bible reports Jesus as saying.

I can only share what I have personally experienced—and what others have also experienced—once we began to take Jesus's words seriously.

When I stumbled onto his words about not calling any other human being teacher, leader or "father" in the spiritual sense and determined to no longer refer to any man or woman by any such title, it was like a blanket of spiritual dullness had been removed from over me. My relationship with God became quite personal and I continually found myself being excited by insights to all kinds of reality in the spirit realm.

Then when I saw the simplicity of Jesus's words—that anyone who believes in him will perform the same miracles that he performed—I began to ask why nobody with whom I was personally acquainted had the ability to do these things? Oh sure, there were some famous evangelists such as Oral Roberts and more recently Benny Hinn who was a product of the Kathryn Kuhlman ministry that I had either read about or heard on the radio or TV.... But there was no one who was just an ordinary person like myself.

I finally began asking if it was God's will to even want to do such things?

Not long after I began thinking and praying about it, I stumbled onto a story that blew me away. A man brought his young son to Jesus and asked for help because the boy had epileptic-like seizures, referred to in the original language as moon madness or lunacy. He told Jesus that the seizures caused the boy

to fall into bodies of water and even fire. The part of the story that I found the most interesting was that he told Jesus he had brought his son to Jesus's disciples, but they couldn't help him. At which Jesus yelled out to his disciples that they were a bunch of faithless perverts. These are literally the words he used in the original language. Then the narrative simply says that Jesus rebuked the evil spirit causing the problem and the boy was immediately cured.

Now comes the astonishing part of the story: the disciples went to Jesus later in private and asked why they had been unable to cast the spirit out of the boy. This was astonishing to me because I realized that they thought they clearly were supposed to be able to do it; it also made sense of Jesus calling them a bunch of faithless perverts. He clearly expected them to be able to do it as well. After all, it is recorded that they had done it with much excitement earlier in their relationship with Jesus.

There's more to the story, but here are the simple answers that you asked for. Why do I say that most Christians cannot do it? For one thing, they don't go to the Source to ask why they can't. Secondly, they are under a church covering that stifles God's Spirit from operating. Most often the church they attend actually has doctrines that boil down to excuses why ordinary people cannot do things like that.

The third reason is found in what Jesus says in the final part of the above story. In the original version and language he tells his disciples that the reason they couldn't do it was that they didn't have sufficient faith. He goes on to tell them that if they did have the faith that nothing would be impossible for them to do.

Then, he went on to say that this kind goes out only by much fasting and prayer. Now I took this to mean that this particular demon was more difficult to get rid of than others and that it took preparation through a lot of fasting and prayer to be able to do it. I, again, was putting together the fact that he had called his own hand-picked dozen followers a bunch of faithless perverts and the reason is that he had expected them to have been following his instructions about preparation through much prayer and fasting.

Now, Jeanne, I want to be careful to say a couple of things here. Shortly after I first discovered this, I was invited to speak at a

missionary conference of the denomination to which I then belonged.

During the conference I was asked to speak to a group of pastors in a morning session. I shared this passage and my own experiences with them; I was totally flabbergasted at the response. Totally negative and argumentative.

It was like getting a wake-up call. That and a couple of other incidents made me realize that I wasn't going to be able to personally follow what I believed God was showing me and stay in the church.

I have since found when others like me who are honest enough to ask why they cannot do what Jesus clearly stated we could do if we believe. When they put the question to me, I usually simply say because you call some man or woman "pastor" (or equivalent) and you are with a bunch of unbelievers. Those who see this and determine to live according to what Jesus said get free and move onto doing the same things he did.

The final clincher for me was coming across a passage in Mark that said that Jesus could do very little in the way of the miraculous where he grew up as a boy, because of their unbelief. Think about it! If Jesus was restricted by the unbelief of those around him, and we are to do the same things that he did, wouldn't it follow that the primary reason that Christians cannot do what he said believers would do is unbelief? Nazareth was the district in which he could do very little; for me and others the "church" has proven to be our Nazareth.

If you recall, in some earlier instructions to me you said not to try to be efficient with my answers, but to just "free-write" and leave the editing to you. I just re-read the foregoing and the temptation is to cut and slash, but I leave this long-winded diatribe in your good hands.

4

AS A WRITER, ONE OF THE THINGS I TRY TO DO IS maintain objectivity. I find myself being intrigued by some of the things you say. What started me on the idea to write a provocative piece about alternative thinking among Christians is my own dissatisfying church-going experience. While I am not looking for a church, you have defined for me a few things I certainly would look for if I was inclined. But that brings me to a pressing question. Couldn't you do a lot more to promote what you apparently see as a God-given purpose from within the organized church rather than from without?

BC: My immediate answer to that made me laugh out loud, because it tells me how far outside the norm my thought processes have gone. John the Apostle said about Jesus, "He came unto his own and his own received him not, but as many as do receive him are given the authority to become the children of God."

So let's be totally outlandish and say, 'I did go to the church and they do not want to receive it.' I find people every day who are eager to hear some of the things I have to say. Let's be even more outlandish for any detractors who will say my answer proves that I am suffering from some kind of delusional thoughts of grandeur...let's leave it at that.

JS: I had an interesting exchange with a man that placed the title "Senior Pastor" right after his name, which was preceded by Dr. and ended with a Ph.D. He refused permission to use his name because he said he didn't want to engage in "self aggrandizement."

I had told him that since I had received his e-mail—referring to you among other things as a deceiver—I had checked out a number of statements by others attesting to faith healing by you. Also I pointed out that the overwhelming majority of all my correspondence about you was favorable.

I would appreciate your comment on two excerpts from his letter.

“That so many people are favorable just underscores the fact that Brad Cullen is a con man.” And, “Ms. Stockwell, you would do well to read your Bible: ‘Faith is a gift of God that no man can boast.’ ”

BC: As to faith is a gift, of course. There is no argument. Jesus just explains where the gift is and how to take off the wrapping and use it. As to the former, if what I do is by the presence and power of God’s own Holy Spirit, then who is this “Dr. Senior Pastor” attacking? If what I do is under my own power, which I have never claimed—God help me! Or, if the “good” Doctor is implying that what I do is by the power of an evil spirit, then God help him! The only unforgivable sin according to Jesus is saying that which is of Holy Spirit is emanating under the control of an evil spirit. I have had more than a few “men of the cloth” level that charge at me.

5

WHAT WOULD BE THE IDEAL CHURCH? AND
 why don't you put together a formula for the ideal?

BC: The problem with your question, Jeanne, is that it goes to suggest that church is a place where people gather together. We are the church. It is not a place to go. However, it is a good thing to get together. But in what fashion?

When I was involved in the organized church I used to say that there was only one scriptural edict for how to have church. In the 14th chapter of Paul's first letter to the Christians at Corinth, he lays out pretty clearly what he thinks should typically happen at a gathering of believers. It certainly might be an ideal to pursue and it certainly is consistent with what Jesus instructed about ministering in equality. It is the only definitive instruction in the New Testament for what a gathering ought to be like. I think it is funny though that some "Dr. Senior Pastor" of some church tells you to read your Bible and you can just bet he would refuse to allow any such thing to happen in his church. Here's what the passage says:

"Whenever you meet together, each of you should be prepared in the power of God's own Spirit to sing a song in the Spirit, or bring a teaching under the power of the same Spirit, or speak in a spiritual language not learned, or speak a revelation, or an interpretation by the same Spirit. Let all things be done for the building up of one another in the Spirit. If anyone speaks in a language not learned naturally, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let the one who is able to speak in such a language keep silent in the meeting, and let him speak to himself and to God. Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others listen and be prepared to say if this is from God's Spirit or not.. But

if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the one who was originally speaking be silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the assemblies of the saints.”

Before anyone gets excited about following this particular recipe for a gathering, it is best to read what comes before and after. For example, immediately following is a statement that sure wouldn't have worked in any church I have ever been in.

“Let your women keep silent in the assemblies, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.”

I used to toss that part out to Bible thumpers who insisted that everything should have a scriptural basis. To say that the passage gave them pause is an understatement. On the other hand, immediately following that the writer, Paul, makes this statement that emphasizes that he believes what he says to be a commandment from God.

“Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached? If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.”

So, Jeanne, if you throw these very clear scriptural instructions into the mix of religious tradition and stir up the pot, what would be the “ideal” gathering for which you could be looking if you were so inclined? I don't know. When I first started refusing to go to any church and refused to take any more speaking engagements in any church I did it to make a statement. The statement I was trying to make is that what is called church has nothing to do with anything I can find in the Bible. And, further, what is called Christianity has nothing to do with anything Jesus said.

In our culture, there is no doubt that churches perform a useful function in a variety of ways. My own relationship to God certainly started there. But that relationship deepened only after I started questioning everything. I have been called a rebel. Okay, but a rebel against whom or what? If you take the words of Jesus to the ultimate end of actually following them, it seems like the religionists are the rebellious ones, not I.

For example, Jesus asked this rhetorical question: “Why do you call me, ‘Lord,’ and yet refuse to do what I say?”

Why indeed? And indeed why—and then call the refusal Christianity?

Jesus said that Holy Spirit would guide us into all truth. John wrote that we don’t really need a human teacher. If there is a message I want to leave with anyone about getting together as believers it is that—ask God’s own Spirit for guidance and stop listening to men...myself included. I guess I’d finish on the note that Jesus instituted a time of eating together in completely open fellowship and said to remember him while doing it. The wine was to be a symbol of his blood which was shed for us and the bread was the symbol of his body which was broken for us.

That this has been reduced to half-ounce glasses of Welch’s grape juice and little bits of stale crackers solemnly distributed by church deacons is a mockery. But the point is perhaps just getting together over a simple meal and celebrating God’s expression of love for us a reasonable choice.

Formalizing it or formulating the “right way to do it” ought best be an individual thing guided, again, by God’s own Spirit. It would soon degenerate into just another dead tradition, because that is what we human beings tend to do.

6

BRAD, YOU'VE ALLUDED TO WHAT YOU CALL Jesus's simple instructions for performing the supernatural. You wrote about the passage regarding Jesus's remarks about fasting and praying being the prime, prerequisite preparation for being able to cast out a particularly difficult demon. But could you give some examples of Jesus's instructions about how to pray? One couple told me that you taught them how to pray specifically in a way that healed some ills in their marriage. Could you share how you pray?

BC: Hmmmmm...that will take a book, Jeanne.

First thing that had to happen for me was to have my eyes opened...*really* opened. I picked up a little blue booklet on a supermarket book rack for one dollar. I don't remember the title, but it had something to do with faith. I do remember the author, Kenneth Hagin. In that little book he pointed out a direct mistranslation of a passage from the Gospel of Mark. Let's lay a little ground work first.

“And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve.

“Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, ‘Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.’ And His disciples heard it.

“The next day, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, ‘Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.’

“So Jesus answered and said to them, (here comes the mistranslation) ‘Have faith in God.’ ”

Hagin pointed out that the preposition “in” in the original language was not there, but “of.” That the correct and literal translation should have been, “Have the faith OF God.”

I looked up the passage in the original and couldn’t believe my eyes! Sure enough, “Have the faith of God,” or “have God-faith” was the correct translation into English. My first question was why on earth had the translators of each of the several Bible versions with which I was then familiar missed this?

This passage had always puzzled me because it made no sense to have Jesus say have faith IN God in response to Peter’s exclamation of surprise—especially with what immediately followed.

This unraveled the mystery. Jesus was actually saying, “Hey guys, you can do the same kind of thing if you will acquire the same God-faith that I have and use.”

This is the point that Hagin was making and he was literally correct in the scriptural sense. The implications were mind boggling.

I looked up the following verses in the original language and was amazed at how watered down the English version had been.

“For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.”

Here is an accurate translation into today’s English...and my own interpretive paraphrasing in [brackets].

“For I tell you the truth, whoever commands any mountain [spiritual obstacle] and emphatically says, I lift you up and throw you violently down into the sea and does not allow himself to waver between two mindsets [spirits] but believes [has a picture held in his mind] that what he is emphatically saying will be done, it will be done.”

Then in most English versions the verses that immediately follow are set apart as if it is a different thought. The original simply (and to me obviously) continues on the SAME subject.

"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

Again, a literal and accurate translation into today's English.

"And whenever you stand [in this way] emphatically speaking toward God, if you are holding anything against anyone, release and send away [by telling them you are lifting them up and throwing them violently down into the sea] these judgmental and critical thoughts so that you can live in the complete release that your Father has already prepared for you."

What I saw, Jeanne, was that in order to acquire the same kind of faith that Jesus had in order to do the same things that he did—kill a fig tree that didn't have any figs because it wasn't the season for figs, no less—I had to remove all spiritual obstacles to acquiring such faith.

What were these obstacles? Obviously, from what Jesus said, hanging onto critical and judgmental thoughts about anyone whom I perceived had wronged me was one necessary ingredient. So I asked God to show me who I was holding anything against. Talk about a list—it was practically endless! So with each one, I began admitting that I was holding onto whatever thoughts were being shown to me and began picturing myself lifting the thoughts over my head while telling them emphatically that I was casting them down into the sea.

It was such an emotional cleansing process. I found myself laughing at all the baggage of anger and bitterness I had been carrying around needlessly. Once on that path I discovered the practicality of Jesus's teaching of walking in God's perfect release, by releasing everyone else. Talk about joy! Amazingly, people who I had put out of my mind for years because I hadn't liked something that they had done would flash into my mind—and I felt nothing but love toward them, realizing that they were children of God and who was I to place judgment or criticism in my thoughts

or speech about somebody whom God had already forgiven? The practicality of what Jesus taught is amazing...it is too bad that the word *diakrinos* is translated into “doubt” when it literally means to be divided by two opposite thoughts or spirits.

I still find today when my speaking into existence on this seen plane what God in the unseen realm has already decreed to be his desire and purposes seems lacking, it is always a signal that I am harboring resentment over some wrong I perceive someone has done against me.

Another thing this event did for me was to begin to question all traditional thoughts and traditional meaning of any Bible passage. One of the things I began emphatically speaking is, “I lift up and cast down into the sea all preconceived ideas that are keeping me from operating in the fullness of God’s own presence and power.”

I have much more I want to say on the topic, but this has taken up so much space already, I’m going to toss it back to you to see if I am even answering the questions you were asking.

7

WELL, BRAD, YOU DID SAY THAT IT WAS GOING to take a book! A wonderful and intriguing first couple of chapters! Can you be specific about what you taught the married couple as to how to fix their marital problems?

BC: I'd have to ask which married couple? Each situation is different and I've had the good fortune of being used by God to help quite a few married couples overcome some of their problems.

I'll tell a story about a couple I'll call Donna and Phil. I'd helped them prepare their business for sale and wrote the contract and negotiated the terms. They were very religious and were leaders of their own small church. Donna approached me and told me that she and Phil were on the verge of divorce. She started reciting all of the qualities in him that she had begun to harbor in her mind as "bad." I asked her if she wanted to get a divorce; she assured me that she did not, but didn't know what else to do. She asked me if I did marriage counseling. I told her that I refused to take that role any more, "but if the two of you want a brother that will just go with you guys and together see what Holy Spirit might have to say, I'd love to be involved."

I forgot all about the conversation until Donna called me a few weeks later and said that she had mentioned our conversation to Phil and that they would like to get together.

We picked a time the following day to meet at a picnic area on the beach.

When we sat down at the wooden picnic table it was obvious that Donna was overloaded with hostility and that Phil was very defensive. I sat for a moment quietly asking what to do and got a flash. I asked Donna if she would mind taking a walk on the beach and let me talk with Phil for awhile.

"Gladly," she almost snarled as she snatched her purse off the table and practically stomped off.

“Phil,” I started out, “what I am going to say is going to go against some of your theological grain, but it will save what appears to be a rapidly deteriorating marriage.”

“I’ll say it’s deteriorating. She has become an insufferable bitch. Frankly, at the moment, I’d just as soon see her go.”

I told him that what I had just “seen in the spirit” was that if he was willing to take the total responsibility for the problems in the relationship, he could solve it. He had a great deal of difficulty with that concept. Donna and he were committed to a co-ministry in their church as full and equal partners.

I told him that I understood and even agreed with the concept, but I was getting that if he took total responsibility for the problems, God had shown me how he could pray to get passed all of it.

He started asking questions that showed basic defensiveness and wanting her to share the blame as a “partner.”

I finally saw that we were not going to get anywhere, so I just said, “Phil, I know what I got—if you want it, I’ll share. If not, I gotta get back to work.

He apologized and asked me what it was.

I asked him how well he knew the story about Adam and Eve and the serpent in the garden in the 3rd chapter of Genesis.

He was quite familiar with the passage and we were on the same page regarding the details.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’ ”

The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’ ”

“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman.

“For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

"Here's the deal, Phil, and it is really quite simple. You know that the cornerstone of most mainstream Christian thought is that because of this first disobedience to one of God's commands, not only did Adam and Eve get kicked out of the Garden, but this was the act that separated us all from God. Right?"

He nodded, so I went on. "I know we both discard a great deal of the theology that gets attached to this passage, but here's what I've been shown.

"Had Adam taken his rightful authority as had been given him over all the things in the garden he could have avoided the whole mess and saved us all a bunch of trouble.

"Now, the dynamics of his problem is the same as the dynamics of your problem with Donna. You have authority that

you are not using in the right way. Adam had more sense than to say anything to his wife. He could have said, for example, for her not to listen to the serpent—but he knew better. You are trying to tell your wife things and instead she is listening to the serpent.

“Had Adam simply told the serpent to get out of the garden because of his authority over it, the serpent would have to have gone. Instead he stood by while the serpent conned his wife into eating the fruit, which obviously was a hallucinogen—it made them think they knew everything. Note that the passage simply says that she gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate also. That’s what’s been going on here. Donna is wrapped up in this blame game and you are eating the fruit she is handing you.

“Without getting into all the doctrinal garbage that gets attached to that stuff I just want to give you a challenge. You have authority over your marriage. Take the blame for everything that has gone wrong and tell the serpent to get out of your garden. Don’t say anything to Donna because she won’t understand it anyway. I’m not being sexist here, Phil—I am simply telling you right now to take the position that you could and should have prevented this by taking your rightful authority. You failed and you are being just like Adam and now trying to blame Donna. It will get you nowhere.

“Just say out loud right now, ‘Serpent, get out of my garden and quit talking to Donna. Don’t talk to me about her either; God has made her perfect. Stop talking to Donna about me and stop talking to me about Donna. Get out!’ ”

Phil repeated the words exactly as I had given them.

“Now comes the easy part, Phil, let me wave Donna back over here. You just tell her we’ve had a long conversation and it has come to you that the problems in your marriage are all your fault and tell her you are sorry and ask her to forgive you.”

“But what about when she—”

“Phil,” I quickly interrupted, “when you say that, who are you saying has the responsibility for your marriage, you or Donna?”

“This is amazing, Brad, I know what you’re saying is the truth. And I still get caught right back in the same problem.”

“Yep,” I answered, “happens all the time. It’s tough, but the solution is the same over and over and over—every day. You are going to be amazed at what happens. Can I get Donna to come back; can you just take all the blame for everything? Because it is your fault for not taking authority over your garden. Got it?”

“Wow,” is all he could get out, barely above a whisper.

I couldn’t see Donna, so I left Phil to go look for her; she was chatting with some people who were lying on the sand. I walked up and apologized for interrupting and said, “We’re ready for you.”

We walked back and sat with Phil.

“Donna,” Phil said, “Brad and I have been talking and all of a sudden I just saw how all this has been all my fault. I am really sorry, will you forgive me?”

“Well, Phil, I am really upset with you,” Donna said with no apparent change in the level of hostility, “particularly over your lying.” I could see Phil was about to go over the edge defensively so I jumped in.

I said, “Donna, until very recently all I’ve ever heard out of your mouth about Phil is that he is a beautiful and wonderful man. Would you do me a favor and just look at him; remember that he has already said that it is all his fault, so just forgive him and tell him he is a beautiful and wonderful man.”

Donna just looked at Phil and said, “You are a wonderful and beautiful man.” Then the most amazing thing happened, she looked like she just awoke from a trance and said, “You are, Phil, you’re a man of God and Christ is fully in you—you are beautiful. I don’t know what has come over me.”

“Donna, it’s all my fault and I see it.” Phil said calmly and sincerely, “I’m not going to be stupid and tell you it will never happen again, but I can tell you that I pretty much know now what to do about it.”

It was just as if they had not gone through about six weeks of emotional terror of a marriage well on its way to breaking up.

Jeanne, I don’t know if that is what happened with the couple you talked to, but I can tell you that anytime I can get a man to take all the blame and understand his authority, this “prayer”

(hardly fits our idea of prayer I realize) and the attitude of realizing that it is his fault—works every time.

8

BRAD, IT'S DIFFICULT FOR ME TO UNDERSTAND why anyone who believes sufficiently that it is possible to do what Jesus did as a man, would not also want the ability to do what Jesus did. What I am trying to articulate is this question: why do Christians, particularly the professional clergy, so vehemently resist this teaching? I have taken my research beyond the list of people I was originally given when your name was first introduced to me. I've been amazed at the excuses and attacks against the concept—and not against you personally, because the people I've been talking to have never heard of you. What can you tell me?

BC: I can only speculate and theorize, Jeanne. You have summed up my frustration with the system quite well with your question. Why would the very people who say they believe in Jesus Christ—and who promote their brand of Christianity—be so opposed to really looking at what he basically said was the destiny of all believers? It just doesn't make sense to me. It is just as if they took a razorblade and carefully extracted all references Jesus made to us being able to do what he did and his instructions for getting there.

Not all men who are listed on their church signs as “pastor” refuse the message. I am flashing on five individuals and I hope it will demonstrate one answer to your question. Four of these incidents happened while I was still in the system and speaking at churches. One happened after I made “my statement” by leaving.

The first one, whom I'll call Bob Patterson, was with a very fundamentalist and evangelical branch of the Lutheran organizations, a denomination called the Missouri Synod. He was listed as “Senior Pastor” on the bulletins of two churches of small towns about 15 miles apart in the Southeast. He conducted two Sunday morning services, 9:00 a.m. at one church, 11:00 a.m. at the other one, two Sunday evening services at 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. and two midweek services, one of them on Wednesday night

and at the other church on Thursday night. Bob relied heavily on the involvement of “lay” members in his churches.

Bob was also part of an organization referred to as Charismatic Lutherans. These are people who openly believe in what the Bible refers to as the “baptism in (of or by) Holy Spirit.” Some refer to this movement in general as “Full Gospel”—in fact, there is a large organization of Christian businessmen that go by that title. Basically, with both these groups and many like them, the focus is on experiencing the baptism of Holy Spirit with the “evidence of speaking in tongues” (real languages, but not learned by normal means), supernatural healing, aggressive personal evangelism and other such phenomena.

I felt a high degree of kinship with many of the people within a wide variety of these groups.

Bob Patterson was highly respected in a broad range of Charismatic Christian circles. He had some rather amazing stories to tell. He heard me speak at a several day deliverance ministry conference at a Bible camp in the Carolinas. He came up afterward and asked if I would speak at his churches some time and we made a date for a Sunday night at which there would be a combined service at the bigger of the two churches.

There were about 150 people scattered throughout this church that probably had 300 seats. The Missouri Synod carries a lot of the traditional Lutheran church trappings, one of which is a tall, broad pulpit set high up on a platform at the front. Bob’s church was blessed with a large degree of informality, I suppose because of the heavy involvement of the laity.

After the typical opening hymns, announcements and the like, Bob introduced me from the pulpit and invited me to come up to use the microphone.

I told him that I preferred being down on the floor and would make sure that I was heard, and he hurriedly came down to sit in the front pew. I do not remember at all what I spoke about that night, but three significant things happened. One, Bob announced that he was removing the title pastor from his name and told the congregation that from that day forward the church had one Pastor—Jesus Christ. Then he announced that he was instituting a change in the format of the church so that anyone could “in

decency and order” signal a desire to speak something that they believed was a message from God and he would stop preaching. The third thing he announced that night was that he was only going to be at each church every other week. The congregation could decide if on alternate weeks the laymen would conduct the services.

After the service Bob, his wife and I went out to a local restaurant. He said, with a laugh, “Cullen, I read in the Old Testament where a prophet got sawed in half—you’re going to get yours.

“That poor congregation of mine gets exposed to more things than most people hear in a life-time. But if you can show it to them in the Bible as you did tonight they generally listen. But you made some of the old saints uncomfortable in there.”

“Me?!?” I chided, “What about all your profound announcements? I saw narrowed eyes and sensed a lot of internal gasping as you did some tradition-chopping there tonight.”

His wife sat there shaking her head. I asked her how she felt about all of this. “Brad, since I received the baptism of Holy Spirit I want only what God wants. Two years ago I would have been scared to death that Bob would be kicked out of the church—and it has come close many times—believe me. I can see that our 11 years here is about to end. Not everyone has liked all the things that Bob has started. This will start the murmurings up to a new level of vibration,” she said with a peaceful smile on her face.

I asked her again how she felt about it. “Relaxed. I know we will be leaving and that’s kind of an upheaval for the kids, but they are really tuned in to where we are and will welcome whatever God has for us.”

We stayed in touch for some time after that, and about six months later Bob was offered a post with some “lay” organization as a traveling speaker and teacher and simultaneously was asked to resign as pastor of the two churches.

I’d sure love to know what the Patterson family is doing these days, but we both moved out of the area and finally just got out of touch.

Second example was a rural, independent community church on the Gulf Coast. The fellow had been preaching there for 20

years. His wife had recently died of cancer. I happened to be going for a walk and he was out in front of the church and we said “hi” to each other and a conversation was on.

He and his wife had left a large denominational church pastorate somewhere up in Michigan near Detroit. They felt that God was calling them to start a church in this little southern community.

We talked about his wife’s bout with cancer and her death. After about an hour he said, “You don’t think it was God’s will that she died, do you?”

“No,” I agreed, “I don’t.” We talked on and he asked me if I would speak at the church the following Sunday. I had something else scheduled.

He asked, “What about tonight?” It was on a Friday and I had no conflict—and I said okay.

I had told him about Bob Patterson and he was deeply moved and when he was about to introduce me to the congregation he announced, “As of today this church has a new pastor. I am resigning.”

I was sitting a bit sideways on the front pew so I could see the reactions of most of the people. Most were shocked and they turned to look at me.

“The new pastor,” he quickly said, “is Jesus Christ. God sent Brad here,” pointing over at me, “to help me see a couple of things I have never seen before. One is, and I’ve never been surer about anything in my life, that Anne could and should have been healed; I clearly see what caused her illness and death and how it could have been prevented. The second thing that God has shown me through Brad today is what has been wrong with how we have been playing church.

“Now, Brad, I can see some of these good friends are a bit surprised at this, and to keep me from getting burned at the stake for heresy, would you please come up and explain how this has all happened—because I’m not sure myself.”

Jeanne, I only spoke for a few minutes and felt that we were just supposed to talk together. The congregation and the former pastor—on the spot, that night while I was there—decided to sell the building and meet together in homes. I never saw that man

again, I don't remember his name and I've never been back—I cannot even tell you why I stopped there on my drive toward Florida to take a walk!

9

AS I SAID, I FLASHED ON FIVE MEN, BUT I FEEL like I am supposed to stop with the following one.

This is not a success story; and it happened after I had gotten out of the system. In my mind it provides one vivid answer to your question about why many Christians resist the message. I was in a fairly large metropolitan area in the Southwest on a somewhat prolonged business consulting assignment.

The desk clerk at the small motel where I was staying was a leader in the local Mormon Church. He and I were quite surprised at the fact that our theology was quite similar. His knowledge of the Bible was quite extensive and he was overwhelmed at the fact that I had translated the first six chapters of Genesis in exactly the way he had. We came to the joint conclusion that we were brothers in Christ and that we were just supposed to leave our (what turned out to be minor, compared to what my preconceived notions about what Latter Day Saints believed) theological differences to our own individual relationship with God.

One morning I walked into the office and saw that Rick's jaw was swollen. He said he'd had a horrible toothache. I asked him if he believed he was supposed to have it, and he looked at me quizzically for a moment before saying, "Of course not."

"Then why are you putting up with it?"

"Hey man," he responded, "ever notice how hard it is to maintain faith in the midst of pain?"

"Why didn't you call me?" I responded, "that's what brothers are for, to stand with each other."

"To be honest, I didn't think about it."

I held my hand up close to the area that was swollen, and felt the heat of the pain go into my hand. The swelling went down immediately and Rick just said, "That'll work, man."

The manager of the motel—a young woman in her early 30s—and her friend who was the housekeeping manager came to

the door of my room and asked if they could talk with me for a moment. The manager, Sandy, said that she had gone down to relieve Rick so that he could go to the dentist and he had told her what had happened. She and Lynda wanted to talk to me because Lynda was diabetic and Sandy had scoliosis (curvature of the spine).

They wanted to know if I thought God could heal such things. We had a rather long conversation which culminated in them suggesting that we get together with their husbands.

I simply said to set it up.

Lynda called my room the next morning and asked if we could all meet in the motel's small conference room at 7:30 that night.

It turned out that both Sandy and Lynda were completely healed—both quite dramatically, with interesting side effects. One of which was that the pastor of the church that Sandy, Lynda and Sandy's husband Al attended (Lynda's husband did not go) wanted to meet me, since they had excitedly told the pastor and his wife what had happened. As Al, Sandy's husband, told the story later, "Man, I couldn't help it—we went home and I watched Sandy's spine shiver and shake and that curve," he demonstrated with his hand how severe the curve had been, "just straightened up. Took about two hours. I had to call Mel and June (the pastor and his wife) and tell them, and the three of us went over to their house."

A couple of days later, Mel called me and asked if he could meet with me. He asked if I would mind coming to his church office. I said I'd rather not, but why didn't he come by the motel and we could sit in my room and talk.

We had a long conversation about his background and how he and his wife had come to take over their church. He was quite excited about the changes in Sandy, Al and Lynda that had been brought about by Sandy and Lynda's healing. He asked me if I would come to the church and speak. I told him that I didn't do that anymore and why.

He took it well and we parted with the thought voiced by Mel that some day we ought to get together for lunch.

Sandy, Lynda, Al and Chuck wanted to get together with me to talk. They wanted to ask some questions Sandy said when she

called. That turned into a weekly dinner in Sandy and Al's apartment, where we would just have a discussion about the Biblical basis for what I did.

One night Al made the statement that our times together were more meaningful to him than church, and said that since Chuck didn't go anyway, they were wondering if I would agree to start inviting other people to our meetings.

I shared my reservations about that—particularly if they were going to invite people from the church.

A week later Mel called and asked to meet with me. He asked if I would pray with him over a matter. When he got to my room he told me that Sandy, Al and Lynda had come to him and told him that they were leaving the church. He asked me if I knew about it. I replied that they had hinted as much and told him what they had suggested and that I had also told them my reservations, which basically were that they were transferring their dependence on Mel to me. I didn't believe that it was healthy, because they were just setting themselves up to repeat the same mistake.

Then I changed the subject and asked him what he wanted to pray about.

He startled me with, "Whether I should leave the ministry."

I shared with him about Bob Patterson who, I pointed out had actually gotten into an expanded ministry, and the fellow down on the Gulf Coast who had made the announcement that he was resigning and that Jesus Christ was the new pastor.

I pointed out to him that there was such freedom in letting go control and just watching God do all the work and let Jesus do the pastoring.

I asked him, "Mel, do you want God's will no matter what the cost?"

"I think so; I hope so. June is really uncomfortable about this. I wanted her to come with me tonight, but she said she had a real check in her spirit about you."

I told him that this wasn't a matter about me at all. I suggested that he might want to get off by himself for a few days and go without food and just beat on God's door and demand some answers. "Just tell God you want His will and nothing else. It works every time," I assured him.

“June’s afraid that we will be letting the people of the church down.”

I looked at him and said, “Mel, I hate to tell you this, but I believe I am supposed to. You are letting the excuse of what your wife says keep you from seeking God. That is a very dangerous position to be in and I am telling you that from experience letting anything get in the way of seeking God makes for a disaster.”

I never saw Mel again.

Why did I tell this story? I’m not really sure...just that I felt it should be included.

Okay, Jeanne, I spent some time asking and here I believe is why I told this last story. People, myself included, do not want to take personal responsibility for their lives. The concept, as you call it, that Jesus is saying that anyone who believes will do the same things that he did...takes some drastic changes. Bob Patterson was already used to going way out on a limb for anything and everything he believed was what God was calling him to do. No equivocation. But look at the fact that his wife and children were on the same page.

The guy down on the Gulf Coast wanted whatever God wanted and had no wife to interfere—and he didn’t care what the congregation thought. He told it the way he saw it and change didn’t threaten him.

I am deeply sympathetic to Mel’s and June’s predicament. They had sacrificed a great deal to prepare for a church ministry. They were also steeped in the tradition of their particular church. Tough things to give up. Mind you, I wasn’t trying to get him to give it up. I was trying to get him to seek God for clarity about what to do. Which may have been a whole lot different than he was assuming. Instead he made excuses and refused to take personal responsibility.

What is interesting as I think about it is Bob Patterson and his wife were not holding on to anything. They believed that God’s best is their best. He had something else to do simultaneously with losing his position in his church that suited him far better. Likewise with the fellow on the Gulf Coast.

The real issue with Mel and June is trust. I am not being critical here. Not at all. The tragedy of Christianity in its many

forms is the doctrinal excuse it provides for not doing what Jesus said to do. There are many things that Jesus said that are simply impossible to do in the natural. Rather than to deny or ignore what he said, wouldn't it make far better sense to go to God and say, "this is a tough one—I cannot do it on my own, help me! Or show me clearly that I don't have to do it."

The answer to your question about why Christians resist what Jesus said, seems to be fear, does it not?

Jesus introduced God as a perfect Parent. In the original the word is equivalent to a deeply informal and personal "Dad, Papa or even Daddy." I presume that perfect Mommy/Daddy is probably all right too for those who don't resist it. God is such a perfect Parent that you can address him/her any way you choose and He/She is not offended. Jesus did say that God is Spirit to be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth. *Why do we insist upon gender?* As a child, you can trust a perfect Daddy/Mommy to help you in every situation. If you resist either—choose the other.

I just got this marvelous insight, Jeanne, and my excitement about sharing it is bowling me over! Here it is.

Christianity has for the most part taken the story of Adam and Eve being kicked out of the Garden of Eden as an act of God for their disobedience to His command not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. I don't think that it was an arbitrary command as much as a warning of a parent to his child, because of the inherent dangers of eating the fruit.

This is the insight: as parents we want to warn our children against many dangers that could inflict pain and even death.

Here is an analogy that I believe may be closer to truth.

A family lives on a busy street that has rapid and unpredictable traffic. A father, wanting to make sure his son doesn't run out into the street, takes him out to the curb and says you must never cross this street unless mommy or daddy holds your hand and goes across with you. Otherwise you will be hit by a car and killed!

The little boy is quite obedient. But a bigger neighborhood kid is playing with him one day and says, "Let's go across the street and climb that tree."

The little boy says he can't because his dad has told him not to.

The older kid asks why. The little boy says, "My daddy says that if I go across the street I will be hit by a car and killed."

"Nah, that's not true, watch me." At that the older boy dashes across the street and yells back across, "See?" Then he repeats crossing the street several times, and finally comes back to the little boy. "See? You won't get killed. Your dad just wants to scare you so you won't have any fun. All you gotta do is look both ways before you cross and then run. Watch me."

The boy made exaggerated looks to the left and to the right, "See?" Then he ran across the street. "See?" He yelled again. Then he said, "Watch!" as he again exaggerated the swing of his head from right to left and ran back to the other side. "See? That's all you have to do. Look both ways and then run fast. C'mon, let's do it." The little boy finally ran across the street with the bigger boy. Sure enough he wasn't killed.

What was killed was something he didn't understand. The former trust he had had in his father's wisdom.

As with all analogies this one has flaws and breaks down. But Jesus tells us that we have a Dad of whom we can make some pretty far-out demands—relentlessly and impudently just like a little child that runs to his dad and says, "Daddy, daddy, daddy...I want an ice cream. Please can I, please?"

At first, the dad may ignore the plea, but the little kid doesn't give up and the dad finally gives in. That is exactly the illustration that Jesus used to tell us how to get something from our Father. It is an astounding promise, because the "something" he said to demand was more of our Father's own Spirit for certain situations. His promise was that if we continued to impudently demand, knock UNTIL we see evidence of an increase of our Father's Spirit...we WILL see it!

10

YOU TALKED RATHER OBLIQUELY ABOUT THE need for much fasting and prayer as a necessary preparation for casting out certain kinds of difficult-to-remove demons. (Please correct me if I am not quoting you correctly.) My research has gotten me answers that run the range of, “fasting is not necessary,” and “it can be useful, but one needs to be quite careful,” all the way to, “it is a dangerous practice and the man (you) doesn’t know what he is talking about.”

That latter, the “dangerous” one, piqued me into asking if that particular man had any experience in casting out demons. Not surprisingly, he had no experience and discarded the whole topic as preposterous. Any further comments?

BC: I used to work with a psychiatrist whose practice was limited to Christians who had emotional problems. He believed deeply in what I do to the point that he insisted on sending me a monthly check because he said he felt led to support me financially. He would assemble groups of patients at his office for me to give a little talk. When I mentioned fasting, he asked me in front of a group if I thought it was really necessary. He asked it in a way that clearly implied that he didn’t think that it was necessary. I told him that all I knew is that until I began fasting I had no idea what faith was and in my experience I had never known anyone who could cast out demons and otherwise operate at an increased level of faith who hadn’t come to the point of knowing that food was unnecessary.

After that particular evening he told me he wanted to try a fast, but he had hypoglycemia. I told him that my experience with both hypoglycemic and diabetic people was that they had absolutely no symptoms during fasting—any more than anyone else—and that fasting was a great precursor to getting rid of the real cause of both diseases. He wanted to know if I had any suggestions. I told him just to ingest nothing except pure water and

not to take any kind of food or medication, even vitamins. I told him to just pray about it to see if fasting was the direction he should go.

His first fast was for four days. The next ten days; I believe his longest fast was 21 days. His faith grew in leaps and bounds. When he would invite me to speak to some of his patients and the subject of fasting would come up he would now attest to its value in his own life and would give rather exciting examples of his own faith at work including that his hypoglycemia was gone!

Many wonderful things happened during that time. Patients with severe mental illnesses who had been in his care for many years were completely freed.

He invited me out to dinner several weeks after an experience with a female patient whom he had been seeing professionally for over 12 years. She'd been on a high level of an anti-psychotic medication he had prescribed for her and was dramatically healed and freed from needing the drug. Any other time she had gotten off the drug or forgotten to take it, she had wound up in the hospital with a severe psychotic episode.

"Cullen, you keep this stuff up," he said with a wide grin, "and you'll have me out of business. Hallelujah!" he exclaimed, with a fist thrust upward—to the notice of people at tables nearby. I laughed.

We worked together up until his retirement. Those who fast with the intent of increasing their faith to be able to do what Jesus said believers would be able to grow in faith. Skeptics who disdain the practice grow in their skepticism.

The dynamics, Jeanne, seem to be to understand at a very deep level that we do not really need food. I knew a guy who lived in a remote area who believed we could live on air, literally, who would go six months at a time without eating anything. He was a bit strange—would express anger because he could only go a few days without drinking water and thought he should be able to get all the water he needed from the air.

I am not advocating anything here—just pointing out that we don't need food. I once read an article that the god or archangel of this earth—which Jesus referred to as Satan—uses food, sex and other things we deem necessary for a normal human experience as

a way to trap us into dependence on the things of this earth...perhaps there is something to that line of thinking?

11

BRAD, THIS THING ABOUT FASTING HAS CAUSED me to begin to narrow my research into what I can only say for me is a rather bizarre arena. I was directed to those who are in what they call a “deliverance” or “exorcism” ministry.

They all agreed with you completely about the need for fasting. I was invited to a couple of different deliverance sessions. What I saw disturbed me and I am not sure whether anything was accomplished.

One man invited me to come to his office where he conducted deliverance at a time when a session was scheduled.

His instructions to the lady who had come to him for help—who was lying on a couch with several of us watching—was to close her eyes and just to think about Jesus Christ silently in her mind and not to pay any attention to what he would say because he was going to be talking to the demons, not to her.

He talked in low tones telling demons to manifest. He wanted to see them. He said something like, “In the name of Jesus, you must obey me. I want to see you.” He did this for about 45 minutes to an hour. Then he finally held up his hand and waved for us to look where his finger was pointing as he was saying, “I see you now, identify yourself.” He was pointing at a small lump on her forehead, just above her left eyebrow that was moving slightly. He said, again, “Yes, I see you; I want you to manifest more. Demonstrate to me so that we can really see you. I command this in the name of Jesus.” The lump started to almost vibrate as the speed of its movement increased.

He started to tell it to speak using the same kinds of commands. Finally, a guttural male voice came out of the woman’s mouth and said, “I am who I am.” He told it that it was a liar.

He then began asking it several questions. (I had asked permission to record the session and he had said that I could take

no notes, nor use a tape recorder. I could witness what happened, but I could not ask any questions or speak during the process).

Two or three questions and the answers from this voice I remember vividly. One revolved around when it had entered the woman—when she was seven years old during a temper tantrum the voice said. Another question was how many of them were there? The answer was something like, “we are many.”

The whole session lasted about 3 hours. That it was dramatic and that something unusual happened I have no doubt. He scheduled another appointment for the lady for the following week. Then he asked her what she had experienced during the session. She said simply that she had felt detached. The voice startled her, but she believed that it was something “real,” while insisting that it wasn’t her speaking, and when it started talking she just tried all the harder to concentrate on thinking about Jesus.

He then told us that in his experience the process of getting rid of all of them could take anywhere from six weeks to six months and even longer.

His parting words to everyone there were, “When you get into this ministry you have to put all ideas of time aside and be prepared to stick it out until all demons have been cast out.”

I realize I haven’t given you much to go on, but what are your reactions to this approach? Do you believe that the manifestations, the moving lump (that totally disappeared when the session was declared over) and the voice were actually that of a demon?

BC: When I first was exposed to this kind of ministry, I was attracted to it only because I did see people get freed up from bondage. It was actually good training because of some of the things I learned and am still careful about today.

After about two years of being involved in a deliverance ministry I began to pray about some of the things that disturbed me.

1. In the passage that turned me on to fasting and prayer, Jesus simply rebuked the demon and that was it. Poof, gone. Why did we have to go through all this silly questioning and answering with lying

demonic entities? It was beginning to make no sense at all.

2. Why did everyone seem to want to turn it into a specialized “ministry” when Jesus said all believers were supposed to be able to do it?

3. Why did those who got involved in it full-time rent office space and the like, to justify what they did? And so many seemed to wind up having a fascination with demons and a tendency to play experimental games—to the point that some of them became emotionally unstable and seemed to be controlled by demons in certain areas of their lives.

4. Why did this ministry seem to give more attention to the activity of demons and draw away from focusing on God and what God can and does do when we believe?

The answers I got for me was that I should be involved only when I was led to be involved. When situations arose I would just depend upon God’s Spirit to lead me. Kind of like playing red light, green light. If God’s Spirit gave me the green light we’d go fight the battle together. A red light simply meant to wait until the time was right. I have found that I don’t have to go out searching for people who need ministry; I just stay in tune with God and I get all the walk-in trade that I can handle.

None of this should be construed as criticism of anyone. It isn’t. It is just the answers that I got for me. As I used to say to my psychiatrist friend, “you shouldn’t be so amazed at God using you. If God can use the jawbone of an ass, it is fitting that he uses a medical doctor—especially a psychiatrist.”

God works in myriad and strange ways through myriad people, including strange ones such as me.

12

YOU MENTIONED YOU LEARNED SOME THINGS that you are careful about and use today. Can you explain?

BC: Sure. Demons are extremely legalistic and they totally respect and are obedient to enforced legal authority. There is a passage in Acts, the fifth book of the New Testament, that demonstrates this in an interesting way.

Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out."

Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.

[One day] the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?"

Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

If you don't have authority over demons don't mess with them. Or, if you don't understand your authority, don't mess with them—for reasons that this passage makes evident. Most people in the deliverance ministry understand that their authority comes from the fact that demons have really already been defeated by the blood of Jesus Christ. The blood of Jesus Christ is not just some religious symbol, Jeanne, it is real and it is powerful.

I'm going to digress here for a moment. Christians in many groups pray "in the name of Jesus Christ." For the most part, why are their prayers ineffectual? For one thing, the word "name" in this context in the original language means, "in the character and authority of Jesus Christ."

Any honest seeker after the truth who looks to the Bible in the original language as at least one viable source of truth, will discover two things about the character and authority of Jesus Christ. One, He only wanted to do the will of the Father—that's his character. Two, the Spirit that became the man historically referred to as Jesus created the Universe and everything in it, including those entities that became demons. That's his authority. The secret of the Universe, Paul wrote in his letter to believers in Colossae after explaining that Jesus had indeed created everything is: Christ in YOU!

The prime prerequisites to operating in authority are to make a determination to want only the will of God, and to understand that the Creator of the universe lives within you. This may seem like a lot of fuzzy-sounding theology, but I can tell you that everyone that I know of who operates in the same character and authority of Jesus to do what he did, has this as a basis of understanding and has gone through a time of fasting and intense praying to get there. Two things I want to point out: one, the detractors to this thesis are unable themselves to do what Jesus did, and two, why then should anybody listen to what they say? They obviously speak with no authority and obviously are unable to do what Jesus said any believer will do if he or she believes sufficiently.

As to what I learned back then and use today—most of the time—is to forbid demons to manifest. I tell them that they cannot cause any smells, vomiting, or any kind of discomfort as they leave, that they cannot transfer and that they cannot communicate or call for replacements.

This probably sounds like hocus pocus to the uninitiated, but in the early days of my experience in the deliverance ministry I saw green vomit, ghastly (I don't use this word normally) odors, demons transferring into other people present causing disturbing behavior in them.... You think what you saw was bizarre, Jeanne, I have seen BIZARRE! Again, the point I made earlier—I believe Spirit was telling me that allowing them to act out was giving more attention to what demons did than to the wonder of God's power at work getting rid of them.

There is another interesting side to this. A friend of mine on the West Coast tells an amusing story. He had cast a demon out of a woman in a small gathering. When the demon went out it caused the woman to choke, causing her face to turn red. When it was all over—the lady of the house got in his face. She told him, “I’ve watched you do this for five years, and you always say things like, ‘I Bind all demons present by the blood of Jesus Christ, I am going to cast you out and you will not transfer, call for replacements or cause any discomfort or smells or vomiting as you go.’ Why didn’t you say these things this time?”

My friend said that he didn’t know, that he had simply prayed for Holy Spirit to guide him, and he did what he did.

The lady’s husband had his head bent over the kitchen table and said that he knew why it had happened. He said that he had watched my friend say these things for five years, and just figured he had faith in saying them, so whatever worked was fine with him. “I needed to see this—I believed that demons existed, but now I know!”

My friend asked the woman how she felt about having to go through the pain and trauma of being choked just so her friend’s husband could learn a lesson; her response was that she was glad it happened too because now she knew also. If it hadn’t happened she said she never would have believed it.

So, Jeanne, we go back to the thesis that God works in strange and myriad ways through strange people even such as I.

One more thing about legal authority and the care I use to make sure that I have it. Sometimes a person doesn’t want the demon to go. Sound strange? They don’t realize they want it to stay, and don’t even realize that a demon is causing the problem.

For example, somebody will come to me for healing and I sense a conflict. I remember an elderly woman a friend had brought to me; she had a great deal of pain in her legs and had difficulty in walking.

I told her I sensed a conflict and that part of her didn’t want to get well. As I questioned her more deeply, I realized that her granddaughter who was living with her would move out if she was healed. Obviously she didn’t want the young lady to leave.

I confronted her with this and she owned up to it. I could never get her to move past seeing that her granddaughter would leave. I sensed the problem was demonic; she wanted the problem to continue because it was the only way she saw to hold onto the girl, so the demons causing the problem had a legal right to stay there.

I have learned the practicality of something Jesus said. “A demon went out of a man and went out over the water. He returned and finding the house swept clean and empty took seven other spirits more evil than he and the last stage of that man was worse than the first.”

When there is conflict I just point out the conflict and leave it at that. Because they don't want the illness I have the authority to get rid of it and can. Because they want the perceived “benefit” the problem will come back. This takes great care, and I believe makes a lot of things that happened in Jesus's time that seemed inexplicable perfectly understandable.

13

I'VE BEEN GOING BACK OVER MY NOTES DURING my early research for this...whatever it's going be. I think you're writing a book as told to me, Brad.

I wrote the word "sin" out on a margin, and I kept wanting to ask you a question about it. I don't know if you remember the 12-page letter attachment I told you I received from a man in Germany. He said he had a Roman Catholic background and that you explained what the word sin really meant and that I should ask you about it. He said it was one of the most freeing things he had ever heard, and should be easy for anyone to embrace. Could you give me that rundown?

BC: Sure. Many others have written on the word far more eloquently than I. In fact, I'm sure that I heard the concept from somebody else; I just did some historical background and a word study.

It is interesting how traditions are started, maintained and then vigorously defended. First a little background on the King James Version of the Bible (KJV).

There is no doubt that the KJV has been the most popular and best loved version of the Bible for over 300 years. Loving a Model T Ford—a car designed and built for the common man, for its historical value—would still be a ridiculous reason to attempt to use it on today's Interstate highway system. It wasn't designed for those speeds or conditions.

Using the KJV because of its historical value is a ridiculous reason when many of the words in it no longer mean the same thing they did in the 1600s. It is obvious that the translators of most modern versions are heavily influenced by and make a hard effort to accommodate the doctrinal traditions imbued by the KJV—some words have been woefully misapplied.

The goal of the KJV was a good one. Put the Scriptures into the simple language of the common English-speaking man. Case in

point “thee” and “thou” and “thy” were used in personal interaction by the working class. We still have a hangover from all the high-toned religionists who insist on using such words when publicly praying—“Thou art”—because they believe the words are sacred.

All this from the question about sin. The word in both the Hebrew and the transliteration of the word into Greek means basically the same thing; depending, of course, on the context.

It basically means in both languages to miss God. Where did the English word sin come from, and why did the KJV translators use it? And those translators of modern versions who were aware of the KJV’s influence, including the Roman Catholic Douay Version and the later Confraternity version? Yep, still sin.

The word was well understood by the English common man. It had its roots in archery going all the way back to the twelfth century. The word had a singular meaning and was invented to be used in archery competition. A meet official would stand close to the target, but protected by a tree. If an arrow missed the target completely, the official would yell SIN! In that way, even in the foggy bogs, the archer knew that his arrow had not hit the target.

The word sin in old English meant miss the target. That’s it. A lovely, meaningful (at the time) paraphrase which was intended to make the concept of missing God more understandable—probably did back then.

Now, let’s look at some theological stretches. The New Testament states clearly that Jesus never sinned. He never missed God. The average Christian makes the application that Jesus never did any of the things he or she was raised to believe were sins.

One of the craziest ideas is that Jesus never got angry. I wonder where their minds are when they read some of the verbal cannonballs he threw at the religionists of his day. He told them they were children of a snake. In my way of thinking that is unequivocally saying their mother was a snake.

He told them that they were like painted-over grave markers. He didn’t say these things while he was lisping and drifting along with the breeze above the ground in a gorgeous, fresh from the local dry cleaners, white robe.

He said their religious traditions had made God's own commands of no effect, and that their worship was worthless! He said these things angrily.

He was without sin—got it? He didn't miss God in his anger. He was focused, knew what he was doing and where he was going, and told anybody off in no uncertain terms, even his own hand-picked disciples with anger and with graphic language when they were not living up to what he expected.

The tragedy of a misapplied paraphrase corrupted by years and years of religious tradition.

How do you avoid missing God (*i.e.*, sinning)? Jesus tells how with clarity. We have turned that instruction into a song or a chant to be solemnly said or sung in unison while sitting in a pew with an organ playing in the background. That is sin! Because that is missing God!

The preceding paragraph illustrates something that I am trying to get across about sin—Jesus told the religious of his day that they were making the words of God null and void by their traditions. Jesus instructed his disciples how to pray in a way to get results.

To reduce that prayer into a paraphrase for common consumption was an excellent exercise. To have built it into a chant or a song to repeat solemnly and mindlessly is a tradition that misses Jesus's whole point. It misses how to effectively stay in touch with God—the REAL meaning of the word paraphrased as sin. Got it?

14

THE NATURAL SEQUENCE WOULD BE TO ASK YOU to give us your version of Jesus’s specific instructions about how to pray. But I’ve had this nagging thought, so I’m going to change the sequence to accommodate it.

You brought up the idea that apparently the original language does not specifically refer to God as “Father,” but could just as easily be “Mother” as well. This was a shock initially and I began to realize how steeped I was in my own religious preconceived notions. Frankly, Brad, I have never thought of myself as a religious person. I have tried to go to church, but it has always been a negative experience for me. I believe you have helped me see why!

The question I have is two-fold. First, you seem willing to allow that God has a feminine side as well as masculine. It doesn’t seem to bother you one way or the other. Why?

Second, if it is no big deal to you one way or another, why do you make an issue of it? I have a confession to make. My idea at the beginning was to interview several people who have “offbeat” and provocative thinking about religion...simply to make an interesting and readable series. I’ve gotten stuck on your story and have taken on ownership because I want it to be read—both because of my selfish inclinations as a writer and because I believe your story should be told. From the beginning of my research I have found that you provoke religious people into shock and it seems to be your primary intent. Why?

BC: Well, Jeanne, look who is being provocative now. You are provoking me to think. I’m hung up on wanting to think through and answer the latter part of your question.... So, before getting off on a tangent that will make me forget the first part, I’ll take first things first.

The word in the original translated as “Father” means initiator of spirit life. I’m going to make a stretch here that I don’t

usually talk about except one on one. We're not talking about the progenitor of a human body, but of the spiritual side. But if we were talking about the human side, it takes both the male and the female to reproduce. Both are equally important in that process. Both have different functions.

Why do we resist a Perfect Parent having both male and female attributes? If we look at ourselves individually, which parent had the most influence in what we have become? As I continually deal with people in business and in spiritual matters who want some objective third-party advice, it never ceases to amaze me that they discount the influence of one parent or the other. An absent father, for example, strongly influences his child by his absence. Does it have to be negative? It does not. Children are amazingly resilient beings, and the absence of a father or a mother is just part of the ultimate molding process.

I made a decision to let my children verbally know that I loved them. I told them so continually. Why? Because my own dad never said the words and I was 30 years old before it finally dawned on me that he did love me. Talk about insecurity! So I determined to tell my kids.

In retrospect, I am a product of that seeming lack of reassurance of love during my formative years. I am comfortable with who I am as a person today—so the obvious question then is, so what? Are my children any better off for my having continually told them that I loved them? I don't think so. In fact it probably cheapened the word. I tell everyone I love them because the Father (Mother) in me does love everyone and I simply cannot help expressing it.

Here's the thing. My mother had all kinds of faults, as do I. My father had all kinds of faults, as do I. I forgive them and I forgive me. Our physical parents are not the issue. Jesus introduced God as a perfect Parent of our spiritual side and specifically said that there was neither male nor female in that realm.

"Mother" and "Father" are human terms that have no relationship to God—other than the fact that, whatever we lacked in our upbringing, we can get fulfilled on the spiritual side of things. This equals reconciliation with everyone as well as God

and we can quit resisting either male or female and just accept both.

I am going to get into a touchy area, but it is my experience. One of my favorite people from the past was a lesbian. Mary had more mature and practical fatherly advice for me in my early 20s than any man has ever provided. Mary and Agnes were raising a teenage boy when I met them. He was very well adjusted and received some excellent advice from Mary about how to deal with his girlfriend!

Homosexuals have never been a problem for me. Because gay men knew I was not judgmental of them (even though repelled personally about any such involvement of my own. It was a simple matter for me—I prefer girls! I therefore was not hung up about any homosexual tendencies that might be prevalent at some level in me—so what?) friends would bring them to me to be healed of AIDS.

Here's the part of my story that gets touchy and there goes some more of your audience, Jeanne! Believe it or not—here is my experience and it is the truth. Those who got “delivered” from AIDS got delivered from homosexuality. In each incident those who were delivered also were delivered from the hatred of their fathers. Obviously I have a little osmotic training from having spent a few years working with my psychiatrist friend about unresolved “Oedipus-rex” complexes, the gender identification problem that supposedly is at the root of homosexuals and like so many other problems—that in itself is just the mask for a deep-seated spiritual problem.

Why get into this? Not sure, just felt like I was supposed to...resisting “mother” or “father” in God is our own inability to see that God is neither and both.

By the way—and this is an important part of the equation. As a result of deliverance a formerly gay man of my acquaintance hooked up with a formerly bisexual woman.

The role reversal was amusing, enough that they were able to laugh at themselves. They had invited me over for lunch as they wanted to discuss a problem they had. As I approached their little log house in the country, I saw Joan, a petite and very attractive blonde outside in a flannel shirt, distractingly tight faded jeans,

boots and a shovel, digging a trench for a septic line for their country home. Meanwhile, Ray was inside preparing our meal.

I made a comment that she looked like she was hard at work, and I almost collapsed in laughter when she said, “Yeah and if I could get my faggot husband out here to help me, I could get it done.” She laughed as she put down the shovel and told me to go inside. She said she had to go around back and take off her boots before coming in or Ray would kill her.

We had lunch and just generally chit-chatted about the beautiful countryside and how they liked the area and their new home. When we finished, Ray said he just wanted to clear away a few things and why didn’t Joan and I take our coffee into the family room and he’d join us in just a minute.

Joan and I continued the general chat until Ray came in and sat down with us. He started right in, “The reason we asked you to come by, Brad, and I’m sorry we didn’t invite you before, just because we love you....” I waved it off and he continued, “Joan and I have a few problems and we kind of hoped that you’d help us sort them out.”

“I’ll try,” I said.

“Here’s the deal, as a homosexual I was always the aggressor and quite active. I enjoy sex with Joan, but sometimes I feel that all she wants to do is use my body.”

I asked Joan how she felt about it.

“Brad, if you want to know the truth, I honestly just can’t get enough of Ray. It’s funny, because I was only moderately active when I was a ‘Bi’—but now I sometimes want to devour him.”

“You both realize, of course, that you two are a classic case of cultural male—female role reversal, don’t you?”

“Yeah,” Ray said, “we’ve talked about it. I complain because she won’t help around the house...and she gripes because I won’t help her overhaul the engine in the tractor, for heaven’s sake.”

“Are you comfortable with it?” I asked.

“More or less,” Joan answered frankly. “We’ve talked about it some and are kind of concerned that maybe this is a mistake. I mean we both admit to temptations about our former sexual orientation.”

“I’m curious,” I said, “are you really tempted or just have occasional fantasies?”

“You flat-out amaze me,” Joan said. “The reason I paid any attention to you in the first place was that for a straight guy you never seemed to judge sexual stuff. Yet I was so amazed when I was delivered that my whole orientation about sex and all the excuses I had been making were just that. Ray and I love each other and all in all this is a good marriage—and yeah, just occasional fantasies, when he won’t put out.”

“But,” Ray chimed in, “we’re a little concerned that maybe we need further deliverance.”

“Have you prayed about this?”

Their silence was their answer.

“Can I share something with you guys?”

“Sure,” Joan said, and Ray just barely nodded his head.

“You are both delightful. I do not sense any demonic activity at all. I only wish that most married couples I get involved with were as open as you two are about what is going on inside. I also think your comments to each other are hilarious. Joan made the statement outside, Ray, that she wished her faggot husband would come outside and help so she’d get the trench done.”

Ray put the back of his hand up to his forehead in mock dismay and said, “How dare you, Joan!”

I convulsed with laughter all over again and they joined in.

“Here’s the key. Pray about this stuff. Holy Spirit will guide you. Sex is such an individual thing. The biggest thing homosexuals get delivered from is their need to justify what they do. Getting rid of self-justification is what gives us freedom.

“We all miss God continually. The antidote to that is just to recognize that we all are in a state of sin, beat on our chests and move on under the guidance of Spirit.”

“I’ve got a question, Brad,” Ray asked, “do you believe that all homosexuality is caused by demons?”

“I don’t know,” I replied honestly. “I believe that we miss God because we try to hide. We try to hide because we don’t believe God will accept us the way we are. In both your cases, you were desperate enough to want God no matter what. Homosexuals are just like everyone else. So busy justifying their lifestyles that

they shove God aside. People who are addicted to religion do the same thing. In that sense it is probably all caused by demonic influence.”

“In other words,” Joan said, “it’s okay that I work outside and Ray works inside, right? Is it okay if I want to rush in the house and attack his body?”

I just laughed and said, “talk to God, Joan, talk to God.”

This is funny, Jeanne, I got so wrapped up thinking about Ray and Joan and gender identification and all that stuff that I forgot the second part of your question. I had to go back and re-read it—and here I was, all anxious to answer it and didn’t even want to get into the mother/father issue.

Okay, I’m looking at my motives for trying to shock people. I really don’t think that is my intent consciously or unconsciously. I guess, what I think about it is inconsequential. I do it; and I certainly don’t do anything to change my behavior, so in that sense I guess it is my intent to shock.

I mean, looking back at telling the story about Joan and Ray, if that isn’t a shocker, what is? Was it necessary to tell? Of course not—but I bet I’ll get comments from some readers that the story set them free. It’s just the way it works. Am I justifying my proclivity to shock? Knowing human beings as I do, the answer is: probably.

Jeanne, I could play around with all kinds of introspective questions. For example, one answer is maybe I do it as an attention-getting mechanism. So what? Holy Spirit, you lead and guide here; should I stop or continue?

The answer is if it shocks it shocks. If it soothes it soothes. The truth sets us free. For some it is soothing love and for others it is a slap in the face. If the truth ultimately frees us, how it does its job depends upon the recipient.

15

SINCE YOU TOOK OFF THE LID OF THE KETTLE OF homosexual fish, I want to go there for a minute.

Since a cure for AIDS was effected through the deliverance from a spirit causing homosexuality, couldn't the conclusion be drawn that homosexuality is not normal and is wrong?

BC: No matter what I say in response to that one will gain me no friends. Since when has that ever stopped me? The arguments about that topic are endless and there are no winners.

Our problem as a society and culture is that we want to have tightly defined rules of right and wrong. That is eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and doing it gets us kicked out the garden just like it did our predecessors.

A couple who are pastors in a large denominational church in Alabama welcome and have a sizable homosexual contingent in their church. An acquaintance asked me if I didn't think that was a bad thing.

My response was that it's not my problem. If God is calling that couple to have a church in the first place, that is what God is calling them to do. God isn't calling me to have a church. If God is calling that couple to welcome homosexuals, then that is what God is calling them to do. Since God isn't calling me to have a church, at least at this particular time, it's not my problem. I don't even have to go!

Somebody asked me once if I believed in gay rights. I really don't know the issues. I know that Jesus said not to judge. So I don't. If I was homosexual I'd probably be more in tune with the issues. I'm not and I don't feel that is my call.

Is the fact that I am a heterosexual making me righteous, ipso facto? Is the fact that I occasionally look at a woman with lust in my heart somehow less adulterous than a man looking at another man that way...or a woman looking at a woman?

God, be merciful to a sinner such as I. End of story (period).

JS: I showed this last segment to a minister of a small Baptist church and asked what he thought. His answer was surprising. “This man has a good handle on what the grace of God means.” Does that concept ring true in your mind? Also, can you explain what the grace of God means to you? This minister said it means unmerited favor of God toward everyone.

BC: The “grace of God” is a religious doctrine. The first introduction of the term in the sense of how this minister is using it is by Luke, the writer of Acts (the fifth book of the New Testament), who quotes Paul saying, “However, I consider my life is worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.” Prior to that the word was used interchangeably to translate a word in the original that meant God’s power, one that meant God’s mercy and in one place I remember, simply God being God.

Paul also wrote extensively about “grace,” particularly in his letters to some believers who were living in Rome and also to some believers in Corinth.

Arguments abound in Christendom as to whether we are “saved” by grace or by being obedient to the commandments of God. Paul’s argument in the original is that it is by the grace of God that we follow the requirements of the law which is Christ and that the law was merely a teacher that led us to Christ because we couldn’t keep the dictates of the law.

A rather thorny issue raised by a giant intellect.

What do I think of the concept, Jeanne? It is by the grace of God that I breathe, that I live, that I do anything including running to God at this moment saying, HELP!

16

BRAD, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THROUGHOUT our exchanges that I have sensed you being uncomfortable. You usually answer my questions with confidence and conviction. Are you uncomfortable and if so can you identify the reasons for it?

BC: My, my are you ever perceptive! Yes, I am uncomfortable with this particular line of thinking—probably because of some experiences with people whom I believe (maybe wrongly) hide behind the concept.

I remember so many times as I began seeing what Jesus said and how it contrasted with what Christianity practiced, I tried to discuss it with Christians. “Grace” was always their excuse for not even looking at what Jesus said to do. One statement I remember almost as if it is ringing in my ear, “I’ve had all that legalism I want. I just depend on the grace of God.”

Well, in the final analysis, me too! But I revert to something Jesus said and I’ll leave it to you and any reader who wants to examine it.

“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?

“I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice.

“He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.

“But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”

The implications to what Jesus said are pretty horrific—are they not?

Yep, Jeanne, it makes me uncomfortable.

Here's the other side....

Peter asked Jesus one time, "If somebody wrongs me, how many times must I forgive him—seven times?"

Jesus's response was, "No. Seventy times seven!"

If Jesus is making a rule that we are supposed to forgive somebody 490 times (and in context if the culprit repeats the same wrong over and over) then it stands to reason that God is committed to forgiving us infinitely more times.

But why refuse to hear and do what Jesus said on the basis of "Grace?"

17

LET'S GO BACK TO WHAT YOU SAID WERE JESUS'S specific instructions about how to pray—I believe you said to “get results.”

BC: Maybe we should write a separate book on the subject and just call it the “Lord’s Prayer.” Actually it is what Luke records Jesus as saying in the 11th chapter of the Gospel under his (Luke’s) name. I take some liberties with the passage, but only by extrapolating what Mark reported that Jesus said, and using some other quotes to make what Jesus is saying here a little easier to understand and totally consistent in the mix.

Before we start, we need to see clearly that a word by word translation from one language into another—because of grammar differences—creates confusion of its own.

For example, there’s movie with Danny DeVito and Billy Crystal in it called “Throw Your Mama From the Train a Kiss.”

The title in itself is humorous to the average American mind. People of most European extractions who speak both their native tongue and an American brand of English find this syntax comfortable. I am told that this is actually a Hungarian maxim, which properly translated means simply that anyone going on a long trip should honor his mother by saying goodbye. But if we play with what an American who insists on being legalistically obedient to a word by word and word for word translation....

We get the image of a man on a train who sees his mother, jumps off the train, grabs his mother and hauls her onto the train, then throws her back onto the platform, jumps off the train and runs over to kiss her and then jumps back onto the train—all the while believing he has been wonderfully obedient to the maxim. So let’s just read the passage in the New King James Version (NKJV), which again is an accommodation to the KJV even though certainly far easier to read and understand. Then we’ll

make some general remarks and then begin to dissect it—word by word.

¹ Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

² So He said to them, "When you pray, say:

Our Father in heaven,

Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come.

Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.

³ Give us day by day our daily bread. ⁴ And forgive us our sins, For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one."

⁵ And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; ⁶for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him;' ⁷and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you?' ⁸I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.

⁹ "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

I believe we covered this earlier, but it is worth repeating. The word *aiteo* (pronounced ah-ee-tay-o) translated here as ask means “ask” in the same sense that somebody who lends 20 dollars to somebody who has promised to pay it back on payday asks to be repaid.

If payday comes around and he cannot repay, the man who made the loan asks for his money back in this fashion. “Look, I loaned you the 20 because you promised to pay me back today.”

The other fellow says, “I know I promised, but I just don’t have it.”

“I don’t care that you don’t have it; I’ve got to have it, you promised—go get it somewhere else.” He is relentless about “asking” for his money back, until the borrower in exasperation finally goes and borrows it from somebody else and pays him back.

The word in the original is a financial term today and its English equivalent is the contractual “due on demand.” We’re a little bit ahead of ourselves, but the example is exactly the picture that Jesus was painting here.

⁸I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.

The NKJV replaced the word used in the KJV “importunity” with “persistence.” This is rather interesting because a 17th century Webster’s dictionary defines the word importunity as “impudence” whereas today’s dictionary gives the definition persistence.

The word in the original means lack of awe, and the context certainly indicates that it means persistently without any awe.

Do *what* persistently without any awe? Demand that God gives us something. Keep impudently demanding UNTIL we get what it is we are promised. What is it that is being demanded?

Remember “throw your mother from the train a kiss?” That is the kind of balled up (to an American) syntax as in this passage. The object of this persistent, impudent demanding is more of God’s own Spirit all the way down in verse 13 for a particular need!

We will come back to the end a bit later, but let's go back and start at the top with what is commonly referred to as the "Lord's Prayer."

First thing we need to see in Luke's account is that Jesus gave this instruction in response to his disciples nagging at him. "C'mon, Rabbi, show us how you pray. After all, John (the Baptist and Jesus's cousin) taught his disciples how *he* prayed."

Jesus replied, "Okay, when you pray, emphatically state...."

Several years ago I saw a videotape of a guy who had a huge church in some town outside of Dallas. He was giving a teaching on the "Lord's Prayer" and he pointed out that what Jesus was doing was telling his disciples that when they prayed they were to stand...and stomp their foot to emphasize their demands.

My aforementioned psychiatrist friend and I would walk and pray together on the beach (anywhere from 25 to 50 yards apart) out of earshot of each other due to the sound of the surf, and I would catch a glimpse of him out of the corner of my eye jabbing his fist into the air for the same reason. Emphatically talking to his Dad.

By the way, the only way to accurately translate the word Jesus used that was translated as "Father" is Dad, Daddy or for those more inclined to the European flavor, Papa. It is a very informal and intimate word. To translate it as an austere Father just goes to prove the problem with religious tradition.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Remember "throw your mama from the train a kiss..." (from now on tymftak)

How would we say it in good old American English?

"Our one and only perfect Daddy who lives in the unseen realm of the Spirit" —one and only perfect is the exact meaning of the words lumped into "hallowed"—as far as the seeming jumble just remember tymftak.

"Your kingdom come, Your will be done,"

"The place from which you alone rule is firmly established in me, so that I will speak into existence here on this physical plane what you have already declared in the unseen realm to be your desire and purposes."

"Give us this day our daily bread"

"Give me today the perfect food, Your own Spirit *"

* “who became the man Jesus Christ” is the addition of one friend.

“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”

“I release and send away all feelings of criticism and judgment that I am holding against anyone I perceive to have wronged me—so that I can walk in your perfect forgiveness.” (tymftak).

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one...”

“Lead me away from temptation to criticize or judge anyone; deliver me from the evil one who prompts me to do this” (tymftak).

Then Jesus continued his instructions on how to pray. “Get a picture in your mind of an old friend who is passing through in the middle of the night and you have nothing to feed him. So you go to your closest friend and neighbor and you knock on his door. He yells down from his bedroom that his family is asleep and to go away. But no, you persist and keep knocking and tell him to lend you three loaves of bread so you can give your friend passing through something to eat. I tell you that just because you are his good friend and neighbor he wouldn’t give to you, but because of your lack of awe and your persistence he will come down and give you everything you need. So I tell you that whoever demands and knocks in this way will get. Whoever keeps on doing this until he sees it actually happen, it will happen. So keep on doing this until it does happen.”

If a child asks for bread from any dad among you, will you give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will you give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being far less than perfect, yet know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more of His own Holy Spirit will your perfect Dad in heaven give to those who keep on demanding in the way a child demands?

Jeanne, when I am up against any situation that I don’t know what to do about, I start knocking. Literally; I get off somewhere by myself and simply tell my perfect Dad that I have a promise and that is to have his Spirit and I Demand and continually knock or

stomp my foot and continue until I see with clarity that God's Spirit is upon me and I know exactly what to do.

Other than that, I know that Jesus prayed this very same model prayer. If we want to quit talking *about* Jesus and—as one of my friends says—start *being* Jesus, he has given us a road map to follow.

I want to get into a bit of interesting theology related to this last bit, if you will permit. But I put it in your hands—you're the interviewer.

18

WELL, BRAD, THERE GOES OBJECTIVITY. I received your response almost four hours ago. For four hours I have sat at my desk and my knuckles are sore (literally) from knocking and telling our Dad that I didn't understand all this and I didn't care. I wanted my Dad's Spirit (I even said I didn't care if it was Mommy or Daddy—but this made all the sense in the world to just trust) and kept knocking and demanding. I have never had such clarity in all my life; I know we are doing the right thing. I asked where we should go from here? And I heard loud and clear to ask you! (Over and out)

BC: Exciting, is it not? You have just played leap frog and sailed over the heads of loads of people who call themselves believers. Tragic but beautiful! Since you don't know what to ask, I'll just tell you what I want to tell you—two bits of theology. One is totally relevant and pure truth (if you want to accept a Bible passage in the original language as a viable source). The second is purely speculative even though I believe deeply in the probability that it is true.

It is offbeat and more than likely will provide the rationale for the mainline Christian folks (if there are any left in your audience) to discredit me. I will take a deep breath in between one and two and ask you for your comment, and give you the opportunity to get back in control of this interview. Here goes.

The passage is Acts 1: 1-8 and I will explain a little of the difference in understanding between two prevalent evangelical Christian groups. One is the Pentecostals, the other are primarily in the Baptist camp—although there are a number of groups within what I'm calling Baptists that have opened their minds, hearts and spirits to *Charismata*... *Charismata* is basically the supernatural move or force of Holy Spirit through people, and this is the focus of those groups who refer to themselves as Pentecostal.

The primary theology that is similar between non-Pentecostal Baptists and Pentecostals is that they both believe in the “born again” experience of receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and through which salvation and the entry card to heaven upon death of the physical body is gained.

Most Baptist-leaning groups fall into the “once saved, always saved” doctrinal position and most Pentecostal groups fall into the “salvation can be lost” position. It’s a verbal and doctrinal battle that neither side can win because on this side of things there is no way to prove either thesis.

What we are going to look at in this passage is something about which both groups, I believe, are misled through the obvious and apparently deliberate mistranslation of this passage.

Digression for a moment on the word translated as salvation.

There are actually several words translated into the English word “saved” or “salvation.” The common passage that Baptists and Pentecostals lean on is “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.” The word in the original means to be “completed.” In other words, not saved *from* something, but actually brought together again—ending the separation between man and God.

Shortly after I first discovered this word *sozo*, pronounced so-zo—a Greek man who owned fishing boats and a Greek Restaurant and a Greek foods market retained me for some consulting work. I asked him what the word meant; he told me it was a word that he would use to describe one of his boats when repairs are completed. SoZO’ he said emphatically emphasizing the second syllable by bringing the palms of his hands flat together.

Re-paired...joined together again...complete! Back to the passage at hand.

The writer is the same author that wrote the Gospel of Luke. Generally thought to be a physician and very precise and thorough in his writing.

¹In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ²until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

³After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ⁴On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵For John baptized in water, but in a few days you will be baptized with (in or of) Holy Spirit."

I have underlined the last sentence to emphasize that the term "The Baptism in Holy Spirit" has a legitimate Scriptural basis...here and in other passages.

⁶"So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when Holy Spirit comes on you; ..."

This underlining is for the purpose of explaining that the word "power" here comes from the word *dunamis* pronounced doo-nah-meese. It is the same word that was used to translate what Jesus said in Aramaic—anyone who believes in me, will do the same works (*dunamis*) you have seen me do. The word means the ability to perform the supernatural. It is the same word from which the English word "dynamite" is derived. But *dunamis* is not that word.

"...and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

The underlining in the foregoing is for the purpose of seeing the difference in beliefs of those in what I have lumped together as the "Baptist camp" and those among the Pentecostals. First, let's look at the word translated as "witnesses" then we'll see another example of KJV paraphrasing that causes some major stumbling, and is carried over into the accommodating of tradition by other translations to continue the misleading.

By the way, Jeanne, when I first discovered these words I went to a guy in the Assemblies of God organization who was known to be an expert in Biblical Greek—he agreed with my

translation, but said, “Cullen, you’re making a mountain out of a molehill.” A friendly argument between us ensued with him finally conceding, “Okay, you’re right, you’re right.”

Whether he conceded just because I wore him down, or because he saw it from my perspective I don’t really know, although he did seem to sincerely assure me that he agreed with my interpretation.

Back to “witnesses.” The word supplanted (notice I did not say “translated,” but *supplanted*, i.e., replaced by “witnesses” is *martus* pronounced mar-toose. *martus* is the root from which we get our English word “martyr.” Martyr, of course refers to an individual who is so committed to a person or a cause that he is willing to give up his life for it. But that’s martyr—not *martus*.

Martus literally means to be taken over by another power and to lose one’s identity to be replaced by another.

When Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will no longer be “you” but others will see (“witness”) me in you. This is what Jesus was saying and the original language leaves no doubt.

“Witnessing” waters down the Baptism in Holy Spirit that Jesus described—into talking *about* Jesus...where the passage clearly says that those who are taken over by Holy Spirit will be seen *as* Jesus!

Those in the Baptist camp say that being taken over by Holy Spirit is for the empowering to “witness” about Jesus Christ...a KJV invention!

Pentecostals make the argument that Holy Spirit baptism results in the ability to speak in languages learned supernaturally. There is certainly a Scriptural basis for this in Acts chapter two...

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues.”

Literally, in the original language, languages not learned; in context, *real* languages—not gibberish as some would claim and perhaps engage in. Refer to the second chapter of Acts to see that these are real languages.

Some of the theological confusion comes from Paul's discussion of "tongues"— in the 14th chapter of 1st Corinthians. That word is *glossalia* which has been translated as ecstatic speech and other like terms. Paul said about the subject, "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all. But not in public gatherings where, unless there is someone to interpret it so all could understand, the speaker should keep it between himself and God."

Later in the same chapter, he spoke regarding how to meet together; he clearly states that the speaking in tongues must not be forbidden, then laid out some rules for it.

To summarize what Paul said, it is a language from God to be used in conversation with God. He was proud of the fact that he had the ability and used it more than everyone else, but knock it off in public meetings unless somebody is there to interpret.

I would go further and say knock off the silly arguments about the subject. When I was still accepting engagements to speak in Pentecostal churches, I was fond of saying, "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all—but that's not the point," and then would launch into what Jesus was saying the Baptism in Holy Spirit was all about as per the foregoing discussion of Acts 1- 8.

Well, Jeanne, time for my promised breather. I leave it to you as to whether you want to change gears.

19

I HAVE BEEN AMAZED AND FASCINATED FROM THE beginning, Brad. As you started down this particular path, I was thinking editorially about how much of it had to be blue-penciled. Now, I'm not at all sure it shouldn't be left in. I am on the path of demanding God's truth and I will keep on demanding what my part in all of this should be.

I do feel free to ask some questions, and hope that some of these questions are being asked by readers as well. I am convinced (now) that my role in all of this is not coincidental. This is a life-changing experience for me.

What you said earlier about Mel's and June's problem being a "trust issue" went right over my head. I thought I was going to have to come back to it later and make some suggested changes. For me, trust has become a leap of faith into the abyss I've referred to as God. If anyone had told me just a few weeks ago that I would be saying that I am demanding that God tell me something and I am going to continue demanding until I hear directly from God, I would have thought they were out of their minds!

I remember reading somewhere how it is dangerous to want anything—because you might just get it.

This is what trust is all about for me. My perfect Daddy/Mommy is not going to give me a serpent when I ask for an egg. I want God's truth and I am no longer afraid to demand it from God—and know that I will have it! Is this amazing or isn't it? Did you think it would happen to me when we started this project?

One question that comes to mind, is it of any value to ask or demand to be able to speak in a language I haven't learned by natural ways?

BC: Jeanne, I'll leave that one between you and Holy Spirit. I've said it all with, "I thank God that I do." Why not just continue demanding to receive more of God's own Spirit and let God put the perfect package together that is tailored for you personally. I

know many highly spiritual people within whom Jesus can be seen operating who do not speak in “other languages.”

As to your question, “Did you think it would happen to me when we started this project?” My answer is simply, it always does. I have met people in situations—mostly in business—that are practically atheists, who have had dramatic life changes by doing exactly what you are doing. Getting past the mind of the body we occupy and demand and keep demanding God’s own Spirit to guide us.

Recently a woman doctor had a life-changing experience. What is beautiful is that she now sees God in all her relationships and sees how she is being supported in them. In other words, I’ve merely been an insignificant vessel in the process. This is what is so freeing and what I was trying to get across to Mel. Just give up and let God work. You’ll do your part and God gets all the credit! Because it is God within that does the work. Exciting, no?

JS: Exciting yes! Dependence upon God is so simple. Just know that God is the Perfect Parent, and keep running to Spirit for everything! Every question; everything. Brad, I am ecstatic!

Well, Brad, you’ve had your breather. Get back to work!

20

OKAY, JEANNE, I'M BACK. I WROTE SEVERAL paragraphs and it was a struggle. I finally realized that I was attempting to write theology in a totally mental (as opposed to spiritual) state.

Your experience spoke volumes to me and I just deleted almost two pages and an hour's worth of writing. Holy Spirit, I want you to write this or I want you to show me that it shouldn't even be written!

Ah, Jeanne, back to freedom! It doesn't need to be written and it is no big deal. It is/was an intellectual exercise that leads nowhere.

Now that I'm back on track...it is time for you to play your role of interviewer and me to respond. YOU get back to work!

JS: Well, Brad, I just asked Spirit what I had intended to ask you.

This is intriguing. I am beginning to see how easy it is to allow another human being to take on the position of spiritual mentor. I am so new at this that I just naturally wanted to lean on somebody who has more experience.

Why should I ask you, when Spirit is readily available and actually wants to guide me?

BC: Perfect question and answer, Jeanne.

One of the guys who got delivered from being a church pastor, but stayed on at the church, Jim told me that it's so much easier to just be one of the sheep and go eat in the pasture and invite his fellow sheep to come eat with him. "When you approach 'church' this way," he said, "the other sheep get to share the food they are getting, and it is such a feast!" He told me that by insisting on ministry in equality, a high percentage of the phone calls and visits he gets from church members are people wanting to share fresh insights from God, rather than coming to him with problems.

Pastoral counseling has been replaced by going to God together to get God's counsel.

"Brad," he said to me one day, "it just won't work. Too many people want a leader other than Jesus, and it's too tempting to fall back into that role. My ego loves being called 'pastor.' I never realized what a trap the whole thing is."

Jeanne, my first reaction to not being needed by you was the very same thing. I was reveling in your spiritual breakthrough and wanted to control the direction of God's leading. Totally ridiculous! I am beginning to see that this project of ours is also ego-driven.

JS: Amazing, Brad, that is the very same thing that I am getting. I am getting so comfortable in asking my Perfect Parent everything.... Spirit of God, should Brad and I be interviewing You and just get Your direction?

BC: Yes, Dad, this seems a way of escape for both of us. Is this from You?

Jeanne, talk about bizarre, but truth. The answer I got so powerfully is, "yes." Here is the reason that it is bizarre. I got that we should get "Dad," or "Spirit" to answer and print the answer as God's in the same format that you've been using with JS: and BC:— how will this affect the audience? It is such an abrupt departure.

G: So? It seems to Me, Sunno, that you just said you wanted My direction and not that from human beings. Are readers your god?

BC: Who is "Sunno?"

G: Sunno is your spirit name. Do not be alarmed. The closest you could come in English to the meaning is being at once frivolous and fierce—a playful warrior....

BC: Is it all right to invite Jeanne back into this conversation?

G: Of course, henceforth you shall refer to her as Novi. It means seeker and finder of meaning and ultimate truth.

Novi: Who am I to argue. I noticed Sunno used "G" as Your title. How do you want us to refer to You?

S: You learn very quickly, Novi, and you are not as deliberate and calculating as Sunno. I want you to use S so that you

will think of Me as totally separate and totally Spirit, for that is who I AM.

Sunno: I know that you said not to be frightened and I also know you called me deliberate and calculating. I immediately see why. This is such a departure from my theology—on the one hand it is totally freeing because I have no reference and cannot use the Bible or my past experiences as reference points that what Novi and I are caught up in and welcome so readily is of You.

On the other hand that is what is so freeing about it. I see the possibility of being calculating and deliberating in my thought and writing disappearing into the spontaneity of trusting Your voice.

How many times I have used the term “bondage” to describe the hold that religion and tradition has on others. Your question, “are readers my god?” jolted me into acknowledging not only that implied truth, but my own opinions, albeit—born out of my own experiences—have been my “god.” The questions in my mind now all reflect the truth of that!

I am not even going to attempt to articulate these questions...all of a sudden the questions don't even matter. If what Novi and I are apparently discovering together doesn't mesh with the thought processes of whatever audience has stayed with us this far—it could mean that the only benefactors of our “hearing” You directly, instead of needing some other reference, will be Novi and me.

S: No comment, Sunno, you are on a roll.

Novi: What I am seeing is that our individual proclivities to come at what appears to be “new” thought are basically the same. I do not see new personalities emerging, at least as yet. Can you explain this to me, or am I missing something?

S: This is why I introduced you to your real identities, that is, Sunno and Novi. These are not new names as you both suppose. These are your names from the beginning, which have brought their individuality to your physical identities.

Sunno: When you say “from the beginning....”

S: Novi, you will see that Sunno is already breaking new ground. He stopped his thinking process to tune into Me. This allows for My truth instead of speculation. The mind of the body you occupy, Sunno, has had small glimpses of who you really are

for some time, that is, a spirit occupying a body rather than being a body with a spirit.

When I say “from the beginning” I AM not referring to “time” as the mind of the body you occupy understands it. To give you a new reference, “from the beginning” simply means before you were trapped in the body called Brad Cullen. You are not Brad Cullen, you are Sunno from the beginning.

You, Novi, are not Jeanne Stockwell, you are Novi from the beginning.

Novi: I see. There is no seniority here. Spirit is spirit and transcends the process of education and experience. I see the flaw in my previous thoughts about re-incarnation. Those thoughts are not relevant. It simply does not matter whether I occupied another body in the “past.” “Past lives” have nothing to do with who and what I am. I am Novi and have always been. I am one with You and have always been. When I chose to occupy the body called Jeanne Stockwell to experience humanity I didn’t lose anything, I just lost sight of who I am.

I also see the struggle Sunno is having remaining Sunno. As Brad, he has been able to see some things that enabled him to compare himself favorably to others. As Sunno he is purity and purity is.

Sunno: Yes, I see the struggle. It is the ego of Brad Cullen. Brad has wanted others to see what he was seeing and was frustrated because they couldn’t see it. Brad wasn’t seeing those things, Sunno is and was. Identity crisis is merely wanting to hold onto the unreality of the physical realm.

S: Where do you two want to go with this writing project?

Novi: You mean it is our choice?

S: Of course. Have I taken anything away from you?

Sunno: Well, Novi, we got here by asking S to take over. S, I prefer that you continue to guide and lead.

Novi: That is what I want as well. I do not want to go back to the blindness of physical “reality.” The song “Only You” comes to my mind—and I now understand without ever meeting her or talking to her (nor does that matter) Debbie Boone’s, “You Light Up My Life.” That was You.

S: Here is what I suggest: with your new understanding of who you are, go back to using your physical identities, but don't revert to depending on the minds of the bodies you occupy. Rather than writing a book which would have an ending and would require you to write sequels, simply start circulating your e-mail addresses and let people write their questions and comments. Answer each one individually and I will show you which to include in your dialogue between Jeanne Stockwell and Brad Cullen. Watch what I do with this; many will come and you do not need to worry about publishing or support. I will provide. Remember, I AM with you always.

Write your comments or questions to either Jeanne Stockwell or Brad Cullen. NOTE: We will reproduce questions and comments only that, in our judgment, stimulate general interest. Differing opinions will not be discarded because they differ, but this will not be a forum for religious disagreement.

Jeanne is at jstkw1@hotmail.com and Brad is at bradcullen@hotmail.com

This question was addressed to both Jeanne and Brad:

“Novi” seems to have absolute clarity that does not, or did not exist before in “Jeanne.” The offhanded way she discarded whatever previous thoughts she held about reincarnation was nothing short of fascinating. I am interested in any comments that either of you have about the subject.

JS: I used to believe that I probably had a preexistence as one or more human beings in past lives—in other words, I was somebody else at some point. What I am seeing is that Novi could have observed and experienced the physical world many times over in a variety of people in history. It just no longer matters to me and I don't feel the need to speculate about it.

BC: That is interesting, because I came to the same conclusion years ago. Most Christians resist the idea of reincarnation almost violently. The concept was certainly threatening to me and for years I refused to get into conversations about it. Until one day I stumbled onto a conversation between Jesus and one of his disciples. They came upon a man who was born blind.

“Why was this man born blind? Did his own sins cause it, or was it the sins of his parents?”

It is obvious from the question that the disciples believed in previous lives, since he was born blind his own sins, if they were the cause, would have to have been committed in a former life.”

From Jesus’s answer there is no indication that he cared one way or the other about the possibility of reincarnation. He certainly didn’t correct the belief. He merely said that neither the man’s own sins, or the sins of his parents caused his blindness. I like how Jeanne has come to rest with it...it just doesn’t matter.

This question was addressed to both Jeanne and Brad:

Do you feel differently than you did before you were told your spirit names, Novi and Sunno?

JS: I certainly do. I am looking through the eyes of Jeanne, but thinking and seeing as Novi. It was an odd sensation at first, now it seems quite normal.

BC: Yes. Before, at some level, I had adopted the belief that I was a spirit occupying a body. Now I simply “know” it. The physical plane does look and feel different to me. Certainly far less important.

This question was addressed to Brad:

Have your beliefs about demons changed? And why couldn’t this S be a demon masquerading as God?

BC: My beliefs have not changed in the least. Your question is a legitimate one. I came across a formula for testing to see whether a spirit is of God. I have sent this formula by e-mail to this questioner. I am willing to share it with others who ask specifically for it.

This question was addressed to Jeanne:

What are the most significant changes in your life since you’ve become a Christian?

JS: To answer your question as honestly as I know how I will have to rephrase it. Before going through this interview process with Brad I would have referred to myself as a “Christian.” For the reasons Brad has articulated, I find myself resisting

applying the term Christian to myself. Therefore the question I will answer is, “What are the most significant changes in my life since I stopped calling myself a Christian?”

The answer to *that* question is that the most significant thing is taking what Jesus said seriously and applying these things to my own life. And when I see myself failing to do so, I’ve stopped making excuses, and started demanding more of God’s own Spirit so that I can stop failing.

This question was addressed to Jeanne:

I’ve noticed that you have changed the format. You are no longer interviewing Brad, but answering questions yourself along with Brad. I am wondering why?

JS: It was not a conscious decision. Being a writer I still revert to the thought about publishing. S told me not to worry about publishing, but the thought still crosses my mind. I’d make the title of a book—if it ever comes to that—“An Interview.” Now both of us are being interviewed and you are one of the interviewers.

I don’t look at Brad with the same kind of awe that I first did. As he says, why make a big thing out of one man doing what Jesus said to do? Since I can go directly to the Source, I don’t even feel curious about what Brad does or says. Brad, would you mind adding your “two cents” here?

BC: Amen, sister! Now, I am writing “Amen, Sister” here with fierce intensity...and smiling to myself because S said that Sunno means frivolous and fierce—a playful warrior. I fiercely agree with Jeanne on not giving one whit about what I say or do, because she goes directly to the Source. But I cannot help (nor do I want to stop) being playful about it!

This question was addressed to both Brad and Jeanne:

I really have difficulty referring to God as “S;” it seems almost blasphemous. Am I wrong?

JS: This one is all yours, Brad.

BC: Jeanne and I were told to refer to S as S as a reminder to us that S was separate and Spirit with a capital S...and I might add

in my own freedom, “Source.” What does that have to do with you?

When God’s Spirit revealed himself to Moses and told him to go speak to the leader of Egypt to tell him to release the Jews from slavery he asked God whom he should say sent him? God said, “Tell Pharaoh that ‘I AM’ sent you.”

God didn’t seem to make a big issue out of everyone calling him I AM. What I am trying to say to you is, if you are uncomfortable in calling God “S,” then don’t. But why not follow Jesus’s instructions and demand your perfect Daddy to tell you what to call Him. I have a good friend that always refers to God as “Dad.” It makes some people very uncomfortable.

Most people that believe in God are more comfortable referring to God in the masculine gender. That’s tradition. Jesus said that God is genderless and Spirit—in that light, why don’t we refer to God as “it?” Why are we hung up on referring to God as a Him? Tradition.

Some prefer calling God “She.” Why are they hung up on that? Anti-male, anti-tradition...or perhaps anti-male-tradition. Who knows?

Is it a bad thing?” It is a non-issue unless it is an issue. To you, currently, it is an issue. Continue to demand and knock until you know what God wants you to call it/him/her—or combination thereof—get peace about it from the Source by whatever name.

This question was addressed to both Brad and Jeanne:

I have two questions. The first is why do you not ask S to answer questions rather than either of you? The second is would each of you describe the differences you see in the way the other responds to questions subsequent to your experiences with Sunno and Novi?

JS: Brad and I agreed that we would each “pray” before we answered, but leave it up to the individual questioner as to whether our answers were inspired, or prophetic. As to your second question, I see Brad being less doctrinaire in his responses.

BC: I have an additional reason. I wish that everyone one would go to “S” or however they want to refer to Holy Spirit. Why go through a third party when you can go directly to the Source?

On the other hand it is fun to share how I am experiencing things. How I see Jeanne? I see her as being totally open...to God and to people. Before, she seemed focused on her career and identity as a writer. Now she just seems relaxed and at peace in her new awareness of who she really is without regard to anyone or anything.

This question was addressed to Brad:

You told Jeanne not to worry about pursuing tongues. My background is that of being urged to seek the Giver not the gift. Isn't that what you were saying essentially?

BC: When I started questioning everything, not only pet doctrines, but even "plain Scripture" I saw that Paul indeed ranked gifts. Prophetic utterance outranked languages acquired supernaturally. On a closer look, in the original language, he was saying to eagerly hunger after them all. He also asked the rhetorical questions, do all speak in tongues? Do all wield exceptional miracles? Do all heal? etc., clearly implying that no, "all" do not. Looking back on what I said to Jeanne—why not want it all? I don't have an answer for that. Hopefully what I said to Jeanne at the time was from Spirit. If it was, then it was for Jeanne....

This question was addressed to Brad:

In all of your stories it seems implicit that healing must always come as a result of another person physically touching someone or as the result of demons being cast out. Is that your position?

BC: Good grief, I hope I don't have any position whatsoever. Since God does the work I would imagine that there are unlimited ways that God would choose to do whatever God wants. I remember reading a book about 20 years ago written by a man from Chattanooga, Tennessee. Don't remember his name, but I do remember something of the title. I believe it was "Seven Ways Jesus Heals." I highly recommend it to anyone as a real faith builder. He had a friend that was a dwarf...just three and a half feet tall who was healed and grew to some "normal" height—six foot, I believe. It was just one of many incidents that author wrote about. I

remember sharing that story with someone who said, “Why wouldn’t it be a healing for the man to accept his height and rejoice in it?”

Okay...yet another way God can heal, why not?

The reason I bring up this particular book is that while it opened my eyes to myriad possibilities, I realized later that seven ways didn’t cover it all by any means!

NOTE: Jeanne no longer uses an e-mail address. Brad still replies to all e-mail inquiries, though neither inquiries nor responses are any longer published.