

Journey Into A Truth

A work of fiction

by Brother Andy
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Chapter 1

Aaron was a young energetic minister who at age 30 had accomplished more than many pastors that were his chronological seniors. With responsibility of a church of over 300 members, he was constantly on the go, helping to organize or supervise one event or another. His devoted wife Cheryl, like himself had grown up in Christian Charismatic churches and was also a devoted Christian worker. The two were eagerly looking forward to a proposed missionary journey to the east coast of Africa, but neither had any idea of how drastically their lives would soon be changed.

A meeting was scheduled with the leader of the team, a native Kenyan who had made the initial contacts for them in his home country. Aaron and Cheryl would be joined by two other Christian couples. George and Juanita Meadows were ministers in their church who had been very helpful building up the music ministry over the years. Having beautiful voices and Juanita being highly skilled on the keyboard, they brought forth a unique but highly uplifting praise and worship service as George's deep baritone blended perfectly with Juanita's high soprano. Yet they too would be shocked at the question the group would soon be asked.

Kyle and Terry Harrison rounded out the group of six neophytes to head to a foreign country on a thirty day missionary journey. The Harrisons pastored a much smaller church nearby with less than a hundred members. They had met Aaron and Cheryl at a marriage retreat and being about the same ages they quickly became friends. With the whole group assembled, Charles Okinyi who was easily ten years the senior of any of the couples began to tell them what to expect on their maiden trip to a distant land with an entirely different culture. It was elements of that culture that was to prove to be a shock to them all.

“Since you're not staying beyond thirty days,” Charles began, “you won't need a visa but you must have your passports in order. Don't forget to get your malaria pills from your doctors and get shots for yellow fever. We'll fly British Airways to England where we'll switch planes and from there we'll go on to Kenya. The total flight time will be about seventeen hours.”

As Charles went on and on about details of the trip, Aaron's mind wandered off thinking about the adventure of ministering in a far distant land. He wondered if he would see elephants or gorillas or lions roaming freely across the jungle. He also wondered how he would be received by the Christians there when all of the sudden he was jolted out of his daydream as he realized Charles was asking him a question.

“Do you want to do marriage counseling while you’re there?” Charles asked.

“Ah, yeah, sure. Why not?” Aaron responded enthusiastically.

“OK,” Charles answered before pausing and looking deep into the eye of every person before asking the next question which he suspected would unnerve some if not all of them.

“How would you counsel a woman who is one wife in a multiple wife family?”

“Huh?” Aaron responded as his eyes widened and his jaw dropped. Wow! These people really need to get their lives straightened out and get saved,” Cheryl offered.

“The people of which I am speaking are already saved.”

“How can that be?” Cheryl questioned. “We all know you need to repent of sin in your life before you can be saved” Juanita chimed in.

“What sin?” Charles asked calmly with a slight gleam in his eye. He knew this revelation would be a shock to the Western Christian psyche. He knew he also needed to prepare them before they got to Kenya and offended some of the brethren there unnecessarily.

Terry, whose face had turned red, could no longer hold her fury and stood to her feet and slammed her hand down on the table in front of her as she challenged Charles “You can’t claim to be a Christian leader and condone such adultery! What are you saying?” She demanded. She then crossed her arms over her chest defiantly as she tilted her head to the side and eyed Charles out of the corners of her eyes.

Her husband, Kyle, looked sheepishly up at her as he was a little embarrassed by his wife’s outburst. He tugged at her arm to indicate she should sit down. While gently coaxing her, “Come on honey, don’t get so upset. Have a seat.” She pulled away from him as darts shot out of her eyes as she looked at him briefly with a look that said “Don’t mess with me right now!”

She then returned to her defiant gaze at Charles, waiting form him to answer. Her face was now flush red almost matching her hair which she tossed

back out of her face. Charles smiled knowingly, then slowly asked “what . . . does . . . the . . . word . . . say?” He drew out each of the words for dramatic effect.

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“Well . . .” George broke in “Maybe we can do a Bible study on the subject after we get some pizza and cokes delivered,” George interjected in an attempt to break the tension that had built up in the room.

“We all know it’s wrong, why do we have to have a Bible study?” Juanita responded as she finally entered the fray. “God made Eve for Adam. If He had wanted a man to have more than one wife He would have made Adam, and Sally, and Sue, and Maria!”

“Well in the Old Testament there were men who had more than one wife. Take Abraham for example. He had Sarah and then Hagar,” Aaron offered.

“Yeah!. And you see what a mess that caused!” Sherry responded.

“Then Jacob had two wives, Leah and Rachel.” George added.

“No, actually he had four wives because the handmaidens Bilhah and Zilpah became wives as well” Charles corrected him.

“No! That can’t be right!” Cheryl objected. “He was tricked into marrying Leah and those handmaidens weren’t really wives even though he might have had sex with them.”

“Is that what the word says?” Charles asked.

“Perhaps” he continued “I’ll let you study this a little more before we continue to discuss it.” Charles, who had coal black skin, stood up to his full height of 6 feet 2 inches. He held his head high and had regal bearing as he towered above the group which was sitting down and even Terry’s diminutive five foot two inch the hundred and ten pound frame, while she remained standing.

Charles smiled broadly, spun on his heels and glided toward that door as the others were left stunned, silently glance back and forth at one another. None had any idea what the coming week would bring.

Chapter 2

As Aaron started the drive home, Cheryl sat in stony silence slumped in her seat on the passengers side of the sedan with her arms folded across her chest and a wrinkle in her brow. After several minutes she broke the silence:

“Does he really expect us to go over there and just approve of what these people are doing?” She blurted out.

“I mean . . . I knew third world countries were backward but I had not idea . . .”

“Hey, wait a minute” Aaron interrupted Charles is doing the right thing to try to prepare us for the cultural differences before we get there.”

“Cultural difference?!” Sherry repeated with disdain. “You mean, sin! Don’t you.”

“Well . . . maybe . . .” Aaron responded haltingly. “Let’s do our homework and then we can figure out the approach we should take before we get there.”

George and Juanita’s conversation on the drive home was also an interesting exchange.

“Hey, I might like this idea of men having more than one wife. Let’s see . . . who could I add to my personal harem?” he chuckled as he teased his wife.

“Juanita was not amused and let him know it in no uncertain terms.

“You can forget that, buster!” She retorted. “The day you start looking at another woman you’ll be out on the streets so fast your head will be swimming. I’ll sue you for divorce so fast it’ll make lightning look like it moves at the speed of a turtle!”

“Hey, hey, hold on sugar, I was just teasing.”

“Well don’t tease about that!” She snapped. “I’m all you need and I’m all you’ll get. The day you forget that you’re going to the poor house cause I’ll sue you for everything you’ve got and half of anything to get in the future!” She twisted halfway around in her car seat and put her right hand on her hip for emphasis.

“Okay, okay! Okay” George responded. “Settle down. I hope you can

show a little more Christian love to the women and men over there in Kenya than you're showing to me now."

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Juanita eyed him coldly for a moment as she bit down on her bottom lip. She considered a response but then thought better of it and turned to look out of the passenger side window. The final minutes of the drive were spent in icy silence.

It had been agreed upon by the three couples that they would individually study the Scriptures concerning the matter and then meet together again to discuss their findings before meeting with Charles again.

Thursday evening, which was the appointed time of the agreed upon meeting, came almost too quickly. The couples gathered at Aaron's & Sherry Cooper's home. arriving right on time and eager to discuss what they each had found. After the normal pleasantries and each grabbing his or her cup of coffee or cocoa they sat around the kitchen table. The tension that the wives had exhibited three days earlier had subsided.

Aaron offered a short prayer before beginning and almost immediately Terry jumped in.

"The Bible says 'For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and these two shall be one flesh.' It says that in Genesis 2 verse 24," she continued, "and it says it in the New Testament in Ephesians 5 verse 31. That should settle the matter of whether it is sin or not to have multiple wives. It is sin! Two become one flesh. Not three or four or whatever," she proceeded. "So it's in the Old and the New Testaments. Now, we can figure out how to best help these poor women in Africa get out of the bondage they've been put in."

"Wait a minute!" Aaron interjected. "The rest of us may have some input before we get to that." Cheryl took this as her opportunity to jump in.

"Yeah. Well, I agree with Terry it's obvious that the correct form of marriage is one man for one woman and the Scripture in First Timothy 3 verse 2 shows that. Let's read it together. 'This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of bishop he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of only one wife.'" She repeated it with emphasis on the word "only."

What about those that aren't bishops?" George asked sheepishly. "Can they have more than one?"

His wife Juanita eyed him quickly before reacting verbally. "Just because you aren't a bishop don't get any ideas!"

"Wait! I was just asking. Some of the brethren in Africa might ask the same question and . . ."

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Terry couldn't wait any more, so she jumped into the fray with both feet, interrupting the others. "The word bishop means overseer, right? So that would certainly mean every leader in the church. Later on in that same passage in Timothy it gives the same requirements for deacons!"

Sherry jumped back in. "The leaders set the example for the sheep. If they aren't supposed to have more than one wife then certainly the lay people can't."

Kyle finally held up his coffee cup to get everyone's attention and then proceeded. "However, we should note that there were people in the Old Testament that had several wives." He interjected.

"Yeah, well that's in the Old Testament!" Terry continued, "We're New Testament Christians which requires a greater degree of righteousness and besides" she continued "Every time there was polygamy practiced in the Old Testament there were problems." She paused, leaned back in her chair as she lifted her coffee mug to her lips and blew on the strong brew as her eyes darted from one to another to see what effects her words were having.

Taking a sip and swallowing, she went on "Think about the problems between Sarah and Hagar. Not to mention Rachel and Leah." She paused again, enjoying her moment in the spotlight as she showed off her Bible knowledge. "And did you know Samuel's mother's husband had another wife which also caused jealousy between the two of them?" She questioned. "We've got to show these people a better way. We must lovingly, gently, but firmly tell these people that if they really want to be saved they must abandon these polygamous practices!" Terry concluded.

Aaron finally spoke up and said "Well, maybe when we meet with Charles on Saturday, we can share what we've learned and ask his opinion on how we can best get this across to the Kenyans."

With that statement the meeting was understood to be at an end, and the men eased into the family room to watch a football game while the ladies piled into one of the sport utility vehicles and headed off to the mall to do some shopping.

During a commercial George spoke up. “You know, I was teasing my wife about having another wife and she about blew a fuse.”

“Yeah,” Kyle responded. “the girls do get a little emotional about the subject, don’t they?”

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Aaron, returning from the kitchen with glasses of soda pop and popcorn, joined in. “Well guys I guess if we want peace in our homes, we best not cross them on this one.”

“Yeah, but we all know that bigamy is illegal in the United States, so how could she not know I was kidding?” George questioned as he threw his hands in the air, and dropped his mouth open and raised his eyebrows to express his disbelief. Though the men’s conversation was revealing, it wasn’t half as much as that of their wives.

Chapter 3

“Can you believe my husband?” Juanita began, “to even tease me about getting an additional wife. He’s got a lot of nerve!”

“Yeah, well girl you’ve got to learn how to control your man. Kyle would never say something like that to me. I keep him under control.” Terry gloated.

“How do you do that?” Juanita questioned. “Haven’t you heard of Pavlov’s dog,” Terry chuckled.

“Well, I don’t consider my husband a dog,” Juanita responded.

“No No, remember the psychology classes you took in college? He trained his dog to salivate by ringing a bell. He rang the bell and then gave the dog food, over and over again, until the mere ringing of a bell made the dog salivate.” She continued as she leaned back in her seat in the S.U.V. As she raised one eyebrow, a devious smile crossed her face.

Juanita who was turned around in the front passenger seat gestured indicating she should go on, while Cheryl who was driving adjusted her rear view mirror so she could see Terry’s face. Terry, who loved to be in the superior role of teacher, continued

“Sex and tears!” She announced. “You control your man with sex and tears. No good man wants to see us cry . . . right? So whenever he hints at doing something you don’t like you burst into tears. Then you go cold. There’s no warm loving until he repents, repents and repents again. This teaches him subtly who is in charge.”

“But Terry,” Cheryl interjected “The Bible does say that wives should submit to their husbands, so technically they should be in charge.”

“Oh come on!” Terry reacted as she slid over to the passengers side of the back seat to see Cheryl’s face better.

“You can’t really believe we should follow the ravings of one who is obviously a male chauvinist!” Terry placed her hand on her hip and tilted her head with a look of shock and disbelief on her face.

“Things are different today! We live in an enlightened age” Terry continued, “We’re no longer the second class citizens that the Apostle Paul wanted to make us.”

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“Well, I just threatened to put him out and sue him for divorce,” Juanita

broke in. ““He knows that if he’s divorced he’ll lose his ministry and probably no church would ever accept him as a pastor or minister of music. So I kept him in line!” Juanita justified herself trying to avoid looking like a naive wimp wife whose husband could walk over her.

“Yes? That works” Terry conceded, “but if you keep him in control with tears and sex you never or rarely have to pull out the big guns.”

“Now Cheryl, she turned again to Aaron’s wife, “admit it. You know there are times when you use your feminine wiles to manipulate your man.”

“Well” Cheryl responded hesitantly “I wouldn’t put it like that. I know Aaron loves me a lot and he wants to keep me happy. I don’t have to use a lot of tricks or manipulative techniques to get what I want.”

“Come on now, you’re telling us you’ve never turned a cold shoulder to Aaron when he’s upset you about something?” Terry pressed the issue.

“Well, I did get upset a little with him when he was interested in seeing the football game that he didn’t have time to talk with me about something I thought was very important.”

“No love making that night, huh?” Terry interjected with a sound of triumph in her voice.

“Well . . . uh . . . no, not that night. But I didn’t think I was trying to manipulate him. I honestly didn’t feel amorous at that time.” Cheryl said defensively.

“But I’ll bet it was hot time the night he gave you that pair of diamond earrings?” Terry questioned further.

“Well . . . I . . . uh . . . did want him to know I appreciated his gesture.” Cheryl conceded sheepishly.

“See! I was right! You do manipulate your husband, but don’t feel bad. Every woman does.”

Cheryl didn’t answer as she pulled the vehicle to a stop in the nearest parking space to a door at the mall. The three jumped out of the car and headed

for the entrance. Cheryl tossed her long brownish blond hair out of her face and she measured her words.

“Aaron and I are truly and deeply in love and I don’t like to think of manipulating him.”

“What is ‘manipulation?’” countered Terry, “It is the use of rewards and punishments to control another’s behavior. And you’ve just admitted that you do it!”

Juanita jumped in seeking to ease what seemed to be tension building between these two sisters in the Lord. “I think all of us as women do it to one degree or another. It’s second nature, isn’t it?”

They entered the giant glass doors and began to engage in what has become a favorite American pastime for women. Window shopping. Terry moved quickly to a bright pink dress that was draped on a mannequin in one of the store windows. “Hey, look at that! Maybe I should buy it to wear in Kenya.”

“I don’t know,” Cheryl responded, “I think Charles said something once about the Christian women in Africa dressing more modestly than most American women. The hemline on that dress is about three inches above the knee and might be considered risqué to them.”

“What!?” Terry howled as she drew her head back and wrinkled her nose. “You mean to tell me these women will allow a man to have two wives and they’re going to judge me because I wear an attractive dress?”

“Don’t look at me” Cheryl reacted wide eyed and innocently. “I am just telling you what he said.”

Terry turned the corner of her mouth down as her eyebrow furrowed, she then crossed her arms and drooped her head as she pouted a little and marched toward the next store window. The window shopping would have its little disappointments but there would be a much greater one for them when they next met with Charles.

Chapter 4

Charles was given the big Easy chair as Aaron sought to honor his senior. The three couples positioned themselves in a semi circle facing Charles on the surrounding couches. Charles leaned forward putting his hands together in prayer

fashion just below his chin as he thought for a moment. “So how are we coming? Do we have tickets purchased?”

“Yes, we’ve got ‘em,” Aaron responded eagerly.

“How about the necessary shots and passports?”

“Everything is in order and set to go,” Cheryl responded gleefully. Just two weeks and we’ll be off to go on the biggest missionary journey we’ve ever taken.”

Charles leaned back and smiled a big smile that showed his gleaming white teeth which were very much in contrast to his dark skin tone. Crossing one leg over the other and folding his hands in his lap, he proceeded to ask the next question.

“How did your Bible study go?”

“Quite well,” Terry stated confidently. “We can show from Genesis and Ephesians that God’s perfect plan is that each man only have one wife. We can also show that the leaders in the church, who are to set an example to others, as it says in 1 Peter chapter 5, are to have only one wife according to 1 Timothy 3 and Titus chapter one. So that means that one man for one woman or monogamy as it is called is the only right answer and anything else is sin.”

“My, my” Charles said as he smiled wryly. “May I ask some other questions to see how thoroughly you’ve done your research?”

“Sure, go ahead” Juanita said.

“Please answer the best you can,” he began.

“Who was the first man in the Bible mentioned to have two wives?”

The couples sat looking back and forth to one another until finally Aaron said “Wasn’t it Abraham?”

“No. It was Lamech before Noah’s time. Did God ever condemn Lamech for having two wives?” Charles continued, and after a brief pause he answered his own question: “No.”

“How many wives did Moses have?” Charles continued. “Two” he answered his own question. “One was a Midianite and the other was an Ethiopian.”

“When Aaron and Miriam spoke against Moses for marrying his second wife, the Ethiopian, did God rebuke Aaron and Miriam or did He rebuke Moses?”

“Aaron and Miriam, and Miriam got leprosy for seven days” Kyle said, remembering the story.

At this point Terry, who was sitting beside her husband, gave him a slight elbow in the side and eyed him out of the corner of her eyes, saying without saying “Don’t you dare help him.”

Charles ignored Terry’s antics and charged on. “Gideon was a mighty warrior for God. Did he have more than one wife?” Yes, the Bible records that he had many wives. Did God condemn him for having many wives?”

By this point everyone was silent and listening and knowing the answer would be no. God didn’t condemn him. By now, Cheryl and Juanita had grown impatient with this question and answer game.

“What are you saying?” Cheryl asked.

“So far I am not saying anything,” Charles replied, I am only asking questions and giving the biblically correct answer when you don’t know it.”

Terry stood up abruptly wiping tears from her eyes with a handkerchief she’d drawn out of her purse. “Well excuse me while I visit the ladies room” she said tearfully as she rushed out of the room.

“I’ll go with her” Juanita suggested as she followed.

Cheryl looked to her husband for a moment, questioning with her eyes what she should do. With a slight nod of the head, he indicated that she too could check on Terry.

With a sigh, Charles leaned back in his chair and asked “Are all American women so emotional?”

George spoke up “I guess you just caught us a little off guard. Uh . . . maybe we could . . . uh . . . continue another time?” he said.

“Yeah . . . that’s a good idea, why don’t we fellows just get together on Monday?” Kyle suggested.

“Good idea,” Aaron agreed, “Let’s shoot some baskets in the church gym while we kick around various scriptural positions on the issue.”

All four men had stood up now and were moving toward the front door. As they came out toward the driveway and their respective vehicles, Aaron reminded Charles that he was the main speaker for his Sunday morning service the next day.

“No problem,” Charles responded, “I am fully prepared.”

Each of the visitors got into their respective vehicles. George had a shining late model BMW. Kyle climbed into his Lexus while Charles moved toward his ten year old Chevy. Although it wouldn’t be fair to call the car an old clunker, it was obvious that he didn’t travel in the wealthy circles of the American ministers.

A honk of Kyle’s horn brought the ladies out who hopped into the appropriate vehicles. Charles, who stood a full six inches taller than Aaron, shook the shorter man’s hand with a firm grip. Although Aaron was shorter, he was a strong man who had played halfback in his college football days.

Aaron felt the calluses on Charles’ hand and remembered that he worked as a construction helper at times. This was curious since he knew Charles also had a degree in architecture. Aaron determined to ask him about that sometime. Specifically why he didn’t get a higher paying job as an architect.

Cheryl was already climbing into bed when Aaron came in. As he came through the bedroom door and headed toward the bathroom, Cheryl spoke up.

“What’s he going to speak on tomorrow?”

“Wh . . . I don’t know. Why?”

“Is he going to preach that a man have more than one wife?”

“Well, uh, I . . . don’t think so. But I told him a month ago he could speak on whatever he’d like,” Aaron said reflecting on a previous conversation with Charles.

“Well, if he does preach polygamy he’ll wreck our congregation. Most

people will leave and our reputations and ministries will be destroyed! He wouldn't, would he?" Cheryl lamented as her voice trailed off.

Chapter 5

Aaron stood nervously at the front door of the church. And yet he smiled and shook each member's hand as they entered. Charles is usually quite punctual, he thought, I hope he is today. Most people had already arrived when finally he saw Charles' car pull up into the parking lot alongside the church.

Aaron left his post and moved in his direction, looking for every spare moment he could use to persuade or reaffirm that Charles was not going to preach on having multiple wives.

Charles climbed out of his car with two Bibles and a notebook under one arm. After locking the door, he looked and saw Aaron hurrying towards him.

"Good morning brother!" he called out heartily as Aaron was two rows of cars away from him.

"Good morning," Aaron returned the greeting as he closed the gap and grabbed this morning's 'special speaker's' hand.

"Hey, I know" he continued "I told you you could speak on anything you wanted . . . but you weren't by any chance going to speak on this polygamy thing, were you?"

"Why?" Charles questioned. "Do you want me to?"

"NO! . . . I mean, no -- don't you see it upsets all the women and teaching like that could wreck the church. Do you want us to be known as some kind of weird cult, teaching false doctrines?"

"Relax," Charles said as he smiled while walking toward the church. Aaron fell in step with him as Charles continued "Before I speak, I always try to get the mind of the Lord. I don't want to wreck anything, but I'm sure you agree that God wants us to preach truth and not just tradition. Don't you?"

"Sure, but . . ." Aaron started to respond, but he was interrupted by Mrs. Walker.

"Pastor . . ." she began as she tugged his arm, pulling him out of his march

with Charles toward the front door. Mrs. Walker was a little old lady who was probably close to seventy years old, but one who took a very active role in the church's affairs. She had suggestions and opinions on carpet colors and types of flowers and plants outside the church and almost anything else that came up.

"Pastor," she repeated, "I think it would just be wonderful if we planned something special for the senior citizens who come to this church."

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"Yes, Mrs. Walker, I'd be happy to talk with you about that some other time," Aaron responded as he glanced after Charles, who had continued his pace and was now entering the front door.

"But pastor. This will only take a minute or two to get the gist of the general idea I have in mind," she insisted.

Finally, he stopped and turned full toward the elderly lady but something in his mannerisms must have tipped off his impatience.

"Oh, never mind" Mrs. Walker said in exasperation. "You young people are always too busy to pay any mind to those that have been around a half century or more. I'll talk to you some other time." She wheeled around and put her nose in the air and began ambling away as quick as her sixty plus year old frame would carry her.

By the time Aaron reached the front door one of the ushers, who had recognized Charles as the featured guest speaker mentioned in the church bulletin, had already escorted him to the visiting speakers seat on the platform.

"Oh no," Aaron thought, "Now I won't get a chance to speak to him before I introduce him!"

George and Juanita had already begun the praise and worship time just as they had been trained to do, right at 11:00 AM. It was 11:03 and they were finishing their first song. Aaron moved though the aisle which had believers praising God on both sides. The church, like most churches, had an excess of women, in fact about sixty five percent of the church was composed of females.

Aaron took his place in front of the pastor's chair on the platform next to Charles. In between songs Aaron whispered to his guest speaker "Please, don't say anything that would embarrass you, me or the church."

“Pastor, don’t worry” Charles said patronizingly as he put his arm around Aaron’s shoulders. “I’ll speak only the truth from God’s word and if anyone can prove from God’s word that it is not truth, then I’ll come back and apologize!”

That wasn’t exactly the answer that Aaron was hoping to hear. A sickening feeling began to well up in his stomach as he wondered how he had gotten himself into this predicament.

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As the ushers began passing the baskets to receive the morning’s tithes and offerings, Cheryl came up to the platform and whispered in Aaron’s right ear (the one furthest from Charles) “Is everything alright? You look pale.”

“Yes, yes, it’ll be OK.” Aaron mumbled as he silently prayed that God would persuade, command or force Charles to speak about something that people could accept. The time had come for him to introduce the speaker. How can I do this and prepare the congregation for something weird to soften the blow just in case . . .

“Brothers and sisters, we praise the Lord today. For this is the day that the Lord has made.” he began. “We have with us today a man who is from a different country and a different culture. We’ve had the opportunity to begin to know each other over the past few months. We may not agree on everything but he has a heart to study God’s word. As many of you know, he will be leading our missionary team to Kenya in a week or two, where we will stay for a month, preaching the word of God to the Kenyans. Let’s give a warm welcome to our brother Charles Okinyi.”

As Charles stood up to go to the pulpit and speak into the microphone, Aaron sat down, hoping he had said enough to mute anything Charles may say that would be out of line or out of convention.

Chapter 6

“Love!” he began “Jesus said ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. If you agree with that, say amen!’” Charles had forgotten for a moment that this was a charismatic group rather than a Pentecostal one. Charismatic groups were usually polite and quiet while Pentecostal churches usually had a lively response of amen’s in between important points.

“Jesus said, ‘If you love me keep my commandments.’ Jesus said, ‘By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that you have love one for another. Jesus said, ‘He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.’ We must each ask ourselves how much we love the Lord, for He said ‘I come not to bring peace but a sword . . .’”

Aaron thought, so far he is not that bad, as he breathed a sigh of relief.

“. . . because when we love the truth and go on in the truth, it will separate us from those who do not go on. But Jesus said ‘If you continue in my word ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.’”

Charles paused and looked carefully around the audience to see if what he was saying was sinking in.

“As we continue in God’s word, more and more of His truth will be revealed to us. As we learn the truth of His word the question becomes, will we walk in His truth or will we continue to walk in tradition. Jesus said to the Pharisees ‘Ye do make the word of God of none effect by your tradition.’

Only the four knew to what he might be alluding. They each sat still, tight lipped, hoping he wouldn’t go too far.

“Let us truly love God and walk in His truth,” Charles went on. “In James we read, ‘Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only.’ As we learn God’s truth and walk in His love we’ll find solutions to every problem we face. The answers are in the word. In the letters of John we read, ‘If a man is in need of food or clothing and ye say, Be warmed and filled, and give him not those things that are needful to the body, how sayest thou that the love of God dwelleth in you.’ Love in deed and truth.”

As Aaron looked around wondering how his congregation was taking all this, he noticed that most were very attentive to every word. There seemed to be a power about the way he spoke. It was not so much what he was saying but the power with which he was saying it.

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It wasn’t that he was just louder and more animated, although he did have a rather booming voice and moved back and forth much more than Aaron ever did.

No. There was something else. Something more.

“Many of you are single women and widowed ladies. You’d like to have a husband, wouldn’t you?”

Aaron cringed and looked at his wife who was sitting in the front row. She clutched her Bible and returned his gaze, both fearing what might come next.

“There’s an answer in God’s word. Look for it. Seek it out. It’s there. I’ll conclude by saying, ‘Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.’”

With that, Charles pivoted on his heels and reached out the microphone to hand it to Aaron. As Aaron took the “mic,” there was a moment of silence and as the congregation realized that Charles was finished and being seated, they spontaneously broke out in a thunderous applause.

Cheryl looked up at Aaron with a quizzical look on her face as if to say ‘what happened?’ They were both pleased that it was over but also knew they’d be besieged by questions about what the Bible answer for singles was. They weren’t wrong.

Chapter 7

The sound of the basketball being dribbled slowly across the floor echoed through the church gym as Charles walked in. He was wearing a pair of cut off jeans and a dingy T-shirt that had paint splotches on it from a previous house painting job. His tennis shoes were cheap and worn. By contrast Aaron, who was now going up for a fifteen foot jump shot, was wearing a Nike shirt, pressed blue gym shorts and a very expensive pair of Michael Jordan Nike gym shoes.

Swish, the sound hissed through the gym as the basketball went through the hoop hitting nothing but net. Aaron was a well coordinated athlete, who though he emphasized football during his college career, could just as well have played basketball.

“Hey., buddy,” Charles called out, “How are we doing today?”

Aaron ran after the ball “Fine, I guess” he responded as he grabbed the ball and executed a two handed chest pass to Charles. Charles dribbled the ball toward the basket, leaped high in the air, and dunked it. “That is, fine,” Aaron continued, “if you can count having fifteen or twenty women call my office today wanting to

know what the Bible answer for them to get married is.”

“Oh, really?” Charles said with mock surprise without hiding that he was somewhat amused.

“You think it’s funny, don’t you?” Aaron asked as he passed the ball back to Charles, giving him the opportunity to take another shot.

“Yeah, kinda.” Charles replied as he went up for a jump shot that missed.

“Well, what am I supposed to tell all these women?” Aaron questioned as he dribbled out to take another shot of his own.

“Tell them the truth” Charles answered as he moved near the basket to get the rebound.

“Truth? What truth?”

“Yeah, what truth?” George asked as he entered the gym.

“The truth that if we lived according to the Bible, not according to tradition, many of those women wouldn’t have to be single because some man would take on more than one wife!” Charles stated matter of factly.

24

“What!?” Aaron yelled as he grabbed the ball and held it. All eyes were now on Charles. They suspected this was where he was headed with all this but now he had said it out loud.

“How can you be a Christian and say something like that?” George asked.

“If you had let me finish the other night rather than letting your wives break up the meeting you would understand.”

“Understand what?” Kyle asked as he entered the gym about ten minutes late.

“Understand God’s requirement to follow the truth of His word, not just modern traditional convention, Charles answered. “You are all ministers, right?” he questioned.

“Yeah, and so?” George responded.

“But are you disciples? Disciples of Jesus Christ?”

“Sure, how else could we be ministers?” Kyle questioned.

“Have you truly forsaken all to follow the Lord? Are you ready to take up your cross and follow Him? Are you truly continuing in His word to learn His truths and not just to get sermons for Sundays?” Charles questioned.

Aaron turned and shot another basket before responding. “Charles, I almost resent what you’re asking. You see the churches where we minister and you know our congregations are blessed by our ministries. Why are you asking this?”

Charles ran and got the ball, tossed up a lay-up, and got his own rebound before tossing the ball in a bounce pass to Kyle. “Who was David’s first wife?” he questioned.

“Michal, Saul’s daughter; so what?” George asked.

“Who did he marry next?” Charles continued.

“Abigail and Ahinoem,” Aaron responded.

“Yes, at the same time,” Charles added.

25

“Was that a sin?” he questioned further.

“Well . . . uh . . .” Kyle started as he looked to Aaron and George to help him out.

“No!” Charles gave them the answer. “David’s only sins that are mentioned in Scripture are his adultery with Bathsheba and the time he numbered Israel and shouldn’t have.”

“Yeah, that’s Old Testament stuff” George complained. “We have a New Covenant. We’re under the New Testament,” he explained.

“George” Charles looked him directly in the eyes “Do you believe that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof,

for correction, for instruction in righteousness?”

“Well . . . yeah, that’s what the apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3,” George hesitantly responded.

“All Scripture includes the Old Testament!” Charles stated emphatically. “If having more than one wife is wrong why did God give instructions to Moses for it on the mount? When he came down with the Ten Commandments he also came down with the rules for having more than one wife.”

“Where is that?” Kyle questioned unbelievably.

“Exodus 21:10,” Charles stated emphatically before going on to quote the verse. “If he take him another wife, her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish.”

“Well can a woman have more than one husband?” George asked with a scowl on his face.

“No.” Charles answered.

“So you’re saying that men and women aren’t equal?” George pressed.

“No, I am saying God has different rules for men than He has for women,” Charles replied, “and besides, this equality of the sexes is more an American doctrine than a biblical one.”

26

The young ministers were taken aback. They looked at one another, each reflecting back his own shock at the statements that were being made. Yet they had no idea what a firestorm repeating some of those statements would make. Still, the men continued their discussion for several more hours before winding up and heading toward their respective homes.

Chapter 8

“Where have you been!” Terry yelled at Kyle as he entered the door.

“Honey . . . I . . .” he started before being interrupted.

“Do you know what time it is? It’s eleven thirty! Eleven thirty! I expected you home hours ago!” She screamed.

“What’s wrong, honey?” Kyle questioned.

“What’s wrong?! What’s wrong?!” Terry mockingly repeated. “You have the nerve to not call me for hours and stay out till nearly midnight and then ask me what’s wrong?”

Terry turned her back on Kyle and folded her arms. Kyle moved toward

her and tried to embrace her.

“Don’t you dare touch me!” Terry snarled as she took a step away from him. “Who were you with?”

“Aaron, George and Charles” Kyle answered.

“Till this time of night?” she questioned incredulously. “What were you talking about so long?” she further questioned him.

“Well . . uh . . . uh” Kyle began haltingly.

“Uh . . . uh . . . what?” Terry snapped.

“He . . . I mean Charles . . . was explaining about how God never did condemn men who had multiple wives and even gave rules for it . . .”

“What?!” she screamed. “He’s over there indoctrinating you to believe it’s OK for men to have more than one wife, and you stayed all this time listening?”

“Well, we all talked . . but . . . uh. . he proved from Scripture that God gave one man several wives,” Kyle explained.

28

Terry turned to face him, her eyes ablaze, her hands on her hips. “You sniveling little jerk!” she screamed “You couldn’t even tell him he’s wrong! Could you?”

“Well I . . . I . . .”

“Forget it!” Terry snapped once again, interrupting him as she marched off toward her bedroom.

Kyle followed but Terry slammed the bedroom door in his face and then yelled “You can sleep on the couch, mister!”

Aaron’s return home was not quite as tumultuous.

“Honey, where’ve you been?” Cheryl asked, as she woke up at the sound of Aaron entering the room.

“With the guys, talking” he replied.

“So long?” she questioned.

“Yeah” Aaron responded as he took off his clothes and prepared to put on his pajamas. “We got quite involved in Bible study after we shot a few baskets.”

Cheryl was now more awake. “What kind of Bible study?”

“Well, I told him about all the phone calls we got at the office from his message yesterday, and from there he went on to prove that many men had multiple wives in the Scriptures and that God never did condemn it,” Aaron said sleepily.

“What!?” Cheryl said as she sat up in bed. “Aaron Baldwin Cooper” she called out his full name for emphasis. “Are you telling me that you let him convince you that having more than one wife is OK?”

“Well, . . . uh . . . maybe in their culture it isn’t so bad” he hedged.

“Isn’t so bad? Sin is sin in any culture,” she lamented.

29

“The problem is” Aaron said as he slid under the covers “that there is no Scripture that says having more than one wife is a sin. Uh . . . can we get some sleep?”

“Well it’s against the law,” Cheryl protested.

“It is here but not there in Kenya,” Aaron said as he closed his eyes.

Cheryl sat up in bed for a while, her arms across her chest, fuming that even the men were being convinced that Charles was right. It was a long time before her mind would stop racing and allow her to sleep; and when she did, she dreamed. Well of course Cheryl called it a nightmare.

She dreamed that Aaron was reclining on a giant sofa chair with beautiful curvaceous women all around him. One was massaging his shoulders. Another was dropping grapes into his mouth. Another was manicuring his fingernails, and

still another was massaging his feet. Aaron lay there enjoying the pampering of these four women whom Cheryl somehow knew were his wives. Yet she seemed invisible in the dream and no matter how she called out to him, he either ignored her or couldn't hear her.

“Aaron, Aaron, please listen” she was talking in her sleep.

“Yeah, babe, what is it” Aaron said not realizing that it was a dream Cheryl was having. Finally, he realized she was having a bad dream and shook her to wake her up.

“What! Oh . . . I . . . I was having a nightmare,” she said tearfully. “What time is it?”

“It's only six twenty two . . . go back to sleep” Aaron suggested.

“No! I am getting up,” Cheryl replied flinging the covers off and sitting up as she swung her feet around to the floor. “I'll make some coffee and breakfast” she said as she threw on a house coat and tied the belt around her waist. “You get cleaned up and come downstairs” she ordered “we've got to talk.”

“Babe, I was thinking about sleeping in a bit today. It was a long night last night” Aaron said pleadingly.

“I said, we've got to talk.” Cheryl repeated.

30

Sensing the urgency in her tone of voice, he reluctantly agreed. While Aaron showered and shaved Cheryl went downstairs and began to make his favorite breakfast of waffles, scrambled eggs, bacon, orange juice and coffee.

“Mmmm . . . something smells awfully good down here” Aaron stated as he smelled the aroma of coffee and waffles mingling together. Entering the kitchen, he put his arms around his wife's waist and kissed the back of her neck as she continued to stir the eggs.

“Aaron,” she began, “do you love me?”

“Do I love you?” he repeated the question. “Yes, let me count the ways . . .”

“No, I'm serious,” Cheryl said as she dropped the spatula and turned

around to face him. Aaron bent down to kiss her on the neck again but she stiff armed him away by pressing her hands against his chest and pulling her head back.

“Hey, what’s the matter?” Aaron questioned.

“Sit down and eat,” she said as she wiped tears away from her eyes. “I’m just not so sure we should go to Africa” she stated as she retrieved a waffle from the waffle iron and placed it on his plate.

“What do you mean? Why?” Aaron asked as he poured himself a cup of coffee from the coffee pot.

“I think . . . I think you’re being too influenced by this Charles character.”

“Charles character? When did he become that?” Aaron said looking at her with a quizzical look on his face.

“Well, a few nights ago . . .” she began as she dished eggs and bacon on to his plate. “We were all in apparent agreement that polygamy is sin and now after one night you guys all agree with him that it’s OK? I just don’t believe that!”

“OK,” Aaron began after taking a sip of hot coffee “I can understand that changing our position a little could be a little unnerving but to want to cancel the whole trip? We’ve spent over three thousand dollars on just our tickets alone . . . and what about the others? They’re looking to us for leadership. I don’t understand why you’re so upset.”

31

“Aaron, you do love me don’t you?” she asked again.

“Of course I do. Don’t I tell you that almost every day?” he responded.

“You don’t need another wife do you?” she questioned.

“What?!” Aaron said, almost choking on his last sip of coffee. “Why would you think something like that? Just because Charles convinced us from Scripture that God is not against multiple wives marriages doesn’t mean I want more than one!” he stated emphatically. “And further more he’s never even suggested that any of us should. And if you want me to I’ll make sure he understands that tonight.” he concluded as he rose and moved toward her to kiss her on the forehead.

“Tonight?” she said. “Tonight you have the elders board meeting about the church addition at six thirty” she reminded him.

“Yeah, I know,” he said, “that’s why we’re not meeting till eight thirty.”

“What?” Cheryl took the cloth napkin she’d had in her lap and threw it on the table, indicating she was finished -- fed up and not in the mood to eat any more. “What kind of hold does he have on you guys?” she questioned as she turned toward him with her brow furrowed. “Are the wives invited?” she asked before he could answer.

“Well no, we’re meeting at his place and you know he lives on the other side of town in a neighborhood that is not so nice” Aaron explained.

“Well I’m coming, like it or not!” Cheryl promised. “You’ll just have to protect me!”

Chapter 9

Searching for Charles’ apartment at dusk was a difficult task. Although he had given directions, nearly all of the street signs had been torn down. The houses were older and many needed repair or painting. Some half naked kids wearing only shorts were racing down the middle of the street where Charles’ dwelling place was located. Aaron began to have trepidations about parking his S.U.V. in this neighborhood.

They finally found the address and excused themselves as they passed by several middle aged men drinking beer on the front steps. These all eyed Aaron and his wife closely as they passed by and rung the bell to gain entrance through the exterior door.

Charles buzzed them in and they began their march up the creaky wooden stairs and past the industrial green painted graffiti covered walls. Reaching the second floor studio apartment, they knocked and were pleased that Charles was there to let them in almost immediately. Aaron knew that even though Charles didn’t have the nearly six figure salary and benefits package that he had as a pastor of a wealthier suburban church, he did make enough to live better than this.

“Brother Aaron, come in” he said heartily “and Sister Cheryl. I didn’t expect you.” He gave them both big hugs, even though Cheryl stiffened and did not return it.

“Juanita is coming with George as well” she stated dryly.

“Oh really, good.” Charles replied “what about Kyle and Terry?” he asked.

Cheryl didn’t want to tell him that Terry had decided that Kyle wasn’t going to come around Charles until they left for Africa. Aaron spoke up “Kyle called me and said he had to take his wife shopping tonight so they won’t make it.”

Charles pulled two chairs away from his kitchen table for Aaron and Cheryl as he offered them something to drink. “Pepsi or Kool-Aid or water?” he asked.

“Pepsi will be fine” Aaron said.

The buzzer went off as he was pouring the glasses and he stopped to buzz in George and Juanita. He pulled out two big pillows for them to sit on the floor while he positioned himself on a large bean bag.

34

“Can we pray before we begin?” he asked and without waiting for an answer he began. “Dear Lord, bring us in to your truth. Show us what your word has to say. Let us not be deceived in any way but lead us by your Spirit to understand your will and your way. Amen.”

“I’ll tell you what, instead of me asking so many questions, why don’t I just teach a little. Then if you have questions you can ask me at the end. OK?”

“Wait a minute,” Juanita interjected, “How is it that Aaron has a masters in Biblical studies and George has a bachelor’s in Divinity and you seem to know more about the Bible than any of us? Do you have any kind of Bible college or seminary degree?”

“No, I don’t” Charles admitted. “I just try to follow 2 Timothy 2:15 ‘Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.’ Let’s review.” Charles continued speaking. “When I met with the men last, we determined that polygyny (which means a man having more than one wife) was practiced before the flood. It was practiced after the flood and before the Law. It was practiced during the Law and specific rules were given for its practice. We established many of God’s most famous men, the Patriarchs in the Bible, had two or more wives.

“Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Gideon, David, and many others. We showed that when David was chastised by God through the prophet Nathan for his sin of adultery with Bathsheba God said ‘I gave you your master’s wives.’ So if God never condemned it, and God participated by giving wives (plural) to David, then it could not have been sin.”

Charles paused and Juanita used the pause as an opportunity to jump in. “Yes, but that’s all Old Testament stuff. Even if God did allow them to do that then, that doesn’t mean He allows it now!”

“Ah yes, that brings us to tonight’s study. What does it indicate about polygyny? Did God change His mind and say, ‘sorry I made a mistake. We’re changing all the rules? If the rules were changed on this issue, do you think that God would be shy about saying so? None of the passages where the New Testament guidelines for good behavior and bad behavior say anything against men having more than one wife. Did it say in Acts 15 when they wrote the letters to Gentile believers? No! It said abstain from fornication and things strangled, and from meats offered to idols and from blood.”

35

“Did it say it was a work of the flesh in Galatians five? No?”

“Wait a minute,” Cheryl interrupted, “it does say adultery is a work of the flesh and if a man already has a wife and claims to marry someone else and has sex with her that would be adultery!” she said as she tossed her head back in a look of defiance.

“Is that an American definition of adultery or a biblical Hebrew definition of adultery?” Charles asked slowly. “Aaron why don’t you grab that Strong’s concordance off the shelf and hand George that American Dictionary that is over to its right” Charles ordered.

Aaron looked to his left and saw the several shelves of books. There were several translations of the Bible and several copies of the King James. Numerous other spiritual or religious books on a number of topics and study materials included the Strong’s, Greek Interlinear Bibles, Vines Bible Dictionary and others.

“Why don’t you each look up the definition of adultery and read what it says,” Charles suggested.

“I’ve got it,” George said after a few moments. “It says ‘adultery -- the act of a married person having sexual intercourse with one who is not his or her

spouse.”

“Okay, that’s what it says in the dictionary and that’s what most people, especially Americans, believe that it is. But let’s hear what God’s definition is. Do you have it, Aaron?”

“Yes. It says in the Strong’s Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary ‘na’aph, pronounced as naw-af; a woman that breaketh wedlock.”

Charles continued “Adultery is when a woman breaks wedlock by having sex with someone who is not her husband or when a man has sex with another man’s wife as King David did. When a man has sexual relations with any of his own wives it is never called adultery!”

Both Aaron and George had looks of revelation dawning on their faces; however their wives were becoming more desperate. Cheryl and Juanita eyed each other almost reading each other’s minds. They wouldn’t let this go on. They had to find a way to stop it.

36

“Well what about a husband of only one wife as it says in Timothy” Cheryl blurted out.

“Yes, what about that?” Charles responded calmly. “Let’s turn to it and read it exactly. ‘This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.’” Charles leaned back on his bean bag as he read by the light of a pale lamp near his corner of the room and quoted from the book of Timothy.

“‘A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife.’” Charles stopped to emphasize “It doesn’t say only one wife, it says one wife. There are several Greek words that can be translated *one*. If Aaron will look in that Strong’s Concordance again he’ll find that *mia*, which is the Greek word that is translated *one* in First Timothy 3 verse 2, is in other places translated as *first*.

He paused to let that much sink in. Then he continued. “So Paul is giving the guidelines for choosing a bishop, elder, or overseer in these passages in Timothy and Titus. These guidelines do not restrict the man to a single wife, but merely advocate that he be married.” He paused again, then he said “Look down at verse 5: ‘For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God.’”

“You see,” Charles continued, “the context in verse 5 shows that ruling a household is good experience for ruling in the church. If a man has no wife and therefore no children, he can have no such experience.”

Once again Cheryl’s attempt to stop what she considered a mad dash toward polygyny was thwarted. Juanita stood up. “Are you saying that men can have as many wives as they want? Well. . .” she went on without waiting for an answer “. . . it is illegal here in the United States, mister!”

Charles dropped his head and spoke softly. “It’s not in Kenya. It’s not in Kenya” he repeated.

“George, take me home!” Juanita demanded as she headed toward the door of the one room apartment. George obediently got up and headed toward the door, but looked back apologetically at Charles and shrugging his shoulders as if to say ‘I don’t understand.’

As Aaron and Cheryl drove home there was a long silence before Cheryl spoke up. “I don’t care what he thinks the Bible says, I still think it’s wrong. It is sin and I don’t like the influence he’s having on you men.”

37

“Whoa, wait a minute! What influence?” Aaron reacted sharply.

“I saw your face. You were going along with it all,” Cheryl replied. “You think having a bunch of wives is a good idea! Don’t you?”

“Wait. Where did *that* come from?” Aaron protested.

“Admit it. Admit it,” Cheryl demanded.

Aaron clammed up, being a little upset that he had been falsely accused. At that moment he had no idea that the next day would bring beautifully timed bliss and a badly timed bombshell.

Chapter 10

Judy Chandler was a middle thirtyish widow with a cute face and thin waist which gave her an almost perfect hourglass figure. Her husband had died tragically in an automobile accident two years previous to this, and she had since been struggling to keep her financial head above water, working as an executive

secretary while caring for two boys. The oldest was now five and the younger was three. She was the first appointment on Aaron's calendar that day even though the time scheduled was 11:00 am.

"Pastor," she began as the boys ran around the office playing a game of tag. "I want your advice on something."

"Yes, what is it?" Aaron asked.

Just then one of the boys bumped into the bookshelf jarring it so that the globe on the top shelf shook and was about to topple over. Aaron stood up but the desk was between him and the shelf where the globe was, but Judy -- quick on her feet from handling two young boys -- was able to catch it and return it to its place.

"Why don't we have the boys wait outside in the reception area and I'll ask my secretary to watch them for you?"

"Alright," Judy agreed.

Settled once again Judy continued "I have a friend at work who has asked me out several times, only he's not saved that I know of. In fact I guess I know he isn't. He has sometimes made fun of preachers and religious things. No offence pastor!" she said, hoping he was not offended.

"No, that's quite alright, go on," Aaron encouraged her.

"Well, do you think it would be alright if I dated him?"

"Mrs. Chandler the word says . . ."

"Oh please, just call me Judy, pastor. Mrs. Chandler sounds so formal and makes me feel older than I am," she said.

"Alright, Judy" Aaron continued "the Bible says 'be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers' so I think it would be a real mistake for you to start something with a nonbeliever."

40

"But pastor," she protested "maybe I could bring him to the Lord."

"Or maybe he will lead you away from the Lord" Aaron countered.

Judy dropped her head and pouted a little. "I thought you might say something like that. But pastor, what about me. I'm in my mid thirties. I've got two kids to take care of all on my own. There are no single Christian men in the church that have indicated any interest in me." Tears began to well in her eyes as she continued "I am used goods, plus I have the baggage of two kids, who I love dearly, don't get me wrong. But they're a handful to take care of. Pastor, I just want a man to love me, care for me, to help with finances and to be a father to my kids." Tears were now rolling down her face. "Is God going to supply me with a Christian husband?"

Aaron pulled out his box of Kleenex tissue that he kept for just such occasions and moved around to the other side of the desk to console her. When he put his arm around her shoulders to say non-verbally that everything would be okay, she threw her arms around his neck, placed her head against his chest and began to sob uncontrollably.

BZZZ. BZZZ. The intercom was going off. "Yes, Mrs. Halsted" he answered as he pushed the intercom button.

"Your wife is on the phone, pastor" Mrs. Halsted answered.

"Take a message, please" he directed.

"She says it's important, sir" Mrs. Halsted insisted.

"Uh - excuse me Judy, I need to take this." Aaron picked up the receiver.

"Hi, honey" Cheryl cooed into the phone.

"Yes, dear, what is it" Aaron said abruptly.

"Honey could you come home for lunch?" she asked.

"Well, I'm kind of busy right now and I was just planning to get a sandwich at a fast food place."

41

"Pleeese" she begged, as she drew out the word "please."

"Yeah, okay. Give me about twenty minutes" Aaron said as he relented to his wife's request although disturbed with the interruption.

“Mrs. Chandler . . . er . . . Judy, I’ll keep you in prayer and we’ll have to believe God that the right Christian man will come into your life. Please excuse me Mrs. . . I mean, Judy . . . I’ve got a situation where I need to rush home” he said apologetically. Aaron rushed home considering what the emergency was that would require him to leave in the middle of a counseling session. He pulled into his driveway, hopped out of the Corvette that he had picked up used for a very good price, and ran to the door. Opening the door he called out “honey, I’m home.”

“Are you alone dear?” Cheryl called back from behind the double doors that led into the family room.

“Yes,” he answered as he opened to doors. Then he froze in his steps. His eyes could hardly believe what he was seeing. There stood his lovely wife Cheryl clad in only a black negligee and matching six inch high heels. As she swayed over to him he caught the scent of the Chanel number five perfume she was wearing. She moved her hips close to his and very gently kissed his lips, just enough for him to taste or smell the peppermint scented lipstick.

She then turned and glided for a few steps away exaggerating the normal sway of her hips before stopping and turning her head and tilting it with eyes half closed revealing that she was wearing eye shadow and mascara. Then she spoke softly and seductively “Do you want to meet me in the bedroom?” As she stood with one hand on her hips and slowly turned toward him, he noticed her full luscious, size “D” cup breasts stand out like twin mountain peaks as her nipples pressed their impression though the fabric. The plunging neck line reaching down to her waist allowed a view of her cleavage that spoke volumes.

She repeated her question again as she batted her eyes in seductive fashion “Do . . . you . . . want . . . to . . . meet . . . me . . . in the bedroom?” she whispered a second time. Did he?

Yes he did!

Chapter 11

Almost two hours had gone by since Aaron had come home for “lunch.” And although a type of “dessert” was all he got, he felt fully satisfied.

“I’ve got to go back to the office, I’ve got some more appointments scheduled this afternoon,” he lamented.

“Well, come on dear, let’s get you up and dressed.” Cheryl encouraged him as she swung out of the bed, threw on her silk house coat, and grabbed the shirt he had thrown on the floor.

“What’s this?” she questioned with a shock in her voice.

“What’s what?” Aaron asked as he drearily climbed out of the bed.

“Whose lipstick is this? It’s not mine -- it’s not my shade!” she exclaimed.

“What? . . . Oh, that . . . Judy . . . uh . . .”

“JUDY!” Cheryl interrupted, “Who is *Judy*? And why is her lipstick on your shirt?”

“You know Mrs. Chandler the . . .”

“So now you’re cheating on me!?” Cheryl screamed “with Mrs. Judy Chandler?!” she said incredulously. “I knew it!” she cried, tears now streaming down her face. “You dog!” she grabbed a book off the nightstand and threw it at him.

Aaron dodged the book as it whizzed by his head, all the time trying to move closer to her to get her under control. When he was in range she began flailing her fists at his face and chest, wanting to damage whatever part of him she could.

“Calm down, dear, calm down,” Aaron pleaded as he held her by the shoulders with his strong hands. “There is no affair. It was a counseling session, and I was just putting my arm on her shoulders to comfort her and she fell against my chest and began crying” he tried to explain.

“You were embracing another woman!” she screamed as she tried to pull away from him.

44

Ring . . . Ring . . . Ring . . . What a time for somebody to be calling. He looked toward the phone fearing it might be one of his members calling with an emergency.

“Don’t you *dare* answer that!” Cheryl spat out as she read his thoughts. *Ring . . . Ring . . . Ring . . .* “That crazy Charles has brainwashed you into thinking you can have other women! And . . .”

Before she could go on, Aaron took three quick steps to the nightstand. “Yes, who is it!” he answered abruptly.

“Hey Aaron, it’s Kyle . . . uh . . . we can’t go man . . .”

“Can’t go? Can’t go where?” Aaron asked impatiently.

“To Kenya.” he responded. “Cheryl and Juanita apparently talked to Terry this morning. Now she doesn’t want me anywhere near Charles.

“But . . .” Aaron muttered as he stared across the room at his furious wife who now stood with her hands perched firmly on her hips and shot fiery eyed glances of hatred his way. “The tickets . . . you spent \$3,000 on tickets . . . you can’t pull out now!” Aaron said urgently.

“If I don’t, she said she’s leaving me. I don’t know if I can live without her and that would destroy the ministry” Kyle reported.

Aaron couldn’t believe his ears. Disaster was everywhere. He looked back at Cheryl who now stood with her weight on one foot while she impatiently tapped the other. Her arms now were folded across her chest and Aaron had never seen such a mean look on her face.

“It is amazing,” he thought, “Just two hours before she was more seductive than she had ever been, even on our honeymoon, and now she looks like Satan has enveloped her very being!

“Kyle . . . I . . . I have to talk to you later. I’ve got my own problems right now” Aaron said as he concluded the call. Aaron thought he had problems but there was an even worse threat on the horizon.

Chapter 12

“What did you tell Terry?” Aaron questioned.

“What?!” Her eyes widening and eyebrows going up in surprise. “You have the nerve to ask me about what I was saying to my sisters in the Lord, while you’re out messing with other women” she huffed as she scowled at him.

“I told you, I’m not messing with other women. It was a *counseling* session” Aaron emphasized. “The lipstick is a pure accident.”

“Accident! Accident?” Cheryl snarled as she raised one corner of her mouth. “So you’re just accidentally embracing another woman.” She whirled around, turning her back to him as she used the sleeve of her housecoat to wipe the tears from her face.

“Do you know Kyle and Terry aren’t going to Africa now?” Aaron questioned.

“Yeah, I know it” Cheryl spat back at him. “Maybe we’re not going either!” she taunted him purposely trying to anger him. She wanted him to hurt and hurt badly.

“How are you great men of God” she said mockingly “great white missionaries to Africa going to minister effectively without the support of your

wives?”

“Why are you doing this?” Aaron pleaded.

“Doing what? Trying to shock you into your sense.” She retorted. “You hang around this Charles character who seems to come right out of the loony bin. He has no Bible college or seminary training and you three dolts let him persuade you to go frolicking around looking for a harem of women?” She had progressively raised her voice until it ended up in a scream.

“What?” Aaron exclaimed, being taken aback by the viciousness of the attack. “Nobody’s looking for a harem,” he protested.

“Well you want to be like your good ole buddy Charles, don’t you?” she questioned before continuing without waiting for a response. “Well let me tell you a little something about him,” she said as she began to take little steps toward him with her hands on her hips again and leaning slightly forward from the waist. “Your precious Charles has two wives in Kenya and is considering a third from Nigeria!” she blabbed enjoying seeing the shock on his face at the revelation.

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“What? . . . How . . . how do you know this?”

“Juanita went down to the foreign student assembly hall and asked around about him. She ran into this Nigerian lady who told her everything!”

“Well . . . I don’t know what to say . . .”

“Tongue tied now, huh?” Cheryl gloated. “What do you think of your missionary leader now!?” She questioned.

Aaron plunked down on the side of the bed and sat in a bent position holding his head in his hands. “Oh my . . .” he muttered “. . .what’ll happen if this gets out?”

“What’ll happen? What’ll happen?” Cheryl repeated as she walked over to him, she lifted his chin up with her right hand while her left remained on her hip. She wanted to see the look in his eyes when she gave the even worse news. Then she dropped the bombshell.

“Terry is thinking of putting out flyers exposing the whole thing to both

congregations!”

Chapter 13

Aaron threw on some clothes and walked out of the house. Cheryl had watched him, eyeing him, wondering what he was thinking and only spoke again as he was walking down the driveway.

“Where are you going?” she called out.

“I don’t know” he muttered. “Just out for a walk. I gotta think . . . I gotta think.”

“What would people say,” he thought. “I knew Charles believed in plural wives marriages but he never gave any hint that he was involved in such a marriage. Why hadn’t he told us,” he wondered.

Twenty minutes later, Aaron returned home.

“Cheryl,” he called out as he entered the front door.

“Yes, I’m in the family room” Cheryl answered.

“Cheryl, listen; we don’t have time to fight. We’ve got to get some things straightened out and some things cleared up” he stated firmly.

Cheryl looked up at him from her position in the recliner rocker. Her eyes were red and swollen from crying. “What do you intend to do?” she asked with a hesitant trepidation in her voice.

“I’m going to see Charles and talk to him and then we’re all going to meet tomorrow night. I don’t care what time -- eight, nine, whatever, but we have got to meet and clear the air,” he stated.

Cheryl slowly got up from her seat as she blew her nose into a handkerchief. “You don’t think Terry and Kyle are going to come do you?” she asked.

“Yes, I do!” he said with emphasis “because I expect you to convince her to come. And if she comes, he’ll come with her.”

Cheryl suddenly ran to her husband, flung her arms around his neck as tears poured out of her eyes as she sobbed. Between sobs she managed to say “Honey, I love you so much, but I’m afraid of what’s happening to us. I feel like I’m losing you. I don’t want to lose you but I won’t share you either.” she paused, then continued “that’s what frightened me about your being around Charles. I don’t want you to want several wives. Aren’t I enough for you?”

“Yes babe. You are,” he spoke gently as he stroked her hair trying his best to soothe her feelings.

An hour later Aaron was ringing the buzzer at Charles’ apartment. He wasn’t home. Pulling out his cell phone from his suit coat pocket, he phoned his office and asked his secretary to reschedule all his afternoon appointments. The efficient Mrs. Halsted indicated she already began doing so after she realized that he was late and might not make it back in. Then he called George.

“George, we’ve got to talk,” he said urgently.

“You’ve got that right, buddy” George responded.

“Listen,” Aaron continued, “I’m over in front of Charles’ place now. Can you meet me here?”

“Uh . . . Yeah, as soon as I finish showing this house, I’ll be right over.”

George in addition to being the leader of the music ministry at the church was also a very successful real estate salesman. This gave him a degree of freedom and yet a very good income. An hour had gone by, Aaron was still sitting in his Corvette in front of Charles’ apartment waiting for Charles to get off work and for George to come by. Numerous people both young and old had walked by and stared at him, wondering why he was in their neighborhood.

Finally, George pulled up in his BMW and parked behind Aaron. Aaron jumped out of his Corvette, glad to see someone else of that same hue and ran around to the passenger side of George’s car and hopped in. “Man, am I glad to see you” he began. “We’ve got a royal mess on our hands. Did you know Charles has two wives over in Kenya?”

“Yeah, my wife just phoned me this morning and told me,” George answered. Then he added “You know Aaron, I’ve been doing a lot of praying and thinking and studying the past few days. I know I’m usually the quiet one but let

me tell you what I think.”

49

“Go ahead,” Aaron encouraged him. He was glad to have another man’s opinion on these matters.

“Our wives place a bunch of blame on Charles, right?” he asked.

“Yeah, they think we’re being influenced by him.” Aaron added.

“But,” George continued, “If what he says is true then it’s true! If it’s false we should be smart enough, studious enough to prove it’s false. Don’t you agree?”

“Yeah, that makes sense.” Aaron agreed.

“If he really believes it’s okay for a man to have more than one wife can we blame him for having more than one?” George questioned.

“No, I guess not” Aaron muttered as he followed George’s reasoning.

“I can’t prove he is wrong so I can’t condemn him” George stated matter of factly.

“I can’t prove him wrong either” Aaron found himself saying.

“In fact” George continued “my wife tried to tell me you couldn’t have a second wife because you would be lusting after a second woman and that was adultery in your heart based on what Jesus said in Matthew 5.”

“Umph” Aaron grunted as he considered the statement.

“Well, I thought about asking Charles about that and then I thought, If there is an answer why can’t I find it. So, I looked up the words in that passage in the Greek. You know what I found out?” George ended with a question.

“No, what?” Aaron asked.

“The word ‘woman’ there means a married woman. Jesus was saying if you look upon a married woman to lust after her, you were committing adultery in your heart.”

“Really?” Aaron said quizzically as he thought about George’s revelation.

“Yes, really. That means it’s not wrong for a man to consider a single woman or a widowed woman as a second wife.”

50

“How did she take that when you told her” Aaron asked.

“Well, I don’t think she liked it but she didn’t have an answer for it.”

A muffled ‘bang - bang’ interrupted their train of thought. “Huh?” They were both startled as Charles had come up to the car without being noticed and knocked on the side window. George pushed the power window button and the window came down.

“Hop in” George invited.

“No, I’ve got to go get cleaned up first. Tell you what. Give me ten minutes and I’ll be back down. It’s such a beautiful day, why don’t we go for a walk.”

With that Charles bound up the stairs, let himself in the outer door with a key and disappeared.

“I’ve planned a meeting for tomorrow night. We’ve got to get things out in the open and clear the air, or the whole African trip is going to fall apart” Aaron shared.

“Good idea,” George agreed.

Before long, Charles reappeared in a fresh pair of jeans and a clean shirt, but wearing the same old sneakers. Aaron and George took off their suit jackets and ties, so they wouldn’t be quite as conspicuous as they walked around this lower class neighborhood. George, who was wearing a short sleeve dress shirt, had powerful arms that filled out the sleeves. He was not the athlete that Aaron was but he had been a body builder for many years. His strong chest, thick neck and powerful arms were results of pumping iron.

As the three walked along Aaron on one side of Charles and George on the other, they formed an almost symmetrical vision in as much as George and Aaron were very near the same height but inches shorter than Charles.

“What’s up guys?” Charles asked.

“The girls found out about your marriages, your wives,” Aaron blurted out.

“Okay,” Charles responded calmly. “Is that a problem for them?”

51

“Well, frankly yes,” Aaron said.

“You see,” George broke in, “they think you’re influencing us and if you’ve got two wives, with a potential for a third is what I heard, then we might think we could have more wives too. And that upsets them.”

“What does God want for you?” Charles questioned.

“Huh?” Aaron responded.

“Have you ever considered what God wants?” Charles said as he sought to clarify his question.

“Well . . . uh . . . no . . . I mean, not in that area. One is enough for me.” Aaron replied.

“Did God say one is enough for you?”

“No, I don’t know. I’ve never heard anything in this area.” Aaron said.

“You know why you haven’t heard anything?” Charles asked.

“Why?” Aaron responded.

“Because up until now you never thought it was within God’s will for you to have more than one.” Charles began his explanation, pausing before continuing. “If God said very clearly ‘See that woman over there, I want you to marry her,’ you would have rebuked the thought as being from the devil.”

Charles paused to let it sink in before asking “Wouldn’t you?”

“Well . . . uh . . . yeah. I guess I would have,” Aaron replied honestly.

“If the men in your congregation knew the truth some would be told to marry additional wives. There is no reason a good Christian woman should go

without love, without being cared for, and without physical, material and spiritual protection when men know the truth. If you continue in his word, you will know the truth and the truth will make you free. That's what Jesus said. Preach the truth, the whole truth and it will make a difference in people's lives." Charles ended his sermonette and waited for one of the other men to speak up.

52

"But Charles," George began, "that's against our traditions and our laws here."

"Tradition? Laws? Jesus said to the Pharisees 'Ye do by your tradition make the word of God of none effect.' You men aren't Pharisees are you?" Charles responded and smiled as he looked from side to side at each man.

Their walk had brought them to an elementary school yard, and they sat on some playground equipment.

"Now let's discuss the law," Charles continued. "Whose law is higher, God's or man's?"

"Well, God's" George responded, "but in Romans, I believe it's chapter thirteen, says we must obey the higher authorities. I did some research on my own and I found out that the Roman Catholic Church outlawed polygyny in 1565 at the council of Trent and then Abraham Lincoln signed the Morrill Act which outlawed polygamy in the United States in 1862. Are you saying we should break the law?" George asked.

"What did Peter say when the apostles had been whipped and told not to preach in the name of Jesus anymore?" Charles asked.

"He said 'whom should we obey, God or man, judge ye'" Aaron said giving the correct answer.

"Right!" Charles quipped. "If God speaks, who will you obey?"

The question was left hanging in the air and no one responded. They all knew the right answer. But whether the women could accept the right answer was another question.

Chapter 14

The meeting was set to be in Aaron and Cheryl's dining room. Aaron sat at the head of the large oval shaped maple wood table to establish that he was in charge. Charles was given a seat in the middle of one side. George was at the other end of the table and each man's wife was seated to his right. They waited for Kyle and Terry who were late.

The gathered group tried to make chit chat conversation about the weather or other such benign topics while they nervously waited for the third couple, all secretly hoping they would show up. Finally the doorbell rang, and Cheryl yelled out "Come on in, it's open."

Terry marched in with a determined look on her face and Kyle came in sheepishly behind her. They had barely taken two of the remaining seats before Terry ordered, "Okay, we're here, let's get on with it."

"Shall we pray first?" Aaron suggested.

"Some people need to repent before they pray" Terry mumbled.

"God help us, in Jesus' name. Amen" Aaron prayed briefly.

"Alright, we all know why we're here" Aaron began. "There have been some concerns about Charles' marital status and the trip to Kenya."

Charles sat with his head down, biting his lower lip trying to restrain himself from speaking too soon.

"George and I had a chance to confer with brother Charles yesterday and although it is true he has two wives in Kenya, he points out that that is legal there and we don't see why that should in any way jeopardize the trip." Aaron paused to see if there would be any response.

Terry spoke up "Trip? As far as Kyle and I are concerned there is no trip. We're going to trade our tickets in for tickets to Hawaii and see if we can get the rest of our money back. There is no way we're going to go on a so called missionary journey with a bigamist!" She spat out the word bigamist with disgust. Then turning to look at Cheryl and then Juanita, she continued "As far as you ladies are concerned you'd be real smart not to let your husbands go either!"

Charles could no longer hold his peace.

“Let them go?” he scowled. “*Let* them go?” He said again. “You make it sound like they’re little boys who need mama’s permission. They are men! They go if they choose. It’s you women that don’t have the choice. You’re supposed to obey your husbands. Not vice versa!”

Terry blew up. “That’s it! That’s it. I’m through! We’re leaving Kyle!” She screamed as she grabbed her husband by the arm, pulling him to his feet. With anger in her eyes and a snarl on her face she spat out her next words “I refuse to let my husband be contaminated by a filthy rotten polygamist who is bent on destroying everything right and decent.”

Cheryl, with tears in her eyes, rushed toward Terry as she moved toward the door. “Wait” Cheryl cried, “Terry what you do or say could ruin everything for all of us,” she pleaded.

Terry stopped for just a moment before going out the door after her husband. She turned and looked her friend in the eyes. “For you and only for you” she paused before going on, “I won’t publicize who and what he (glancing at Charles) is. For now.” With that she slammed the door behind her.

“I guess we won’t see them at the airport tomorrow,” Charles said quietly. He didn’t know someone else would be missing as well.

Chapter 15

After everyone was gone, Aaron and Cheryl sat at the dining room table. Aaron held his head with one hand while gently beating his fist on the table with the other. Cheryl slouched down in her chair with her arms over her chest.

“What are you going to do now?” she queried.

“I don’t know” Aaron began to reply, “I guess we have to go on without them. I had no idea Kyle was such a henpecked husband. I mean Terry just runs their entire show!” he despaired.

“What do you mean?” Cheryl exclaimed. “Can you blame her? She’s trying to protect what’s hers! In fact I think she’s doing the right thing.”

“You do?” Aaron questioned.

“Yes, she doesn’t want to lose her husband to another woman and she doesn’t want her husband thinking he can have more than one wife. And I don’t either.”

“Yeah, that’s fine. But what does God want?” Aaron responded.

“What does God want?” She repeated incredulously.

“Yes, have you ever considered that God might want something different than what we want?” Aaron said as he grew bolder. “Have you considered that we are His servants, He is not ours? You women seem to think that the only reason a man might have more than one wife is because he’d like a variety of sexual partners, but have you ever considered that God might be concerned about those single Christian women and the widowed Christian women? Maybe God wants their needs taken care of and He chooses certain men to do it by becoming their husbands.”

Cheryl’s eyes widened as he talked. She began to visibly shake. Aaron knew he was shocking her and yet he went on.

“There was nothing, and I mean absolutely nothing, going on between Mrs. Chandler and me, but suppose, just suppose God spoke to me or George to take her in as a second wife. Either one of us could afford to do it. Then I could give her boys the father figure they need and she would have a man to love her and take care of her. Would that mean you or Juanita if God chose George to do it would be loved any less? No!”

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By this time Cheryl had burst into tears. She couldn’t believe what she was hearing. In a flash she was up from the table ran to their bedroom.

They were to have arrived at the international airport three hours ahead of time. Charles was there, waiting and looking for the others. A half hour went by - still he was alone. He began to wonder if he’d be making the trip alone. Finally, two hours before departure, he saw George and Juanita hurrying to the checkin stand.

“Hey, glad to see you,” Charles greeted them warmly.

“Glad to be here,” George returned grabbing Charles’ extended hand and giving a firm handshake.

“Where’s Aaron and Cheryl?” Charles asked.

“I don’t know,” came the reply from George, “They should be here. Let’s wait another half hour before we check in, maybe they were delayed.”

The three pulled all six of their large suitcases to the side and sat down in a row of chairs.

“You know,” George began, “Juanita and I had a long talk last night. We prayed together too, and we came to some agreements.”

“Yes, go on” Charles encouraged him.

“The Bible says,” he continued, “the head of every man is Christ and the head of the woman is the man.” He paused. “No offence to them but when I look at Kyle and Terry, I see a couple that is just totally out of order. We decided if our house was going to please God it had to be in order. That means I lead and my dear wife follows. So I told her we’re going.” He paused and smiled at his wife. “I know it was hard for her to swallow and say it but she did. She said, ‘Yes, dear.’ So regardless of anyone else we want to go on with God.”

“Great! That’s great, George” Charles said and then turning to Juanita he added “You, my dear sister, are very pleasing in God’s sight.”

57

“Well, to tell the truth,” Juanita began to admit, “I hope George isn’t called to have more than one wife, but if he is I pray I can deal with it.” She sighed. “Part of the reason I wanted to come even after last night is to see how your two wives could both love you and get along with each other as well” she said.

“You’ll see” Charles chuckled “you’ll see. We have a small 40 acre farm. There is the main house where I live when I’m there, and each wife has her own smaller house nearby for her and her children.”

“You have children?” Juanita asked, being surprised by the revelation.

“Ah yes, my first wife Rachel has 3 boys and 2 girls and my second wife

Elizabeth has 2 girls and 2 boys,” he revealed.

“Women must be different there than here.”

“Ah yes, this is true” Charles said. “You see, in the country and in the small villages we don’t have women’s liberation like you do here in America. Wives cannot divorce their husbands and take the children and the possessions” Charles continued. “Our wives give us great respect as the Bible says they should. If they do not we can suspend them.

“Suspend them? What’s that mean?” George asked.

“It means we send them back to their parents for better training” Charles explained.

“How long” Juanita questioned.

“Oh, up to five years” Charles answered.

“Wow!” George exclaimed, “that’s different!”

George’s eyes widened as a revelation came to his mind. “Now I understand why you work so hard and live so meagerly. You’ve been sending money home to support your wives and children,” George said as things began to click in place.

“Yes, that’s right my friend” Charles continued.

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“But why don’t you get a higher paying job?” George questioned further.

“Life here in America is not as kind to us of a darker hue as it is to you lighter brethren,” Charles explained.

George and Juanita looked at each other a little sheepishly. They, like many whites, had thought racism and discrimination had ended in the sixties.

“Hey, there’s Aaron” Charles exclaimed. They all stood up as they saw Aaron jostling his way toward them, tugging along a large suitcase and carrying another.

“Hey buddy! Praise the Lord! Where’s the wife?” George asked.

“She’s not coming” he revealed. “And she said she’s not sure she’ll be there when I get back,” he shared slowly with eyes cast down.

“But one thing I know,” he said as he looked up again, “I must follow God and where He leads me. I must walk in His truth as His Spirit guides me.” He paused. “Let’s check in and go to Africa!”

The End

(of part I)

Journey
Into
A
Truth

Part Two

Chapter 16

Anticipation of seeing a new land with a different people and different culture grew as they boarded the plane. They found themselves seated in a middle row of the giant 747 airplane. This enabled them to talk and ask Charles more questions as they took the long eight hour flight to England where they would switch planes.

“Charles” Juanita began shortly after takeoff “how can you truly love two women at the same time?”

Charles chuckled a bit before beginning his reply. “I love them with the love of the Lord,” he explained.

Juanita turned her head toward him with a quizzical look on her face.

Charles continued, “When Americans say they are in love, they mean they have ‘fallen . . .’” -- he said the word fallen with a hint of negativity in his voice -- “‘in love.’ You mean by this that you feel, feel, feel” he said the word three times using a different method of emphasis “that you are romantically in love.”

He paused again as he looked at Juanita who was seated to his left and George who was seated to her left before turning to look at Aaron who was seated to his right. Thus he gave them all time to let the words he was saying sink in.

“In romantic love” Charles continued “you are continually indoctrinated that it can be only monogamous. If a man loves more than one woman, he is taught that is wrong! You even call it ‘cheating.’”

The plane hit some disturbed air causing the plane to rumble a bit in turbulence. After a few seconds the plane settled, and everyone’s attention was refocused on Charles.

“I have not fallen in love. I have risen in love,” Charles confidently stated.

“I have risen to agape love. This is God’s type of love. It is not based on the lust of the flesh or the lust of the eyes or the pride of life, as romantic love often is,” Charles explained.

“So,” Aaron interrupted, “you’re saying that most people begin dating a girl because she’s cute or they lust after her body or they know it would give them prestige to be seen with a good looking woman.”

There was a pause during which the only sound was that of the hum of the jet engines as each considered the revelation that Aaron had just related.

“Yes!” Charles exclaimed, obviously pleased that Aaron was beginning to see the point that he was attempting to make. “People say” Charles went on,, “I love my house, I love my car, I love my dog, I love my boat, I love my wife. Are they all the same? Don’t you love a woman in a different way than you love an inanimate object?” He paused again briefly to let them consider the question (he didn’t really expect a response).

“How are we told to love one another in the Bible?” Charles questioned further. “It is with Agape love.” He stated flatly. “It is not ‘I love you because you are pleasant to my eyes’ or ‘I love you because I think you will please my lustful desires’ or ‘I love you because I will get prestige as people know you are related to me.’”

“No!” Charles exclaimed as he went on. “‘I love you with God’s love because you are a person. God loved you enough to send Jesus to die for you. I love God with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my mind and with all my strength, therefore I love what God loves.’ God loves his people. I love Him, I am continually trying to obey him therefore, I marry whoever he says to marry.”

All three of the others were stunned into silence. They of course knew of God’s love. They knew they were to obey God; and yet they had never seen or heard of it taken to the point that one would marry, not based on romantic love, but on mere obedience to what God wanted.

“How . . .” Juanita began a question hesitantly, “how do you know you can hear God that clearly?”

“Did not Jesus say” Charles began his answer “My sheep know my voice?”

With that the questions ended for a time as they each settled in to sleep before reaching England. Juanita wondered as she drifted off what Charles’ wives would be like. Since he hadn’t married for looks, or prestige, maybe they would be grossly ugly, she thought. Her answer was only hours away.

Chapter 17

The switch in planes had gone well in England. George had commented to Juanita on Aaron on how efficient the English flight attendants were and their propensity to offer tea rather than coffee. This last leg of the journey into Africa was scheduled to last another seven hours. The seats were tightly crammed together and all the sitting was taking its toll on their backs and bottoms. Still time seemed to pass faster when they talked or slept. So the four talked.

“Charles” Juanita began “I didn’t mean to pry but is it true that you were considering marrying that Nigerian girl we heard about?”

Charles sighed as he began his answer. “First of all she is no little girl,” he explained. “She is thirty five years old. She has a little boy about six who was born out of wedlock, and she is going to school at the University and working and struggling to make ends meet.” he paused and bit down on his bottom lip, considering carefully how much he should reveal. “In my culture, there is a tendency to stay within one’s own tribe with the nation and it is rare to see someone marry one from another entirely different nation; but God frees us from our own culture and tradition as we go on in Him. I’ve seen her and talked with her a number of times. I don’t know for sure that God would have me marry her. I am still praying and waiting for his command.” Charles stopped, considered saying more, and then thought better of it.

“But . . . what about your wives in Kenya?” Juanita questioned unbelievably. “Wouldn’t they be upset to know that you’re considering adding yet another wife to your family?”

Charles smiled, and considered how confusing this must be for a person with a Western Society world view. “My wives know” he began shortly “that I am a servant of God and that I submit to Him the same way in which I expect them to submit to me. Completely!”

“Wow! I know that’s scriptural,” George exclaimed, “but I haven’t ever seen any women do it in real practice.”

“Well,” Charles explained, “I am not saying that my wives are always perfect in obedience, just as I’m sure we men sometimes fall short of perfect obedience; but we should all be striving to be like Christ, who said ‘I do all things that please the father.’”

Aaron pulled out his pocket Bible and began flipping through the pages. He finally stopped on a particular page and ran his finger down to the verse he was looking for.

“It says here in Ephesians 5:22-24” he prefaced before reading “‘Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church and he is Savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing . . .’ we don’t really preach this in America.” Aaron concluded.

“Why not?” Charles questioned, not that he didn’t know the answer, but rather he wanted others to verbalize it.

“I guess if the truth be told” Aaron explained “we’re afraid of losing over half the congregation.” He had known for a long time the truth of his statement but until now had never had the courage to verbalize it. Now with his wife refusing to come and threatening divorce, he knew he had failed to put sufficient emphasis on verses like this one.

“Yeah” George chimed in, “I think the women like it a lot better when we emphasize verse 21 and 24. Read those, will you Aaron?” he suggested.

“‘Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of the Lord.’” Aaron read.

“Women in America emphasize this because women’s liberation says they are equal to men and therefore it is a two way street. But that verse is speaking to the brethren in general and not to husbands and wives.” Charles explained.

Aaron continued reading verse 25: “‘Husbands, love your wives even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.’”

“On this passage of Scripture women say it shows that men ought to let women have their way if they love them” George interjected.

“But that is not what it is saying” Charles pointed out. “We need to be tender, loving, caring, providing and protecting, but it doesn’t mean that women should rule over us!”

Juanita eased her chair back and sat quietly, she felt -- and was -- outnumbered by the men. She wanted to defend her sisters and yet also realized that any attempt to do so would be futile. She would wait to see if all this was just talk or were there women in the world, even in Africa, that would live out what the men were claiming was right.

Chapter 18

“We are about to land at a Nairobi International Airport,” the voice came out of the speakers in the plane, “Please place your seats in the upright position and stow away your tray tables. And fasten your seat belts. Please remain in your seats with seat belts fastened until the aircraft comes to a complete stop at the terminal and the captain has turned off the seat belt sign.”

The standard wording was very familiar to the entire group, all having flown on many occasions before. This however was the first touchdown in Africa for the Americans. After the hustle and bustle to leave the plane, there were immigration lines to go through and then baggage claims and finally customs. Once Charles had cleared the customs and waited on the others in his party, he looked around for his wives.

Two women moved rapidly toward him. One was about 5’ 8” tall weighing about 150 lbs. A stout woman yet well proportioned. The other was a diminutive 5’3” approximately 115 lb. lady. They both wore very colorful African dress attire which came down to the ankles. The sandal type shoe had two inch heels and their heads were covered with a beautiful scarf type wrap.

“Welcome home Bwana OKinyi” said the smaller of the two.

“Yes, welcome home Bwana” said the other.

Charles nodded his head to each as they did a type of curtsy bow and then kissed each on both cheeks. He then began making introductions. “This is George and his wife Juanita, and this is Aaron” he began.

“Welcome, brethren” the larger of the two women said.

“Yes, welcome to Africa” said the smaller.

Charles put his arms around the shoulders of the smaller woman first as he introduced her. “This is Rachel my first wife. And this . . .” he continued as he moved to place an arm around the larger woman “is Elizabeth my second wife.”

“Hello, glad to meet you” the others in the party responded.

“Bwana, where are the others” Rachel asked as she looked at Charles curiously.

“There were some last minute complications. We’ll explain later.”

“Elizabeth, would you and Rachel go get the van and bring it up closer so we won’t have to carry the bags so far?” Charles asked, although, all present could clearly tell that it was a directive even though placed in the form of a question.

After the African wives began to hustle away, Aaron leaned over towards Charles and asked “What’s Bwana mean?”

“It means Lord,” came the reply from Charles.

“Lord??” Aaron questioned, being taken aback by the response. Don’t you think that’s a little blasphemous, letting them call you Lord?”

Charles smiled, “I don’t force them. They know it is scriptural and they do it out of respect for me.”

“Scriptural?” Aaron mused as he mentally searched the Scripture for a reference. “1Peter 3”. George offered. “Sarah called Abraham Lord.”

“Right, ”Charles said approvingly.

Juanita kept her thoughts to herself. But she was surprised that the women were quite beautiful, not the images that she half way expected.

The van rolled up and they piled as many suit cases as they could get into the back and tied a couple on the roof. The group of six now climbed in the back seat, with the ladies in the back seat, while the men crowded into the front. Charles took the steering wheel and they were off from the airport and through the city of Nairobi.

George and Aaron were amazed that the city was very much like an American city with stores and gas stations and some tall buildings and restaurants and so on. It wasn’t at all like the Africa they had pictured from the Tarzan movies.

As Juanita sat in the back with Charles’ two wives, she thought of many questions she wanted to ask, but was besieged by questions from them.

“What is America like?” Rachel asked.

“Yes, tell us,” Elizabeth added. “Bwana OKinyi has told us some things but tell us from a woman’s perspective.”

“Well . . .” Juanita coughed as she began “there are many poor people who make less than \$20,000 a year.”

Rachel and Elizabeth’s eyes widened as their mouths dropped open.

Juanita went on. “We are fairly well off since we make several times that but we wouldn’t consider ourselves rich.”

Rachel could no longer hold her shock and surprise in. She grabbed Juanita’s arm to indicate she should say no more until she clarified what she had just said.

“You mean people who make \$20,000 are considered poor?” She questioned, not able to believe what she had heard.

“Yes,” Juanita answered tentatively, wondering what was so shocking about that.

“Do you know” Elizabeth began “that the average per capita income for a Kenyan is \$334?” she asked.

“Well, yes, I can appreciate that \$334 a week is not much and believe it or not there are a few people in America that make only that much.

“No!” Rachel exclaimed, uncharacteristically raising her voice a little. “That is \$334 a year! Anyone making \$334 a week here is a wealthy person.

Now Juanita was shocked. How could people survive on \$334 a year? She and George usually spent more than that for dinner at one of their favorite restaurants. This was one shock for Juanita but there were still others to come.

Chapter 19

The roads varied from smooth highway driving to rough gravel to places where potholes were so big that to let a tire fall in one would have meant major damage to the vehicle. They had driven for several hours and passed through the village of Nekuru, a place where about several hundred thousand people lived. They now pressed on as the day grew older. Here and there they would stop at a petrol station as gas stations are called in Kenya. At such stops they purchased soda pop or bottled water, mindful that the natural water would likely make the Americans violently ill.

“My wives inform me” Charles announced at one of the stops “that there is a church that is awaiting us in the Awendo district. They wish to greet us on our first day here. This church had expected us at 1:00 p.m. but the roads are worse than expected, and it is already past 1:00 p.m. and there are at least two hours more to drive. There are few petrol stations between here and there. So this may be our last stop until we get there.”

“Why don’t we just call them and have their greeting wait until tomorrow?” asked Aaron, who felt tired and grubby and was in no mood to meet anyone.

“They have no phone” Charles replied matter of factly.

“Well it’s past three. They’ve probably all gone home by now,” George offered.

“Perhaps, but I doubt it,” Charles responded. “Kenyan Christians have learned to be very patient.”

Juanita realized she was not dressed for church. She had worn jeans and tennis shoes and a T-shirt to travel in. “Give me ten minutes to dig out a dress from the bags and put it on,” she begged.

Meanwhile, as they continued on, back in the States a plot was hatching between the remaining wives.

“Hello, Terry” Cheryl almost screamed into the phone. It was almost nine hours earlier in their time zone so Terry was groggy as she answered.

“Hello, uh . . wh . . what time is it . . .” she stammered.

“It’s almost six o’clock. I know it’s early, but we’ve got to meet,” Cheryl pleaded.

“Oh, OK let’s meet at the Coffee shop in one hour” Terry offered.

“I’ll be there,” Cheryl promised as she hung up the phone.

As they settled in a booth and a waitress brought them both coffee and pastries. Cheryl, whose eyes were swollen and red from crying, began pouring out her heart to her friend Terry.

“It didn’t work!” she spat out tearfully. “I told him we weren’t going and he said I couldn’t control him and he was going anyway. He packed his bags and left. For the past day or so I’ve been a miserable wreck! O Terry I think I’m losing my marriage and I don’t know what to do.”

“First, calm down,” Terry counseled. “Then let’s look at your options,” she said as she rolled up her eyes toward the ceiling and then side to side, trying to think of as many as she could. “You can’t let this go on,” she stated. “You’ve got to take control.”

“How?” Cheryl asked. “He’s in Africa! For all I know,” Cheryl continued, “he may be picking out some young African Princess to bring back to be my ‘co-wife.’” she snarled her nose at the thought as she spat out the words.

“Wait a minute, let me think” Terry commanded as she drew her cup up to her lips and took a long sip of coffee. After a few moments of reflection, she placed her cup on the table and with a gleam in her eyes, she blurted out her answer. “The elders governing board!”

“What?” Cheryl asked, confused.

“We’ve got to get you to the elders governing board before he gets back,” Terry said almost gleefully. “You do what I tell you and we’ll have them under complete control. It will be like taking candy from a baby!”

Chapter 20

As the van rocked back and forth down the new country road a shell of a church building came into view. There was only one car there and a few children playing outside underneath a nearby tree.

“Well, good,” Aaron sighed, “They have long since gone home.”

“Let’s see.” Charles responded knowingly. As they climbed out of the van, an elderly gentleman came out of the unfinished structure to greet them.

“Hello, Brother Charles!” he began. “Are these our American guests?”

“Yes. . .” Charles began. The elderly man interrupted. “I’ll let you introduce them to us all. We’ve been waiting and praying for the past four hours.”

The American trio could hardly believe their ears. Waiting and praying in 90 degree weather with no air conditioning was unheard of in the States. As they entered the building they were ushered to seats of prominence in front of the congregation of over 100 people.

“Where are their cars?” Aaron whispered to Charles, who was sitting on his right.

“They don’t have cars” Charles whispered back. “Most of them probably walked 5-10 miles to get here” he revealed.

Aaron’s mouth went dry. He stared out blankly at the congregation as he considered what he would possibly say to an audience of Christian believers who were obviously his superiors spiritually.

Juanita had quickly slipped into her blue skirted suit at the “petrol station” two hours before. She had thought it would be more than adequate for meeting in the country but she was now embarrassed. The skirt which came down to her knees while standing rose up and exposed her knees and lower thighs while sitting. In America she would have been fine since many women wore skirts of similar length or shorter, but here in Kenya -- near the equator no less -- almost every woman wore a dress that came down to her ankles. By comparison Juanita felt like an exposed harlot and wished the whole day could be over and forgotten.

After two hours of welcomes and songs and introductions, the weary guests were released to continue their journey to Charles Okinyi's compound.

Chapter 21

It was dark as the van finally pulled to a stop just outside the gate of the Okinyi compound. A few beeps on the horn brought a twelve year old boy wearing a T-shirt, shorts and sandals to open the gate. As the van pulled in toward the larger house which stood directly facing the gate which was some 100 feet or so beyond it, children of various ages came streaming out from the two houses which stood on either side.

“Welcome home father,” they cried out as they beat on the sides of the van as it slowly rolled to a halt. Charles turned from the driver’s seat and spoke something to his wives in Luo. The American trio could make out that it was some type of directive, since both Rachel and Elizabeth quickly climbed out of the van and began to speak in Luo. The children then immediately lined up in rows facing each other. The largest stood closest to the front of the van and the smallest on either side was near the front door of the big house.

Rachel and Elizabeth took their places behind each line indicating which were their children by the common father, Charles Okinyi. As Charles passed each child, he or she would bow as they shook the visitors’ hands, while crossing the left hand over to the right forearm. Charles later explained that this was a sign of respect.

Charles’ larger home faced the east and the rising sun. Rachel’s house was then to his right on the south side facing north and Elizabeth’s house was on the left, facing Rachel’s house to the south. The group moved past the porch and into the medium sized living room. Just beyond that was a dining room. Off to the left was a kitchen area. And alongside the kitchen area were two bedrooms, one slightly larger than the other.

“May I use the restroom?” Juanita asked.

“Surely, Mrs. Brandon,” Elizabeth replied. “Just follow me.”

“Hey,” Juanita objected, “Let’s have none of this Mrs. stuff.” As she followed Elizabeth out the side door of the kitchen. Although passage through the kitchen was quick she noticed that it seemed quite quaint, even ancient. She’d soon found out how ancient but another shock greeted her first. They marched several yards through a back yard before coming to the outhouse. Juanita stood in shock and amazement for a moment. “An outhouse” she thought. “You mean you don’t even have running water and a decent toilet?” she blurted out.

“I . . . I . . . I’m sorry ma’am,” Elizabeth began as she tried to hide her shock and embarrassment provoked by her visitor’s rudeness. “Perhaps we can find a running water toilet at a petrol station, but the nearest village is two hours away.”

“Uh . . . no . . .” Juanita reluctantly stated as she wrinkled her nose at the stench that greeted her at the wooden door.



As Juanita returned toward the kitchen a few minutes later her suspicions of Charles only having a wood burning stove to cook on were confirmed.

“Are you alright, ma’am?” Rachel asked.

“Yes, I’m fine” Juanita responded as she was escorted back to the living room where Aaron and George were seated.

“May I get you a Fanta to drink?” Rachel asked.

“Fanta? What’s a Fanta?” Juanita questioned.

“Sorry, ma’am -- I mean a soda pop.”

“Yes, that would be fine. Could you put lots of ice in glass?” Juanita requested.

“Sorry, ma’am,” Rachel said sheepishly, “no ice.”

Juanita turned to look at Charles (who was seated with the men) with a quizzical look on her face as if to ask without words why there was no ice after such a long hot drive.

“We don’t have a refrigerator because we don’t have electricity in this part of the country,” Charles explained.

Juanita could hardly believe her ears. She had envisioned this great Africa trip which would be a combination of an African Safari and a vacation with a little preaching thrown in, but what she was getting was like a time machine trip back to the eighteenth or early nineteenth century, as they were approaching the twenty first century!

Juanita’s eyes began to tear as she uttered a muffled “OK.” Rachel and Elizabeth noticed Juanita’s discomfort, but neither said anything.

An hour later dinner had been prepared. Rachel escorted Juanita into the kitchen where there was a wash pan with warm water for her to wash her hands. Juanita returned to the living room just in time to see Elizabeth -- who had a towel over her left arm and a small wash basin in her left hand -- pouring hot water out of a kettle held in her right hand onto the hands of each of the men. Once again Juanita was hurt as she experienced another culture shock.

Dinner consisted of chicken, rice, greens, and a special bread that was sort of like a soft taco shell and tea. Juanita sat and ate quietly while the men sat and talked jovially.

“Where are the ladies?” Juanita finally asked, being very curious as to why they hadn’t joined them for dinner.

“They’re eating in the kitchen,” Charles explained.

“Oh! They aren’t good enough?” Juanita blew up “to eat with the great lord Okinyi?” she yelled sarcastically as she threw her cloth napkin on the table and ran out of the dining room through the living room and out the front door.

Bam! The screen door slammed behind her as she made her exit. George started to rise to go after her but Charles indicated he shouldn’t, while he spoke something in Luo in a voice loud enough for his wives (who were still in the kitchen) to hear him.

Both wives quickly moved through the front door to speak to Juanita. Juanita’s outburst only displayed a small amount of the emotion she was feeling. The next one would be far worse.

Chapter 22

Meanwhile, back in good ole U.S.A., Terry had hatched her plot and rehearsed it thoroughly with Cheryl. At 9:35 am Cheryl was at Mr. Becker's office. Mr. Becker was part owner of one of the local malls and was considered a very wealthy man by standards in his community. In addition, he served as chairman of Aaron & Cheryl's governing elders board for the church.

His large, spacious office had plush chairs, a huge desk, and a scenic view of the city through large picture windows. Terry had helped Cheryl pick out the exact outfit she was wearing, a beige shirt with a matching beige v-neck sleeveless stretch sweater blouse and a pink sweater that draped over her shoulders, and matching beige three inch heels. Her hair had been freshly washed and styled and she wore just enough makeup to bring out her beauty but not enough to look gaudy, and with just enough perfume to be smelled about three feet away.

She strode into the office cheerily reaching out her hand to warmly shake Mr. Becker's hand. "Good morning, Mr. Becker," she sang out with a pleasant smile on her face. "And how are you today?"

"I'm fine," the portly middle aged businessman responded. "This is a pleasant surprise," he said as he arose from the plush executive chair from behind his desk. "I thought you were supposed to be in Africa this week." he stated with a puzzled look on his face.

"Yes," Cheryl sighed as she sat down in a chair facing the desk. She dropped her head, crossed her legs and folded her arms as she paused and changed to a sullen look of worry and concern. Her knee length skirt rode up slightly to show a peek of thigh covered with the silky smooth nylon stocking that was two shades darker than her own skin tone. Mr. Becker almost involuntarily leaned forward to enjoy the view, just as Terry had planned he would.

Cheryl, who had strategically placed her handbag on the floor near her feet, then bent over to pull out a tissue as her eyes watered. As she did this, the v-neck revealed just the right amount of cleavage for the wealthy, prominent church leader's parousal. Mr. Becker caught himself staring and quickly looked away -- as he asked "Well, what's wrong? What happened?"

"I . . . I . . ." Cheryl stuttered slightly "We . . . are having a problem" she said whispering as she wiped a tear from her eye.

“Who? You and Aaron?” He questioned, not believing this could be true of the pastor and his wife who had always seemed like the perfect couple.

Cheryl stood up abruptly and glided several steps away from the desk. With her back to him, she stood with her heels together. Her skirt was tight enough to show the form of her hips and yet not so tight as to be considered risqué. She had slipped off the pink sweater and placed it on the back of her chair.

Standing perfectly erect he was given a glimpse of her form before she lowered her head and began to sob into the tissue she was holding. Being the conservative old fashioned gentleman that he was, Mr. Becker had stood as she did. His mother had trained him well nearly a half century ago, saying “When a lady is in a room standing, then so are you.” A certain rage began to build in him. How dare anyone hurt this vision of loveliness.

“Now, now dear,” he said out loud. “Tell me about it.”

Cheryl now moved to one of the giant picture windows and as she looked out between sobs she told the story of how Aaron was being influenced by Charles Okinyi, a bigamist. She then paused, turned her head slowly, and then ran to him flinging her arms around his neck and placed her head on his shoulder as she heaved sobs and tears that freely flowed down her face.

Mr. Becker was surprised by the sudden move but patted her on the back reassuringly, secretly enjoying the feel of her breasts against his chest. He caught himself thinking ‘what if . . .’ as he sniffed the scent of her perfume. Then he quickly rejected the thought.

Although he and his wife had lost all passion years ago, he knew he couldn’t afford to divorce her because he’d lose millions, and it would destroy his reputation in the Christian community. His wife who enjoyed spending his money had allowed her sexual duties to deteriorate to a once a week perfunctory ritual. It had become a chore that she obviously wanted to finish and get out of the way as quickly as possible. Mr. Becker had accepted a long time ago that this was his cross to bear and yet had to keep rebuking lustful thoughts about Cheryl.

In his reflection, he hadn’t been listening and awakened to hear Cheryl saying “After a divorce what would I do?”

“Uh . . . would you like a job working here?” he offered.

“Well, I don’t know about that,” she replied. “I have been sort of like the unofficial assistant pastor. I help with the women’s auxiliary, I’ve taught the women’s Bible class, I think I could preach a pretty good sermon, don’t you, Mr. Becker?”

“Uh well, yeah, sure, but what’s this Mr. Becker stuff, honey you just call me John.”

Well . . . John,” she said as she pushed away and walked a couple of steps before asking the next question. “I know we set up different elders to speak the four Sundays Aaron and I would be away, but do you think I could give a sort of trial sermon on one of those Sundays?” she cooed. She turned slightly toward him again and as she batted her eyes, she added “Pleeese.”

“Well, sure . . . I mean I’ll have to check with the board but I don’t see why not,” he began to respond.

“Oh, thanks Mr. Becker,” she said excitedly, flashing him a smile as she moved toward the door. Then she turned just before going out. “Shall I check back in with you on Tuesday about it?” she asked.

“Uh, yes, come back in on Tuesday and we’ll talk,” he responded even as he thought a phone call would be good enough but he’d much rather see her in person.

Chapter 23

“What!” Juanita was startled awake by the sound of a rooster crowing.

“What time is it?” George asked sleepily.

George and Juanita had been given Charles’ bedroom to sleep in, while Aaron had slept in the living room on a couch.

“It’s six a.m. in the morning,” Juanita answered.

“Sounds like I hear someone in the kitchen, maybe your ought to offer to help out,” George suggested.

“Help out? Help out?” Juanita repeated herself. “How am I going to help out with no refrigerator, no electric stove, no gas stove and no microwave! How could I possibly help out?” she questioned.

“Well . . . uh . . . maybe you could gather some sticks or help make a fire” George chuckled.

“Umph” Juanita grunted. “What do you think I am, a girl scout?”

“Well, let’s get up, take a shower and . . .” George started before being interrupted.

“Shower, George?” Juanita said mockingly. “What makes you think he’s got a shower?”

“O, come on” George said as he sat up in bed. “He’s got to have a shower.”

Throwing on her bath robe and house slippers Juanita went from the bedroom to the kitchen where she saw Elizabeth busily stoking the wood stove with wood. There was an old fashioned metal kettle on one side in which Juanita guessed was water heating up.

“You obviously don’t have a shower, do you?” Juanita asked drearily.

“No ma’am” Elizabeth responded “but I can show you how to wash. You put the hot water from the kettle in this big cup and throw it over your back.”

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“What?!” Juanita reacted. “That’s disgusting!”

“Sorry ma’am” Elizabeth said as she cast her eyes down.

“Where’s Charles anyway?” Juanita questioned further in an irritated voice.

“Bwana Okinyi is sleeping in with Sistah Rachel this morning at her house.” Elizabeth shared matter of factly.

“Doesn’t that bother you?” Juanita interrogated with a snarl on her face.

“No, ma’am” came the reply “tonight he will spend with me.”

“How can you share a man like that?” Juanita questioned further.

“Better to share a good man like Bwana Okinyi than to have a bad man all to myself.” Elizabeth said.

“Seems so . . . so . . . unclean . . . and ungodly if you ask me,” Juanita said as she walked toward a window which had no glass pane but only an overhanging door to keep the rain out, and was used only when necessary.

Elizabeth remained silent and continued busying herself with breakfast preparations.

“Excuse me, ma’am” she said presently. “I must get eggs from the hen house. Would you like to come?”

“I might as well,” came the response. As they walked through the back yard toward the hen house they passed through chickens in the yard, some of whom plucked at Juanita’s bare toes that were exposed by the thong type house slippers.

“Hey! Ouch! -- get away from me!” she cried out.

“Shoo, go away” Elizabeth said as she moved the chickens away. Juanita thought she caught a glimpse of a smirk on this black woman’s face. She wondered if Elizabeth was enjoying seeing the misery she was experiencing.

Two hours after breakfast was finished and Elizabeth began to heat more water to wash the dishes, while the American trio wandered around the front yard

of the compound. As Aaron and George stood near the front gate admiring the beauty of the landscape around them, they saw Charles and Rachel walking with

their arms around each other's waists coming down the dirt and gravel road. They looked to be the ideal picture of a couple in love.

"Good morning, my friends" Charles called out as he waved.

"Good morning," the pair called back in unison.

As they drew closer, Juanita joined the men and also saw the spectacle of Charles showing affection to his first wife. It came to her that this was the first time she'd ever seen them show that type of open display of caring.

"Come, sistah," Elizabeth called out to Rachel as the pair entered the gate. "Help me catch a chicken so we can cook it for lunch. Would you like to help ma'am, or just watch?" she asked Juanita.

"You're going to kill a chicken?" Juanita cringed. "OOOO I don't know that I care to help OR watch."

Charles flashed his two wives a knowing grin before they hustled off to prepare for lunch.

"Hey guys" Charles said, turning to the men. "Let's jump in the van, drive to the nearest village, and maybe do some preaching."

"Preaching?" Aaron questioned.

"Yeah, street preaching." Charles clarified. "You mean just stand out one the corner and start preaching?" George asked.

"Yeah," Charles said. "This is a missionary journey for you guys, isn't it?"

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After lunch Rachel and Elizabeth gave Juanita a tour of their homes. They were small and modest. Each had only two bedrooms and a sitting room. The large bedroom had a regular sized bed where Charles would join this particular wife on her night; and a smaller bedroom that had mattresses on the floor where all the children slept together.

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Juanita was already counting the days till she could be back to the normal

luxuries of life (of course she counted them as necessities).

“O my” she sighed. “I wish I hadn’t come to this back in the woods throwback to pioneer days.”

“Is there something we can do to make you more comfortable, ma’am” Rachel offered.

“Would you please stop calling me ma’am?!” Juanita blurted out.

“I wish Charles had told us the truth in the beginning, maybe I wouldn’t be in this mess” she said half to herself and half to the wives.

“O Kay, Wah knee dah” Elizabeth strongly, her eyes ablaze.

Juanita looked up shocked to see the woman who acted so demurely and subserviently all of the sudden address her so personally in such an angry way. And the accent took off just enough to make it difficult to know if she was pronouncing it incorrectly on purpose or not.

“That’s enough!” Elizabeth continued.

“Sistah, please stop it!” Rachel said to her co-wife.

“No!” Elizabeth continued. “Why should we allow her to come here and insult our husband like that, in our own homes?”

“Sistah, please, she is our guest,” Rachel pleaded.

“Yeah!” Elizabeth spat out as she stepped forward toward Juanita with clenched fists. “A guest with no manners, no respect, and no sense of proper decency.”

Rachel stepped in front of her sister wife and between the two women. She faced Elizabeth and grabbed her by the upper arms near the shoulders.

“Bwana Okinyi will not be pleased,” Rachel reasoned.

“What?! What is this Lord Okinyi stuff anyway,” Juanita reacted. “I don’t have to take this!”

Rachel turned her head to look at Juanita as she heard that remark, but Juanita continued her own harangue now.

“I don’t have to wait around and watch two uneducated country bumpkins dolt over some egocentric bigamist!”

“Uneducated? Uneducated? Why you arrogant American wench! What makes you think we’re uneducated? I have a master’s degree in agriculture, and Rachel has a doctor’s degree in linguistics from the University of Nairobi. She speaks Lua, Swahili, English, French, and German.”

Elizabeth now had her feet spread about a shoulder length apart, hands on her hips. She cocked her head slightly to the right before asking “And how many advanced degrees do you have, Wah knee dah?”

Juanita was taken aback. Charles’ wives never indicated that they had such a background. She was temporarily stunned into silence, so Elizabeth continued.

“Tell us, dear American lady,” her voice now softened but mocking, “why is it that you Americans murder a million and a half unborn babies every year?”

“Why is it that your President allows sodomites into the military?”

“And why is it that your American television broadcasts lewd lascivious dancing and pornography for all to see?”

“Why does your film industry promote fornication?”

“And why do your courts promote divorce after divorce?”

“You people do all these things that the Bible calls abominations, and then you have the nerve, the unmitigated gall, to come here and make aspersions at us who are living in a biblically acceptable marriage arrangement?”

“I . . . uh . . . I . . . uh . . .” Juanita stammered.

“Mama, come quickly! Susana has fallen out of the fig tree!” One of the boys yelled as he reached the house breathlessly.

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Both women were out of the door in a flash to see what degree of injury

had befallen Rachel's daughter.

Fortunately, the child had only gotten the wind knocked out of her and a few scratches. However, the incident served to extricate Juanita from a very awkward situation.

Juanita had been shocked by the wives' dedication to Charles, their respect for him, and numerous other things, and yet this strange and different culture had more shocks to come.

Days had gone by; Tuesday came and Mr. Becker found himself eagerly looking forward to Cheryl's return visit. The time for her 10:30 appointment came and went. Mr. Becker looked nervously at his watch, wondering if he would miss out on seeing his vision of loveliness today.

Finally at 10:45, his secretary announced over the intercom that Mrs. Cooper was there to see him.

"Send her in immediately," he ordered. Cheryl came in almost bouncing and bubbly. She scurried over to Mr. Becker and surprised him with a hug and a kiss on the cheek.

"What's that for?" Mr. Becker asked with a big grin on his face.

"For being a good man and looking out for me," she answered. "Did you talk to the board of elders?"

"Yes . . . we . . . uh . . . they want to hear what Aaron has to say before taking any final action but they did agree to let you have a Sunday with a trial sermon."

"Great!" Cheryl said excitedly as she clapped her hands together like a

little girl. Wearing a navy blue skirted suit and a white blouse with black hose and three inch heels, she glided over to the big picture window that looked out. Being on the eighth floor, the office had an overview of much of the city. Mr. Becker, still standing, watched her as she moved and admired her youth, vitality and gracefulness. He didn't know that every move she made and every item she wore down to the sweet scented perfume was planned out ahead of time by Cheryl's friend Terry.

Cheryl stood on her tip toes and turned her head as if to get a view of something just barely out of sight. Terry had known that this would emphasize the curve in her calves and that Mr. Becker would be watching. She dropped a pen from her hand and bent over from the waist to pick it up. She knew full well that a lady should stoop to pick up an item, but Terry had pointed out to her that almost any man enjoyed the view of a woman bending over in high heels more than one stooping.

"You have such a beautiful view from up here!" Cheryl exclaimed.

"If you think that's something you should see it from 10,000 feet," Mr. Becker suggested.

"You mean . ." Cheryl started " . . . from a plane?" she said as she turned around with a smile on her face.

"No, I mean from my plane," Mr. Becker said as he raised his chest a little and sucked in his stomach.

"I have a twin engine Cessna that I fly around in mostly for fun but also for business at times."

"Oh, really? Would you take me for a ride?" she asked in a cooing voice.

"I suppose I could arrange it," he said with a smile and a wink.

". . . Mrs. Becker wouldn't mind, would she?" Cheryl asked coyly.

"This is business," Mr. Becker said. "This is your first flying lesson, and I am going to charge you. Mrs. Becker never minds me doing business and earning money."

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"Oh . . . I see . . ." Cheryl responded disappointedly. "How much will it

cost me?"

"One dollar," came the response.

"Only one dollar?" Cheryl said gleefully. "When can we go?"

"Will tomorrow be OK? Or will the next day be better?" he asked.

"Let's go tomorrow afternoon, if it's OK with you," she responded.

"It's set, then. My driver will pick you up at three, and bring you to the airfield," Mr. Becker stated.

Cheryl rushed over and kissed him quickly on the cheek, and gleefully scampered out of the office. Mr. Becker smiled as he enjoyed the lingering aroma of her perfume. He rationalized that he was just helping out a lady in distress. Still, he hoped his wife wouldn't find out.

Chapter 24

Time passed and Aaron preached at the church. Although everyone was attentive, he felt as though he was just repeating sermons that he had preached

before but to a people that really didn't need to hear them. The people had more fruit in their lives, they were disciplined and certainly had far greater faith than almost any of his congregation back home.

The day after the big blow up, Elizabeth apologized to Juanita. A few days later they became horseback riding buddies, something Juanita hadn't done since she was a teenager visiting her granddad's farm. Yes, she was adjusting and even learned to make fire in the cast iron cooking stove. Still, it was difficult for her to watch the slaughter of some animal or fowl, only to be eating its flesh a few hours later.

The real test of her Christian love was yet to come.

Pastor Ondiek, who led the church where Charles and his families were members, called George and Juanita aside after an evening service.

"Come, my American Brethren," he began. "Let's go for a walk."

"Sure," George replied as he and Juanita fell into step along with him.

"We have a young lady who has been saving for three years to have enough money to travel to America and study at an American Institution. She is twenty five now but wants to complete her degree there."

"Yes," George nodded as they continued to walk out into a cow pasture.

"We would like you to act as her hosts while she is there." Pastor Ondiek, who was an older man in his sixties, paused and waited for a response.

"George," Juanita spoke up. "I don't know if having a twenty year old woman come and live with us is a good idea."

Before George could reply, the older gentleman moved to Juanita's side and put his arms around her shoulders. "Tell me, my child, why would this be a concern," he said.

"Well frankly, Pastor," Juanita stated "as you know, George has been hanging around Charles Okinyi who has two wives and I don't know if I want my

husband to be tempted to do the same thing.”

“Oh I see.” The Pastor remarked. “We have several men in our congregation who have a plurality of wives. One even has four wives.”

As they continued to walk, George decided to stay out of it and just listen. The older man removed his arm from her shoulders as he began to gesture with his hands. “Do you love God with all your heart, daughter?”

“Yes, of course!” Juanita said with a hint of insult in her voice.

“Do you love your neighbor as yourself?” He continued to question.

“Y. . . yes,” Juanita said slowly, fearing she might be led into a trap.

“If the sister was cold and needed a coat would you lend her one?”

“Yes, sure” Juanita said sharply. Realizing now where he was headed, she thought she’d eat him to the punch.

“But I don’t want to share my husband.”

“Why?” the Pastor asked simply.

“Because he’s mine. Let her find her own husband.,” Juanita retorted.

“We’re not saying this young lady would ever become a wife of your husband,” he cautioned. “However,” he continued, “Are you aware that there are more Christian women than men?”

“Yes, that’s probably true,” she replied.

“And you know,” he went on, “that the Bible says be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers.”

“Yes.”

“Well now, would you condemn all those extra single sisters in Christ to never being loved by a man? To never have children, to do without the provision

and protection a man can provide?”

Juanita paused. She thought, ‘If I say yes I’ll seem cold hearted, and if I say no I’ll be saying it’s OK for George to have another wife.’ Finally after a long pause and several steps she said, “I know what the answer should be, but I don’t know if I can handle it.”

“Good,” the Pastor announced. “You are making progress.”

“I am?” she queried.

“Yes -- when you admit you are unable to handle something you give God a chance to supply His grace in the situation. Does not the Scripture say, ‘My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.’”

They turned around and started back toward the half finished church building.

As they drew near the Pastor announced, “I’ll send her to Okinyi’s compound tomorrow so you can meet her.”

Chapter 25

Cheryl climbed in Terry's vehicle and announced excitedly "I'm going flying!" as she beamed.

“What!?” Terry exclaimed. “What did he say and when are you going?” she asked before continuing. “Just give me a blow by blow description of everything that happened.”

Cheryl began her rendition of the morning’s events, only to be stopped every few moments with a question from Terry.

“Was he watching when you bent over to pick the pen up? Did you make the drop of the pen look accidental like I said?”

As Terry drove and listened, a sly grin crossed her face. “Am I the master manipulator of men or not?” she asked triumphantly.

“Well” Cheryl began her reply “I guess when it comes to men you do know how to take control.”

“He’s falling for you,” Terry stated confidently.

“Well, wait a minute” Cheryl protested, “I don’t want him to fall too far. I only want him to back me and persuade the rest of the board of elders to back me, if Aaron comes back talking crazy. Then if they fire him as pastor, they’ll hire me!” she explained.

“I know all that,” Terry said. “But if you’ve got the chance, why not go for the brass ring! Or I should say diamond ring,” she corrected herself.

“Now Terry,” Cheryl protested again, “before you get those wheels in your head turning, I want to say, I don’t want to be the cause of breaking up Mr. Becker’s marriage.”

“Aw, come on,” Terry pleaded. “The old goat probably doesn’t get any more than once a month and he might give half his fortune away to have a sweet young thing like you.”

“Terry!” Cheryl stated her name firmly, indicating she shouldn’t go on. “Oh, alright, but now I almost wish I had played him myself instead of teaching you some of my best tricks.”

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A long black stretch limousine pulled in to Cheryl’s driveway at the appointed time. Before the driver could ring the bell at the front door Cheryl came bouncing out wide eyed, wearing a tight pair of jeans and a similarly fitted sweater

and tennis shoes. The driver opened the right rear passenger door for her and she hopped in gleefully.

The last time she'd ridden in a limo was after her wedding some eight years previously. That one was only rented for the day, but this one was completely owned by Mr. Becker himself. As she began to look around the luxurious passenger compartment, she was startled to find she was not alone. "Good morning, Mrs. Cooper" Mr. Becker greeted her.

"Why Mr. Becker," Cheryl started, "when you said you'd send a car, I had no idea that you would be in it."

"Does my presence bother you?" he asked.

"Well no, she cooed "I sometimes like surprises" she said as she tilted her head and looked up from half closed eyes looking as seductive as possible. She couldn't believe herself. She had told Terry she didn't want to destroy the man's marriage and yet here she was playing seductive games.

There was something very appealing about Mr. Becker, although it was difficult to figure out what it was. It couldn't be just that he was very, very rich, she thought. She wasn't that type of woman, was she? While Mr. Becker offered Cheryl a choice of Champagne or Gingerale, neither of them knew that Terry was following and taking pictures every step of the way.

Chapter 26

Tabitha, the young lady the old Pastor had recommended as a house guest for George and Juanita, appeared at the front gate of the Okinyi compound promptly at 9:00 am. After the introductions were made they sat in the living room of the big house to get acquainted.

“I would be most appreciative if you would allow me to come to America and live with you in your house while I attend the University there,” Tabitha began. “I will cook, and clean, wash clothes, wash dishes and do all the household chores,” she continued.

“Whoa! wait a minute.” Juanita interrupted her.

“Yes, ma’am,” Tabitha responded.

“Stop it, just stop it” Juanita said dramatically. “Don’t call me ma’am.”

Tabitha rocked back in her seat, eyes wide as if frightened. “Why . . . I am sorry, Mrs. Bowman, I in no way meant to offend you,” Tabitha said apologetically.

“Wait, stop,” Juanita sighed. “Just hold it! Please don’t say anything for a moment.”

Tabitha stiffened but remained silent.

“You Africans are always bowing and scraping, treating us Americans like we are kings and queens or something. I know now that it’s part of your culture to show respect to men and older women, but by gosh, I’m only two years older than you. Can’t you just talk to me like another person?” Juanita stated simply.

“Yes, Mrs. Bowman,” Tabitha started again.

“No!” Juanita snapped. “Call me Juanita, please.”

“Yes . . . Wah-knee-dah,” Tabitha said, sounding it out with the same type of accent that Elizabeth had some days ago.

Juanita looked up and down at Tabitha, a beautiful young lady who was probably about 5’4” tall, which was only an inch shorter than herself, although she weighed maybe five pounds less than her 125 lbs. Tabitha was garbed in a

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traditional long colorful African dress which came down to her ankles and a complementing head dress that many African women wore.

I’ve got an idea,” Juanita announced. “Let’s go horseback riding.”

“Pardon me, ma . . . I mean, Wah Knee Dah,” Tabitha said, somewhat shocked at the suggestion.

“You’re about my size” Juanita went on “I’ll get you a pair of jeans and a T-shirt. We’ll saddle up a couple of Charles’ horses and go for a ride.”

“But . . . I . . .” Tabitha stuttered.

“You do know how to ride a horse, don’t you?” Juanita asked.

“Sure . . . but . . .” Tabitha said before she was cut off again.

“Look girl. I don’t need a slave or a servant at my house, I’ve got an electric stove, a microwave oven, an automatic dishwasher and half the stuff I cook comes prepared to pop in the oven from the supermarket. But if you want to live with us, I’ve got to get to know you and be relaxed around you,” she announced. “Come on, let me get you something to change into,” she directed.

About an hour later they came back riding their horses at a gallop. It appeared to George that they were racing each other. As he stood at the front fence watching them approach and hearing the clip clop of the horses hooves on the gravel and dirt road, he wondered what life would be like with another female in his house.

As the two reached the front gate they pulled back on the reigns and stopped the two horses a few yards past George. Turning the horses around, Juanita waved at George cheerily.

“We had a great talk and a great ride,” she stated happily. “Here,” she said

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as she sprang from her saddle and landed with both feet on the ground at the same time. “Why don’t you ride with her for an hour or so and talk.” She said as she held out the reins of her horse. “I think she’ll make a great guest but I know you’ll make the final decision.”

George was shocked. He couldn't believe his ears. Was this his wife? Was this his beloved Juanita inviting him to go off and be alone with another woman? He hesitantly took the reins, climbed on the horse, and then looked deeply into his wife's eyes as he said, "Thanks, hon, I love you."

With that he kicked the horse with his heels and the two were off.

"Juanita," someone called her name. She turned, surprised to see Rachel behind her smiling.

"Hey, you pronounced my name correctly. I didn't think a Kenyan could do that."

"I've been practicing," Rachel said sheepishly. "Is my white American sister growing?" Rachel asked.

"What do you mean?" Juanita queried with a furrowed brow.

"Are you coming to the point where you can allow your husband to love another woman and not be jealous?" Rachel clarified.

Juanita dropped her jaw and bit her lower lip. She paused for a long while as they walked together toward the front porch. She didn't really think that George would be attracted to a black woman, so it probably wasn't much of a test anyway. But she didn't want to say that to Rachel. Finally she spoke. "Let's just say I'm not ready for graduation in this area yet, but I am trying to make progress."

Juanita may not have thought this was a real test but what she didn't know was that a real test with a white American woman was soon to come. Juanita also didn't understand how much George was growing spiritually. His decisions were being made less and less on what he wanted and more and more on what God wanted. For that reason, there would also be a black woman who could be a real test in Juanita's life.

Chapter 27

As time marched on Kyle and Terry took their weeks visit to Hawaii where Terry took plenty of vacation pictures and yet remembered to time their return to be just previous to the African Missionary Trip return. Meanwhile Aaron found his messages to the Africans leaning more and more toward telling them to preserve the good things they had and to avoid the contaminations of the West.

Aaron and George often found themselves reflecting on life together. “You know, Aaron,” George began “It’s kinda nice to get away from all the hustle and bustle of the city.”

“Yes, I know what you mean,” Aaron replied. “We have immense wealth compared to most of these people and yet they seem to have an inner peace that is lacking in most Americans.”

“Yes,” George jumped in. “And their praise and worship is so, so sincere. I mean every member is into worshipping God. It’s not like in the States where I think half our church is just listening to Juanita and me sing and play, as if they were enjoying a concert.”

There was a moment of silence as they both reflected on what had been said. After a while George spoke again.

“The love” he said. “They have genuine love one for another.”

“I know what you mean,” Aaron said slowly. “They don’t just say I love you. They really, really show it.”

“Hey, are you and Juanita going to let Tabitha stay with you guys while she goes to the University?” Aaron asked.

“Yeah, sure.” George replied. “With a home as big as we have she could hardly be in the way, and besides she seems somewhat independent so I don’t think she’ll be much of a burden.”

“You don’t think Juanita will be jealous of a good looking woman running around the house?” Aaron asked with a wink.

“No, I don’t think Tabitha is any threat to her. Besides to marry a Kenyan woman there are all types of dowries, Bride prices and relatives to consider. I don’t hear God saying he wants me going through all of that.” George answered.

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Indirectly Tabitha would indicate a change in their lives in a way that no one suspected.

Juanita had become good friends with Elizabeth and Rachel, by the time they had packed up and were ready to go. Knowing she would miss her new

friends she wanted to say something special to each.

“Rachel,” she began as they stood outside the airport before going inside, “I’ve seen more love, graciousness and honor of a husband from you than any wife I’ve ever met.” Her eyes began to tear a little as she went on. “If I ever find myself in your type of situation I pray that I can be half the Christian woman you are.”

Then she turned to Elizabeth and beamed a big smile. “You taught me how stuck up and arrogant and presumptuous we Americans can be. For that I will never forget you.” she chuckled.

She hugged each of the wives of Charles Okinyi and then quickly grabbed her bags and headed into the airport so they wouldn’t see the tears stream down her face. She knew her words had been inadequate. Those two women had taught her more about Christian love than years of attending church. She had learned the right words but they showed it in action.



The flight home was long and boring, cramped and tedious, but the five (Tabitha included) talked in between sleeping. The U.S. trio had learned a great deal.

“Most Christian missionaries from the United States need to forget about going to teach Kenyan Christians; they have a lot to learn from them,” Aaron stated.

“You’re right about that,” George agreed. “Most American Christians are far outranked in love for God and devotion to him as well as caring for one’s fellow man.”

Then Juanita jumped in. “Another thing I think I’ve learned as I’ve

reflected on it, is that we in America and the West are so thoroughly indoctrinated in the monogamy only mode that anything else seems weird and crazy. We are brainwashed from childhood by stories like Cinderella and Snow White and later Romeo and Juliet that there is one handsome prince for every beautiful young princess. This myth is furthered by a constant diet of television programs, movies, romance novels, magazines, books, the media and friends, relatives, mom and pop and you name it.” She paused a moment to let the others reflect on her words.

“In our culture,” she went on, “We almost worship monogamous romance.” She turned to look at the others to see if they were still listening.

“So anyone that dares violate the monogamy only standard is considered lower than scum. In a way it’s considered worse than rape or murder. And women are so well indoctrinated that if her man considers caring about another woman, she feels hurt and betrayed. Her self esteem is lowered because she feels she was unable keep her man happy with only her. She then gives in to depression. This is followed by anger, even rage. She wants to kill the man, or at least divorce him.”

“Doesn’t that show,” Aaron jumped in, “that the whole ‘monogamy only’ system is straight out of the pit of hell?” he asked. “A woman would rather divorce, something the Bible speaks against, rather than love enough to share the man, which is something the Bible is very much in favor of.”

“Yes,” Juanita confirmed. “Well said, you took the words right out of my mouth.”

“Well, not everyone is going to want more than one wife,” George joined in. “But we must not be so critical of those that do.”

“Not critical?” Juanita questioned. “You know, before we came I never would have thought I’d be saying this, but I’ve never seen a more loving husband and father than Charles, or more respectful and devoted wives than Rachel and Elizabeth, not to mention the degree of discipline and respect the children show to their father.

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We should not only be not critical, we need to warmly embrace them with Christian love that they’ll rarely find anywhere else!” she concluded.

Tabitha lowered her head and smiled, being pleased that her countrymen

had left such a favorable impression.

Charles leaned his chair back and closed his eyes, satisfied that the three had learned what he had hoped they would.

Chapter 28

“Cheryl, this is Terry,” she said as she spoke into her cell phone as she paced through her home.

“Hi Terry,” came the response from the other end of the line. “You guys are back from Hawaii already?” she asked.

“Yeah, it was lovely, I’ll have to tell you all about it. When is Aaron coming in?” Terry asked.

“It should be tonight,” Cheryl replied. “But you have a copy of the original schedule, don’t you?”

“Oh yeah, I had just forgotten.” She lied. “You know how to play it when he gets in, don’t you?” Terry continued.

“Well,” Cheryl began, “I know you think I should give him the cold shoulder, but I do miss him, and I was hoping we could just make up and forget what’s happened.”

“What!?” Terry almost screamed into the phone. “Girl, he hurt you, he walked out on you and almost as much as said he was considering another wife!”

“Yeah, but . . . maybe . . .” Cheryl began again before being interrupted.

“Yeah, but nothing” Terry said firmly. “If you let him get away with this, he’ll always treat you like trash.”

“Umm . . I don’t know . . .” Cheryl started again before Terry continued.

“You give him the cold shoulder, then hide all the food in the house in the guest room closet. Don’t cook him anything. Then tell him if he wants food in the house he’ll need to get it himself!”

“Well . . .” Cheryl began again.

“Well nothing!” Terry insisted. “Have I proven that I am the master manipulator of men or not?”

“Uh, yeah . . you’ve proven that alright” Cheryl agreed.

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“Well, do what I say” Terry demanded.

“Okay . . . I’ll do it. Good bye” Cheryl responded before hanging up the phone.

“I’m home!” Aaron called out. He’d seen the light on in the upstairs

bedroom and he rung the door bell several times, only to have to fumble for keys and let himself in. Tossing his bags in the front door, he called out again. “Honey, I’m home!” Still there was no answer.

He marched up the stairs into the master bedroom. There Cheryl sat wearing a long pink night gown, and stroking her long blondish brown hair with a brush.

“Sweet heart, I am home” he repeated.

“I heard you the first two times” she said dryly.

She never turned but continued to stroke her hair with the brush.

“Are you really going to treat me this way, when we haven’t seen each other for a month?” he asked incredulously.

“You . . .” she started “You walked out on me!”

“Walked out? Walked out?” he repeated. “It was a ministry trip that had been planned for a long time. You were supposed to be with me!” Aaron said as he began to raise his voice.

Cheryl turned partly around so she could see him out of the corner of her eyes. “I asked you not to leave and you went anyway!” She spat out, and then returned to looking in the mirror and stroking her hair.

Aaron was turning red, he could not believe his wife could have such venom after a whole month. He started to say more and then thought better of it. He turned on his heels, walked out of the room, and went back down the stairs to the kitchen. He’d had a long flight with tiny airplane type meals and he was hungry. Opening the refrigerator, he found it nearly empty except for a half gallon of milk and a few carrots. Proceeding to the food pantry, he found it also empty.

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Where is the food? He thought. Then, letting his thought be verbalized, he yelled out “Hey, where’s the food?”

There was no answer.

He went to the intercom that connected the kitchen to the bedroom and pushed the button asking again. “Hey, honey, where is all the food?” Still there

was not answer. He bounded up the stairs and into their bedroom, where he asked once again.

“Dear, where is all the food?” He said through clenched teeth as he tried to keep his anger under control.

“I suppose the grocery store has plenty,” Cheryl replied coolly. She didn’t want to lie but according to Terry’s plans, she wasn’t supposed to tell him the whole truth.

Aaron clenched his fists, took a deep breath, counted to ten in his head, then turned and headed downstairs and to the garage. As he pulled out in his Corvette, Cheryl was on the phone to Terry.

“Terry, he’s gone and he’s mad. What do I do now?”

“Did he say where he’s going?”

“I suppose to Carville Grocery where we always shop” came the reply, “but I think I really upset him and I . . .”

“Cheryl, I can’t talk now, I’ll call you in a little bit.” Click.

Cheryl heard the phone hung up in her ear. She redialed Terry but there was no answer.

Reaching the store just minutes after Aaron, Terry grabbed a cart and put a few things in it to pretend she was shopping. She then went down the end of the rows looking to see which one Aaron was in. Finally she spotted him in the cereal aisle. She thought to herself, I’ve got to time this so I run into him at the end of the aisle.

Her timing was perfect -- her cart was run into his. As he was about to say excuse me she beat him to the punch.

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“Oh excuse me, Oh Aaron!” She said as if in surprise. “You’re back” she said cheerily. Aaron was in no mood for socializing but still he didn’t want to be totally rude.

“Hi Terry,” he said dryly.

“Kyle and I took our trip to Hawaii” she announced as bubbly as she could. “It was so much fun!” she went on. “Here, I have some pictures in my purse . . .” she said as she opened her purse to take them out.

“Excuse me Terry, but I really don’t feel like looking at a lot of pictures right now” Aaron began his reply, but before he could finish it appeared that Terry stumbled and dropped the pictures on the floor. As they hit the floor they scattered.

Being the gentleman that he was, Aaron bent down to help gather them. This too had been part of Terry’s anticipation and plan. As he began to pick up the pictures, he saw scattered among pictures of Pearl Harbor and grass skirted Hawaiians were pictures of his wife.

“What are these?” he questioned.

There was one of her getting in the limousine. Another of her getting out of the limo with Mr. Becker. Another of Mr. Becker helping her into his personal airplane. And finally one of her kissing Mr. Becker on the cheek while he had his arm around her.

“What!”

“Why?”

He felt like he’d been hit in the stomach with the fat end of a baseball bat. His head began to swim. He felt nauseous. He grabbed the pictures and looked at Terry with tears in his eyes questioning what had happened in his absence.

“I’m sorry” Terry said, “you weren’t supposed to see those.” She lied. “Give them back,” she pleaded.

“No way!” he said as he stumbled to his feet. And leaving the cart behind, he ran outside to his car and drove madly toward his house.

Chapter 29

Flashing lights in his rear view mirror caught Aaron’s attention. He pulled over to the curb and got out his license and registration.

“Sir,” the officer began, “May I see your license and registration.”

“Sure, here it is” Aaron mumbled, disturbed more by the interruption in his

mad dash home than the possibility of receiving a speeding ticket.

“Oh,” the officer said, “It’s you -- pastor Cooper.”

“Uh . . . Yeah” Aaron responded as he squinted through the flashlight being shown into his eyes.

“Pastor, you were going 50 in a 35 mile per hour zone” the officer announced.

“However, since it’s you, I’m just going to give you a verbal warning. But slow it down, okay?”

“Yeah, sure officer . . . and thanks” Aaron said, somewhat relieved that the stop hadn’t taken as long as he had expected.

Driving home at a slower pace, he began to think, “How? Why has she done this? Are things so bad between us that she is having an affair?” he picked up his cell phone and dialed.

“Hello, George.”

“Yes, who is it?” came the irritated response.

“It’s me, Aaron. Listen, we’ve got to meet.”

“Tonight? It’s late and I’m tired.”

“Yes, tonight buddy. I’ve got extreme problems” Aaron pleaded.

“Oh, alright” came George’s reply.

“I’ll be in front of your house in 5 minutes” Aaron informed him.

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Ten minutes later the two friends were driving around as Aaron explained what had happened.

“Let’s bring Charles in on this” George suggested.

“Aw, man, I don’t know.” Aaron hedged. “I don’t know that this is his

problem, besides I am not too sure I want too many people knowing my wife is cheating on me.”

“Aaron, he’s got a lot of wisdom and he may have some insight as to how to handle the situation.”

After arriving at Charles’ apartment and getting him out of bed, the three sat around his table drinking coffee as Aaron tearfully went through the events of the evening. Charles was quiet for a long while, then finally he spoke.

“The spirits of Jezebel and witchcraft are at work” he said confidently.

“What?” Aaron questioned.

“Don’t you see,” Charles began, “It’s Terry that’s trying to destroy your marriage? Actually it’s the spirits that control her.”

“Are you talking demons?” George queried incredulously.

“Yes, unclean spirits” Charles responded. “The spirit of Jezebel that seeks to rule every man and the spirits of rebellion and witchcraft. Terry had the pictures. That means she probably took the pictures. Why did she just accidentally run into you at the store? I’ll tell you,” Charles continued without waiting for an answer, “it wasn’t an accident at all. She wanted you to see those pictures, knowing it would bring an even greater rift between you and Cheryl.”

“Wow!” Aaron howled as he leaned back in his chair. “That is diabolical!”

“Well, what are we going to do?” George asked.

“First, we’re going to agree together in prayer and bind these devilish spirits and then Aaron is going to go back home and pretend nothing has happened. Terry will likely be waiting to hear about the expected explosion

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between the two of you. When it doesn’t happen, she’ll be temporarily thrown off balance.

“We will continue to pray for you and we will continue to speak against the power of the spirits to manipulate the situation.”

The men prayed together as Charles had suggested, before Aaron and George headed out the door.

“If anything else comes up” Charles called after Aaron “then give me a call, day or night!”

“Yeah, thanks Charles” Aaron replied gratefully, although he had no idea he’d be making just such a call very soon.

Chapter 30

Cheryl was asleep in bed when Aaron returned home. It took every ounce of discipline and self-control he possessed not to wake her immediately and confront her with the evidence of the pictures. Charles had said to wait, and wait he would; but how long was another question.

Although he climbed into bed, sleep escaped him as his mind whirled, imagining all the possibilities of things that might have happened while he was

gone. A fitful sleep finally came in the wee hours of the morning.

Ring . . . Ring . . . Ring . . .

The sound of the phone ringing brought Aaron abruptly to a wakened stage. He rolled over and grabbed for the phone on the night stand, at the same time realizing that Cheryl was already up and probably downstairs. He lifted the receiver gently, only to hear Terry on the other end of the line and Cheryl answering. He decided to listen in. Something he'd never have done before, but now was a desperate time.

“What happened last night?” Terry asked excitedly.

“What happened?” Cheryl snarled into the phone. “That’s what I want to know. Why didn’t you call me back?”

“Uh . . . I was tied up” Terry hedged. “What did Aaron say when he got home?” Terry asked.

“Nothing. I was asleep when he got home and he’s still in bed asleep now.”

“Oh.” Terry said. “I’ll call you this afternoon. I’ve gotta go.”

Click.

Terry had hung up, leaving Cheryl to wonder what was really going on, but unbeknownst to her, it confirmed Aaron’s suspicions that Charles was right. Terry was manipulating things. Still, he thought, that was no explanation for Cheryl to be with Mr. Becker.

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Aaron gloomily climbed out of bed, showered, shaved, dressed and went downstairs where he found his wife still dressed in a gown and housecoat, sitting at the kitchen table sipping coffee and staring out the window.

“Good morning” Aaron spoke dryly.

“Morning” Cheryl responded without looking up.

Aaron began to thumb through the mail that had come while he was away and stopped suddenly when he came to an envelope addressed to him from the church.

“What’s this?” he asked.

“What’s what?” Cheryl responded as she finally looked up.

“Something from the church to me,” he said.

Cheryl drew a deep breath before responding. “Why don’t you open it and see,” she said, not wanting to let on that she knew what it was.

Aaron opened it and read aloud,

“Dear Pastor Cooper,

It has come to our attention that you have certain associations with a person or persons who have beliefs that are contrary to the doctrine of the church, and such could have negative repercussions to our church’s reputation and integrity. We the board of elders demand your presence on the first Thursday of this month at 7:00 p.m. in the church conference room. At said time you will be given the opportunity to explain or defend your actions against the allegations that have been made, after which the board will determine the best course of action to insure the future success of the church.

Sincerely,
John Becker, Chairman

“What!? I can’t believe this!” Aaron yelled. “They’re trying to fire me! And Becker even has the nerve to sign his name!”

Cheryl’s eyes widened. “What does he mean by that?” She thought.

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“What does he know?”

She would soon find out.

Aaron continued ranting. “Becker steals my wife and then works to get me fired too!”

Cheryl now stood up, frightened. She backed away from Aaron, who had fire in his eyes. She'd never seen him this way.

“What . . . do you mean by that?” She mumbled, even though guilt was written all over her face.

“What do I mean?” Aaron snarled as he took slow, small steps toward her. He then reached into his back pocket and pulled out the pictures and flung them at her face!

Cheryl instinctively reacted by raising her hands to cover her face as the pictures fell to the floor. She stooped to pick them up and look at them.

“Where . . . Where . . .” she stuttered “where did you get these?”

“From your good buddy Terry,” Aaron spat out as he turned his back on her and moved toward the kitchen window. He stood motionless, staring out the windows as Cheryl began a slow deep moan that began from the pit of her stomach. Tears streamed down her face as the moan turned into a wail and then into uncontrollable sobs.

Aaron ignored her, believing her reaction was only proof of his worst fears. She had been unfaithful.

Tabitha had enrolled in the University and planned to stay on campus until five or so when Juanita was scheduled to pick her up. With the help of several students, she had completed her enrollment and purchased the necessary books by three, so Shawanda Perkins, a grad student in her mid twenties, offered her a ride home.

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“Thank you,” Tabitha said as she climbed into the blue Toyota.

“Sure, no problem,” Shawanda responded, “now what did you say your address is?”

Tabitha looked in her purse and pulled out the slip of paper on which Juanita had carefully written the address, and handed it to Shawanda.

“4702 Parkhill Way. Hey, girl you live in the ritzy neighborhood don’t ya.”

“Pardon me, ma’am?” Tabitha said.

“Hey girl, don’t ma’am me, I’m just a student like you,” Shawanda began to respond before she realized that foreigners might not be familiar with some American idioms. “Ritzy” Shawanda explained “implies rich. It came from the Ritz Hotel, where at one time only the very rich could afford to stay.”

“Oh,” Tabitha said.

“But girl, tell me about Africa, my ancestors’ home land” Shawanda went on.

She was a light brown skinned girl with long black hair that came down to the middle of her back. She was well proportioned although not much leaner than Tabitha, who was nearly three to four inches taller.

Aaron had left Cheryl crying in the middle of the kitchen floor, but first he had gathered the pictures from her before he left. He just might need them again, he thought.

After Cheryl composed herself, she got dressed and drove to Terry’s house. She rang the bell again and again, and then began beating the door impatiently.

“Okay, okay, I’m coming” came the response from within.

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Terry opened the door surprised to see Cheryl standing there with eyes red and swollen from crying.

“How could you?” Cheryl demanded as she pushed her way into the house.

“How could I what?” Terry asked. She backed up, fearful of being struck by the very angry Cheryl.

“You took pictures without my knowing, and then you showed them to Aaron!” she screamed.

“Well, yes, I . . . uh . . . I did take the pictures but they were to be used with Becker, just in case we needed them.”

“What?!” Cheryl screamed. “You expected me to be part of some blackmail plot?”

Terry lied: “Well, no . . . uh . . . it was just leverage, in case we needed it.”

“I don’t believe you” Cheryl growled as she marched toward Terry with clenched fists. Terry looked around for an object to defend herself with, but it was too late. Cheryl grabbed her by her blouse with her left hand and slapped her across the cheek with her right. The blow sent the smaller woman reeling backward to the floor.

“You have purposefully tried to destroy my marriage!” Cheryl screamed. “I don’t ever want to see you again! Stay out of our lives! Do you understand?” Cheryl declared as she stood above Terry with her feet spread apart about one shoulder’s width and her left hand on her hip as she pointed with her right.

Terry held her cheek and stayed on the floor, afraid that if she got up she’d only be hit again.

Cheryl squinted her eyes about to say more, but thought better of it. Pivoting around, she marched out of the door, slamming it behind her.

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As Shawanda drove up to the house she saw the garage door had been left open and there were baseball gloves, a softball and a bat inside.

“Hey, Tab,” she said, “you want to play some catch?”

“What’s catch?” Tabitha asked.

“You know, throw a softball back and forth.” Shawanda explained as she pointed toward the gloves and ball in the garage.

“Let me ask Juanita if it is alright.” Tabitha responded cautiously.

As she went through the first door she almost ran into George, who was coming out, having heard someone driving up and not knowing who it was.

“Oh, excuse me,” Tabitha said after almost bumping in to him. “May my friend and I play ‘catch’ with your equipment?” she asked.

“Sure,” George smiled. “I don’t have anything to do right now, I’ll play with you.”

Minutes later Shawanda was burning fastballs into George’s glove and alternately lobbed the ball to Tabitha, who was new at this strange game.

“You’re quite an athlete, Shawanda” George said, offering a compliment to Tabitha’s new friend.

“No offense, my man, but that doesn’t mean much coming from a white man.” Shawanda retorted with a chuckle.

George was shocked by the brazenness of Tabitha’s friend while he secretly admired her sleek figure as she leaped high and twisted to catch the ball he had thrown over her head.

“Think you’re tough stuff, huh?” George playfully called back.

“Tougher than you!” Shawanda stated confidently as she burned another fast ball into his glove.

“Oh, Yeah” George called out. “I’ll beat you in game of 21.”

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“Put five dollars on it and you’ve got a bet.”

“Whoa, wait a minute, I am Christian and don’t gamble. But I’ll tell you what, win or lose I’ll treat you to a cold Pepsi,” George offered.

“Shawanda and walked over to George and shoved her baseball glove in his chest. “Two Pepsi’s, she said as she winked at him.

Shawanda and Tabitha followed George through the garage as he replaced the baseball gloves and softball and picked up the basketball. The two then traveled through the house.

Shawanda whistled as she saw the luxurious interior. “Man, you’re living large!” she exclaimed.

“If that’s a compliment, thanks” George replied.

They went out the back door, and immediately Shawanda pulled the ball from George and leaped high in the air, executing a perfect jump shot that hit nothing but net. George was playing defense against the next shot, but she faked a hook and when he went up into the air she dribbled around his airborne body and made an easy layup.

George was determined to block the next shot. Even though he wasn’t the greatest athlete, no girl had ever gotten the best of him. This time Shawanda did a fadeaway shot. George leaped high and tipped the ball and then came tumbling down on top of Shawanda. As they both toppled to the ground Shawanda yelled, “Get off me, you big oaf!”

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry” George said very apologetically.

“That’s OK, I’m not made of glass, so I don’t break easy. However, that doesn’t mean you get to climb on top of me without permission” she said playfully as she lightly punched him in the stomach.

Juanita, having heard voices, stepped out of the house and into the back yard just in time to hear George say “Hold on, I’m a lover not a fighter” as he grabbed her around the shoulders.

Chapter 31

Aaron had made the calls and George and Charles were huddled in his office discussing what Aaron's strategy would be at the governing elders' board meeting which was coming up in two days.

"I guess it's a question of do I stand up for the truth and almost certainly get fired or do I try to compromise and maybe keep my job," Aaron stated dryly.

The George spoke up. "Well, I think you should . . ."

BZZZZ . . . bzzz . . . bzzz

The intercom was buzzing and Aaron pushed the button. “What is it?” Aaron answered irritably. “I thought I said I was not to be disturbed!”

“I’m sorry pastor, it’s Mrs. Chandler. She says it is very urgent,” Mrs. Halstead said.

“Give me a minute,” Aaron ordered.

“Yes, sir” came the response.

Aaron looked up pleadingly at George.

“Don’t say a word, my friend” George assured him. “I’ll take care of it. Whatever it is, I’ll take care of it!” he stated firmly. George left the room as Charles and Aaron continued to talk.

“Then there’s the problem at home with my wife,” Aaron said as he stood up so the other man could not see the tears that welled up in his eyes. “I don’t know whether to divorce her, go in for counseling some place or what.”

Charles waited a long while before responding. “Jesus said we should even love our enemies. I don’t think she is your enemy. Yes, she may be hurt and confused and she may have done something rash and out of line . . .”

Before Charles could finish this statement Aaron turned and exploded.

“Out of line? Out of line? I’d say having sex with another man is more than out of line!” he almost yelled.

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“Wait a minute,” Charles replied, “you don’t know that she had an affair with him. The pictures just showed her getting in a Limo and getting in and out of a plane.”

“Well, if that were true why didn’t she say it,” Aaron asked.

“Who knows, maybe guilt, maybe fear, maybe the realization that her best friend Terry had betrayed her. Who knows! And even if it is the worse,” Charles

said as he rose from his seat and moved closer to his friend, placing his hands on his shoulders, “can you forgive even that?”

“I don’t know,” Aaron muttered, “I don’t know . . .” he said as he turned his eyes away from Charles and gazed into nothingness.

George and Judy Chandler were seated in the conference room as she began her tearful story.

“I used my last thousand dollars of savings trying to fix the transmission in my car last month, then my employer laid me off, the rent is due and the landlord says he is going to send the eviction process in two weeks if I can’t pay up in full,” she said between gasps of breath trying to hold back the tears.

George looked at her boys who were now going under, over and around the conference table. He reflected back at the young children of similar ages that he saw in Africa and how in contrast they were so well disciplined.

“No problem,” George spoke up after a moment.

“No problem? What do you mean?” Judy Chandler asked.

“There’s no problem because you and the kids are coming home to live with me and my wife. I’ll speak to the landlord and pay the back due rent. You move in with us at no charge. Stay as long as you like. I’ll help you find a job and you can save money until you’re ready to step out on your own again.”

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“But . . . but . . . I couldn’t let you do that,” she began to protest.

“Don’t worry about it. It’s my pleasure. It’s a done deal,” George responded.

“But what about your wife, don’t you want to confer with her first?” she asked.

I am the head of my house and what I say goes. Besides I have a very loving and understanding wife,” he stated confidently. “Let’s pack up and start moving” he suggested.

Privately, George was hoping Juanita wouldn’t mind. Judy was very attractive and this would be a real test of her spiritual growth.

Bzzzz . . . bzzz . . .

The intercom went off again.

“What now, Mrs. Halstead?” Aaron answered angrily again.

“Your wife is here, Pastor.”

“My wife?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Send her in.”

Charles and Aaron stared at each other in the eyes. Then Charles mouthed the words “I’ll see you later.”

“Hello, Mrs. Cooper,” Charles spoke warmly as he passed her on his way out.

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“Hello, Mr. Okinyi.” Cheryl said dryly.

Cheryl stood just inside the door of her husband’s office. She had used makeup to hide her puffy eyes as best she could. Her hair was freshly washed and draped over her shoulders. She wore a blouse, a skirted beige suit, white hose and matching beige 3 inch heels.

Aaron’s back was turned to her as he pretended to gaze out the windows.

“We’ve got to talk” she began.

“Oh, really!” he said sarcastically. “You mean you aren’t flying off with John Becker today?” He regretted saying it as soon as it came out of his mouth. He turned slowly only to see she had dropped her head. A single tear was slowly making its way down her left cheek. He moved over to her, put his arm around her shoulders and said, “Yes, you’re right, we have to talk, but not here. Let’s go for a drive,” he said softly. With that he steered her out of the office.

Once they were in the car and moving, Cheryl began. “I want to tell you everything” she said.

Aaron winced, not sure whether he wanted to know the whole truth or not.

“When you left” she continued, “I was hurt and angry. I thought you might go to Africa and find some princess or have a harem of women . . . or . . . Oh Aaron, there were just so many silly things going through my head . . . and . . .”

Aaron interrupted: “We’ve been married for how long? And you think I’m just going to drop you and pick up somebody else in thirty days?”

“Well . . .” she tried to explain “Terry said that . . .”

“Terry! I figured she had a part in this,” Aaron blurted out.

“She planned out everything,” Cheryl explained. “What to wear, how to act, everything.”

“But why did you go along with it?” Aaron questioned with irritation in his voice and yet pleading to understand.

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“Well . . . I don’t know . . . well, will Mr. Becker being chairman of the elders governing board . . . I thought if you were leaving me in . . .” she halted and started again, hesitant to say it all.

Aaron interrupted. “Leaving you, how did you come to that . . .”

“Oh Aaron, I am sorry I . . . I just wasn’t thinking straight. And those pictures. I never knew Terry had taken them until you showed them to me.”

“She’s a witch” Aaron spat out. “I think she’s demonically possessed.”

“Well . . . ah . . . I think you may be right now” Cheryl responded.

“You’ve got to cut her loose. There’s no chance of us making it with her around!” Aaron stated firmly as he turned to look at his wife with a flash of fire in his eyes. They had come to the city part. Aaron parked the car and walked around to the other side to let Cheryl out.

Aaron hung his head and bit his bottom lip as he placed his hands on his hips. “Tell me!” he said. “Did you have sex with Becker?” He forced himself to raise his head slightly to look in her eyes. He had to know the truth, even if it hurt.

“No!” Cheryl almost screamed. “No!” She said again. “He picked me up in his limo and the driver took us to the airfield. He took me for a flying lesson and showed me the city from 10,000 feet. That’s all! Truly that is all!”

Aaron breathed a sigh of relief, took her hand in his and began walking through the park on one of the concrete pathways.

After several steps Cheryl asked “What now?”

“I don’t know,” Aaron answered. “I have to meet with the governing board in two days.” He took in a deep breath and blew it out his mouth. “I may lose my job.”

They walked silently for a long time and finally returned to his car. “I’ll prepare the best I can and see what happens” Aaron said matter of factly. However, Aaron wouldn’t be the only one preparing for that meeting.

Chapter 32

Aaron arrived five minutes before the start time wearing his best navy blue suit and long sleeve white shirt and silk maroon colored silk tie. He was told to wait outside the conference room until the entire board was seated.

There would be old Mr. Greenwald, a retired pharmacist and Ben Peacock was the owner of a tire dealership. Then there was Mr. Pirtle, a retired school teacher and Mr. Johnson, who had at one time been a minister but found the sale of securities more lucrative. The youngest man on the board was probably a good fifteen years senior to Aaron's thirty years of age.

Once they were all assembled Aaron was invited in. Mr. Becker sat at the head of the table; the other men sat on the sides. Aaron was given the seat at the other end directly opposite Mr. Becker. "The hot seat," Aaron thought.

Mr. Becker began. "Pastor Cooper," he started out very formally. "There have been certain allegations that you have been involved with certain persons who are espousing doctrines that are in opposition to our church tradition. We feel . . ."

He was interrupted by the sound of the door opening. Everyone turned to see who it was. "Uh . . . this is a private meeting" Mr. Becker called out.

"I understand you might be talking about me so I thought I ought to be here" Charles Okinyi responded as he strode confidently into the room with his head held high. His very bearing said that no one was going to be able to remove him and he was staying whether they liked it or not.

"Well . . . uh . . ." Mr. Becker stuttered as he looked at the others on the board questioning with his eyes as if to say 'what do we do?' Finally he said "Well, have a seat over there on the side." He then turned to face Aaron again but was obviously disturbed by Charles' presence.

"As I was saying . . . you seem to be supportive of the concept of polygamy which is very anti-Christian as you well know and . . ."

He was interrupted again by the door opening. "Good morning, gentlemen," George spoke as he entered. "I thought I'd just drop in for moral support of my friend, the pastor."

"This is supposed to be a private meeting" Mr. Becker stated irritably.

“A man doesn’t deserve to be alone when he’s being railroaded!” George stated emphatically.

Charles, who was now seated in a chair on the side with his legs crossed and his arms folded across his chest, smiled at George’s antics.

“Polygamy is not of God!” Mr. Johnson blurted out.

“Oh, really” Aaron countered. “And on what scriptural basis do you make such a statement, seeing as how that most of the Patriarchs in the Bible were men who had more than one wife. Let’s see -- there was Abraham, Israel, Moses, Gideon, and David to name a few of many.”

“Well that’s all Old Testament stuff,” Mr. Johnson argued. “God winked at a time when men didn’t know any better.”

“Really!” Aaron responded, feeling a boldness come over him. “God could say He was against idolatry, murder, theft and covetousness but he was afraid to say don’t have more than one wife? I’ve never known God to be afraid to say anything He wanted to!” Aaron finished confidently.

“Wait a minute.” Mr. Pirtle jumped in. “Adam had only one wife, Eve. If God had intended man to have more than one He’d have made more than one.”

Aaron smiled slightly before answering. He was using the same old tired, weak argument that he himself had made a couple of months ago. Charles sat quietly with a twinkle in his eyes as he watched his protege handle the arguments one after another. The board members were becoming more and more irritated, as none of them could find an argument to defend their ‘monogamy only’ position that Aaron couldn’t counter.

Mr. Johnson sat quietly and thumbed through his Bible, in as much as he was the only one other than Aaron who had thought to bring one. Finally, he spoke up. “Tell me Pastor Cooper, does the Bible say that we are to be a kingdom of priests?”

“Yes.”

“The priests were only to have one wife” Mr. Johnson stated. “So God is effectively ruling out a plural number of wives for New Testament believers.”

Aaron was stunned. He'd never heard this argument before. He didn't think the reasoning could be right but he had no answer. He turned to look at George, whose facial expression and the hunch of his shoulders told him, he didn't know either.

Finally, Charles spoke up. "You must be referring to Leviticus 21. But it doesn't say the priest can marry only one wife. It says he must marry a virgin. It is not a restriction on how many he can marry, but a restriction on the type of woman he can marry, inasmuch as the high priest is a shadow and a figure of Jesus Christ." He paused a moment to let it sink in.

Then Charles went on "Is our priesthood after the Levitical order, sir?" he asked and waited for an answer.

"Well . . . uh . . . uh . . ." Mr. Johnson stuttered, obviously not quite knowing what to say.

"No!" Charles answered his own question as he stood up and walked over beside Aaron. "We have priesthood that is after the Melchizedek order, and if you remember the Melchizedek order is above the Levitical order. Melchizedek was a king and a priest. Most of the kings mentioned in the Bible had a plurality of wives.

"Jesus is our King and High Priest, right?" He continued without waiting for an answer. ". . . He depicts himself as the bridegroom marrying five wise virgins in Matthew 25. True, it is a parable speaking of union with the true church but he would never have used such an example if having a plurality of wives was wrong!"

The room was silent. Charles walked back over to his seat and sat down again. Finally Mr. Becker spoke. "I don't care how you silver tongued young punks twist the Bible, I don't think it's right and it makes us look like a bunch of Mormon fundamentalists weirdoes. It will destroy the church's reputation, I tell you!"

"What?" George stood to his feet. "You mean you don't care about truth, you only care about what people will think?" He questioned incredulously.

"You, mister!" Mr. Becker said as he turned red in the face and stood up. "You be careful! You've got three women living with you now and have been

seen playing around with a fourth.”

“What?” Aaron responded almost involuntarily as he looked toward his friend. Although he knew about Tabitha, George hadn’t told him about how he had handled the Judy Chandler situation and George had never thought to say anything about Shawanda. She was just a friend of Tabitha.

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“What? How? How did you come up with this?” George questioned.

“I have my sources!” Mr. Becker warned as he shook his finger at George.

Most of the men on the board had shocked looks on their faces as it seemed that Mr. Becker had delivered the knockout punch.

Aaron decided not to wait any longer. He delivered a punch of his own. “Mr. Becker!” he called out. “Is the real reason you’re interested in getting me fired, because you want to date my wife!”

Mr. Becker rocked back on his heels, shocked at the accusations; but Aaron pulled the pictures from his jacket pocket and flung them on the table for all to see. There were gasps from everyone as they looked at the pictures and then at Mr. Becker and back at Aaron.

“Don’t worry!” Aaron said as he stood up. “I’m resigning! I’ll give my final sermon on Sunday and have my office cleared out in a week!” With that he pivoted, moved around his chair and marched out the door, followed by Charles. George hastily grabbed the pictures off the conference table and rushed out to join his friends.

“You be careful, or I’ll sue you for liable!” Mr. Becker yelled after them.

Later, Aaron and Cheryl were seated together in their double wide love seat in front of the fire in the fireplace in the living room.

“What are we going to do now” Cheryl asked as she nestled her head between his head and shoulder.

“I’m not sure,” came the response.

“Dear,” she said, “I still wish you hadn’t gotten involved in this whole polygamy thing.”

“Babe” he responded “the Bible says, ‘if you continue in my word, ye shall know the truth and the truth will make you free.’ I wish you had come to Kenya and met Charles’ wives and seen how well they get along. Sure, there are marriages with several wives that have problems, just as there are monogamous marriages that have problems. I just wish you could have seen that it can work.”

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After a moment of silence Cheryl asked “Does that mean you want to be involved in it?”

“No,” Aaron replied, “Not necessarily. But it does mean I can’t condemn those that do. The Bible says ‘to whom much is given, much is required.’ Said another way, it means that the more we have, the more we are required to live out.”

THE END