

Living a Truth

by Andy Nonymousman

Chapter 1

Although they had a place to live in a compound in Kenya, East Africa, George, being an American with four wives, now decided to also establish a home in a Western state that might be more sympathetic to his plight.

A few years previously they had tried to build a home in Kentucky. He had had only two wives then, and added a third there. That was the lovely and vivacious Shawanda. Although she had suffered the trauma of losing a new husband in a car accident, and abuse by racist KKK members, she had finally become his wife.

Now a fourth had been added. This was the voluptuous, full figured Beatrice who was also oftentimes called Betty. It wasn't that he had felt any sexual attraction toward her. There was no romantic attachment. It was merely and purely that George felt he had heard from God that this was a woman that needed a husband. Even so, the tension between Shawanda and Beatrice was often thick. They were each witty in their own way, and often matched wits in verbal sparring matches.

Now the question was could George live with four women successfully.

He had talked with other polygamist people by internet and in person. In the Western world they often tried to house all the wives in one big house, while giving each wife her own bedroom for privacy.

In Africa, oftentimes each wife would have her own house, but all on the same compound.

George had to decide what would be best for him and his family.

He had one advantage over many polygamist men. He had money. Because he had had some Divine wisdom given to him at a time when he had desperately prayed for it, he had invested in stocks and prospered. He was now diverting some of those returns into real estate. He was buying apartment houses and hiring professional managers to manage the properties.

In Kentucky he had followed the advice and council of his friend Okinyi, his longtime African friend, and set up separate houses for each wife. Considering the volatile nature of the dynamics between Shawanda and Beatrice, he decided to do that once again. And yet even so, he once again decided to have a big house with several bedrooms where any of his wives could come to stay if they so wished.

Surveying the construction site of this new house as it was being built, he walked along the ridge of the hill on which it sat. He took a deep breath as he looked out at the beautiful landscape that was around him. Wrapped in his thoughts, he barely heard the car coming up the gravel road. Glancing down at his watch as the sun set, he heard the closing of a car door and leaned back to see who was coming in his direction.

Actually he was expecting all four of his wives to return from a shopping spree, but only Shawanda was walking up the hill toward him. To himself he was wondering where were the others and why was she all alone.

Chapter 2

George leaned back and turned to see Shawanda pause several yards away from him. She stood with feet apart and her hands on her hips. She was wearing tennis shoes, jeans, and a yellow T-shirt. Shawanda cocked her head. “Hey muscles,” she yelled out, and then paused. “You just insist on increasing the size of this family, don’t you?”

George frowned, not sure what she meant. He was fully satisfied for now that four wives was enough. He had even been careful since the blonde bombshell incident in New York, to avoid paying any attention to other women.

Shawanda’s serious look gradually turned into a smirk which evolved into a grin and then a smile. Her eyes widened as she began to run toward him. Suddenly she threw herself into his arms, throwing George off balance, sending them tumbling down the hill. As they rolled over and over several times, they wound up with George on top.

He looked deeply into her eyes and remembered how they had first met, and the joy he always had when she was her bubbly inexplicable self. He bent his neck down, their lips met, and they enjoyed the intimacy of their mouths as they kissed deeply. When they parted lips, he drew back a bit.

“What’s this about adding to the family?” He questioned.

“Honey,” Shawanda began as she searched his face with her eyes wanting to perceive what his reaction might be.

“Honey, you’re going to be a daddy!”

George’s eyes widened. He involuntarily drew in a breath.

“O, sugar babe, that’s great!” He exclaimed.

He pulled off of her and sat up.

“When? . . . How long? . . . How do you know?” he had so many questions that they all came tumbling out one on top of the other.

As Shawanda opened her mouth to begin to answer, and she sat up, George couldn’t help himself. He went on.

“Do the others know? When is it due?”

“Whoa, big fellow,” Shawanda finally said, sensing she needed to butt in to get a word in edgewise.

She placed her hand on his shoulder, indicating he should calm down.

“I just found out for sure,” she began to exclaim. “I slipped into the doctor’s office while the other ladies were in town.”

“What . . .” George started again, but Shawanda quickly placed two fingers over his lips gently, as if to say, hold on honey, I’ll tell you.

Her gesture along with her facial expression said much.

“No one knows right now but you and me,” she responded. “The other ladies are in town watching a movie. I pretended I didn’t want to see it, and told them I’d be back to pick them up.”

“Yahoo!” George yelled. His yahoo echoed across the valley. “I can’t wait to tell them. They’ll be so excited. George was happy. He wanted to share his exuberance with everyone.

However, not everyone would be as pleased as he thought.

Chapter 3

As the people began to come out of the show, George drove up to the front stairs in his Mercedes with Shawanda beside him. Being that the prospect of being a father, he couldn't wait to tell his other wives.

"There they are," Shawanda commented as she saw Juanita, Judy, and Beatrice emerge. Almost simultaneously, the other wives spotted the car and headed toward it. Juanita and Judy climbed into the back, but Beatrice paused outside the front passenger door.

As Shawanda lowered the window, Beatrice leaned over, and speaking ever so sweetly, said "Honey dear, you won't mind slipping in to the back seat so I won't have to squeeze in there, would you."

Shawanda, who a moment before had been so happy, had some of that exhilaration fade as she closed her eyes, gritted her teeth, and paused, and then pulled on the door handle, opening the door. "Sure sister Betty," she said with a forced smile. "I understand you need the extra room."

There was only a slight hint of sarcasm and put down. While it was true that Beatrice's size made the front passenger seat a more comfortable one as compared to the back, Shawanda felt that it was her time to be next to the father of the child when the announcement was about to be made.

Shawanda reopened the rear door as Judy slid over to the middle and Beatrice squeezed herself into the front passenger seat.

In the meantime, George was oblivious to the whole thing. He was just waiting for everyone to get in so he could burst out with the good news.

"We're adding to the family, ladies" he blurted out once everyone was in and the door shut. "We're having a baby!"

"That's great," Judy cheered.

"Yes it is," Juanita chimed in, although not quite as exuberant as Judy.

"Well, I figured that might be why our young sister was feeling peaked lately," Beatrice added.

Shawanda smiled and received the congratulations of her family, all the while secretly mentally recording their responses.

"Congratulations, Snookums" Beatrice said as she leaned over and stretched to kiss

George in his seat. “Maybe I’ll be next.’

With the noise that Juanita and Judy were making as they asked the normal questions about when, how long, etcetera, Shawanda could not make out what it was that Beatrice had whispered, but she resented that she was the one sitting next to him at that time.

She thought to herself, “I said it would be okay for him to marry her. I’ve got to learn to live with my decision.

Yet in the days to come she would find that it would not be easy.

Chapter 4

Having agreed to meet at the local steak house restaurant, they all sat together enjoying steak, potatoes and plenty of vegetables. While Shawanda sat close to George on his right side, Beatrice made sure to get close to him on his left.

It had only been a few months since the big debate in New York. Beatrice was the newest bride, and was hoping to spend more time with her husband, but now that Shawanda was pregnant, it appeared that the spotlight would be taken off of her so to speak, and placed on Shawanda, who she still considered her nemesis.

Since the marriage to Beatrice, the cat fights had taken a more subtle tone. Before they had all out verbal attacks. Now each was trying with varied success to contain themselves. Even so, the carnal nature even among these Christian women, would rear it's ugly head.

Judy leaned toward Shawanda, "Dear it's supposed to be my night with hubby, but perhaps you'd like to take my turn."

"That's sweet of you to give up your night," Beatrice interjected before Shawanda could respond. "But since you don't want it perhaps Snookums would like to choose who he'd like to spend the night with."

She paused, raised her eyebrows as she looked around and then continued. "Maybe Snookums would like to start on another baby." She stroked his forearm and glanced seductively toward George as she completed her statement.

Shawanda looked down and bit her bottom lip. It was taking every degree of self control she could muster not to return with a verbal harangue that would blister the fourth wife's ears. She took a deep breath, and then turned to Judy and smiled. "Thank you," she said simply. "You are so kind and considerate."

"Yes," Beatrice chimed in, "Judy is a doll, but isn't that the rule? . . . that when a wife doesn't want her night, that Snookums gets to choose?"

George was now on the spot. He prayed for the wisdom of Solomon as all eyes turned toward him. No matter what decision he made, somebody would be upset. He wanted to spend the evening with Shawanda, but he didn't want Beatrice to feel less loved. He thought he had been careful to let all his wives know that he care for them all. Still, jealousy could rear it's ugly head with the slightest provocation.

He smiled and took the hand of each other the wives on either side of him. He brought each hand to his mouth and kissed the back of their hands.

Tonight Shawanda and I spend together," winking with his right eye, the eye that was away from Beatrice, hoping the Beatrice could not see the wink.

“Tomorrow,” he went on, Beatrice drew back feeling that she had been slighted in favor of Shawanda. “Tomorrow, and the next night I’ll spend with Beatrice” he said of the larger sized wife.

But Snookums, wont’ that be using Juanita’s night?” Beatrice gushed with false concern as she bated her eyes at him.

George looked toward his first wife Juanita, and pursed his lips to send a kiss. “She understands,” he said softly. “You won’t mind, will you, babe?” he questioned louder.

Juanita nodded and raised a thumb to let him know that it was okay to let him use her night to get out of a tough spot.

George felt that much more love expand in his chest for this most understanding first wife. He determined to let her know later just how much he appreciated her help in extrication him from this predicament.

This was one of many negotiations and maneuvers that George had to face as he tried to please four women. It wasn’t his first, and it certainly wouldn’t be his last.

A storm was brewing that he couldn’t see coming.

Chapter 5

George got through the night and the next few days with no further strife or even tension between his ladies. They had rented a couple of houses just outside of town while the main house was being built. George lived in the smaller of the houses and the ladies lived in the other, with each visiting George on her particular night. George then usually went over to the larger house for lunch and dinner.

One evening as they sat and sipped tea and coffee after supper, George began a discussion. "You know I love all of you," he started, thinking it was just best to start out on a positive note.

"However, I want to point out that there are times when you" he swung his arm around to indicate that he meant all of them "you put me in an awkward position."

Juanita, who was seated opposite him, spoke up. "How's that, sweetheart?"

"Well . . ." George went on "sometimes I feel like I am walking a tightrope. If I don't do everything just right, then someone will be angry or upset with me." There. He had said it. He had begun to get it all out.

"Well, dear," Judy spoke up, "I think you do a good job of trying to treat us all equally," she said reassuringly.

"Well, maybe . . ." Beatrice jumped in "that is the problem."

"What?" Juanita and Shawanda said in unison.

"Well . . ." Beatrice went on as she rose from her seat, walked across the floor, and around George. "Suppose . . ." she hesitated as she passed behind him and massaged his shoulders for a moment. "Suppose that one of us has more sexual needs than another."

Shawanda couldn't help herself as she leaned back suddenly in her seat and raised her eyebrows.

Beatrice plunged on. "If I need sex three times a week, but Judy only needs it once, why should we all be treated equally?" Beatrice asked, extending her hands as if to say it was obvious.

Shawanda spoke up. "Now just wait a minute!" she said as she rose from her seat and moved to the opposite side of the room.

"You just got here! You are the newbie on the block! And you're going to start trying to make new rules?" she questioned incredulously.

"Well," Beatrice began to counter, "I'm just saying . . ." but before she could finish, Juanita jumped in.

“Beatrice, it’s not fair to take advantage of Judy’s kindness . . .” yet before Juanita could finish her statement, Shawanda jumped back in.

“You got that right, sister! That woman has been nothing but nice to you, and now you want to take her time away from the hubster??”

“Oh . . . Ah . . . Ah . . .” Beatrice recoiled, realizing that she had struck a nerve and started a firestorm of emotion.

“Ladies!” George interjected as he stood up and raised his voice to be heard. “Let’s discuss these things calmly. Please, everyone sit down.”

Everyone took their seats once again. George had no idea that his attempt at discussion of his feelings would result in such a firestorm of emotion. He wondered now whether the right decision would be to end it for tonight or to go on and get it all out.

He decided to move forward and continue. He would later question that decision.

Chapter 6

“I guess the real question is . . .” Juanita began, and then paused to make sure everyone was listening. “. . . is George treating all of us fairly?”

She glanced around. No one spoke. She continued. "That is different than asking if he is treating us equally."

"Wait a minute, doll, how is fairly and equally any different?"

"Well, let's use an example . . ." she said as she stood up. George brings me daisies. I don't like daisies, I like roses. But since he gave Judy daisies, Shawanda daisies, and you daisies, he now thinks he must give me daisies. Why can't he give me roses because I like roses and give Judy daisies because she likes daisies?"

Even George was amazed at the revelation in the statement.

"However," Beatrice interjected, "roses cost more than daisies. So if you get roses that cost fifty dollars, and Judy and I get daisies that cost twenty dollars, shouldn't Judy and I get something with a thirty dollar difference in the amount?"

Juanita, who was now sitting on the arm of the sofa, leaned forward and held up her finger. "You see, fifty dollars a piece is equal, but are we concerned about being treated equally, or are we concerned about being treated fairly?"

George scratched his chin as he mulled over what his first wife had said. "Hmmm . . . The truth is I don't think I could always treat all of you equally, but I could always try to be fair," he mumbled.

"Wait a minute! Wait A minute!" Shawanda jumped in. "This sounds like a setup for some of us to wind up getting less under the guise of it being fair but not necessarily being equal," she said.

"Well, my sister, I have to agree with you for once," Beatrice chimed in again. "If this is fairness - equality game is going to be played with my nights with Snookums, then I have to object. I want an equal share of nights, and certainly not less nights than anyone else."

Judy decided to wade in. "What about flexibility? Should George be able to decide when he wants to be with a particular person occasionally?"

"People - ladies! Let's not fight about it."

"Okay, well, I don't want to fight, Snookums, but I'm the newest; and if anyone needs more time rather than less, it's me," Beatrice said.

"Wait just a minute!" Shawanda butted in. "You don't get more time! In my condition, maybe I need more attention, and affection, and understanding."

"Wow!" Juanita jumped back in. "He was my husband first! Now I've stepped aside allowing all of you to come in, even when I didn't feel like it. If anyone wanted to

demand more time,” she paused with her hands on her hips, “it should be me!”

Judy’s eyes began to tear. Suddenly she stood and left the room. George stood and prepared to go after her.

“She’ll be okay, Snookums,’ Beatrice said as she grabbed her arm.

Again, George had a decision to make. Should he please the majority by staying, or should he go after Judy, who was obviously hurt. Again, he wondered, could he make the right decision?

Chapter 7

He chose to follow Judy.

As she stood on the porch of the house with her arms folded and her arms crossed holding her own shoulders, George came up from behind her. Placing his arms around

her, he bent down and whispered “Don’t worry my dear, everything will be okay”

Judy leaned her head back on his chest

“Honey,“ she said “Things are just so different than I ever imagined.” She sniffed as another tear rolled down her cheek. George drew a handkerchief out of his pocket and wiped away the tear with it in her hand. She took it and blew her nose and then continued.

“I try, I really try!” she lamented.

“I try to get along with all my sister wives. Yet the more I give it seems the more others take, you know?”

George stared up at the moon and the stars. Suddenly, a shooting star went across the sky and George pointed it out.

"Honey, you have done your part. I want you to know that I know that."

Meanwhile, back at the house, the other three women continued.

"Judy may be the oldest woman among us, but she is also still the most sensitive," Juanita explained. "Well, nobody is trying to hurt her, but it appears if you don’t speak up for yourself in this family, you might just get run over like a beetle in front of a Mack truck," Shawanda said.

"What!" Beatrice blurted out. "Are you trying to make some subtle put down about my weight?"

Shawanda rolled her eyes upwards toward the ceiling and she raised her hands and let them fall back down to her sides again.

"Now who’s being sensitive?!" she retorted.

"Wait!" Juanita screamed out uncharacteristically. "What are we doing? Why are we fighting among ourselves? We’ve got to be able to put aside our wants and desires and see what’s best for the whole family."

Shawanda plunked down on the chair and folded her arms, but she was quiet as she listened to what Juanita was saying.

Beatrice also held her peace for the moment as Juanita went on.

Juanita went on, "If we each try to get a bigger piece of George or more time than others or bigger or better or more expensive gifts then we tear the family apart."

She paused and looked directly at each of her two sister wives remaining in the room. Then she continued.

"To be successful in this arrangement, we have to be, and I repeat, we have to be more disciplined than women in a monogamous relationship with a husband. We truly have to be disciples of Jesus Christ. We each need to be willing to lay down our lives for the other. "

She paused again. This time Shawanda jumped in. "Well it's been my experience that when you don't stand up for yourself, people take advantage of you."

"Yes, that may be true out in the world, Shawanda, but we're family!" Juanita stressed as she repeated over again. "We are family! We have to trust the family. All of us are sister wives. Can you trust me as your sister?"

The question was left hanging in the air. The right answer was yes, but that would not be the response that came.

Chapter 8

"I trust you!" Shawanda said cryptically. The meaning was obvious. She trusted Juanita, but she didn't trust Beatrice. Beatrice realized what she was saying without actually saying it and retaliated.

"So you're saying you don't trust me?!" she said as she rose and turned to face Shawanda. She put her hands on her hips.

The tension between them was thick. Juanita questioned in her mind whether or not they might actually become physical.

If that happened, she would need George because she realized that she would never be able to hold the two apart. Seconds passed, but it seemed much longer.

Neither spoke for a time and then finally Shawanda broke the silence.

"Trust is built through time and reliability. You haven't been in the family long enough to prove that you're reliable and whenever you get around it appears that you seek to undermine the rest of us and seek to get closer to George."

She paused and gazed directly into the larger woman's eyes.

Beatrice thought of responding, but bit her lip and remained quiet for a moment.

Shawanda continued, "You seem to constantly be trying to maneuver into the number one position with George and quite frankly," she went on, "you don't deserve that number one position. If anyone deserves the number one position, it's Juanita." She raised her right hand towards the first wife as she spoke those words.

Beatrice choked back tears.

"The truth hurts, huh." Shawanda went on, but before she could go much further, Beatrice spoke up as she took a step towards Shawanda. Shawanda stood not wanting to be trapped in a sitting position if the larger woman meant to get physical.

"You hated me from the beginning!" Beatrice blurted out.

"You never did want George to marry me," she lamented. "You think that since you're young and thin you can monopolize most of his time for you."

Her fingers involuntarily balled into a fist and she found herself taking another step towards Shawanda. Shawanda held her ground with her feet spread shoulder's width apart.

Would they come to blows or was there a method of diffusing the tension? The next few moments would tell.

Chapter 9

Juanita went to the front porch looking for George just in case the situation became even more serious. Reaching the front porch she saw neither George nor Judy.

She then moved out to the street and looked both ways. Straining her eyes she saw them walking at a distance about block away.

She had a choice.

She could call out to them, but that might attract too much attention from the neighbors

in this small town. She did not want to do that!

The other option was to run to where they were and yet she did not know If she had that type of time, considering what might be happening inside.

Meanwhile Beatrice and Shawanda continued to stand and stare and glare at each other.

Finally, after a long while, Beatrice blinked.

" I don't know what possessed me to marry a man with three wives in the first place," She lamented as she turned sideways and took a step at a 90 degree angle.

Shawanda's eyes dropped as she reflected on how she had married George when he already had two wives.

Her mind raced back. She remembered how George had gotten to know her. She thought of their playfulness and camaraderie on the basketball court. She mused and smiled a bit as she reflected on his initial proposal and how she had turned him down.

She, like most young girls, had grown up being told the fairy tales of Sleeping Beauty and Snow White and Cinderella. She had dreamed of having her very own Prince Charming and just the two of them going off and living happily ever after.

George had taken care of her and loved her despite her depression after the tragedy had struck. Her bridegroom, her prince charming had been killed immediately after the wedding in an automobile accident! After that, George had cared for her, protected her and stood by her even when she had treated him like dirt!

She had decided that he was her prince Charming even If he had other wives.

What she had not counted on was that George would continue to grow and mature and reach a place in the things of God that few reached.

He married Beatrice not because he had fallen in love with her but because God had told him to marry her.

Their good friend Charles Okinyi had explained once how it is that in The West people are indoctrinated to believe that they must fall in love to marry, even though God does not require that.

She took a deep breath and turned 90 degrees to her left and then walked between the chair and the couch.

The women were now each standing with her back to the other.

Meanwhile, Juanita's run had brought her closer to George and Judy. She finally felt that she was close enough to cry out.

"George, Come Quick!"

That was a mistake!

Chapter 10

As she completed the outcry for her husband, she turned her head to the left, and saw an elderly neighbor sitting on a rocking chair on her front porch. She slowed to a walk as George and Judy turned and moved toward her.

"What is it?" George demanded to know as they reached each other.

"Come quick!" She said breathlessly.

"Why?" George said as he studied her face, as he queried further demanding to know the answers. "What's happening?"

‘It’s Shawanda and Beatrice!’ She answered. “They may start a fight!”

“Ha! That’s nothing new.” George chuckled.

“No, not a verbal fight, a physical fight” Juanita found herself screaming.

As they started a brisk walk back toward the house, Juanita saw that the old woman, who was now staring, and had obviously been watching the whole conversation between herself and George. George began to jog toward the house. Judy and Juanita continued their brisk walk.

Finally reaching the house, he entered the living room. Now he found that these two wives were seated once again, and calmly discussing what they needed to do to get along.

They had not come to blows, as Juanita had thought they might.

“Either you’ve got to change, or I’ve got to change, or we both need to change,” George heard Shawanda saying.

“Well, we both have quick witted tongues, I suppose” Beatrice responded.

George took a seat as his breathing slowed. He had determined to interrupt what was going on. Shawanda moved her hips forward on the couch so she could lean back and put her head on the back of the seat. She then closed her eyes and continued speaking.

“You know, I think I remember Charles saying in one of his sermons that God places people and events in our lives to help us mature. I didn’t like it when he said it but I think it’s true.” She opened her eyes and sat up straight again.

He said that tribulation worketh patience, Shawanda went on. ‘God must want me to develop patience, cause you sure bring me a lot of tribulation.’ she chuckled, to indicate it was a halfway joke a tease. However, the question was now, would Beatrice receive it as a joke, or would she be even more offended?

Chapter 11

Beatrice stared for a moment, expressionless.

Tension was in the air.

George opened his mouth to speak but Beatrice spoke up first.

"You are right!" She chuckled. "God is probably laughing at our on going war! " She said.

Is God laughing or is it the devil that is laughing?" Shawanda countered.

"Well, Beatrice began after taking a deep breath, and blowing it out, " I guess it is the

devil who is the one laughing sense he is the one that sows strife and division.

"Actually," George now spoke up while being pleased that the two adversarial wives were finally beginning to agree on something.

"Actually," he repeated himself, " it is the carnal nature in us that Satan exploits."

Beatrice took her seat and faced George.

"You see within the fallen nature of mankind is what the Bible calls carnality. That carnal nature is evidence of Satan's nature placed within us.

He paused and looked at each of his wives to make sure he had their full attention.

Just then Judy and Juanita reentered the room.

George continued. " As long as our own carnality is showing it is an indication that we are babes in Christ!"

He paused.

"Wait a minute muscles," Shawanda began to interject, " I have been saved for years. I don't exactly consider myself a babe in Christ!"

George leaned forward toward her and reached out to take her right hand in his left hand.

"Dear, just because you have been saved a long time does not necessarily mean that you have matured. At least not in every way that you should," he said simply.

Shawanda stiffened a bit and leaned back but did not take her hand away from his.

George then looked at Beatrice, who was sitting directly opposite him.
"Come here, Dear." He ordered indicating that she should move to a seat on the couch opposite of Shawanda and to the right of his own chair.

Beatrice moved to the place that he had indicated and George continued his sermonette but now directing his attention toward her.

"Hon, you also need to restrain the tendency to retaliate at the least provocation." He said.

George leaned back in his own chair, as he let go of both of their hands.

"If this family is to make it and not break apart, we have all got to mature. I know at first try, it will not always be easy but we must try!"

He paused again.
Juanita moved up behind him and began to massage her husband's neck and shoulders.

"We have all got to mature!" George pronounced sternly.

Juanita took the next pause as an opportunity to lean down and whisper something in George's ear.

When he heard it, he jerked his head around suddenly and demanded,
"What did you say?!"

Chapter 12

All eyes turned toward Juanita as she drew a deep breath and composed herself. He noticed that Judy, who was still in the doorway, had a tear running down her cheek.

"What is it?" Beatrice demanded to know.

"The lady down the street asked if Judy and I were sister wives," Juanita revealed.

"And?" George said, trying to get her to tell the rest of the story.

"Well . . . Uh . . . I . . . I wasn't sure what to say, so I said we're friends, and walked away" she said. She gulped.

"It's true, isn't it, that we're friends, even though we may also be sister wives?"

Judy stepped further into the room and spoke. “Here we are hoping to start out with a new beginning in a new place, and it’s possible that the persecution may start all over again.”

Shawanda stood to her feet and shook her head as she looked down. Then looking up, she questioned: “Why would she even ask you that?”

“I don’t know” Juanita responded defensively. “I called out to George when he and Judy were walking alone. The three of us started back, and then George went ahead while Judy and I followed,” she explained.

“She figured out that you were sister wives from that?” Beatrice exploded.

“Ladies,” George spoke out firmly. “Let’s relax. Have a seat.”

Everyone followed George’s instructions and sat down.

“Well, I guess we are all friends,” she said cryptically.

“Yes,” Judy replied, “but if we say we are friends and imply that’s all that we are, and they find out for sure that we are more than that, then we’ll look like liars!”

“Where will that put our Christian witness?” she demanded to know.

“He he he” Shawanda chuckled under her breath. “If they find out that George had four wives, our Christian witness will be destroyed right there.”

She chuckled again. “We certainly won’t have to worry about the lying part!”

George looked down and scratched his chin as he thought.

“Look” he finally said. “On the one hand, we don’t want to flaunt our lifestyle in front of the people in town and make unnecessary trouble for ourselves.”

He paused as he looked at each of his wives. Each of them intently studied his face.

“On the other hand,”

He went on, “I’m not going to run and hide when anyone suspects that I am doing what I am doing, for it is certainly right before God!”

“In the future, I suggest that if a situation comes up like that, we say something like, we’re family, and just leave it at that.”

“When and if someone comes to know us well enough and we deem them mature enough, then we’ll tell them more.”

He paused again. "Okay?" he asked.

Everyone nodded or mumbled an okay, but each secretly wondered whether it would work.

Chapter 13

Come babe, let's go to bed," George said to Shawanda as he extended his hand toward her and stood up on his feet.

"George, are you sure you should?" Juanita questioned as her eyes searched his face.

George turned his head toward her and saw the concern on her face.

"We're probably being watched," she added.

George sighed as he looked down. Looking up again, he spoke. "I'm through running and hiding," he proclaimed.

"Now I won't go out of my way to push it in someone's face. But on the other hand, I won't pretend that I don't have and love all of my wives."

“Ya! Go Snookums!” Beatrice cheered

Judy and Juanita both turned their heads and looked at her, knowing that she did not realize what the repercussions could be.

Judy spoke up first, “Betty, you cheer, but you don’t know . . . I mean . . . you haven’t been through the type of persecution that such a stand can bring, honey.”

“Well, honey,” Beatrice began her reply, emphasizing the word honey, believing it had been used in a condescending way, “I ain’t afraid to stand up for what is right, for what is just, for what is moral, and righteous in God’s eyes.”

Juanita decided that she needed to jump in to try to steer the pair from more tension. “We’ve been through it in Kentucky. She’s just trying to warn you that it’s not some kind of adventure. People can be vicious.”

“Well, I am with Beatrice on this!” Shawanda said loudly. “I’m tired of running and backing down like we have to be ashamed.” She paused as she looked around the room. “If muscles said we stop ducking and hiding, then I stand with him on that!”

“Well, we all back him,” Juanita retorted. “But all Judy and I are saying is that things need to be thought out before we rush down a dead end street.

George finally decided to end it all. “Okay, ladies, okay. Perhaps tomorrow we can discuss it some more. But for now, I’m tired and I’m going to bed.”

With that he grabbed Shawanda’s hand and started leading her toward the door.

The ladies stood speechless as they wondered what coming days would bring.

They didn’t know it then, but they each would have an opportunity to defend their lifestyle.

Chapter 14

"Muscles," Shawanda whispered to her husband as they walked out the door, "can we go to the ice-cream shop down the street?"

George took a deep breath and looked down at his watch. "It is almost 10:00 PM. They are probably closed," he replied.

"Can't we go see, dear?" She cooed.

"Sure", He said, giving in to her.

The two walked the half block to the ice-cream shop arm in arm.

As they were entering a middle aged man with graying hair and a child about ten years old were exiting.

"Oh.. Howdy neighbor" the man called out.

"Hi" George responded, intending to keep right on going after speaking. However, the man stopped and continued speaking.

"You are living in the old Brownfield house aren't you?"

"Uh,..mmm . . Yeah, temporarily" George replied trying not to let on that he had been caught off guard by the question.

"I am sorry," the stranger continued, "I am Paul Stewart and you are..." he paused waiting for George to fill in his name.

" Uh, George Meadows", he responded.

The other man now continued on, "And is this the Mrs.?" he questioned.

George was now on the spot. He had never dreamed that he could be put to the test so soon, of a statement that he had just made only minutes before.

"Well...uh.. Yes, this is my covenant partner, Shawanda" he hedged.

"Oh.. partner huh?

What are you guys partners in?" he asked.

George drew a deep breath as he sought desperately in his mind for the appropriate answer.

"We're having some construction being done a few miles out of town. We both have an interest in the project along with several others," he said quickly, as he started to move again toward the ice-cream shop door.

"Oh, I see," the man called Stewart said, as the boy with him began to tug on his hand. to get him moving.

"Nice to meet you." He called back over his shoulder.

George's face was flush red.

Had he said the right thing? How would Shawanda feel about it?

Would she think that he was ashamed of her?

Would what he said, be gossiped about around town?

Did the older man really not know what a 'covenant partner" was?

He hoped he didn't but still he could not be sure.

He waited for Shawanda to say something. Instead, she said nothing about the incident, and went to the counter and ordered a vanilla ice-cream cone with two scoops of ice-cream.

After George ordered a Chocolate shake for himself he sat down across from Shawanda at one of the small tables in the shop.

He looked into her eyes as she licked the cone and knew that questions would soon be coming his way.

He wasn't wrong!.

Chapter 15

“What do you think we should name her?” Shawanda asked playfully.

“Her?” George howled. “You mean, him” George chuckled.

“O, so you want a boy.” Shawanda said in mock surprise.

“Ya, I thought we could name him after me,” George said more seriously, as he thought what it would be like to have a child of his own flesh and blood.

“Nah,” Shawanda howled as she leaned back in her chair and took a lick of the ice cream cone. She swallowed, paused, and then said, “Everyone would call him Junior. Who wants that?”

“Well maybe we could call him the second,” George offered.

“Anybody who calls themselves the second without there being a third is considered proud and presumptuous,” said Shawanda.

“Proud and presumptuous?” George parroted as he smiled.

“Well we wouldn’t want that” Shawanda leaned back in her chair again, and she placed what was left of her ice cream cone on the table. She held on to it with one hand so it wouldn’t tip over, but she looked seriously and directly into her husbands eyes.

“What will his last name be?” she asked simply.

“Well, uh, Meadows of course” George replied. He was giving the right answer, although he knew what she was really asking.

“Not legally,” Shawanda replied.

“Legally,” she went on, “legally he would be George Perkins, a bastard, an illegitimate child!” she complained.

“No!” George stated emphatically as he raised his voice. “Don’t ever say that!” he demanded. “Our child will be as legitimate as any child ever born. It was before God that we said our commitment vows of marriage. God makes what we have legitimate, and our child will be legitimate” he stated strongly.

“But what about the name?” Shawanda questioned again.

“If it is that important, honey, we’ll go to court and have his name legally registered as George Meadows.

I assure you my dear, I would never allow my child to be handicapped in any way!”

Shawanda gave a slight smile and was thankful for his reassurance.

Still, there were other questions to come. Some wouldn’t be handled quite so easily.

Chapter 16

Knock . . . Knock . . . Knock . . .

“Huh?” George wearily opened his eyes. He and Shawanda had been awake ;late into the night as they lay in the bed together dreaming of the future of their son or daughter with whom Shawanda was pregnant.

Knock . . . Knock . . . Knock . . . Came the sound at the door.

“Uh . . . Um . . .” George groaned yelling out “who is it?”

“Yeah,” Shawanda said sleepily as she rolled over and pulled some of the covers with her, “Who is knocking this early in the morning?”

She glanced at the digital clock radio on the nightstand and saw that it was only 6:55 am.

“Yoo-hoo, Snookums,” came Betty’s muffled reply from the other side of the door. “It’s time to get up, breakfast is ready” she sang out cheerily.

“Breakfast?” George mumbled as he swung his legs onto the floor, wiped some of the matter from his eyes, grabbed his watch that he had placed on the nightstand the night before.

The door handle rattled as Beatrice tried to open it. Fortunately George had remembered to lock the door.

George, don't " Shawanda demanded. "don't you see that she's trying to intrude on our time together?" she pleaded.

Nevertheless, George threw on his housecoat, threw on his slippers, and stumbled toward the door. As he unlocked the door and cracked it open, meaning to chastise Beatrice for disturbing them so early, the door was pushed further open by Beatrice's shoulder as she barged in with a tray of food.

"Time for breakfast in bed, Snookums," said Beatrice.

George involuntarily took a step back as the mixed aroma of coffee, grits, ham and eggs hit his nostrils.

"You sit up in bed there so I can adjust the tray just right for you," Beatrice suggested.

George sat on the edge of the bed as Shawanda sat up on the other side.

"And where's mine?" Shawanda asked cryptically.

"Oh, dearie, if you want some breakfast, there's plenty downstairs" she replied with eyebrows raised, saying without saying that she wasn't about to bring her anything.

She then turned and bent down and kissed George on the forehead.

"Snookums, since this is our day together, I wanted to get an early start. I wanted to enjoy every minute of it."

"Oh, brother, I don't believe this" Shawanda moaned as she swung her feet to the floor on the other side of the bed.

"Believe what, dearie?" Beatrice asked in mock innocence.

"Okay, so today is your day, but does it have to start before 7:00 in the morning?" Shawanda retorted.

"Ladies," George interrupted, "let's calm down and have a little consideration.

"Oh, Snookums, I'm considering you" Beatrice said in a baby talk voice. "Look at this wonderful breakfast I made you?"

"Yes, thank you for that," George began. Meanwhile Shawanda threw on her bathrobe and disappeared into the adjoining bathroom.

“Betty, sit down over there” George said as he pointed toward the chair a few feet away from the bed. “Doesn’t the Bible teach us that we should love our neighbor as ourselves?”

“Yes Snookums, but . . .” Beatrice began.

“Hold it’ George interrupted her. “Just listen for a moment. How would you like your time to be interrupted by one of my other wives?” he asked.

“But Snookums, we agreed that today was my time” she protested.

“Yes,” George said sternly, “so now, do I have to set exact times when I will shift from one wife to another?” he questioned, raising his voice. “I’m not going to do that.’ he said firmly just as Shawanda came out of the bathroom dressed in jeans and a t-shirt.

“Thank God” Shawanda said as she lifted her eyes and hands to the heavens.

Beatrice watched Shawanda coldly out of the corners of her eyes as she watched Shawanda move toward the door and exit, yet she refrained from saying anything further, concerned that it would irritate George even more.

Breakfast in bed is a nice idea, “ George said as he softened his tone. “But, not when it’s done in a fashion that is disrespectful to your sister wife,” he explained.

‘But . . .’ Beatrice started to protest again before being interrupted.

“But nothing,’ he said. “We’ll have enough battles with people without. We don’t need battles within the family at the same time.” George spoke prophetically, although he didn’t fully realize it.

End of Part 1

Chapter 17

The morning had come and gone.

George decided to drive out to the construction site with all his wives.

They all enjoyed the beauty of the landscape as they gradually climbed the mountain toward their new home site. Juanita and Judy had prepared a picnic which was composed of fried chicken, potato salad and peas, and biscuits.

Although Betty enjoyed cooking more than any of the others, this was a day when she wanted to spend every moment with the one who she sometimes called the Hubster.

The SUV they drove was large enough to carry all of George's wives and Judy's two boys who were now ages 7 and 9.

As they neared the mansion under construction, they could hear the whine of power saws and the pounding of hammers. Good progress was being made.

Moments later two large blankets had been spread on the grass in the back of the house, and the family sat and ate their lunch as they enjoyed the magnificent scenery. There was peace and love in the midst. Even Beatrice and Shawanda did not verbally go at each other as they often did.

God is great, isn't He?" George spoke aloud after a prolonged silence. It was a rhetorical question. The obvious answer was yes; everyone thought it, but no one verbalized it.

“God is so good . . .” Shawanda began to sing out. “God is so good . . .” the others joined in. “God is so good, he’s so good to me.”

They then continued with other verses. “He answers prayer . . .” and the following verses which says “I love him so,” before coming back to the initial verse which says ‘God is so good.’”

“You know,’ George began quietly in a voice that was slightly above a whisper, “too often we humans murmur and complain about what is not right in our world. We murmur and complain about the unfairness of people or situations . . .” he paused and looked at Beatrice and Shawanda. They both lowered their eyes as they felt guilty. George went on.

“We complain about what we don’t have, and about what we wish we did have, rather than thanking God for who he is and what he had done, and what he is doing for us right now.” He paused and then took in a deep breath and then continued.

“And . . . And . . . What he will do.” He paused again. They were having impromptu church out in the green grass along the hillside in the mountains on a Tuesday afternoon!

They each sensed the presence of God, and knew this was much more what an assembly of believers should be like than what it often is.

“The church is an assembly of believers,” George said. “It should just be a further extension of what we are experiencing here and now.”

“Let’s pray and thank God for his goodness” Juanita suggested.

“Lord, you’ve brought us a long way,’ she began. “We thank you for that. You are teaching us so much as you expose to each of us the fleshy, carnal nature within us . . .” She paused and took in a deep breath and blew it out and then continued. ‘And we thank you for that.’”

She paused again, and Shawanda broke in. ‘Yes, Lord, forgive me for allowing my temper to flair up. Help me to control that rage within me.’”

Beatrice spoke up and continued. “Lord I also want to ask your forgiveness. Help me to show love not only to my Snookums’ she giggled and then continued “but help me to show love to my sister wives as well.” Beatrice paused and Judy chimed in.

“Yes Lord, I thank you for a man of God, a husband, a man willing to face abuse and ridicule. I thank you for this man among men who has been willing to lay aside his life, his reputation, and his finances, and everything else to serve you by loving us his wives. Thank you Lord!”

George now decided to conclude the prayer. "Lord Jesus, I too want to say thank you. Thank you for opening my eyes, thank you for providing these wonderful helpmeets" he smiled at each as he now prayed with his eyes open. "Thank you for two wonderful boys" he said as he looked down and Judy's two sons. "And thank you for the new baby on the way." He turned and winked at Shawanda.

"Help us, O God, to be strong witnesses for you and your truth. Amen."

"Thank you Lord" Shawanda began to sing again. All began to join in. "Thank you Lord, thank you Lord, I just want to thank you Lord."

Afterward, George and the two boys began to play with a softball that they had brought with them. All in all the day was wonderful. Unfortunately, it was to be marred by an event when they returned to town.

Chapter 18

The family played on the mountain top and enjoyed the beauty, the atmosphere and each other's company. After watching the beautiful sunset, they started back to town.

"Muscles," Shawanda chirped up as they reached the edge of town. "Let's all go to the ice cream shop."

Betty opened her mouth about to protest since it was her night to be with her "Snookums" and she wanted all the time that she could get. However, she remembered her prayer for discipline to control her tongue, so she bit down on her bottom lip and said nothing.

Arriving at the ice-cream shop, the boys quickly piled out of the car and ran for the door.

George was about to exit when he noticed the same older man that he had met the previous night. Again, his son was with him but this time there was also a lady that he presumed could be his wife.

George hoped he hadn't been seen, but he had.

All of his wives had already gotten out of the vehicle and begun to walk toward the shop, when the man spoke.

"Well, hello George," he said as he guided the lady with him. He walked toward George's S.U.V.

George now realized that it couldn't be avoided and decided he had to go ahead and get out and speak to the man.

"Honey, this is George Meadows and ... he paused as he looked for Shawanda. And that is his construction partner," he said before continuing.

"George this is my wife Martha" he said.

"Well, hello" Martha said.

"How do you do?" George responded.

And are all these others "Construction " partners?" he asked with raised eyebrows which said without saying that she believed that more than just construction was involved.

"Well.. uh... Yes..Uh.. George stuttered. "They are all my covenant partners."

There he had finally said it. Well, he thought, I have almost said it. Why didn't he just say that they were wives? Was it wisdom that was holding him back or was it fear of more battles with "Monogamy Only" indoctrinated people?

He was shaken from his thoughts as he heard her speak again.

"Well, Mr. George" Martha began, "Don't you have any men in this partnership? Or are all your so called partners women?" She said with a sneer.

"Now Martha," her husband began to interject," Be nice!"

Martha turned her head briefly towards her husband and smiled without showing her teeth.

"I am being nice, Dear!" She said sarcastically.

"I am just wondering why Mr. George here, only likes women in his partnership."

George's face began to turn red. He was on the spot!

Juanita overheard the last few remarks and returned to stand with her husband.

"Ladies!"

She called out.

All the other wives attention was drawn to what was happening and each began to quickly make her way back to George's side.

Chapter 19

All the wives stood beside the husband, George. Two were on one side, and two were on the other.

“Oh, so you are the construction partners?” Stewart questioned with a special emphasis on the word ‘construction.’

George dropped his eyes for a brief moment. He smiled, and then he raised his head and spoke. “I didn’t say construction partners, I said covenant partners, and we’re doing some construction.”

He paused and took another deep breath.

“And yes, all of these ladies are my covenant partners” he declared boldly.

“Are you trying to say that they are wives, and you are a polygamist?” The woman demanded to know.

“That’s your word” George replied. “I told you they are covenant partners.”

‘You people act like Mormons,’ Stewart commented.

“We’re not” Juanita blurted out.

“But you admit that you have covenant partners” Mrs. Stewart questioned as she looked at the various women standing by George.

Beatrice moved to a position behind George and tiptoed and looked over his shoulder. “Listen, sister,” she quipped, “If my Snookums says we are covenant partners, that’s

what we are!”

“Excuse us, please, we’d like to go get some ice cream” Shawanda interjected as she grabbed George’s hand and gently tugged it.

“Uh, yes, excuse us, folks” George said as he took the hint and began moving away from the couple.

“Thanks, my dear ones” George expressed to his wives.

Judy then asked “What was that all about?”

“I think we’ve been outed,” George said simply.

“Honey’ Juanita jumped in “I know you must have your reasons, but why are you calling us covenant partners instead of just wives?”

“Well . . . Let’s get some malts and have a seat, and I’ll explain” George replied.

After each had received their malts, the adults all sat at a larger table while positioning the boys at a smaller one nearby.

“I read on a list serve that many words have been given legal meaning in government” he paused and took a sip of his chocolate flavored malt as everyone looked on puzzled.

“You see” he continued “if I say I have several wives and then I go to court and someone testifies that they heard me say that, they can use it against me.”

“What?” Shawanda reacted.

George could see that his explanation would not be easily received. He also wasn’t sure whether his argument really held any water or not. Time would tell.

Chapter 20

“We’ve been wives all this time, and now we’re covenant partners? What’s up with that, muscles?” Shawanda asked.

“What difference does it make what you’re called as far as they’re concerned?” George countered.

“Well, you’ve always been a stickler about Scriptures. Where do we find covenant partner in place of wife in the Scriptures?” Shawanda replied.

Judy decided to help the husband out. “Well Shawanda” she started “Jesus did say that we should be wise as serpents and harmless as doves, didn’t he?” She paused, not really expecting an answer to a rhetorical question. “Maybe it is wisdom not to go around using terminology that may be used against us.

“Yeah,” Beatrice jumped in. “What do we care whether we are called wives or covenant partners in front of other people? We do know what we are, don’t we?”

Shawanda felt like they ganged up on her again, but she held her peace.

That’s right” George jumped back in. “We can’t completely hide who and what we are, but we don’t have to go around flaunting it in people’s faces.”

“You remember Tom Green got a five year sentence by being married to five wives. We don’t want to make his mistakes,” he concluded.

George and his family weren’t going to make all the same mistakes as Tom Green. But they would soon be confronted by a representative of the law.

Chapter 21

Knock.. Knock... Knock

George was awakened by the knocking on the door. He looked at his watch. It was 8:30 Am.

Betty's arm was around his waist although she continued to sleep.

Who could be knocking, he thought to himself. Could it be Shawanda trying to get back at Betty for the previous morning's interruption?

Not wanting to disturb Betty's sleep he shoved her arm aside gently and slipped out of Bed.

Wearing only pajama Bottoms and a T-shirt he slipped out of bed and quietly went to answer the door. As he cracked the door open he could see Juanita's face and immediately he knew something was wrong!

"George, it is the Sheriff," he's downstairs and he wants to talk to you!" She said nervously.

"The sheriff," George repeated with a puzzled look on his face. "What does he want?"

"I don't know," she answered, "but you had better come down and see."

He quickly dressed in slacks and shirt and shoes and made his way down the stairs.

"Are you George Meadows?"
The officer questioned.

"Yes, What can I do for you officer?" he replied.

"I have a report that there is a practicing bigamist staying here. Would you be the one I am looking for?" He questioned.

George felt himself begin to smile. He was surprised at his own reaction. "Well, have seat Sheriff," he found himself saying.

"No thank You!" came the gruff reply.

"Well, in that case officer, let me inform you that I have only one lawfully wedded wife."

The officer was taken aback.

George continued to speak.

"I think you met my wife Juanita when you came in, didn't you?" George said as he extended his hand toward Juanita.

Juanita came to his side and slid her arm around her husband's waist.

"What about these other women that you have been seen with?" He asked.

George stiffened a bit but tried to avoid showing it.

"They are family" he responded simply.

He could tell that the officer did not believe him but he said nothing further for the moment.

The officer paused and looked around and then pointed his finger into George's face.

"I am watching you BOY!"

"You get outta line or If we can prove you're lying we will run you out of town on a rail or throw you in jail and let you rot there!"

Chapter 22

George was unnerved but he tried not to show it.

The sheriff turned and walked out.

George stood there, staring for a moment. Juanita, who followed the sheriff to the door, returned to him and threw her head against his chest and wrapped her arms around his waist.

“O my dear husband,” she moaned. “What will we do this time?”

Beatrice and Judy, who had been in the kitchen preparing breakfast before the arrival of the sheriff, had been listening from the other room. They now entered the front room and also began to question George.

George sat down in the big lounge chair and pulled Juanita down to sit on his knee.

“Well it looks like . . .” George began before Shawanda entered huffing and puffing from her morning run.

“What’s up? What’s going on?” She asked innocently, not knowing about the sheriff’s visit.

The sheriff was just here” Judy informed her.

“Sit down, honey babe” George directed.

After she had taken a seat, George spoke again. “It appears that we will have to be careful about what we say and how we say it . . . And in front of whom we say it,” he began.

“Juanita and I were married lawfully, so I will refer to her as my only lawfully wedded wife. In front of others, I will refer to you as family, or possibly as partners.” He paused

as he looked at each of his wives and then continued. “Perhaps in this way we will get around giving them any ammunition to try me for bigamy.”

“But George” Judy spoke up. “I thought that they couldn’t try anyone for bigamy unless they could prove that you had registered two or more marriages with the government!” she snarled her lips and raised her eyes as she asked, ‘isn’t that still true?’”

“Well I’m not sure,’ George said with a puzzled look on his face.

He bit down on his bottom lip and furrowed his brow.

“I suppose that a creative prosecutor could claim that I have common law marriages that the government recognizes, and a legal marriage, making me a bigamist!”

They would really have it in for you to do something like that, wouldn’t they?” Beatrice asked.

“Yeah, but you never can tell what some fanatic bureaucratic politician who wants some publicity might do!” George declared.

He was right, but no one at that time knew how right he was, and how his words would prove to be prophetic.

Chapter 23

Breakfast was a quiet affair. George was in no mood for more talking, and everyone sensed it. Each wife in her own private thoughts considered, what might come in the next few days or weeks.

George ate, and though he usually enjoyed Beatrice's pancakes, eggs, and bacon, today they were like paste in his mouth.

"I'll get the dishes done" Shawanda offered as she stood and began to clear the table.

"I'll help" Judy offered.

"No, that's all right, let me help her" Beatrice broke in.

Juanita looked up, surprised that Beatrice would offer to help Shawanda.

AS she looked back down, she realized why. This was a different time. This was a time of war. Even when it was natural for these two wives to battle each other for time and attention from George during a time of peace, now, in that the family was being attacked, they would all band together to counter the enemy.

They decided to have lunch at the local café. Placing two square tables together, there was enough room for the five adults and two boys to sit and eat.

"Good morning," a silvery haired lady in her fifties greeted them.

"Huh?" George looked up a bit, startled from his reflective thoughts.

"Yes, good morning," he replied, trying to sound cheerful, but not quite pulling it off.

"Are these your wives?" she asked.

George stiffened, guessing that this was a trap. He decided to respond discreetly.

"This is my wife, Juanita," he said as he extended his hand to his right, where

(thankfully) this time she was seated. “These other ladies are partners” he said. He hoped that she would drop it at that.

The lady smiled knowingly, and then stared at Shawanda, then back at George, and then again at Shawanda.

“Oh,” Shawanda spoke up. “I’m a distant cousin’ she said with a chuckle. “I think he took me in out of sympathy” she said lightheartedly. “Would you like to join our construction partnership?” she said in obvious jest.

The woman’s mouth fell opened. She huffed out of breath, and then quickly turned and move away. Everyone around the table had a quiet laugh.

‘What’s funny, mommy?’ the older boy questioned.

“Nothing, honey, nothing you would understand. There’s nothing to worry about, we were just having some fun with that lady.’

Unfortunately, their “fun” would cause them to have one more enemy who would seek revenge.

Chapter 24

George looked around at the family and beamed. This is what he had wanted. This was what he had hoped marriages to several women could be like. For now at least there was no competition, no bickering, and no fighting and no jealousies.

They were just one big happy family!

He sat quietly taking it all in and enjoying the moment as his wives busied themselves with menus trying to figure out what they wanted to order.

"Why?" he asked himself silently. Why did it take the pressure from the outside for the family to come together like this?

"Because" the thought came to him as he could almost hear Charles Okinyi explaining it with his African accent.

"Because it takes fiery trials to bring us to perfection."

"Because the Scripture says, 'Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.'"

"Because," he heard in his head, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

George was amazed at how swiftly and how coherently The Holy Spirit was bringing these Scriptures to remembrance.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

"George, George" Juanita called his name shaking him out of deep thought. " What would you like?" She asked , obviously repeating the question that the waitress now standing to his left had asked.

"Huh . . Oh . Uh .. He stammered, "I'll have the daily special." he replied , not even knowing what it was. it didn't matter. he was a Happy man!

"What are you thinking Dear?" Juanita asked.

Oh,..mmm... I was just thinking how nice it is when we all get along without fighting and yet it seems that it takes outside forces coming against us for that to happen." he answered.

They ate and enjoyed the meal.

Meanwhile Mrs. Glenwater, the lady with the silvery hair who had spoken to them earlier , was doing an Internet search.

She was going to do whatever was necessary to find out about the so called "family" and get any evidence necessary to bring them down!

Chapter 25

Several days had passed without another incident.

George hoped that the world would leave him and his family alone, but of course that was not to be!

As he was sitting on the front porch of the rented home enjoying a lazy Wednesday afternoon, the cell phone rang.

Reaching into his shirt pocket he pulled out the handy device and answered gingerly.

"Good afternoon and God bless you, " he sang out cheerfully.

"Mr. Meadows?" Came the stern reply.

"Yes," George answered.

"Mr. Meadows, this is G, W. Sturgess, the District attorney, I 'd like to see you in my office at 9:00 AM tomorrow morning!"

"What?" George asked almost involuntarily.

"Why?" he questioned as his heart began to pound and felt a lump well up in his throat.

"Let's just say that there are some concerns." Sturgess answered, "I will see you here at my office in the morning at 9:00 Am."

Click!

With that, the phone call was over.

What had been a beautiful day in which George was just enjoying God's creation was all of a sudden thrust into a descending tunnel of blackness and despair!

Did this district attorney only want to talk OR did he want a chance to arrest him?

"Who was that Dear?" Juanita asked, having been just inside the door when the phone rang.

"The D. A. " George said simply.

WHY?!!" Juanita screamed out.

"What is it? " Judy demanded to know as she came running to the front porch after hearing Juanita's scream.

"The D. A, wants to talk to George!" Juanita explained tearfully.

Shawanda and Beatrice soon joined them

As they all gathered on the porch and all had questions pouring forth at the same time, George noticed that neighbors were beginning to watch and stare.

He took a deep breath, "Hold on, Hold on!" he yelled. Let's take this inside.

Shortly thereafter, they were gathered in the living room and seated.

"We haven't done anything wrong!" Judy lamented, as tears rolled down her cheeks, "Why would he need to see you?"

Shawanda bit down on her bottom lip and hit the arm of the couch with her fist. "We have been careful not to say we were wives," She paused and then snorted in another breath, "We have been careful not to say that you were our husband. They can't have anything with which to charge you!"

George heard the protests in the distance as his mind was racing through all the possibilities of what could happen.

Would he be thrown into jail on some trumped charge?

What could he do?

What could he do?

Chapter 26

George and his family agreed to spend the rest of the day fasting and praying.

Strife ceased as they united to fight the common enemy.

They walked and they prayed. They knelt and they prayed. They prostrated themselves on the floor and they prayed.

"Oh God George prayed out loud. "Forgive our sins. Help us O' God and Give us wisdom!

Lord, we make mistakes. I haven't always sought you as diligently as I should have. But Lord, Jesus, we now need not only your forgiveness but your wisdom!

Juanita dropped to her knees and joined in, " Oh My God, My husband has tried to be a good man. He has taken in wives when others wouldn't. We left our home. We have gone where you thought that you were sending us.

Lord! Please don't allow our husband to be taken away from us."

"Lord," Judy prayed, "I, too, pray for your deliverance from this situation. We need George, Lord! PLEASE don't let him walk into a trap."

Shawanda then added, "Lord Jesus, This man has been good to me. LORD, if you would, please spare him from jail Lord! LORD! I even PROMISE I will be nice to Beatrice, Lord! I wish ask your forgiveness for being mean to her. Please Lord help us to get along.

LORD, if you will spare Muscles from jail or prison, I promise, I'll bite my tongue every time she gets on my nerves."

Beatrice followed, "Well God, You gave me a good man when I had come to point in my life that I did not expect one. I thank YOU for that.

Lord, I am probably the one who is most to blame. I have baited Shawanda and had fun matching wits with her.

Lord, I know it is wrong. But it is sooo much fun! Please forgive me and help me in the future. Lord!

But whatever, you do, Lord, IF someone must be punished let it be me and not George!"

Shawanda got up from her knees and went upstairs.

"Honey Babe are you OK,?" George called after her.

"Let her alone." Juanita suggested. "Let's continue to pray!"

A few minutes later they heard Shawanda come back down the stairs. They then heard the screen door bang as she went out the front.

"In the name of Jesus Christ, and by the authority in that Name," George spoke boldly, " I take authority over the devil and every demonic spirit that would attack me or this family!"

"I bind them in Jesus name and I command that they have no authority over me or this family!"

He paused and then returned his attention to The LORD.

"Lord Jesus, I would ask you to send forth your angels to do those things in the spiritual dimension to give us all the protection that we need!"

"AMEN!" he finished.

The others also said "Amen"

They then waited.

Quietly, they waited for a word from God.

They heard NOTHING!!!

Chapter 27

Morning came, and at 9:00 AM George was dutifully sitting in the DA's office.

"He'll be with you shortly, Mr. Meadows" the secretary/receptionist said. "Would you like some coffee?"

"No" George replied simply.

9:10 am . . . Still George waited.

9:15 . . . Still nothing.

Finally, at 9:18 the door opened. "Come in, Mr. Meadows" Sturgis ordered.

George rose and walked briskly toward the office.

Once inside, he was offered a seat, while the DA went to his larger chair on the other side of the desk. Once there, the older man, who George estimated to be around 50 or so, who had sagging jowls and a fat belly, shoved a folder stuffed full of papers across to George.

"It seems by this that we may have a problem," he began.

George opened the folder and saw articles about himself from several years previous when it had first been discovered that he had two wives. He had left and gone to Kentucky. He had read a few articles before he had left, but there were many here that he had never seen.

He continued to thumb through the papers and pictures, while Sturgis, who was balding down the middle of his head, grabbed a pipe and began to suck on it as he rocked back and forth on his big swivel chair.

There was an article on his speech in Dallas. This George had never seen. That article pointed out that he had three wives. George continued to thumb through them, reading what each was saying, while glancing up briefly from time to time.

"Where did you get all this?" George asked weakly.

He felt a sickening feeling in his stomach. The older man enjoyed his discomfort.

"There's more" he said with a sly grin that showed his yellow teeth. With that, he pushed his desk so that his chair rolled across the room, and pushed 'play' on his DVD player.

George looked up at the screen to see a clip of himself on Greenberg's TV show that he

had done in New York. That clip said he had four wives - or so the announcer had said - even though it had not yet been true.

“Where did you get all this?” George asked again.

“It seems these days,” the DA said with a chuckle, “you can get almost anything you want on the internet!”

He paused and smiled with a gleam in his eye. “If, that is, you know where to look.”

“It seems I have some citizens in my county that know how to use it and know where to look” he beamed. “But hold on, sonny!” he gleefully said as he leaned back in his chair.

“There’s more!”

Chapter 28

More? How could there be more? George thought to himself.

The DA rolled his chair over to the DVD player once again, popped out the DVD, and replaced it with another. There on the screen George saw himself debating at the T. J. Thornbush College. The DVD was cued to the point where he was admitting to loving all of his wives. The nausea George felt in the pit of his stomach increased.

How could this happen? He had secured a written agreement that the recording of the event was for the use of the university but was not to be broadcast.

“How’d you get that?” George blurted out.

“Almost anything can be found on the Internet, and almost anything can be downloaded off it” the DA said with a relishing smile as he chomped down on his pipe. “So it would appear that we have plenty of evidence that those women that you are with now that you are now calling partners are really wives!” the DA stated.

George looked down. What could he say?

BZZZ . . . bzzz . . . bzzz. . .

“Yes, what is it?” the DA asked as he pushed the Intercom button.

“There is a Mr. Gene Cole here who says he has to see you right away” came the answer from the receptionist.

“You know I’m busy with someone right now,” the DA answered angrily.

“I . . . I’m sorry, Sir, he says he is Mr. Meadows’s attorney.!”

The DA looked up at George surprised, but before he could say another word, the office door flew open.

A tall man burst into the room.

“Sorry - interview is over! My client is not saying another word!”

“Well . . . Uh . . . Uh . . . I was unaware that Mr. Meadows had secured counsel,” the DA stammered.

“Well, now you know” Cole said authoritatively. He looked down at the desk and saw the file. Picking it up, he began to thumb through it as he continued to talk. “You’re trying to collect evidence against my client, huh?”

“Have a seat,” the DA offered.

“No thanks, we’re leaving. But I want copies of everything - and I mean everything - that you have on him.”

At the same time, he handed the DA his card, which said Cole, McCrosby, and Ross, Attorneys at Law.

George stood up, baffled, but pleased. Where had this knight in shining armor come from?

Chapter 29

“Wait a minute” the DA demanded. “I’m not finished yet!” he almost yelled.

“Look” Mr. Cole retorted, “Either charge my client, or we’re leaving!”

The DA hesitated. Mr. Cole took his hesitation as an opening.

“Let’s go, Mr. Meadows. He doesn’t want to deal with me and the people in my firm. We’ll put an army of lawyers on this if necessary, and take this case all the way to the supreme court.”

He then turned back toward the DA and raised his finger to point at his face. “And you, sir, will look like a buffoon in the process!”

Cole grabbed George by the arm and began to drag him out of the office.

“This isn’t over yet!” the DA called after them.

As they reached the outside of the building, George spoke up. “Man, are you an angel from God, or what?”

“No, I’m not an angel, but I am an attorney.”

“But how did you know, and how did you get here all the way from the capitol?”

“Your wife called me” he answered.

“Juanita?” George asked.

“No,” he chuckled, “your other wife, Shawanda.”

“So that’s where she went yesterday” George muttered.

“Pardon me?” Mr. Cole said.

“Sorry, nothing” George replied. “She must have called you yesterday when she left the house.”

“Well, she made it sound like this was an emergency. I told her I was busy and would send someone else, but she insisted that she wanted the best. I took the red eye flight and got in this morning.”

“Wow! What a woman” George responded.

“I’ll say” Cole went on. “I told her I was not cheap. She said she didn’t care what it cost” Cole revealed.

“I’ll pay your fee” George said.

“Well, she claimed she got some life insurance money from her mother’s estate” Cole said.

“That was only ten thousand dollars” George revealed.

“Yeah, when I told her that would be my retainer, she said I could have it all.”

“She did?” George exclaimed and questioned.

“Yeah, she does have that, doesn’t she?” Cole asked with concern in his voice.

“Yes, she’s got it, but she won’t be paying you. I will.” George stated firmly.

“However, I do have a word for her.”

Chapter 30

George rode back to the house in attorney Cole’s rental car, thinking he would go back to his own car later.

“Come in,” George offered upon arriving. “We have much to discuss.”

“Yes, you’ve got that right,” Mr. Cole answered. “And you’ve got those retainer documents to sign.”

“Yes, of course, of course” George said as he exited the vehicle.

Hearing the door of a car, all of his wives met him on the front porch, eager for the news of what happened.

George took everyone back inside, and once seated, patiently reviewed the events of the morning.

“When did you contact him?” Juanita asked, referring to Mr. Cole.

“I didn’t” George replied. “Apparently, Shawanda did.”

All eyes turned toward her.

Shawanda hunched her shoulders and said “I just felt led to get legal counsel, so I called my cousin who lives in the state capital, and asked him who was the best law firm in the city” she explained.

“Well, honey, how could you do that without George’s permission to use George’s money to pay for it?”

Shawanda took a deep breath. She had promised God secretly that if He would get George out of this predicament without going to jail, she would try her best to get along with all her sister wives, and that included Betty.

She bit down on her bottom lip briefly to compose herself, and then responded. “I had some money of my own left from my mother’s estate. That is what I’ll use to pay Mr. Cole and his firm.”

“But dearie” Betty came back. “When we married, didn’t all our assets go into the same pot?”

Shawanda looked down. Inside she was seething. To her, it seemed Betty could never leave well enough alone. She clenched her teeth. I will not retaliate, she said to herself. I WILL NOT RETALIATE, she repeated to herself.

Fortunately, she didn’t have to. George came to her defense.

“It’s all right. I know about the inheritance, and she has my permission to keep it.” he stated affirmatively.

Shawanda looked up at him with appreciation and gave him a quick smile and a wink.

“However, while you ladies prepare Mr. Cole some lunch and entertain him, I do want to talk to Shawanda alone,” he said as he rose from his seat and extended his hands toward her indicating that she should come with him.

Shawanda rose hesitantly, not knowing what to expect. Would he privately chastise her for not informing him what she had done? Would he even appreciate her efforts?

She was not quite sure what to expect, but she would soon know.

Chapter 31

“I appreciate what you’ve done” George said as he walked along the road.

“You do?” Shawanda reacted with surprise.

“Yes. It got me out of a very awkward situation, and I wasn’t sure whether that DA was going to arrest me or what.”

“Muscles, I thought you brought me out here to chastise me for not asking for your permission to do it” she retorted.

They walked a few paces in silence, and then Shawanda asked “Why didn’t you think of getting an attorney?”

“Well, I don’t know.” he replied after a few more paces.

“I guess” he continued “I’ve been trying to be like Charles Okinyi and trying to trust more and more in the Lord” he answered candidly.

They again walked in silence for a while.

“Couldn’t it have been the Lord that directed me to contact the attorney?” Shawanda asked.

“Yes, I suppose it was,” George answered simply.

“Perhaps the advantage of being with others that pray and hear from God is that no one person has the burden of hearing everything one hundred percent of the time,” Shawanda offered.

George pulled her hand and briefly brought the back of it up to his mouth and kissed it even as they continued to walk.

“Yes, my honey dear, you are so right,” George said.

“Oh, by the way, I also want to thank you for not reacting to Beatrice when she tried to bait you into an argument earlier” he acknowledged.

Shawanda took a deep breath and blew it out. “Well, it wasn’t easy” she admitted. “I had to bite my lip hard to keep from coming back at her” she lamented.

“Yeah, I know, but you didn’t orally attack her, and that, my dear, shows progress” he chuckled.

“Now if you can keep it . . .”

He started the sentence, but never finished it.

“That is going to be a task,” Shawanda admitted.

They turned the corner and started back.

“Yes, but isn’t that what God wants?” George asked. “To see us grow in the Spirit, and to show love even in the face of provocation?”

“Yes, of course you’re right” Shawanda admitted.

Shawanda had come along further than George knew, and her next statement would even shock him more.

Chapter 32

Muscles” she began her next statement with her old nickname for her husband. “When I look at how Juanita and Judy treat you and how they have extended themselves toward me and now toward Betty, I well I . . . I want to be like them.

She paused as they took another right turn and headed back in the direction of the

house..

“I know what I want to do, but it is so hard to do it. She said.

Yes,” George interjected, “ Paul the apostle said something similar in Romans chapter seven.

He paused moment and took a breath. He said something like, “The thing I want to do, I don’t, and the thing don’t want to do, I do. Now if I do the thing that I don’t want to do, and I don’t do the thing that I want to do, then it is no longer I that do it, which shows that there is another source within me, which is sin.”

He chuckled, “Well, that’s a crude paraphrase, but it’s something that we all face.”

“The answer, of course,” he went on, “is in the next chapter. We have to seek to be continually led by the Holy Spirit.”

“Yeah, I know,” Shawanda said, “yet it is difficult.”

“Yes, it can be,” George admitted.

“Nevertheless, just as the law of lift can overcome the law of gravity so that planes can fly, the Holy Spirit’s leading can help us overcome the law of sin and death” he concluded.

They walked a few more paces.

“I want . . .” she started, but hesitated, then continued again. “I want you to give more time and attention to Betty. She needs you more.”

George was so shocked by the statement, that he suddenly stopped and stood still and looked at Shawanda. He tugged her hand and pulled her toward himself.

Holding her in his arms, he slowly lowered his head and kissed her lips . . . Gently at first, but then more deeply.

Shawanda was a bit embarrassed, and pulled away after a few moments.

“Muscles! People will see us!”

“So what!” he countered.

“Do we want charges filed against us?” she asked.

George held her at arms length with his hands on her shoulders and laughed.

“When I’ve got wives on my side like you and the others, and a good attorney, what do I

have to fear?"

The End