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*For the woman  
I love*



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*“But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.” (2 Cor. 2: 14-15)*

*This book is dedicated to all the women of God, warriors, who stand as a column in their family, work and ministry, showing everyone the other side of our God. To all my sisters on this earthly journey, who despite the struggles remain firm, holding in their hands the great weapon of love and perseverance.*

*I thank God the Father for choosing me to be His instrument on earth and for showing me the beauty and strength of being a woman on a planet where human prejudice try to take out of her the primary focus of her divine creation. I thank Jesus, the Son, who came to rescue for all of us the dignity, the respect and the understanding of our mission. I thank the Holy Spirit for His love, for His strength and for His creativity that He places in me every day, helping me to move on and do His work.*

## *Introduction*

Do you like to be a woman? Are you happy with this choice of God to you?

This book aims to teach us certain basic principles in relation to the initial creation of human being in order to understand the real role of woman from the point of view of God, especially how she was emotionally planned by Him to be a powerful instrument of His love. When I thought about writing this work, I was living a difficult moment of my life, concerning my health. Therefore, the Lord gave me the book to write, for while I dedicated myself to write it, He revealed His secrets to me. From birth, many of us suffered the wounds of rejection, the distorted vision of the world that seemed to be hostile and threatening, especially the lack of knowledge about the sex itself, because it is still a taboo. After the fall of man, we created fantasies and lies around what God planned with a holy purpose, and therefore, most of our pain and oppression as a woman derives from the misuse of power on the part of man over our fragility, because in Eden the seeds of distrust and of enmity were sown. It's important to stress that the problems associated with our sexuality are also linked to our identity as person; so the wounds in this area often prevent us from acting in the world as we should do.

Hereditary curses are transmitted at conception; the unfavorable conditions that the mother may experience during pregnancy, such as words spoken by family and friends and an unsatisfying marital relationship can also affect the child that is being generated, both in body and in soul and spirit.

This book is also for you, man of God, who also was misinformed about your position as a male being, created in the image and likeness of the Creator, and therefore, you cannot understand the companion that He has placed beside you.

The book will be divided into two parts: the first will be of theoretical teaching (I'll begin by describing the creation of the human being by God, the result of his fall and the redemption brought by Jesus, besides scientific information on the physical constitution of woman and how Satan can touch not only in women but in all their descendants). The second part of the book contains the practical learning from the experiences of women who were directly touched by Jesus and had their lives transformed in all areas, showing that He came to restore our dignity and reveal to us His true design. It is a novel. The psychological description of each of the characters (since there is no data in the bible about it and I chose not to consult the apocryphal books) will be led by the Spirit of the Lord. Maybe you can identify with any of them and her history and are also ministered by Him for healing.

May God bless you and give you a good reading.

Notes:

- Words or phrases enclosed in brackets [ ] or parenthesis ( ), in italics, were placed by me, in most cases, to explain the biblical text, although some verses already contain them [not in italics].
- The version used here is the New Revised Standard Version, NRSV-1989 (1995)
- NIV = New International Version (it will be used in brackets in some verses to facilitate the readers' understanding).

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*Part One*

*Theory*



*“There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved” (Acts 4: 12).*



## The Creation

### *The two stages of the creation of man:*

Man was created in two stages: first the spiritual, and then the physical (human). Let's go to the original texts in *Gen. 1: 26-27; Gen. 2: 7*: "Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth'. So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them...then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being." Through these verses we can see that God first created the spiritual portion of man ('*in our image, according to our likeness*'); then his earthly part, as He had created the other creatures. He created man (*adhām*= *humanity*, that comes from the same Hebrew root <sup>a</sup>*dhāmā*, which means 'earth', to remind man of his origin: *Gen. 2: 7; Gen. 3: 19*); the next word is *bārā* = man, compound form, that is, man and woman ('*male and female he created them*', *Gen. 1: 27*). Thus, our earthly portion is enlivened by the breath of life from God (His Spirit) as it is written in *Gen. 2: 7*: "... and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (referring to *the Holy Spirit*); and the man became a living being."

*The other biblical truth is that the woman was created to be man's helper and walk on equal terms with him.*

In *Gen. 2: 18* it is written: "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner'" [NIV, 'I will make a helper suitable for him', which is translated in Portuguese for: 'I will make for him someone who helps him and corresponds to him', i.e., an appropriate helper, competent, convenient, adequate, reliable, qualified]. The word 'helper' in Hebrew (עֲזָרָה – *ezer*, from the root: *ozr* – to help), means *companion, helper* (*Gen. 2: 18; Gen. 2: 20*). It also means: *help* (*Deut. 33: 26; Deut. 33: 29; Ps 121: 1-2; Ps 124: 8; Dan 11: 34; Hos. 13: 9; Deut. 33: 7; Isa 30: 5; Ezek. 12: 14; Ex. 18: 4; Ps 33: 20; Ps 146: 5*) and 'support' (*Ps 70: 5; Ps 115: 9-11*). In only two Psalms, the word 'helper' has the meaning of 'strength, power and strengthening':

• *Psalms 89: 19*:

"Once you spoke in a vision, to your faithful people you Said: I have bestowed **strength** on a warrior; I have exalted a young man from among the people" (NIV)

"Then thou speakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid **help** upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people" (KJV)

In Hebrew:

'āz dibbartā-bhechāzon lachasiydeykha vatto'mer shivviythiy`ezer `al-gibbor hariymothiy bhāchur mē`ā

• *Psalms 20: 2*:

"Send **thy help** [*strengthening, in the original text*] from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion" (KJV).

"May he send you **help** from the sanctuary, and give you support from Zion" (NRSV).

In Hebrew:

yishlach-`ezrekha miqqodheshumitsiyon yis`ādhekhā

Then He caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, He took a rib from him and transformed it into a woman. The fact that God has taken a man's rib to form the woman means that He planned *interdependence*, that is, as the first woman depended on

the man to exist, the man depends on the woman to be born on earth (*1 Cor. 11: 12*). In the original text, the words “*a rib from him*” are substituted for the expression: “*part of the man’s side.*” The Greek word for woman is *gyne* or *gynai* and in Hebrew, *’ishstâ* = woman, for out of man (*’ish*) she was taken. God took a rib (Hebrew: *çelâ*, or *’tsêlâ*, which in Sumerian means ‘life’) and made it (*bânâ* = to build) into a woman (*’ishshâ*). The word *’tsêlâ*, in Hebrew, means ‘face, side or wall of the tabernacle’ (used in the same sense that has the expression *’Tsela Hamishcan*, ‘one of the faces’, ‘one of the walls’; the tabernacle = *Hammishkân*). Thus, one side of the first human being became the masculine part and the other, the feminine part. According to this Hebrew concept, the woman has a greater discernment, since she was created with a spiritual compartment more than man. In other words, she is turned to the things of God (“*Tabernacle*”) more than man. Explaining differently, one side of Adam was the masculine side, made by the hands of God on clay, symbolizing the matter, the flesh. The side where the rib was removed to make the woman was the feminine side, emotional or spiritual, by the Hebrew meaning of rib (*one face, one side or wall of the tabernacle*, the tent in the desert where God spoke to Moses). So, the woman would be an emotional and spiritual complement to the man and he, would be the material for her. At the same time, she in relation to herself, for having originated from the spiritual side of man, from what was ‘turned to the things of the tabernacle’, the woman would have this side more expanded, the double than that the man would have.

So far we have many interesting lessons. First, by having a spiritual sight more developed than man’s, *the woman is more susceptible to spiritual forces*; therefore, more susceptible to deceit and idolatry. Other consequence resulting from the position of *helper* that God gave her is that, being a helper, she has the right to express opinions and to influence who is assisted with regard to the action to be performed. Thus, woman has within herself *the ability to influence* greater than the man. While the man has the authority to decide what is to be done, the woman has the freedom and the ability to tell him the best way of work to be done because she is more practical and acts quickly when she is told clearly what to do. Due to their capacity of influence, many women in the Old Testament influenced in a lesser or greater degree, their husbands, subjects or even the people of Israel. Let’s see some examples:

1) *Eve* (*Gen. 3: 6 cf. 1 Tim. 2: 14*): “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.” Paul wrote (*1 Tim. 2: 14*): “and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.” This supports our previous idea of the greater possibility of the woman to be deceived, and at the same time, to influence. She may have been deceived because she didn’t have the same knowledge of Adam. The bible doesn’t make it clear that the Lord spoke only to Adam, but perhaps His contact was greater with His son and he should transmit the teaching to Eve. In *Gen. 3: 8-9; 13* we read: “**They** heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and **the man and his wife** hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, ‘Where are you?’... Then the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What is this that you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent tricked me, and I ate.’” This makes us reassess some learning that we had until here that was in the cool of the day that God spoke in Eden with Adam. From what is written above, we may think that He talked with the **two** (Eve was also present at this time of the day to talk to the Creator). If God spoke only to Adam, it would be a form of discrimination, for Eve was also His

daughter and was spiritually created in the image and likeness of God as man was. She had the same spiritual intelligence than man. Later, we can see in various places in Scripture, God speaking to women (Miriam, Deborah and Huldah, for example) and confirming, in the New Testament, that He is no respecter of persons.

- 2) *Sarah* (*Gen. 16: 2; Gen. 21: 10; 12b*): “and Sarai said to Abram, ‘You see that the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.’ And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai... So she [*Sarah*] said to Abraham, ‘Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac’... But God said to Abraham:... whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you.” Here, Sarah had two opportunities to influence Abraham; the first time, offering Hagar, the maidservant, so that they could have children, and the second time, expelling her from the camp so that Isaac had the birthright, as ‘the son of promise.’
- 3) *Rebekah* (*Gen. 27: 5-17*): because the text is long I will not write it all, but here we can see Rebekah acting against Isaac and Esau in favor of Jacob so that his right as firstborn was assured, and participating in the plot that would favor her favorite. But God had spoken directly with her during the pregnancy: *Gen. 25: 21-26*.
- 4) *Potiphar’s wife* (*Gen. 39: 7-14*): in this text, the wife of Pharaoh’s officer used of seduction toward Joseph, who, however, did not yield to temptation, preferring to remain upright and faithful to God.
- 5) *Miriam* (*Ex. 2: 7-8; Num. 12: 1-16*): First, Miriam as a child had an influence on the daughter of Pharaoh, who found Moses in the Nile and did not know what to do to breastfeed it or take care of him; so Miriam suggested that a Hebrew woman (in this case, his own mother) cared for him for the princess until he was weaned. In the second passage, Miriam, already adult and prophetess of the Lord, influences Aaron against Moses his own brother by jealousy of his leadership position, using as a pretext the Cushite woman (probably an Ethiopian) he had taken as wife.
- 6) *Rahab* (*Josh. 2: 1-24*): again, because the text is long, I will describe only the episode itself. Here, Rahab, the prostitute who lived on the walls of Jericho, had an influence not only on the citizens of her own land, not allowing them to discover the whereabouts of the spies sent by Joshua to observe the region before invading it; she also influenced the spies, promising not to denounce them, in exchange for her rescue and her family’s because they wanted to change their lives and adopt the Israelite style, converting to their God.
- 7) *Achsah* (*Josh. 15: 17-19*): The daughter of Caleb, after having the possession of the Promised Land and having been given in marriage to Othniel by her father, acted in an influential way on him, rejecting dry and barren land; on the contrary, she asked him the springs of water, and Caleb gave her the upper and the lower springs.
- 8) *Deborah* (*Judg. 4: 6-9*): here, the prophetess of the Lord had influence over the captain of the Israelite army (Barak), urging him to go to war against the Canaanites who oppressed Israel for years, as well as giving him courage and safety through her presence with him, because he recognized that God was with His people in the person of Deborah.
- 9) *Jael* (*Judg. 4: 17-21*): wife of Heber the Kenite, people related to Israel, but who suffered under the yoke of Sisera (commander of the Canaanite army, enemy of the Israelites) and that was confronted by Barak. Here, Jael influences the commander to hide in her tent and drink the milk she gave him, because God had already determined that she did so, by the mouth of Deborah the prophetess. He yields to her guidance and sleeps comfortably in the tent of Jael, who takes a stake and kills him,

driving the peg into his head. Thus, she frees the people of the Lord from the Canaanite dominion.

- 10) *Delilah* (*Judg. 16: 4-22*): here is one of the most striking examples of how a woman can seduce, influence and take a man out of God's presence and his commitment to Him. In this passage, Delilah denounces Samson to Israel's enemies and he is not only defeated, but blinded by the Philistines, made captive and taken as a slave to the foreign mills. Worst of all is that his weakness in yielding to the temptations of Delilah led him to the loss of his strength and his communion with God because the Holy Spirit had withdrawn from him. Unlike Joseph, he did not know to keep his integrity before the Lord.
- 11) *Naomi and Ruth* (*Ruth 1: 16-18; 3: 1-5*): both Ruth and Naomi influenced each other. Ruth was influenced by the culture of Elimelech and Naomi, and, consequently, by their God, and therefore she could influence Naomi to let her return with her to Bethlehem. Showing her loyalty to the mother-in-law, Ruth was able to influence her, somehow, to continue the journey and to believe in the Lord's rescue for both of them. In Bethlehem, Naomi influenced Ruth to seek protection in Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer of the family, also encouraging her to make to him a marriage proposal so that the inheritance of her ancestors was her again.
- 12) *Peninnah over Hannah* (*1 Sam. 1: 6*): Peninnah and Hannah were wives of Elkanah, a servant of the Lord. He loved more Hannah, who was sterile and, therefore, annoyed and provoked by the rival. This negative influence made Hannah suffer. However, in turning to God, pouring out her sorrow before Him and asking Him a son, she was answered, rescued from shame and honored, returning his son to Him as a Nazirite (consecrated to the Lord for all his life), who was Samuel, one of the greatest prophets of God and a great priest and judge of Israel.
- 13) *Abigail* (*Nabal's wife*) on David (*1 Sam. 25: 18-35*): Abigail was the wife of an important landowner in Israel, but he was mad and violent; therefore he did not understand the protective actions of David over his community, defending it from foreign invaders. By passing through his land, David asked him for help and food to his men but Nabal denied it. Then, David wanted to destroy him. Nevertheless, under the pacifying influence of Abigail, the anointed of God left her insane husband in the hands of the Lord and did not kill him. Later he died at the hands of God Himself, through a heart attack, and Abigail became David's wife.
- 14) *Medium consulted by Saul* (*1 Sam. 28: 21-25*): when Saul heard the news that he would die on the battlefield, the medium convinced him to eat to regain his strength. The king refused at first because he was too upset to react, but for her insistence, he ate and went his way.
- 15) *Bathsheba intercedes for Solomon* (*1 Kin. 1: 11-31*, with focus on v.17): here, Bathsheba intercedes with David for his son Solomon, who had already been chosen by God to be king of Israel and successor of His anointed, but was in danger of losing him for Adonijah, his older brother and also David's son by another wife. The king remembers the divine choice for Solomon and grants the request of Bathsheba.
- 16) *Solomon's wives* (*1 Kin. 11: 1-13*): Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, of all religions and nations; therefore, he was the greatest example of how a man of God may be influenced by unbelieving women because they perverted his heart, moving him away from the Lord and, as a consequence, he not only lost his throne and the spiritual communion, but also generated a curse on his offspring.

- 17) *Jezebel*: she was the wife of King Ahab of Israel, but came from Tyre, a region outside the Israelite nation, hence pagan. She exerted a negative influence on the prophet Elijah, threatening him with death (*1 Kin. 19: 2*) after his fight against the prophets of Baal, and on her own husband, Ahab, who was displeased with the reaction of the subject Naboth for not wanting to sell his vineyard to him (*1 Kin. 21: 5-16*). Jezebel raised false witnesses against Naboth, condemning him to death and incorporating his lands to the king's. Jezebel is a symbol of immorality, carnality, licentiousness, false prophecy and all kinds of emotional imbalance. His name is often used to describe an Authority of the darkness that acts on human emotions.
- 18) *Esther* (*Est. 7: 3-6; Est. 8: 5-6; Est. 9: 13*): made queen of Persia by the Lord, she was a powerful instrument in His hands, influencing the king Ahasuerus so that the Jewish nation was preserved from the destruction decreed by the king's Chancellor, Haman.

*Eve, Hawwa*, which means *life* (Hebrew, 'chay', 'hay'), *root of life, mother of humankind, mother of all living beings* [*Gn 3: 20*: "The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living"], is a name that can be written as 'Chavah', which means 'to express an opinion' (*Lachavot dáat*). Eve talked to Adam (dialogue), which allowed the flow of life in common. Thus, the initial plan of God for the woman was *the equality with man*. With the passage of centuries it went growing the trend in rabbinic teaching of making man more prominent than the woman, slowly eliminating the idea taught by *Gen. 2: 20* ("a helper as his partner", "someone who helps him and corresponds to him", that is, "a helper comparable to him"). Over the years, this trend took from the woman even her right to learn to read. According to the Hebrew concept mentioned previously about having the woman a spiritual capacity more developed than man, only to man was given the right to study the *Torah (the book of the Law)*, for in truth he needed to study and learn what to the woman is practically intuitive. For being a helper, the woman received an ability to exert great influence, so the serpent seduced her, for she was liable to be deceived, and at the same time, to influence Adam.

For being created from the man's rib, the woman would be an essential complement to balance of the emotions of man. The male sex is more assertive, more aggressive and more impulsive to act, for his greater physical strength gives him some confidence in his 'power.' The sensibility of man is different from that given to the woman; he is more rational than emotional, what may be an advantage before certain tests or challenges; however, sometimes it hampers him to hear more clearly the subtle voice of the Lord, because it is heard in the interior, often through the characteristic that we can call *intuition*, something that physically and rationally has no explanation, but that the woman knows and is sure whether is the correct path to follow or not. The woman, by having emotions and sensibility more developed than those of man, comes to complement him, giving him the subtlety of acting, feeling, to plan and to love more fully and correctly. What I mean is that man, without the moderation and passivity of woman, can get lost in his relationships, not measuring the consequences of his impulsive actions and repent later. Thus, the woman complements man emotionally, while he complements her giving her strength, determination and security to act in certain areas, making her feel protected, mainly in material area, from any kind of devastation or violence.

Thus, it was established by God *the function of man and woman*. As we read the passage again about their creation, we will draw important conclusions about the role of each one from the point of view of the Creator. We can see that before creating Eve, God gave man work and responsibilities. So, it's *function of man*: the foundation of family and society, to be responsible for teaching the woman, to work for the family

sustenance, to guard and protect the woman, to sow. The *function of woman* is: to be helper, she needs to be taught; therefore, she requires communication; to fit the man (rib), to be a multiplier (she receives, multiplies and returns) and to be an ‘incubator’ (to take care and give birth). She needs to be supplied so then to multiply the supply. For being a sower in all areas, the man must be careful with what he sows in the woman so that she multiplies and returns the seed to him properly. For example, a spermatozoon that is sown in the woman, after nine months is returned as a complete human being. In the emotional area, if she receives warmth and love from man, that is what she will return to him, but if he sows anger and hatred in her, that’s what he will reap in a multiplied manner. Another important point is that the man works to sustain his family and to bring supply into his house; it’s not the function of the woman to do so. She works to have professional fulfillment and to release the potential that God placed within her. However, if she sees herself overburdened with the duty to sustain the house, which happens often because the husband is unemployed, this will create serious problems in the relationship. She feels with a burden to which she was not prepared to bear, and this situation generates revolt and prevents the flow of the true love in the marital relationship. Women have a very important role in the ministry as well. In the NT we see that the women worked in God’s work with love and dedication.

Let’s talk a bit about marriage in order to understand not only what God planned in eternity for the two sexes, but also to understand what a wrong choice in this area can open gap for Satan to act. In *Gen. 2: 24* it is written: “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.” In *Matt. 19: 4-6* Jesus returns to the same subject when He says: “Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” Jesus gave focus to the fact that God has united, as He spoke clearly about the institution of legal marriage here on earth, blessed by Him before men. I’m bringing this comment to warn you about other illegal human practices relating to this such as: fornication (sex outside of marriage), prostitution and adultery that open gaps for the destruction of the enemy. In the next chapter we’ll return to the subject.

## *The fall of man*

God had created man in His image and likeness, blessing him in everything and giving him the right to talk with Him and know His secrets and His character. The condition was obedience. But under the seductive influence of the serpent, the woman was deceived and led the man to sin as well, both eating from the tree forbidden by God. In *1 Tim. 2: 14* it is written: “Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.” As Adam walked in God’s presence and spoke with Him, it was very unlikely to be deceived easily. He simply disobeyed the orders of the Lord and fell into transgression, which cost him life. God’s blessing became a curse. The earth became cursed and the work of Adam came to be with effort and struggle. The land that once produced good and pleasant fruit started to produce thorns and thistles (*Gen. 3: 18*), that is, weeds. The woman, who had a position of honor and equality with the man, began to be dominated by him, i.e., before the fall she was taught by him in love and complemented him. From sin onward, enmity entered their relationship and she came to be controlled by him, for she was not worthy of his trust. The seed of mistrust generated slavery. Howsoever, sin came by both and affected the lives of both and the rest of humanity. For the woman, to whom the activity of raising children would be blessed before the fall, the fact of raising offspring in a fallen world became a hard work (in pain). God knew that from then on He would have to put into practice His plan of salvation by sending His Son, who would be born on earth from the womb of a woman, but would be the only one capable of reversing the whole process of destruction, putting an end to the works of the serpent. Therefore, God said to it: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers (*Jesus*); he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel” (*Gen. 3: 15*).

God drove them out of Eden and placed cherubim to guard the east of the garden. The *east* in the bible means: the *spiritual side*. This means that God made, from then on, a spiritual separation between Him and man, because he had been defiled by sin and could no longer enjoy spiritually the intimate relationship with Him as he had before. Adam gave his wife the name Eve (*hawwâ*), which means *life* (*Hebrew, ‘chay’, ‘hay’*), *root of life, the mother of mankind, the mother of all living beings*. This word appears only twice in the bible (*Gen. 3: 20; Gen. 4: 1*), in relation to *Eve*. What happened was the disobedience of man to God’s commands.

Because she was more sensitive to the spiritual world, the woman was more susceptible to deceit, because she understood and felt things differently than Adam. I think relevant to put here an interesting comment on the way used by the serpent to seduce and confuse Eve. In *Gen. 2: 16-17* it is written: “And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.’” It’s important to stress that it’s the tree of life that was in the middle of the garden (*Gen. 2: 9*), not the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Then, in *Gen 3: 1-7* we read: “Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, ‘You shall *not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden*, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’. So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be

desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.”

Do you realize the subtlety of the conversation? Somehow, the snake caused a distortion in the mind of Eve; she began to confuse the tree that was at the center of the garden (*the tree of life, symbol of Jesus Himself*) with the tree of knowledge of good and evil, symbol of pride and arrogance of Satan, whose purpose was to steal for him something that belonged exclusively to God. This tree was not in the center of the garden. The devil, as well as the Creator, knew good and evil, for he was formed long before Adam and Eve and had fallen because of his pride; for being an angel and having the power given by God over the spiritual world, he knew the difference between light and darkness. Therefore, by jealousy of the man and his relationship with the Lord, he led the woman to the error so that she influenced her husband and they lost the so coveted fellowship with Him. It is clear that God was not unaware of what happened in His garden, but respected the free will of man and let it take its course; however, He didn't lost focus of His intention to maintain full union with His children, therefore He protected *the tree of life*, Jesus, who would be later the vehicle of reconnection with the Father. In *Gen. 3: 22* it is written: “Then the Lord God said, ‘See, the man has become like one of us [*the Trinity was implied in this comment; cf. 1 Jn. 5: 7*], knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.’” Sin had created an impurity and a chasm between God and man. This comment also lets implied that Adam and Eve began to have an understanding of right and wrong and this was printed in the human heart, even if unconsciously, thus giving him the responsibility for his future actions. It is as if God had said, “even if you have not my laws yet carved in stone (because the Law was only given thousands of years later through Moses), the notion of right and wrong remains within you; therefore, you have no excuse for not knowing what you are doing.” Hence, a little child, even without knowing how to read or even without knowing the Word, clearly expresses his understanding that he did something wrong. Inside him, he knows he was wrong; he did something that was not good (*cf. Prov. 20: 11*: “Even children make themselves known by their acts, by whether what they do is pure and right”).

The man, male being, began to deviate from his initial design in relation to love, delivery, provision, submission to God and commitment to Him and his wife. He became neglectful regarding to his obligations and began to use wrongly the power and authority that God gave him, oppressing the woman.

She, in turn, became a competitor of man rather than his helper, letting jealousy, slander, seduction and negative influences enter the relationship.

Another evil seed implanted by the serpent inside the woman was the rebellion, not only to man as her husband, but to all types of authority delegated by God, which worsened her condition during the centuries that followed, creating captivity and ‘prison’, where she came to be oppressed, humiliated, disrespected in her dignity in all senses. All this led her to behave in a more inflexible way, causing her to lose her femininity. She began to do things that men did more often, such as to drink, to smoke, to gamble, to have a more libertine sexual life and without commitment and so on. Centuries passed, and in favor of her freedom and quest for her own dignity and respect, she got ‘got lost’ because she began to fight in the world’s way, not in God’s way. This rebellious behavior needs to be treated by the Lord to break the cycle of bad family relationships that generates all kinds of disorder.



That's why Paul says in *Eph. 5: 24-25*: "Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." And in *verse 31* he repeats what Jesus said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and *the two will become one flesh.*" *Submission* implies "to support a mission", that is, to support the direction given by God to man about everything, including family. Therefore, if man does not listen to God and neglects his position as head of the family, 'the roof of his house', the family perishes, the house stays with no 'roof', and the foundation, which is the woman, stays without covering (is unprotected). Perhaps to avoid controversy around this is that Paul says in *1 Cor. 7: 8-9; 32-34a; 35*: "To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain unmarried as I am. But if they are not practicing self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion [*Here he talks that the institution of marriage is better than sex without commitment, that opens gap for Satan as: prostitution, adultery and fornication*]... I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; but the married man is anxious about the affairs of the world, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided... I say this for your own benefit, not to put any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and unhindered devotion to the Lord." The husbands should treat their wives with dignity, according to the Word (*1 Peter 3: 7*), "Husbands, in the same way, show consideration for your wives in your life together, paying honor to the woman as the weaker sex, since they too are also heirs of the gracious gift of life – so that nothing may hinder your prayers." This will cause her to be spontaneously submissive to him through love, besides what this loving union will ease the couple's prayer before the throne of God.

The question itself is not about *to marry* or *to remain single*, but to remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. Marriage is a call from God to man or woman the same way to remain single is also, depending on His sovereign choice and the human free will. The concept of celibacy was discussed by Jesus in *Matt. 19: 11-12* when He says: "But he said to them, 'Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can.'" What He meant is that voluntary celibacy (to remain single) as a personal and total dedication to His work is not for everyone, as well as a total separation of secular work.

Paul was a case of voluntary celibacy, as it seems, by personal choice (*1 Cor. 7: 7*: "I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has a particular gift from God, one having one kind and another a different kind").

Jeremiah was another case of celibacy, but determined by God (*Jer. 16: 2*: "You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place"). For a Jew, who has the family institution as something strong and as a sign of God's blessing upon him, the fact of receiving the order from the Creator Himself not to marry must have been a great burden on Jeremiah, almost a curse, but this attitude was necessary in order to carry out the ministry to which he was called. Furthermore, it was a protective attitude of God in relation to the prophet, for many families in Israel would be destroyed by the Babylonian bondage, including Jeremiah's, and he would also suffer because of it. Because of this we can see the conflicts in his personality. He was called *the weeping prophet* by many people. Perhaps his loneliness and his affective deprivation, besides his great responsibility, have brought him the feeling of living a great burden, instead of

a pleasant life, despite the difficulties inherent to it. For him, the world must have seemed quite hostile. Only the power of God on him and on his calling should have made him to overcome his mission.

Both for Paul and Jeremiah, celibacy had nothing to do with the law of Naziriteship described by Moses, for the *three Nazirites (set apart for the Lord)* for life described in the bible (Samuel, Samson and John the Baptist) had the freedom to marry, if they wished. Samuel married and had two sons: Joel and Abijah. Samson had several women (although only one legal marriage) and John the Baptist did not marry.

We must also remember that the Jewish culture of the time that Paul wrote all this saw the widow and the unmarried woman as a somewhat problematic case to society for not having anyone to take care of them, not being permitted to them to work to earn their livelihood as the women of today. Therefore, it was almost imperative that the woman was married.

The widows were despised by men, so God showed special care for them especially if they had not children: *Deut. 25: 5 (levirate), Ex. 22: 22 (not to oppress them), Deut. 14: 29 (to take part in the tithes), Deut. 16: 11; 14 (to participate in the festivities) and Deut. 24: 17 (not to steal them)*. They had too much need of protection.

Due to the fall, God tried to rescue His relationship with man, so He made covenants, especially through Moses, giving His laws to the people. By the Hebrew laws we realize that the mother of a family should be *honored (Ex. 20: 12), respected (Lev. 19: 3) and obeyed (Deut. 21: 18); she would name their children and would be responsible for their primary education (Gen. 29: 32b; 33b; 34b; 35b; Gen. 30: 6; 8; 11; 13; 20; 21; 23-24; Gen. 35: 18; Gen. 38: 4). She attended worship services (Lk. 2: 36-38) and led her offerings to sacrifices. The vow of separation (as Nazirite) could also be made by the woman, seeking to devote herself especially to the worship of God (Num. 6: 2). She was exempt from work on the Sabbath (Ex. 20: 10) and, if was sold as a slave, she had to be freed with the man in the 7<sup>th</sup> year (Deut. 15: 12). If there were no male heirs in her home, the woman could inherit and become the owner of lands with all the legal rights (Num. 27: 8; Num. 36: 1-13). Women like Miriam (Ex. 15: 20), Deborah (Judg. 4: 4) and Huldah (2 Chr. 34: 21-22) had a direct personal relationship with God. Not only in the OT this was true, but also in the NT, as is the case of the prophetess Anna (Lk. 2: 36-38), when Jesus was presented in the temple, passed the days of Mary's purification according to the law of Moses (Lev. 12: 6-8): forty days in the case of male child or eighty days if the baby was a girl.*

As mentioned before, with the passage of centuries, even after the laws be established, it went growing the trend in rabbinic teaching of making man more prominent than the woman, slowly eliminating the idea taught by *Gen. 2: 20*.

Jesus came to redeem the dignity of woman: Mary (*Lk. 1: 42*) has been called *blessed among women*. He forgave, healed and taught them; and they, in turn, served Him with provisions for His travels (*Lk. 8: 1-3*), showing Him hospitality, through their acts of affection as in the case of His burial. So, Jesus gave them the same means of salvation than for men. In the NT women participated in the prayer with the followers of Jesus (*Acts 1: 14*); they helped to elect Matthias (*Acts 1: 15-26*); received the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (*Acts 2: 1-4; 18*); Mary the mother of John Mark, offered her house to one of the centers of the Church of Jerusalem (*Acts 12: 12-13*); Lydia the first convert in Europe (*Acts 16: 14-15; 40*) was a woman; Priscilla and her husband Aquila taught the great preacher Apollos the complete truths of the Gospel (*Acts 18: 2; 18; 26*); the daughters of Philip the deacon prophesied (*Acts 21: 8-9; Acts 6: 5*). It was men in future generations who tried to remove from women the dignity brought by Jesus, for they did not accept Him as Lord and Savior, remaining thus in the

fallen condition of sin. Still in the NT we have other examples of women who were of great help in God's work: Dorcas (The only woman in the NT to be called the disciple, *mathêtria* in Greek; she was a deaconess, *Acts 9: 36-43*), Euodia and Syntyche (*Phil. 4: 2-3*), Eunice and Lois (mother and grandmother of Timothy, respectively – *2 Tim. 1: 5*), Claudia (*2 Tim. 4: 21*), Apphia (*Phlm. 2*), Nympha (*Col. 4: 15*), Phoebe (*Rom. 16: 1-2*), Mary (*Rom. 16: 6*), Tryphena and Tryphosa (*Rom. 16: 12*), Persis (*Rom. 16: 12*) and Julia (*Rom. 16: 15*) among others.

Jesus included the women in the illustrations of His teaching, making it clear that His message involved them. Thus, honoring them, He placed the woman in a position of equality with man, requiring the same pattern for both sexes and offering the same means of salvation for both. Examples: the poor widow (*Mk. 12: 41-44; Lk. 21: 1-4*), the woman who found the lost coin (*Lk. 15: 8-10*), the parable of the unjust judge who answered the request of the widow to judge her cause because he got tired of her insistence (*Lk. 18: 1-8*). He also responded to the women who wept for Him on His way to Calvary (*Lk. 22: 27-32*). He appeared first to women after His resurrection and they became bearers of the good news. The bible talks in *Matt. 28: 1-10* about Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, probably the mother of James the less. In *Mk. 16: 1-11*, it talks about Mary Magdalene, Mary (mother of James the less) and Salome. In *Lk. 24: 1-12* the bible mentions Mary Magdalene and the mother of James the less. And in *Jn. 20: 1-18* it says that the Lord appeared to Mary Magdalene.

Some women had a meeting and a personal relationship with Jesus and it is about these that we'll speak in the second part of the book:

1) *Mary, His mother*: we can see the participation of Mary in *Matt. 1: 18-25; Matt. 2: 1-23; Lk. 1: 26-56; Lk. 2: 1-52; Lk. 8: 19-21 (Matt. 12: 46-50; Mk. 3: 31-35); Jn. 2: 1-12; Jn. 19: 23-27*. She occupied her place of carnal mother of Jesus; she was called *blessed (happy)* for being chosen for this (*Lk. 1: 45-48 b*); she respected Jesus as the Son of God when He put the spiritual loyalty above the family ties (in the episodes in which the bible talks about Jesus' family, which is composed of all those who do the will of the Father); Mary also showed her submission to Jesus at the wedding in Cana, where the way to call her ("woman") didn't express rudeness, for the term used by Him was a tender term ('*Gynai*', in Greek, 'woman'). When He said, "*Woman, what concern is that to you and to me?*" [NIV, "Woman, why do you involve me?"] He meant, "*Woman, what we have in common?*" He was reminding her that it was not time for people to recognize His true identity. She understood His desire to remain in secret for awhile, so she gave those orders to the servants and trusted in Him. Moreover, this meant that the reason of being there was different, as well as their projects of life; she, as just a human being participating in a feast; He as the Son of God beginning His ministry of miracles on earth. Mary was also present at the crucifixion where she received John as her son and was given her the task of his mother, because Jesus had compassion on her pain at seeing there on the cross the son who was born of her womb. In short, she was respected by Jesus in her position of carnal mother and she, in turn, respected Him as the Savior and the Son of God.

2) *Peter's mother-in-law*: *Mk. 1: 29-31; Matt. 8: 14-15; Lk. 4: 38-39*. She not only experienced the healing by the hands of Jesus, but also had the opportunity to serve Him and, surely, had the privilege to learn more from Him than many others, by the fact of having a closer relationship with the best friend of his son-in-law.

3) *The woman with the flow of blood* (*Matt. 9: 19-22; Mk. 5: 24b-34; Lk. 8: 42b-48*). The bible does not say if she was sterile or if that disease appeared after having children, or if it was the case of a coagulopathy or any disease of the uterus. What matters is that Jesus gave her dignity back. He individualized her amid the crowd,

rewarding her for her faith and for her courage and determination. In Jewish culture, the bleeding was considered ceremonial uncleanness. In the bible (*Lev. 15: 1-33*) are described the uncleanness of man and woman, being the word 'flow' connected to disease. In *Lev. 15: 2* the Hebrew word 'zôbh' means: *any discharge* that made his 'victims' ritually unclean. In the Scriptures, other terms for 'flow' are also used, such as: *māqôr, rhyis and haimorrhoeo* (*Lev. 15: 33*) translated as: *hemorrhage*. In *Lev. 12: 7*, the bible speaks of blood flow in relation to the purification after childbirth and, in *Mk. 5: 25; Lk. 8: 43 and Matt. 9: 20*, about the woman with flow of blood, it's used the Greek term corresponding to *bleeding* or *hemorrhage*. It is important to remember that there were still no clinical treatments to cure hematologic diseases or hormonal disorders nor surgical interventions to cure gynecological diseases such as uterine myoma or uterine polyp etc.

4) *The Canaanite woman or Syro-Phoenician woman* (*Matt. 15: 21-28; Mk. 7: 24-30*) that was touched by Jesus when He was on His way to Tyre and Sidon. In *Matt. 15: 21-28* is reported that the woman followed Him on the way, screaming for His help to her little daughter who had an unclean spirit, and in *Mk. 7: 24-30* it is reported that she bowed down at Jesus' feet when He was in a house. Anyway, she experienced the healing through the expulsion of the devil that was in her daughter, she received salvation through her faith in the Son of God and was rewarded for this and by her boldness for being a foreigner because Jesus came first for the Jews, but her attitude was also an example of faith to the Israelites and a way to predict the acceptance of the Lord by the Gentiles.

5) *The woman who anointed Him at Bethany* (*Matt. 26: 6-13; Mk. 14: 3-9; Lk. 7: 36-50; Jn. 12: 1-8 cf. Jn. 11: 2*). In the first two references, the bible says that she anointed Jesus' head, and in the two following, it speaks that she anointed the Lord's feet. This woman received forgiveness of her sins, had her faith honored because Jesus commended her for her act before everyone and said that she would always be remembered for all generations. In addition, He corrected her wrong way of loving. As if she was the hostess of the house, by anointing Him, she performed an act of courtesy which usually was offered to visitors, so she was also commended.

6) *The widow of Nain* (*Lk. 7: 11-17*). As I said previously, the widows were despised by men, so God showed special care for them, especially if they hadn't children, for they had too much need of protection. He provided for them a new marriage to the brother-in-law or to the kinsman-redeemer of the family, in the case of the death of their husbands (levirate law); He forbade everyone to extort or oppress them and made them to participate in the major feasts along with the people as well as to receive the supply through the tithes. This widow in particular, seemed to have no one else to support or defend her; therefore, by resurrecting her dead son, Jesus restored to her the sustenance and the honor.

7) *Martha and Mary, sisters of Lazarus* (*Lk. 10: 38-42; Jn. 11: 1-57*). Martha worried too much with the material things, with social rules, with the natural work; Mary, in turn, gave priority to the spiritual things and the teaching that flowed from Jesus, so the Lord in calling Martha's attention to the attitude of Mary taught both at the same time about what is a priority for God, about gratitude and to value friendship.

8) *The bent woman* (*Lk. 13: 10-17*) of whom He expelled the demon of disease. That woman, trapped for years in that captivity, had her dignity restored, as well as her physical, emotional and spiritual health, and experienced personally the power and authority of Jesus over all things. She had a true revelation of His character and, metaphorically speaking, she could change her limited way of seeing life and the things around her, because in the position she was she could only look down; she was not able

to see things from above, the things of God. Now, healed by Jesus, she not only could see His face but she could see everything around her in a broader way.

9) *The Samaritan woman who was at Jacob's well* (Jn. 4: 1-42). This woman had a personal revelation of the Messiah, as well as of salvation that came through Him. She understood what the true worship was; she had her dignity restored, the opportunity to be emotionally happy now with the correct husband, beyond what she received from the Master a ministry of evangelism in her hands. Through her the whole city believed in Him and received His word. More than that, the future generations of her family would be influenced by her conversion. The man with whom she lived was the sixth in her life and the bible does not mention the causes of those unsatisfactory and limited relationships, leaving her always abandoned and disliked by everyone. Certainly, from that moment she could understand the proper way to love and change completely the course of her life.

10) *The adulteress* (Jn. 8: 1-11). By the Law of Moses, both the man and the woman caught in the act of adultery were punished with death (Lev. 20: 10); in more details, by stoning (Deut. 22: 22). Jesus surpassed the barriers of the inflexibility of the *Torah* to show the woman and all those present the most important precepts of the Law, which are love and mercy so that justice could be exercised from the higher standpoint of God. She experienced forgiveness and with it the understanding of what is right and holy; therefore, the true freedom. Moreover, she received the opportunity to be happy again in the sentimental area, now settled on new basis. Probably, she also received the ministry of evangelism, because through her change of life, everyone around her could see the Lord.

11) *Mary Magdalene* (coming from a village in Galilee called *Magdala* or *Magadan*) and *the women who followed Jesus* (Lk. 8: 1-3). According to the bible, she was freed from seven demons, and along with the others she began to follow Him. Not only she was freed from demons and healed from diseases but also her companions. The bible mentions the name of the other two: *Suzanna* (we can not find any other biblical reference about her) and *Joanna* the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward (Herod Antipas) [NIV, the wife of Cuza the manager of Herod's household]. According to the bible, these women provided assistance to Jesus with their goods (Lk. 8: 3). Probably some other women walked together with the three already mentioned, because the bible describes their participation not only in the episode of the crucifixion but also in the resurrection of Jesus. They are: *Mary*, mother of James the less [NRSV; NIV, 'the younger'] and Joseph (Matt. 27: 56; 28: 1), also called the wife of Clopas or 'the other Mary'; *Salome*, the wife of Zebedee and mother of James and John, the cousins of Jesus (Jn. 19: 25 cf. Matt. 27: 56; Mk. 1: 19). Regarding the crucifixion of Jesus, the bible describes the presence of four women (Matt. 27: 56; Mk. 15: 40; Jn. 19: 25): *a*) Mary, the mother of Jesus. *b*) Mary, mother of James the younger [or 'the less'] and wife of Clopas (Also called Alphaeus). *c*) Mary Magdalene and *d*) the sister of Mary (Jn. 19: 25 cf. Matt. 27: 56; Mk. 15: 40 – *Salome*), the wife of Zebedee. As a conclusion about these women, we can say that they had an opportunity of service, growth and development of holiness, an opportunity to offer and to contribute to God's work (as *Joanna* and *Susanna*, for they were rich). Without any doubt, they also had the blessing of being healed and delivered, receiving back the dignity before that society, and the freedom to act with more confidence in their own lives.

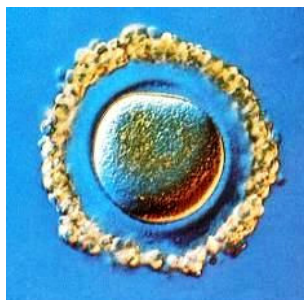
*The physical portion*

*“For it was you who formed my inward parts;  
 you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
 I praise you, for I am fearfully  
 and wonderfully made.  
 Wonderful are your works;  
 that I know very well.  
 My frame was not hidden from you,  
 when I was being made in secret,  
 intricately woven in the depths of the earth.  
 Your eyes beheld my  
 unformed substance.  
 In your book were written  
 all the days that were formed for me,  
 when none of them as yet existed.  
 How weighty to me are  
 your thoughts, O God!...  
 Search me, O God,  
 and know my heart;  
 test me and know my thoughts.  
 See if there is any wicked way in me,  
 and lead me in the way everlasting”.*  
*(Ps. 139: 13-17a; 23-24)*

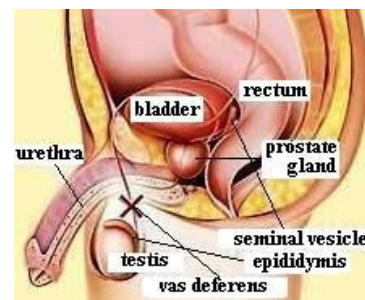
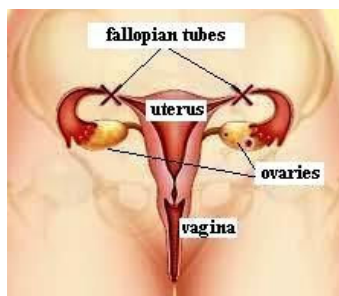
When we analyze human beings and their complex constitution, physical and emotional, we remember David and what he wrote in *Ps. 139*. David did not know biology or the medical science of today; however, he felt God's heart deeply and had reverence to Him, acknowledging His sovereignty and His infinite wisdom to create something that even today man strives to reproduce, but will never manage to generate or create or to invent, which is a living being. Any one of us, however much we try, will never be able to create a cell, let alone a whole being; at most, we can *reproduce* it through cloning. Perhaps this is why our sexual organs are also called reproductive organs, for they only 'follow a programming' already placed on their inside by God Himself to obey His command given in Eden: "Be fruitful and multiply."

God specialized some of His children to treat the soul and spirit, and others, to treat the body. Those working in health should have the humility to use science and knowledge to help their fellow men, knowing that was the Lord who allowed them to receive them, so only He deserves the honor for the healing. I like to say, '*The doctors treat; God heals.*' Some doctors powerfully used by God, often use their intuition more often and get right the diagnosis and the treatments more effectively; this is because the wisdom of God is involved.

All living matter is composed of small units called cells. The human body is composed of approximately 200 billion cells, all contributing to the common goal of survival and reproduction. We can say that each cell possesses life of its own, because it contains elements within it that provide food and regulate metabolism and excretion. They can only be seen with the aid of a microscope. The ovum that the woman's ovaries generate is the largest cell in the body, measuring 0.2 mm or 0.0079 inches in diameter, but most cells of the body has between 0.02 mm and 0.08 mm [0.0008 to 0.0031 inches] in diameter.



*Ovum*



The cell is limited by a thin membrane that allows passage of certain substances such as water and nutrients. There are several elements within the cell, with different functions, but let's focus on the largest of them, which is the nucleus, where are the genes responsible for hereditary characteristics. Genes are grouped into larger structures called chromosomes, which appear as filaments ('small threads'), extremely thin in the nucleus. The number of chromosomes is constant for each species. For human beings the total is 46, two of which correspond to the sexual chromosomes. It is this pair of chromosomes that determines whether the individual is genetically male or female. The male and female sex cells (spermatozoa and ova, also called gametes) carry only one sexual chromosome (X or Y), that is, half the number of chromosomes of the other cells of the body; in other words, if the cells of the mucosa of the mouth (the membrane inside of the mouth corresponding to the cheek) are examined by a microscope, the two chromosomes will be seen: XX (for woman) or XY (for man). However, if an ovum is examined, it will only contain one X chromosome, and the spermatozoon, an X or Y chromosome (half the amount of spermatozoa produced by men contains an X chromosome and the other half, an Y); so that when fertilization occurs, the union of a mother's X with a father's X generates a female fetus, and a mother's X with an Y from the father generates a male fetus.

The cells divide and reproduce giving rise to two new cells with identical properties to the mother cell. Some cells of the body have cilia around, like 'small hairs' that move, facilitating the transport of liquids or other substances more viscous (sticky). This is the case of the fallopian tubes (uterine tubes) that push the ovum from the ovary to the uterus where the fetus develops.

The spermatozoon, the masculine sexual cell, is formed in the testicle and transported to a structure that exists around it (epididymis) where it completes its maturation stage and is stored. Through a tube attached to this structure, the spermatozoa come out and mix with the liquid content of the seminal vesicles and the prostate gland, which are substances that neutralize the acidity of the vagina and urethra

and increase the spermatozoa motility. They have a great head, where is the nucleus with genetic information, and a mobile and long tail. In man's ejaculation are deposited in the vagina of the woman about three to five milliliters of semen containing two hundred to five hundred million spermatozoa that will compete to fertilize a single egg (ovum). The active masculine hormone that commands the whole process is testosterone, which is then transformed in the liver into androsterone, and that provide the external masculine sexual characteristics.

In women, the ova are produced in the ovaries and at birth they already contain hundreds of thousands of them, but only one in every thousand has the opportunity to mature, much less will have the opportunity to be fertilized. Most go gradually degenerating during the woman's life. Anyway she is born with all the ova that will be necessary for her reproductive life, while in man the production of spermatozoa is constant until the end of his physical life, reducing only the number with the advance of his age. The ovaries are small until puberty and reach about two to four centimeters long at maturity [0.79 to 1.57 inches]. Its size is reduced after menopause, and in elderly women they are tiny. In the outer layers of the ovaries, the ova stay within spherical cavities that vary in size, the follicles, and the more mature, the greater will be the size. In half of the menstrual cycle, a follicle breaks and a mature ovum goes out, triggered by the sequence of various hormones (FSH and LH) of the pituitary gland (a gland located in the brain and that controls the other glands in the body) and the ovaries (they produce hormones: estrogen and progesterone), and that is transported by the fallopian tubes to the uterus where the fetus will be formed. Generally, fertilization of the ovum by the spermatozoon occurs in the proximal third of the tube near the uterus, and the ovum takes about eight to ten days to reach it. In the first phase of the menstrual cycle, the hormone that is in a higher amount is estradiol, one of the estrogens; in the second phase is progesterone. In other words, while the ova mature, the ovaries produce estrogen (specifically estradiol: E2). After ovulation at mid-cycle, its main production is of progesterone, by the follicle that became 'corpus luteum' (Latin for 'yellow body'). Progesterone stimulates the modifications designed to protect the egg: thickening of the mucosa of the uterus, which will sustain the pregnancy for three months, until the placenta begins to produce the same hormone. In girls, menarche occurs at about eleven to thirteen years, although it may vary in some cases, to more or less. The usual interval is of twenty-eight days, and ovulation marks the midpoint of the cycle. When the ovum is not fertilized, the corpus luteum gradually degenerates and the hormones start to decrease. This physiological condition moves away the uterine mucosa ('a thin skin' that is the internal lining of the uterus and where it will form the placenta), which gives off and gives rise to menstruation. As mentioned above, the fertilization of the ovum by the spermatozoon occurs in the proximal part of the tube, and soon on the first day the cell begins to divide. It takes eight to ten days for the egg reach the uterus.

Following, I put a table showing the main stages of fetal development, starting with fertilization:





*Spermatozoon in the fallopian tube*

It is here that fertilization occurs in most of the time. From the 200 to 500 million spermatozoa that are ejaculated very few can reach this place. As the passage is very difficult, the spermatozoon makes great efforts in the uterine tube. Its tail makes swimming movements that move it against the stream of viscous substances produced by the cilia ('small hairs') of the epithelium. Some cilia are visible in the photo behind the spermatozoon. From its union with the ovum the zygote is formed and goes through a first division into two and so on (1 to 2 times per day) to generate a group of about 32 cells called morula, which moves slowly through the tube toward the uterus, reaching it after 1 week. In the latter part of the journey it is a hollow ball (blastula or blastocyst) that performs the implantation in the uterine membrane (endometrium). After one week it becomes a new structure called gastrula, which will give rise to the embryo.

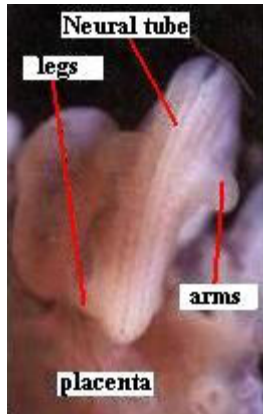


The new creature is already implanted in the uterus in the form of a cluster of cells which were divided from the zygote, a cell resulting from the union of the ovum and the spermatozoon. The mother often does not even know she is pregnant, because there has not been menstrual delay. From the seventh day of pregnancy, the blood test ( $\beta$  HCG) is already positive. After the period of menstrual delay and clinical detection of pregnancy she can be sure that this little creature of God is ready to be 'shaped' through her feelings and her words.

3 weeks

Begin to form the vertebrae, legs, arms, eyes, heart and liver.





4 weeks

The embryo is 0.20 inches long. One can see the neural tube (a rudimentary nervous system) and that is still open. The protuberances in the top are the future arms. Beneath, the legs, which develop slowly. In the placenta, in the background, maternal and fetal blood is exchanged for oxygenation. The blood circulation of the mother and fetus are completely separated by a thin membrane of the umbilical cord to the placenta. The heart, the blood circulation and the digestive system are already formed.



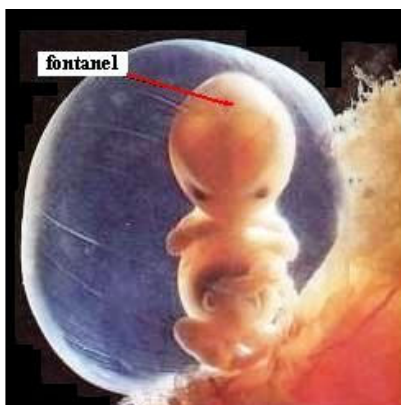
5 weeks, 0.19 inches length

The embryo floats in the amniotic fluid attached to the placenta through the umbilical cord. The upper part of the body grows faster than the lower, so the development is from top to bottom.



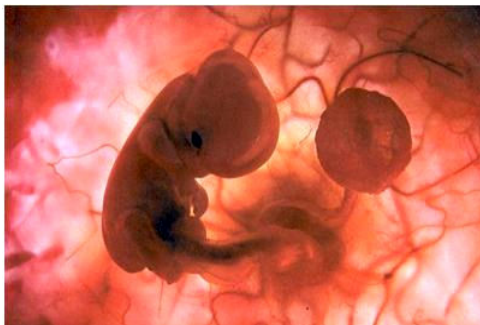
6 weeks, 0.59 inches length

The embryo lies in the amniotic sac (water bag), which absorbs all shocks. The heart beats quickly, the brain is growing and the eyes take their natural form. The embryo is sensitive to viruses and toxins, which can penetrate the placenta.



7 weeks, 0.79 inches length, 0.07 ounces weight

All external and internal organs are visible and are in full development: eyes, nose, lips, tongue, the beginning of milk teeth, hands, bones, muscles covered by a very thin skin. On top, the fontanel.



8 weeks (two months), 1.18 inches length,  
0.088 ounces weight

The mother may feel pregnancy. The embryo grows a few inches per day. From these eight weeks, it is no longer an embryo but becomes a fetus.



3 months (12 weeks)

3.15 inches length and 0.88 ounces weight. Fingers and toes, head, external ears and eyelids; organs fully developed. The umbilical cord is greater. The fetus moves freely in the amniotic fluid.



4 months

The baby is 6.30 inches and 7.05 ounces weight. It is active; arms and legs move. All organs are formed and it follows, then, a period of simple growth. The whole process of growth and maturation of the fetus takes nine months.

In the postpartum period there are some important changes. The main ones are:

1) Uterine involution from the height of umbilicus to its normal size, in the pelvic cavity. It takes 40 days, in the bible called “period of the purification of woman”.

2) Healing of the placental wound, for doctors assessed by the discharge of material and secretions called *lochia* (Latin: *lochia rubra*, *lochia flava* (or *lochia serosa*) and *lochia alba* and whose color varies from red to milky white), and that lasts 3 to 5 weeks, that is, 21 to 35 days; nearly 40 days as well. During this period, women should abstain from sexual intercourses, for this can cause problems such as infections; the body’s tissues involved in childbirth has not healed completely.



It is interesting to remember that the bible describes certain commandments, especially in the book of Leviticus on ritual impurities and that have scientific foundation, which makes us once again honor the Lord for His wisdom, because even at that time He gave laws and commandments favoring man, showing that He knows all things about our life and our physical constitution, what centuries later was discovered by science. In *Lev. 12: 2-5* are described God's guidance for the purification of women after childbirth. Mary fulfilled that Jewish ritual for the purification of women by presenting Jesus in the temple when He was forty days old (*Lk. 2: 22*), when she led the animals determined by the Law to be sacrificed to the Lord. *Lev. 12* describes the period of 40 days in case of newborn male and 80 days in case of a newborn female. Although there is not still a consensus (even among rabbis) why twice as long for the girl, the 40 days described as ceremonial cleansing period agree with the medical explanations described above. I suppose that, perhaps, by having the woman "*that extra spiritual compartment*" compared to man, described at the beginning of the book concerning the creation, this doubled period for cleansing to the female child has a spiritual equivalent of "*one care else, a double care*" from God in relation to her, teaching us that the closer relationship with God requires a greater holiness. I don't mean that man should not be sanctified or that the woman is purer or holier than him; what I mean is that perhaps because of having this greater capacity to feel the spiritual things, therefore, to be more vulnerable to them, is that woman should have more vigilance, be closer to God not to take the risk of being dominated by the devil; she must be in a *greater purification*. It is as if the first forty days cared for the strengthening of the physical portion, and the other forty days cared for the spiritual portion of the mother and girl who was born. Perhaps, the physical equivalent of this reasoning is the fact that woman has two X chromosomes (XX) and man, only one (XY). As I said, this was only a speculation on my part about this subject.

Returning to the previous subject, another interesting factor that occurs in the postpartum period is the hormonal crisis, that is, the hormones that were all very high in women during pregnancy fall suddenly with the removal of the placenta. This leads to a condition where there is the increase of a hormone in the pituitary gland of the woman, named Prolactin (PRL), which in addition to inhibit all others and, consequently, ovulation, triggers the formation of milk for breastfeeding. With the phase of "non-ovulation", the menstrual cycle will gradually return to normal, resuming the release of hormones before pregnancy, in 90 to 180 days, that is, the menstrual cycle returns to

work from 3 to 6 months after delivery; hence, it's the period guided by doctors to nurse the newborn. Because of the high PRL and non-ovulation, another pregnancy is rare in this period, however, there are exceptions. What I mean is that this hormonal crisis, where all the hormones fall abruptly, is one of the factors that may contribute to the well known "*postpartum depression*" of intensity and variable period, although many women do not present it. In the Near East, children generally are nursed up to two years old and the "*wet nurse*" often stays with the family as a trustful servant (like Deborah, Rebekah's nurse – *Gen. 35: 8*).

### *Guidance for your baby*

Do not forget to take him to the pediatrician to see if all is well in the physical area. Observe the dates of vaccination and feeding so that he eats natural foods as much as he can, instead of highly processed, frozen or with many preservatives or dyes; they can cause allergy problems. If possible, breastfeed him up to the sixth month of life; breast milk provides sufficient nutrient and antibodies for immune defense. Check the quality of diapers and hygiene products that you use with him not to cause rashes or other dermatological problems. Do not overheat him with too thick clothes or made of synthetic material. Contrary to what many mothers think, infants have a more intense metabolic rate than adults; therefore, the heat is greater in his little body. Play with him, talk to him as much as possible, softly and without sudden changes of tone, for you can scare him; he'll think you are scolding him. And when he rolls to the edge of the bed in the diaper change, do not scream; he just has no sense of danger yet. Get closer and pull him gently back to safety. Remember to make of his bath something nice; they love water (reminds them of the uterus). Soft music is also part of the care of babies, especially before bed; that's why he likes it when you sing to him. If you can, go to an evangelical bookstore and ask about CDs for babies to sleep. They're great. After that comes the most delicate part of all: relatives. Not all of them are so delicate and the baby will react against many, but keep calm and make use of psychology. Ask for guidance to the Holy Spirit and you will win. Therefore, the consecration of your child to the Lord from the womb is important, as well as your daily prayer, protecting him from everything that does not belong to Jesus. If he grew a little bit and starts to show some constant emotional reactions and that bothers you, such as jealousy of his little brother (can be of the older brother too), anger, revolt, tantrums, aggression, crying with no apparent physical reason etc., try another technique. Open the bible and ask the Lord for a word. Meditate on it and the content it brings and that may be related to the situation in question. Then, when the baby is sleeping, come very close to him slowly and talk the words guided by the Holy Spirit, softly, in relation to what you've read. If any trauma that is related to the period of pregnancy comes to your mind, treat it in your child through the word of God, asking forgiveness to your child, changing what you said, declaring your love and his father's on him, the security of God on his life and so on. Say what your heart boosts you to say. It's not necessary a long time for this, but do it every day until you see a result. Surely, you'll have a positive result, because you will be speaking with his spirit and his unconscious without the barriers of conscious. With love and patience, everything is solved. Remember that Jesus directs everything.

### *The emotional and the spiritual portion*

We have already talked a bit how God planned man and woman and about the effect of ‘the fall’ on them, causing them to lose not only their spiritual communion with Him, but also bringing the emotional illness into them. The objective of this chapter is to describe some strategies used by the enemy to generate disease in humans, both physical and emotional and spiritual, as well as to remind us of what the word of God tells us to protect us, to prevent and destroy the evil works on us. Here, especially, come the hereditary curses, for it is written in *Ex. 20: 5-6*: “for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.” In *Deut. 24: 16* it is written too: “Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents; only for their own crimes may persons be put to death.” In the OT it’s also written that anyone hung on a tree was under God’s curse (*Deut. 21: 23 cf. Gal. 3: 13*) and was precisely Jesus, the Son of God, who was nailed to a tree (the cross) to carry our curses upon Him.

First, when fertilization occurs, we saw that the features of the new being are printed through the maternal and paternal genes that will be combined. This means that not only the positive features will be transmitted, but also the negative ones present in the family tree and that may have been dormant for a few generations, however, now they will be about to be implanted. That’s why God said that He punishes children for the iniquity of parents to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject Him (*Ex. 20: 5*). Therefore, the physical and emotional genetic inheritance present will suffer also the spiritual action by the sins of the ancestors, because demons have legality to enter and participate in this process by non-confessed sin of the fathers and by mistakes of the previous generations. By the lack of understanding of the human being and with his resistance to the correction of the Lord, joined with his natural ability to perpetuate the error, the unborn child may receive, already at that stage, the weight of heredity. However, the children are not obliged to carry this burden for the rest of their lives. When they receive salvation and forgiveness of God through Jesus, bringing the truth of the Father for them, they begin to be aware of how things happen and are free to exercise their own free will given by Him, taking a different attitude of that they brought in the flesh as an inheritance; then, they come to have the Lord’s blessing on them and their descendants (“to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments”). The interesting is that when we talked about fertilization and about the nutrition of the fetus through the placenta, we saw that the blood of the mother and fetus’ do not mix, but are separated by a thin membrane. The fetus only receives oxygen through the blood of the mother but all his hematologic cells, that is, all components of his own blood was already determined before, during fertilization. Therefore, we can extrapolate this reasoning to the spiritual side as for the hereditary curses, saying that demons begin to act before the fetus is implanted in the uterus. They begin to have legality already in the formation of the new being, especially if parents do not know the Lord, if they come from a root of idolatry and if the act of generating, itself, was carried out with violence, hatred or any other feeling than the love and the full approval of God. Then, we can sum up this way: *the first form of Satan to act on a person is during his conception in the womb*. David said: “Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me” (*Ps. 51: 5*). He meant that the mark of Adam and Eve was already in his nature when he was conceived.

Pregnancy causes in woman a flood of hormones that make her emotionally vulnerable to all kinds of circumstances and external aggression. What the mother feels, thinks, says and lives during pregnancy affects the fetus tremendously, so the environmental conditions in which the woman lives, her family relationships, bad personal experiences, criticism, false accusations, the mundane and dirty way of seeing things and people, even God, all this affects the personality of the one who is being generated inside the uterus. Therefore, women should be careful not to pass on to her child still being formed, feelings, words, thoughts and damaging attitudes that she may regret later. Today, psychology and medicine agree that an embryo or a fetus are not alienated and insensitive beings; instead, they already have a perception of the world and the family in which they will be born, and that they react in their own way to these adverse conditions, externalizing, sooner or later, the consequences of any aggression that they suffered in this period of intrauterine life. Many rejections generated since the conception will appear in the form of numerous symptoms, years later. Thus, *the second way for the devil to act on a life is to bring any kind of evil to the woman during her stage of pregnancy, and when he wants to destroy, oppress or disturb the human being, it is in this trauma that he will touch.*

Another interesting comment is about the “*three doors*” of human beings, for they can be instruments of strength and protection in the life of a person or factors of destruction and lack of protection. The three doors are: *eyes, ears and mouth*. The *vision* leads us to see things and to want them; therefore, Jesus spoke to men not to look at a woman with lust in the heart, because they could commit adultery with her. This was part of a biblical concept of the Jews in Ancient times that referred to the eyes as windows or doors which led things into the physical life of a person, that is, what one saw and wished a lot could be part of his material world. In other words, Jesus referred to this as to ‘have good or bad eyes.’ Popularly, this concept still valid in our society, which says is not good that a pregnant woman see ugly things lest the child is born ugly. Superstition or not, everything that a woman sees during her pregnancy that can cause her a trauma may also affect directly or indirectly the child in her womb. This is a form for the enemy to indirectly touch a child still in formation; even if the fetus does not see the outside world, it will feel the effect of all things through its mother’s feelings and will suffer as well. If the trauma occurs in the early years of a child’s life through the vision of a bad situation or emotionally heavy for him, this may be recorded in his unconscious and may affect his entire growth. One manner for the devil to destroy families, starting with children, is through television and Internet, where pornographic images or images emotionally heavy can enter the soul, bringing damages later. Through the *ears*, i.e., the words we hear, we can have our soul strengthened or wounded. Here, come the famous curses of sentence, destructive words that for years can ruin completely the mind and emotions of a person, taking away his self-worth and security in life and in himself besides his faith in God. Both mother and child are vulnerable to this type of aggression mainly coming from the closest people as husband or parents, siblings, parents-in-law and brothers-in-laws or sisters-in-laws. Along with this second way, “*hearing*”, is the “*speaking*”, that are things closely linked. The worst sentences that anyone can say after a great emotional trauma are: “I’ll never love again”, “I’ll never do it again”, “never again”, “It will always be so, this will never change” ... and so on. These phrases end up sealing the fate of someone, preventing him to love and be happy again, hindering a revelation or a restoration of God, creating walls for years and that will later manifest as a disease, whether physical, emotional or spiritual. Women! Be careful with what you hear and be careful with what comes out of your mouths when you are betrayed and injured, especially with the desire for revenge

that the enemy may try to nestle in your heart, for this can greatly hinder the work of God in your lives and also cause serious consequences for everyone around especially your children, who can assimilate this destructive pattern of behavior. This third form of destruction, ‘the speaking’, creates to the very person a spiritual barrier as well as on those lives upon whom he casts these curses. Husbands! Be careful with what you sow in your wives whether pregnant or not, because you will shape the spiritual portion in her life and her children. In short: *the third form for the devil to steal, kill and destroy is through the three doors: Vision (it shapes the physical), Hearing (it molds the soul) and the Speaking (the word – shapes the spiritual). That is why it is important for parents to talk to their children from the womb, because their positive words will give them security and mold their soul.*

The fourth form for the devil to sow destruction using the woman is through sexual intercourses that she keeps; so, God does not approve sex outside of marriage because fornication, adultery and prostitution are big gaps for the devil to destroy a life. Many sexually transmitted diseases are causes of problems, as well as other emotional and spiritual diseases may be contracted through these unlawful acts. This dirty strategy occurs, especially, in cases of rape and violence. Therefore, *the fourth form of the opposing forces to manifest with destruction in someone’s life is through sexual contacts not approved by the Lord.*

Until seven years of age, the child is emotionally attached to his mother, despite his physical umbilical cord having been cut at birth. That’s why traumas both in mothers and in children in this age group may have harmful consequences for both, not to speak for the whole family. Couples who fight a lot, argue and even separate through divorce or not, with one or more children in that age group, are causing physical, emotional and spiritual damage to them, and they need to reassess their situation before God to stop this process of destruction, as soon as possible. Thus, *the fifth form used by the adversary to destroy lives is through the family example that they acquire in the first and the second childhood.*

*The sixth way to see the enemy devastate and destroy are, without any doubt, the acts of witchcraft etc.* that, through unscrupulous people, will create serious problems in many lives, especially if they still are not saved because they are not under the protective covering of Jesus’ blood.

#### *What does the bible say about all this?*

Salvation brought by Jesus stops the destructive cycles. In Christ we are new creatures (*2 Cor. 5: 17*), we have been forgiven and now we are entitled to His blessing if we walk according to His will for our lives. However, even accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior, this fact by itself does not make us perfect and holy beings. Our spirit is completely new and redone, but our soul and our body do not follow this immediate transformation. That is why the apostle Paul speaks of to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, and confirms that he was not even able to obtain perfection (*Phil. 2: 12b; Phil. 3: 12-16*). This is called ‘inner healing’ or ‘emotional release’ if you prefer; something that the Holy Spirit does with our souls throughout our lives. It is through the daily healing and the search for a deep communion with Him that our soul goes being transformed and truly filled with His Spirit. Therefore, we must not lose time in our Christian walk. Every second of our life is precious to grow and be the ‘new creatures’ that the Lord wants to make of us. Only God is aware of the human physical and psychological formation that He created. A factor that the bible mentions as important in this prevention of emotional and spiritual diseases is to avoid unequal yoke with



unbelievers, because it undermines our strength and thus, we take the risk of moving away from Him (*2 Cor. 6: 14-18; 2 Cor. 7: 1*).

Our choice is personal (*Deut. 24: 16*: “Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents; only for their own crimes may persons be put to death”). Even if our parents with no fault had transmitted us bad family characteristics, and family demons have received until some time ago the legality to act on us through the bad behavior of our flesh, when Jesus came in into our spirit all this debt ceased to exist (*Col. 2: 14*) because His blood forgave us of the past sins and gave us a new authority over ourselves, returning us the free will to act as we please. We can no longer put the blame on anyone; on the contrary, we have the privilege of exercising the divine authority to direct our own lives. The curse of God on man because of his sin (*Gen. 3: 14-19*) was broken on the cross through His Son (*Rom. 8: 1; Gal 3: 13*), giving us the chance now to live under His blessing → “For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ – if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him” (*Rom. 8: 15-17*).

I want to put here some information about the neurological constitution of man, for this will be very important to understand our process of memory and to understand why often the prophetic word of divine healing that has been released on our life takes time to act and become reality in the material world, as well as it becomes difficult for us to change our habits quickly. This makes us also have a little more tolerance with one another, rather than label them as unbelievers, just because they have not shown the promise of the Lord in their lives yet. And also teaches us why the Apostles Paul and James spoke so much about practicing God’s word to be truly a new creation in Christ.

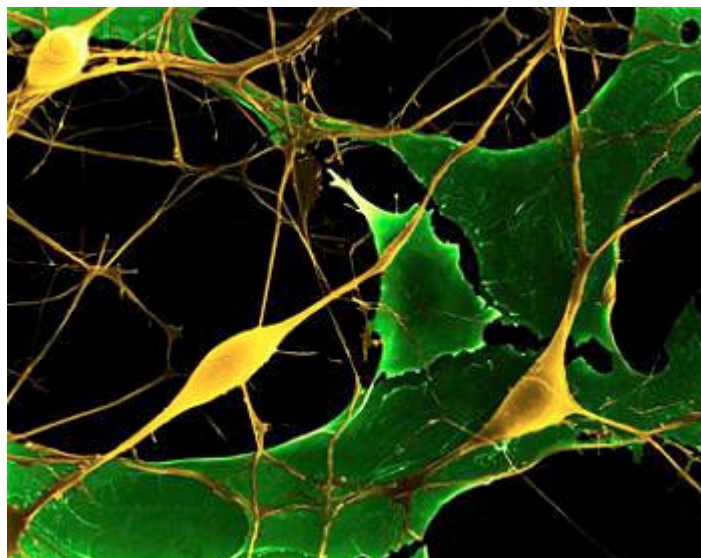
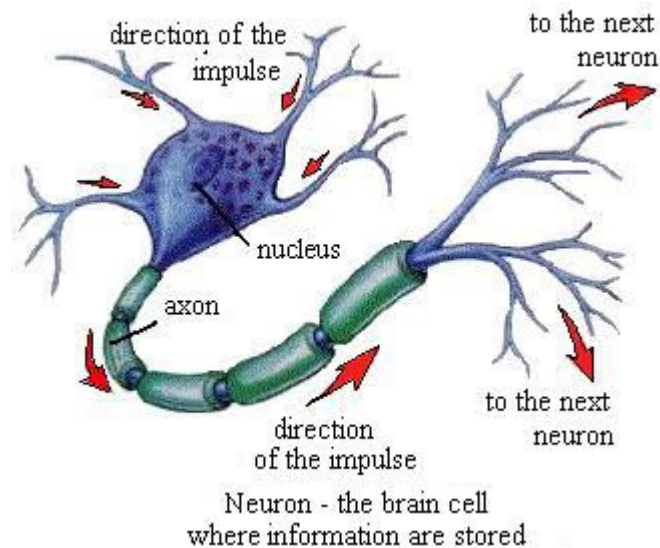
Briefly, our nervous system is divided into the central nervous system (CNS, where is the brain itself, the spinal cord and other structures attached to it) and peripheral nervous system (PNS: nerves). The Spinal Cord is a nerve center of involuntary acts and a vehicle of conduction of nervous impulses. From the white matter of the brain (which is under the external face of it, called the cortex or gray matter), therefore, in the CNS, fibers arise, which give rise to nervous pathways related to motility and learning (motor nervous system) that goes to the spinal cord and the peripheral system and are divided into two portions:

1) One portion (pyramidal nervous system or pyramidal tract or corticospinal tract) that is involved in the conscious learning of certain habits, for example: to drive a car, to pray, to write, etc.

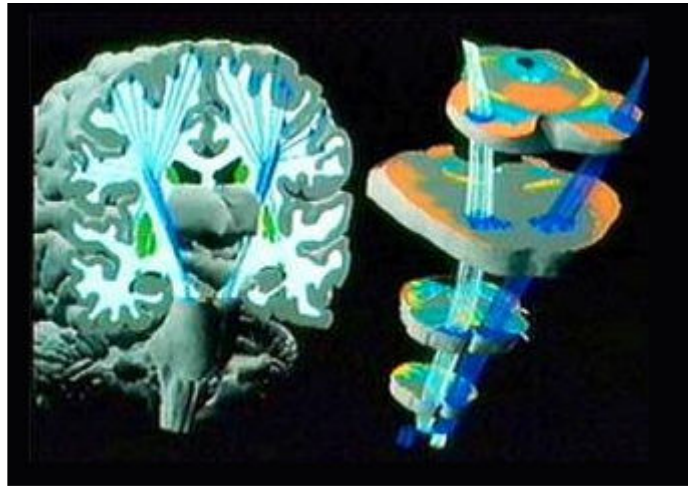
2) The pyramidal pathways then divide themselves into two separate tracts in the spinal cord in its lateral and anterior portions (the lateral corticospinal tract and the anterior corticospinal tract). This is the portion that takes on the unconscious control (extrapyramidal nervous system or extrapyramidal tract) when the learning is incorporated and thus becomes a habit.

Other structures are involved, for example, the visual system and the vestibular system, the latter linked to equilibrium. When we talk about learning, we also talk about memory, which also participates anyway of this system. Thus, all traumas that befell us (especially if they came with emotional burden) and the attitudes to which we were used to have are recorded in a stronger form in our nervous system, specifically in the limbic system and hippocampus (located in the temporal lobe of the brain – see figure). These structures are responsible for emotions and memory, so when a word of God comes and assures us the divine healing, even if we’re convinced that we are new creatures in

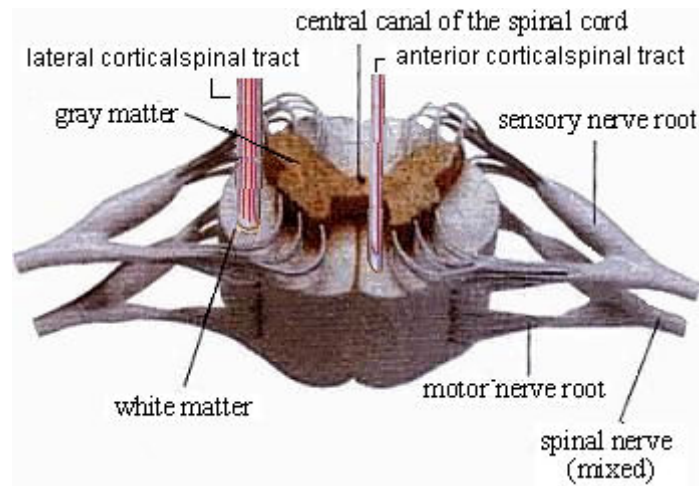
Christ Jesus, we can take some time to change our way of being or react; we have to go back to make a conscious effort (pyramidal nervous system comes back to be triggered) to get used to the new behavior that God expects of us. Science shows us that the emotional burden is necessary for the stimulus to fix in the long-term memory. I do not mean that God has no power to undo and redo everything in our soul (instantaneous miracles), nor that it's we who are going to do something without the participation of His Spirit. What I want to say is that it's our partnership with Him that brings us victory and makes us truly new creatures.



Neuron

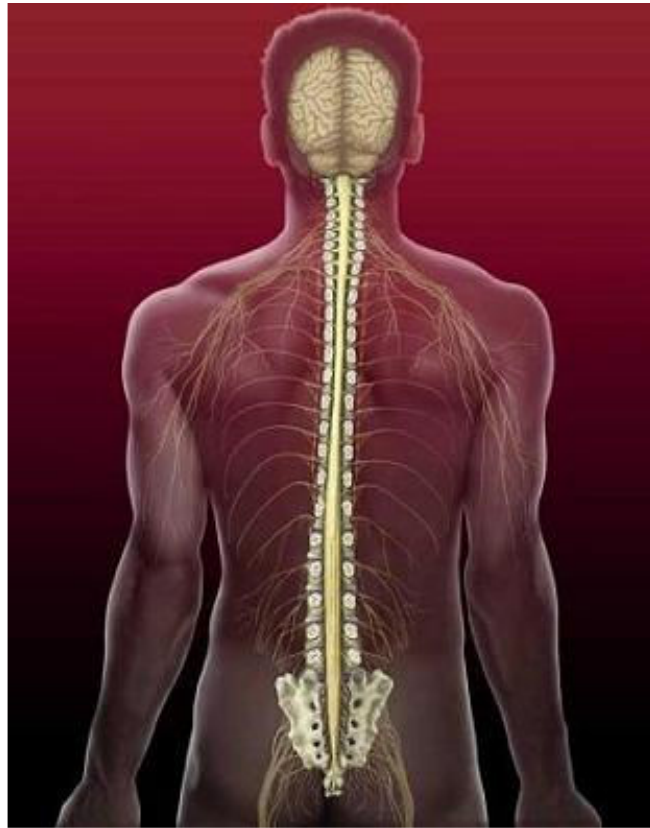


Pyramidal Tract

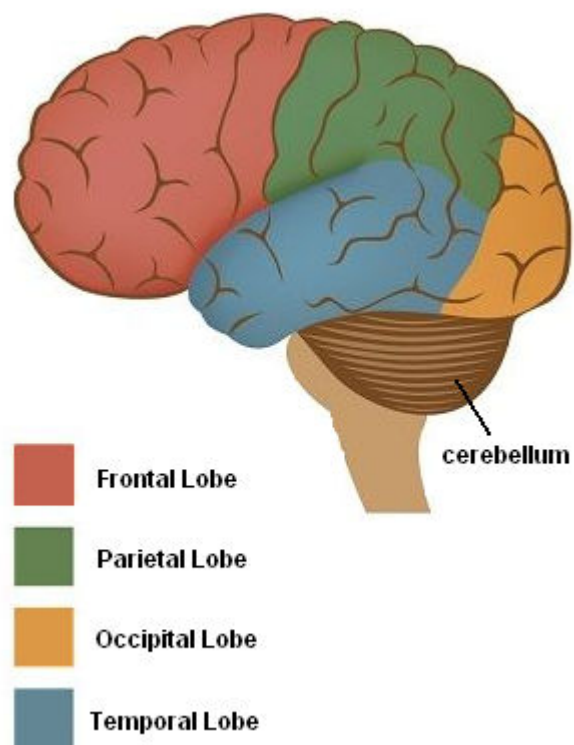


Spinal cord

Paul says: “But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual” (1 Cor. 15: 46), i.e., we receive the Word, we believe in it, but we have to exercise it and put it into practice (to be practitioners – ‘doers’ – NRSV, as James says, Jam. 1: 22) until it is incorporated and takes the place of what was before; in other words, the ‘new self’ takes the place of the ‘old self.’ This is the true miracle of healing by faith. Thinking this way, we’ll understand why the enemy often oppresses us and touches certain traumas or wounds of the past until we surrender in God’s hands and He acts supernaturally over this, breaking the spiritual chains, letting His Spirit fill us and shape a new standard in us. But it is up to us to make it alive, leaving the past behind. When the Lord heals us deeply, we can see that our behavior changes, but our memory remains intact. We don’t forget what happened but evil ceases to have power over us. In Job 11: 16 it is written: “You will forget your misery; you will remember it as waters that have passed away”. *The memory of the trauma remains, however, the emotional burden disappears and “it does not hurt” anymore.*



Spinal cord



Human Brain

Breaking hereditary curse only with the word that comes out of our mouth will not change the DNA composition of the person in question at all, nor prevent their offspring from repeating the error or from coming up with the same genetic tendency. We only break or build something in the spiritual world with the anointing of the Holy Spirit, poured out in the form of healing or miracle upon us. *In fact, we break the by changing our daily attitudes.* Genetic traits remain but the spiritual permission for demons to act is removed. In other words, we conquer in the material life the blessing that Jesus has already left us in the heavenly places (the spiritual world).

## *A word about children and adolescents*

Let's think a little in this chapter in children and adolescents. They need too much the proper guidance from parents and are the major target of Satan. God put man and woman on earth and gave them a duty in Eden: "Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it." In giving this order to the human being, He also instilled the idea of taking care of his children, as He cared and still cares. Children repeat what they see in their parents. To speak bad things to the children from an early age or to give them certain ugly nicknames, it is actually a curse thrown on them and besides molding them emotionally, is a subtle way of delivering them 'in a silver platter' in the enemy's hands. It means to give liberation to evil to act in these lives because the blessing protects, and the curse makes them unprotected and generates destruction.

I want to put some topics that I find relevant, because it is a very delicate matter to counsel parents to care for children. They are thousands of different personalities that need to be treated individually and through closer contact. To facilitate our study, we will direct some topics:

*1) Discipline:* God's word is clear: "Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray" (*Prov. 22: 6*). It also says, "My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or lose heart when you are punished by him; for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts" (*Heb. 12: 5b-6*) and "I reprove and discipline those whom I love" (*Rev. 3: 19a*). God is love, the bible says, but it's with love and for love that He rebukes the son He loves. Therefore, start educating your child by discipline. This means to put make a schedule appropriate with his age and his activities: time to sleep, to wake up, to make his physiological needs, time (and the correct location) to eat, to play, to watch TV, to go to school, to make his homework, to stroll with his friends, to use the telephone or the computer, to date, to come back home etc. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews says: "Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (*Heb. 12: 11*). And the Apostle Paul says: "Athletes exercise self-control in all things" (*1 Cor. 9: 25a*). Timothy was disciple of Paul and received some guidance even as to food. Discipline teaches the child how to act in one way or another depending on the place and situation in which he finds himself. If he is in his own home is one thing. If he's at school or at friends' houses is another thing; freedom is not so great. And if he is attending a church service, he must be taught about the difference that there is between his house and the House of God to avoid the absurdities of irreverence within the Church. He should also be taught and disciplined in relation to laboratories and medical offices not to provoke or irritate the health professionals in a so blatant way. If, by chance, you feel obliged to use authority and punish the child physically, explain why he is being punished not to generate after a sense of revolt or injustice for something that he did not do. He needs to understand why he was being punished. Please, do not throw on your children your frustration, anger or any emotion, whatever it is. They are not the correct targets.

*2) Respect for others, especially for the elderly:* here we point out that 'thank you', 'excuse me', 'I apologize' and 'please' have not yet gone out of fashion. Helping an old lady to cross the street, helping someone to carry a heavy bag, holding the elevator door or car door for a neighbor are still part of the training of a 'gentleman.' This goes for the 'ladies' as well. Regarding the respect for teachers, there is no need to mention! It's good to alert the readers to something that has become a sad routine between parents and teachers, which is the game of table tennis of responsibilities. Parents exempt

themselves of teaching certain things and throw the ball to the teachers who, in turn, return it to the parents, because their role is another. Thus, besides not respecting the authority anymore in the position it occupies, children and adolescents, actually, lose their way because they no longer know who is right. 'Education begins at home.'

3) *To be friend of the children, before being father or mother:* this statement may seem odd, however, the great complaint of children is that parents do not understand them, and parents' complaint, in turn, is that they can not have the intimacy they would like with their children. One factor that contributes to this is the fact that one no longer has time to see each other, at best on Sunday, for parents work for hours, and when they get home, the children are asleep. When children wake up, they have already left for work and so on. Another factor is the lack of confidence that, for some reason, parents generated on their children and that now led to a separation in the relationship. From silly little things (for adults, but for small children make a huge difference) up to more serious things like child abuse, serious fights between the couple before the children, adultery in family, promises never fulfilled, attitudes inconsistent with the words that are verbalized, all this contributes to the lack of confidence. Others: lies, lack of accurate information about what children and adolescents ask, lack of interest in what they are needy, humiliation, contempt, to expose them to ridicule in front of other adults and so on. Therefore, travelling together, strolling together, to have fun together with a common goal is very healthy and brings back unity and trust. Being concerned for the needs and desires of each other is a sign of respect.

4) *To be careful with the health of children:* with the excuse that they are working, many parents leave their children (especially teenagers) at the door of the clinic and they go alone to the doctor, hardly knowing why they are there. Here comes the old mismatch: the doctor treats the patient of one thing and the mother or father comes after, saying that the problem was another. The worst is to endure the family fight in the medical office. In this topic about health comes dietary guidance to not see the sad cases of children and adolescents, obese and diabetic due to diet completely wrong, or cases of bulimia and anorexia due to depression.

5) *To participate in education (school):* besides the problem of respect for teachers, as commented above, it is good that parents assist their children in school assignments, when possible, to participate in their growth. It is not be boring or do the lesson in their place to have a good grade; it just mean to participate in the learning, cooperating in their development.

6) *To talk openly about all matters of interest to children:* from an early age children are curious; they want to know why of everything. Some parents even get angry with that small being behind them all day saying, 'Why? Why? Why?' But the curiosity for knowledge is part of the psychological and cerebral functioning of the child. He needs answers in order to make certain associations and to understand himself. He needs a human mirror to see himself. So, parents! Do not deny information. If you do not have the answer, be honest and say, 'I don't know,' and then promise to look for it, instead of the easy and the famous phrase: 'Because it's so' or 'Because I want.' This does not satisfy a child. Have you ever thought if God is putting these questions in their mouth for you to learn something? Today, parents should be the first to be informed of the latest novelties, because the devil does not waste time nor take a vacation; they should know where their kids are and with whom. There are smoking, drinking, parties of all kind, Internet, video games, R-rated movies, drugs (all forms), child abuse, teenage pregnancy, complicated abortions and so on. It's not even good to mention the rest! Parents need to sit with them and talk about issues that, if not taught properly at home, will certainly be learned the wrong and more painful way out there. Afterwards

it's no use to cry, scream, hit, beat, threaten, disinherit etc. Today, there is great controversy about the news of children that kill their parents and go to jail. Just as the devil uses parents to make their children's lives miserable, he also uses children to make their parents' lives miserable, so the next item is:

7) *To be in the presence of God:* A family that walks in the presence of the Lord firstly walks in love and thus there are no gaps for hatred, violence, envy, strife, etc. In second place, a family that follows the guidelines of our Father, can feel strong and blessed because the unity makes it strong. In the third place, a family that prays together and studies the Word walks in truth and serves as an example for many others, besides to produce holy offspring as well. It is the rarest thing, if not impossible, to see this today, even within the Church. The brothers leave the church service blessed and it's just get into the car that the anointing is gone because of quarrels. Did Jesus come to teach discord? All these kinds of wrong attitudes are sign that the flesh is still sick and does not make room for the Spirit.

I would like to complete this chapter with a text about sex and adolescence. The biblical reference is in *Song 2: 7*. The beloved says: "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the wild does: do not stir up or awaken love until it is ready!" The beloved tells the other women, probably those of the harem of King Solomon or the ladies of the court, about the true love and tells them that sexual intimacy can not be forced and that love and sensuality is not the same thing ("*Do not stir up or awaken love until it is ready*"). On the spiritual level, this means that the intimacy with God is not forced; is the heart of the person who is awakened to a deeper relationship with Him. On physical level, this text warns us about the teens who suffer a lot in the world by the external influences that the devil uses, awakening their sexual life early, causing great inconvenience. At puberty, which is the period during adolescence when the hormonal changes begin to generate physical and psychological changes, it is normal that people start to feel certain bodily sensations and psychic desires of 'discovery' of themselves. At this stage, more strict parents, traditional and fearful, discover that they do not deal very well with the situation and end up suppressing certain manifestations in their children. What they think to dominate eventually turns against them because the children will seek the answers in other sources not so reliable and that are openly available in the world, bringing family problems later. Unfortunately these teens 'awake love before it is ready' and are injured. How many boys are traumatized and how many girls are abused and get pregnant without any maturity to be mothers! The case is delicate when parents are leaders within the church, even pastors, and because of the community they reject the daughter, the son or the future grandson or grand-daughter, causing problems even bigger for all. In some places, many leave the leadership position because of shame and discrimination by their own brothers in Christ. Others, who manage to deal with this family situation, finally disappoint some sheep, which go to another church. When parents are not converts things can get worse, depending on the degree of emotional maturity and the love they have. The result is abandonment, abortion, rejection, prostitution, separation etc. that could be avoided if parents talked openly with kids before or took them to the doctor, if they are not able to explain them certain things. The factors that hinder so much the process at this stage of puberty and adolescence are: the inexperience of parents and pastors in relation to the area in question, religiosity, traditionalism (taboo), fear of creating confusion in the mind of the adolescent and even the malice of adults that holds the 'victims' in ties, and prevents all from addressing the subject with frankness. In most cases, the best way at this point is to pray, to ask the Lord for wisdom and let nature to follow its course without 'making a storm in a teacup', but give support to the



needs of the son or daughter, as their curiosity is aroused. A bit of psychology to address the matter is a good strategy; even better if the bible is near. Another important tip is to direct this energy that has awakened to other activities that edify (Music, arts, sports, etc.), for it is the same force that exists within us and will be directed to an area or to another. I'm not saying that the teen should sublimate everything, deny or flee to the spiritual world; what I mean is that good sense is necessary.

*Biblical verses:*

- *Prov. 13: 24:* “Those who spare the rod hate their children, but those who love them are diligent to discipline them.”
- *Prov. 19: 18:* “Discipline your children while there is hope; do not set your heart on their destruction.”
- *Prov. 20: 11:* “Even children make themselves known by their acts, by whether what they do is pure and right.”
- *Prov. 22: 6:* “Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.”
- *Prov. 23: 13-14:* “Do not withhold discipline from your children; if you beat them with a rod, they will not die. If you beat them with the rod, you will save their lives from Sheol [*hell*].”
- *Prov. 29: 15:* “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a mother is disgraced by a neglected child.”
- *Prov. 29: 17:* “Discipline your children, and they will give you rest; they will give delight to your heart.”
- *Heb.12: 4-13:* “In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as children – ‘My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or lose heart when you are punished by him; for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts’. Endure trials for the sake of discipline. God is treating you as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline? If you do not have that discipline in which all children share, then you are illegitimate and not his children. Moreover, we had human parents to discipline us, and we respected them. Should we not be even more willing to be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share his holiness. Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.”

*Practical experience for parents:*



The purpose here is to assess values. It's not to question anyone or to accuse, but to put ourselves in the scales of God, because what we'll talk is about the value of a soul. If Jesus did what He did to give us salvation, it's because our life has much value to Him. This makes us think about how much time of our day and of our lives we are dedicating to wrong things and with no real value. No one denies the need to work to earn money to support the house and to pay expenses. However, when the work becomes an escape for not being at home anymore or becomes a maniac way to earn more money to feed fantasies, this, indeed, is dangerous and should be reassessed before the throne of God. The greatest strength is love, for it is God Himself. Not even all the money in the world can buy this product; nevertheless, it seems to be the rarest today, for it was exchanged for something without life to fill the existential void that only Jesus Christ fills. A child is a blessing from the Lord, the Word says, but for some people a child becomes a nuisance, and they only don't get rid of him for reasons of moral. Our reflection today will be about the questions: *"How much is my family, especially my children? What am I creating for the future, blessing or curse? What is worth more: my children or the money? What is most valuable: my children or my job?"* Since Satan was thrown into the depths by God Himself because of his arrogance and rebellion, his function is to kill, to steal and destroy mainly lives, families and relationships. Jesus came to restore us of all this, but it is up to us to fight for the restitution. Think, talk honestly with the Holy Spirit and ask Him direction to act and rewrite a new story for you and your entire house. May God bless you, and may your family be a blessed family of the Lord on earth.

*Part 2*

*Practice*



*“Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little’. Then he said to her, ‘Your sins are forgiven’... ‘Your faith has saved you; go in peace.’” (Lk. 7: 47-48; 50)*

*I was touched by Him*

Eve was overjoyed that morning, after all, she would have visitors. They responded positively. The table was set in the right way; the flowers perfumed the place and gave a beautiful color to it. They would have much to talk about, since their husbands were out at the Conference for men. How nice! The bell was ringing.

“My dears, how nice to see you here! Come in, feel at ease.”

“Eve, dear, what a beautiful garden you have!”

“I hope you don’t have some critters. I hate reptiles and insects.”

“Don’t worry, girls, it has been sprayed for insects and reptiles. I barely could wait to call you for this nice and wonderful tea for women. There’s no better place to heal some traumas, don’t you think?”

Eve was really happy. That evening tea was something she had waited for a long time ago and only now had achieved: to bring to her home the women who had a private encounter with Jesus and whose testimony was of great interest to edify their companions. All of them had received a special invitation and could not fail to respond because “*the mother of the living beings, the mother of mankind*” was calling them. Eve was with the guest list on her hands and made an annotation beside each name, as they passed through the gates of her garden:

Mary the mother of Jesus – ok

Peter’s mother-in-law – ok.

The widow from Nain – ok.

The woman with flow of blood – ok.

The Canaanite woman – ok.

The sinful woman who anointed Jesus – ok.

Martha and Mary, sisters of Lazarus – ok.

The bent woman – ok.

The Samaritan woman – ok

The adulteress – ok.

Mary Magdalene – ok.

Suzanna – ok.

Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward – ok.

Salome – ok.

Mary the wife of Clopas and mother of James the younger and Joseph – ok.

Other women who followed Jesus – ok.

“Eve, what a beautiful dress! Where did you buy it?”

“It was the Maker who confectioned it, after my husband and I have done that ‘horrible thing.’”

“Don’t feel guilty; anyone could have done the same thing, right?”

“I feel so comforted by your presence here and by having forgiven me; really, it makes me feel quite honored.”

“Can we sit and talk a little bit?”

“Of course! The tea will be served.”

“Which flavor?”

“Apple.”

“Aahhh! Are you sure it is safe to drink it?”

“Absolute certainty! This tree was planted by Adam himself and he just let me see it from afar. Moreover, he put poison for reptiles at the root of it to avoid further problems.”

“Oh, well! If it’s so, everything is fine.”

“Tell me one thing, Eve, darling. What happened, really, for you to do that thing?”

“Martha! I was feeling a little lonely because Adam was working double those days because of the animals and the land the Creator had given him. It is true that He spoke with us every day, but the conversation with Adam was special, more professional, I can say. He would work overtime that day and I decided to stroll a little; after all, women love shopping and see beautiful things, don’t they?”

“Were the trees attractive indeed?”

“Oh, yes! Each fruit was amazing. I looked and I was very happy. Until a scrawny thing caught my attention and I went there to observe closely. We started talking and we stayed there till evening. I actually felt as if she were deceiving me, but she spoke so fast that I was confused. I liked the fruit and bought it. I came running home and told Adam, who was surprised because I was coming at that hour. I told him, who took a bite in the fruit and then ‘bye to Paradise.’ We got naked in all senses. Ouch! I don’t know if I can continue my narrative. I feel so ashamed; please, forgive me.”

“Why don’t we give the opportunity to the other sisters to talk too? They have a positive testimony and so you don’t need to get so embarrassed, right?”

“Sure, sure! I, Sarah, Peter’s mother-in-law, I would like to begin, if Mary the mother of our Lord permits.”

“Yes, you can speak!”

Who could forget the rosy cheeks and the bright and enchanting eyes of Peter’s mother-in-law? Her plump small body was really attractive in new clothes that she bought for the event. After all, is not always that one can be face to face with so interesting women. Her blond hair was fragrant and bright with the oil bath she had made.

“Beloved ones, you don’t even imagine what a pleasure it was to receive Jesus that night at my house for dinner! I was in the kitchen when Andrew came running to me saying that Jesus would come in a few minutes with Peter, James and John for dinner. I wasn’t fine during the day; I’m not sure if I ate something that was bad for my stomach; however, I realized I had fever. I knew that the best friend of my son-in-law had the power to cure all diseases, but right now? It was our first meeting. I wanted everything to be faultless in order to receive Him.”

“I know how it is. Mary only knelt before Him to learn, and I, Martha, had to take care of everything when the Master sat at the table to eat.”

“So you can understand how I was feeling. I barely realized when they came because my daughter had already put me in bed, so bad I was. I heard when the men arrived, and suddenly, His soft voice was heard. He was coming to see me. I looked up to Him, so ashamed that He saw me in that condition. Then, Jesus calmly knelt next to my bed to greet me. He said, ‘How are you, Sarah? Feeling bad, aren’t you? But now everything will be okay. Fever, I rebuke you and command you to leave this body.’ Girls! What a wonderful thing! The disease immediately went away and I sat on the bed. I left all shame aside and gave Him a hug. He smiled kindly at me and helped me to stand up. It was an honor to serve Him at the table and I, more than quickly, ran to the kitchen.”

“Sarah, you had several opportunities to be with Him, didn’t you? It seems clear that Peter brought Jesus to have dinner with you and your whole family when He returned to Capernaum.”

“Oh that envy.”

“Huh! What’s that? Didn’t you spent so many days talking to Him in our home, Mary? Envy is a work of the flesh. It seems you want Him only for you.”

“Martha, be quiet, I know what Sarah is saying. The closer we are to Him, the more we want to be.”

“Go on Sarah. What came next?”

“Surely, I had the privilege to learn from Jesus, more than many people because somehow He was part of my family. I would like to call myself *“Privileged.”* I hope that you don’t get jealous, Mary; after all, mother is mother. How about telling us what it means to be the mother of someone so popular?”

“I can say that it was a privilege to be chosen by the Almighty to welcome His Son in the flesh here on earth. I was an inexperienced teenager, but after the visitation of the angel, I started looking at life differently. I told my cousin Elizabeth that I felt myself *“Blessed.”* I could only feel happy to be His mother. I was honored by God, so I could only say *yes* to His choice. All of you know how frail we were in that society. Appearing pregnant without being able to say who the father of the child was, it’s the same to expose oneself to stoning. But as God does everything right, I was not only freed from the penalty but also was honored by Joseph, who understood me and took on his role of carnal father of Jesus. I can say that togetherness with my son was the best possible, because I could teach him everything that was within my grasp as a mother and I could learn from Him, even though still a child. I remember the day we came back from Jerusalem and missed Him along the way. As a mother, I was in despair, but by seeing Him sitting among the rabbis and teachers of the Law, I was astonished. Of course! First I gave Him a deserved rebuke for not warning me that He would stay in the temple. Afterwards, I mused with myself that His reverence and obedience to God overcame the bonds of the flesh, and then I started to respect Him.”

“Didn’t you feel a bit strange with His attitude? If I recall correctly, He behaved the same way at several times in His life, as at Cana, for example, and in Capernaum, when you and your other children were looking for Him, for He was many days away from home. Men! They think they can do everything without speaking with us.”

“I also think so; in fact, as a mother I would feel affronted. How does a son leave home without saying where he is going to?”

“Sisters, if you knew Him like me, you would know that He was not being disrespectful. On the contrary, in all these moments He always treated me with love, in a so tender and sweet way. At Cana, He called me ‘woman’ (*gynai*), which was not a form of disrespect, but of surprise at my reaction, for I was His carnal mother, but He was my Lord (He said: ‘Dear woman, why do you involve me?’, that is, ‘What does we have in common?’). In Capernaum, I also was worried about Him, because He hardly ate or seemed to care for sleep or rest. He spent almost all day surrounded by lots of people wanting Him to heal them, touch or teach them. Once again I remembered that His behavior, giving more importance to spiritual bonds than to the family ones, was the same He had at the age of twelve in the temple. He was free to follow what the heavenly Father had determined to Him and I had to accept it. I could not accompany Him on His travels, but whenever He could, He came to visit me, or I had news about Him when someone came from some part of Israel. Of all the experiences I went through as the mother of Jesus, I can say that I was honored to hold this position, even if He no longer depended on me as a grown man.”

“Mary, what did you feel at His crucifixion? It should have been horrible for both.”

“I think no mother would like to see her son sentenced to death, especially when he is innocent, but even in this conflicting situation, He was worried about me and honored me when He looked at John and asked him to take care of me. Salome was the mother of John, not I. Yet, He was concerned to fill my emptiness. He understood what it meant for a mother losing her son. I was once again honored by Him.”

“By the way, there is someone here who knows very well what it is to be a widow and despised by men, besides to see the son die at a young age, don’t you, widow from Nain?”

A nice lady with gray hair stood up and greeted all the other women who were around her. She came dressed in a simple manner, with a dark gray woolen tunic adjusted at the waist by a thin belt made of braided fabric. What gave her some ‘color’ was the red robe that she carried around the neck like a scarf.

“Good afternoon, my sisters. I am very grateful for the invitation and I feel honored indeed to be able to talk about what Jesus has done in my life. As has been said here, it was very difficult for us widows to survive in society, especially without children or close relatives who could support us. So it was for me a tremendous sadness to see my only son die still young and without any explanation for this. I was astonished, desolate, I could hardly believe in what I was experiencing. I walked with my head down beside the coffin where my son was. I only woke up from that nightmare when I saw a tall young man before me, looking at me tenderly and feeling compassion for my pain. I couldn’t see his face in details; the tears were so abundant that fogged my vision. However, I could hear clearly when He said, “Woman, don’t cry. Young man, I say to you, get up.” What was He doing? Was that man the famous Jesus of Nazareth, who performed great miracles who was now in front of me? I heard screams around me, a mixture of crying, amazement, joy, fear, worship, until I felt a comforting hand touching my shoulder saying, “Mother, it’s me, don’t cry, I’m alive.” I could only look to the author of that miracle, and my first reaction was to prostrate myself at His feet and worship Him. I began to sob convulsively until He lifted me by the shoulders and said, “Woman, go in peace.” When I looked back I saw my son smiling and we hugged each other. Jesus was no longer there, but had given me back the joy and the will to live, the faith and the sustenance, because my son had been back to life. I can call myself *“Restitution”*.”

“Huh! What a shiver! It should have been a fright.”

“We passed even more fright, after the resurrection of our Lord, by seeing His empty tomb.”

“Wait, girls, soon you talk about it. I would like to touch a rather delicate point for all people, especially for women who had problems with marriage and with sentimental life and went astray by not so good ways. From what I heard, Jesus brought many restorations in this area.”

“Hem (clearing the throat)! My beautiful sisters; who begins?”

“Wow! What a silence! Why did you suddenly stop talking?”

“And why are you looking at me with that suspicious face?”

“Folks! What is up? Eve may have started everything, but after all, the free will of each one of us was personal. Enough of shame, I start. Apparently, my case seems to have been the scariest.”

A tall and beautiful woman stood up for all to see her. Her clothes were of a fine and brilliant cloth that seemed silk. The tunic was a little just, and the robe curled over itself three times around her body, from the neck to the knees. Her hair was smooth and well-treated, tied behind the veil. Her sincere eyes and her clear smile gave her all the life that this face needed. There was no need for makeup or jewelry to make it more attractive. Before being touched by Jesus, she was a woman with difficult relationship, especially with men; that’s why she was caught in the act of adultery.

“You may call me *“Restoration”* if you want, because that’s what Jesus came to bring to my life.”

“You are very beautiful. Tell us how you fell in that life of dissoluteness.”

“I wasn’t always so, pretty as you say. On the contrary, I always found myself ugly and unattractive. From childhood, my complex of inferiority made me feel clumsy and worthless. I think the only person who gave me support was my mother, but she could not give me all the attention she wanted because we were many brothers. Once every year and a half she gave birth again and we always had a new baby brother to look after. As time passed, I began to feel ‘thrown to the corner.’ My older sisters were married and then my father decided that my time had come to find a husband. It is a pity that it was he who made the choice. As you remember, women had no right to choose her partner in our society. We had to submit to paternal choices, good or not. I looked at my bridegroom and could barely see his eyes. His beard was thick and mingled with his matted hair and ill-cared, which made his face a ‘swarm’ of hair. In fact, I could have a better thing; however, my low self-worth made me feel conformed with that thing in front of me. I would have to do a great effort to like him. Our engagement was relatively short and the wedding day arrived. Imagine the horror! During the days that followed, my life became sad and lonely, because he barely spoke to me and when he spoke, was rude and aggressive. He was a trader and often he traveled leaving me alone with the maidservants. One day, a new neighbor came to the house next door, and chat goes, chat comes, she began to give me some ‘interesting’ ideas so that I could know other things. It was then that I made a big mistake: I listened to her.”

“Didn’t I tell you that these neighbors are a danger? The same way, that ‘scrawny thing’ made me to betray the trust of Adam.”

“And then what happened?”

“I started to stroll by other homes and found out several other male specimens more interesting. On the sixth attempt to feel myself someone important is that the Jews caught me in adultery and brought me to the temple, where Jesus was. I don’t even remember how that mob entered the house and took me along with the man who was with me. It was shameful. Everyone already knew about my procedure, but at that very moment everything was clear to everyone. What would happen if my husband came from travel at that time? They put me in the center of the circle and began to accuse me, starting with the older inhabitants of the city till those who knew me recently. The famous neighbor had packed her things and escaped the city; she didn’t want to get involved. I could only look at the floor in shame. I was afraid too, because the penalty for my act was stoning. While they discussed and blustered, I remembered all the situations of my past and I felt ashamed and cowardly for not having made better choices. Suddenly, everything fell silent. The Rabbi was standing in front of me and waiting for an answer from my accusers. He had written a bunch of words in the sand, but I could not read. I just remember of hearing Him say, ‘Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.’ Nobody moved; nobody spoke. It seemed that everyone was now looking into himself, accused by their own conscience. After a few minutes Jesus returned to bow, writing, but remained resolute, waiting for an answer. I began to hear footsteps, one after another, moving away from that place. No mouth was speaking now. Gradually, all of them withdrew. When no one else was left, He made me get up and look Him in the eyes. At first, the shame I felt prevented me from looking at Him, until His gentleness, His soft-spoken and quiet voice made me open my eyes and see Him who was standing before me. His eyes sparkled and seemed to cross my soul with love, purity, sincerity, with forgiveness and healing. He, indeed, understood me. He was the only one who could cure me from the deep wounds that were inside me. He was the light that could illuminate my path again and teach me what I never learned. More than anything, He was the only one who could give me the true self-worth and dignity as a woman in that society. Then He spoke, ‘Woman, where are



your accusers? Has no one condemned you?" I replied, 'No one, sir.' He continued, 'Neither do I condemn you. Go in peace and sin no more.' There was no need for any other conversation. Our eyes had done everything. I slowly went away and noticed that He kept looking at me with respect and kindness until I turn the next street. I could never thank Him properly for what He had given me. He gave me a new way of seeing myself and people around me. Shortly after, my husband died and I had the chance to marry again. Today I can truly say that I am a happy woman and restored. I have children and a beautiful family who loves me, thanks to Jesus. I feel myself beautiful for who I am without needing any resource or artifice that makes me be seen and respected by men. Today, my family and I are a living testimony of the power of God where we live, and many women come to me, asking for advice.

"What a beautiful story! I never thought there might be a restoration for people like that."

"With Him beside us there is restoration for everything."

"Let's applaud the Lord, my darlings, for this wonderful healing."

"It was a case very similar to mine; the difference is that I have never been married."

"Speak, Mary. We know that you anointed the feet of the Lord in the house of Simon the leper."

"Martha and Lazarus, my brother, could never imagine that the conversations at home with the Master could culminate in a cure so—"

"Public, dear little sister."

Mary, sister of Martha, was a light-skinned woman. She seemed to be a delicate and sensitive person, unlike her sister, short in stature and with an authoritarian face, strong and determined. Her hair was loose and exuded aromatic essences, especially the nard. Her simple garments and of a thicker fabric were clean and adjusted to her waist by a soft leather belt. The mantle was of purple wool wrapping her from her shoulders. Mary was slim, and the wool seemed to give her a feeling of comfort and warmth. She started talking and all women noticed the brilliance of life in her eyes by talking about *Him*.

"Although Martha gets a little embarrassed by my attitude, I'll tell what I felt when I found the Master in the house of Simon the leper. It is true that we had talked a lot in our house. He spent hours teaching us the truths of God's kingdom and I stayed at His feet, listening. But something inside me needed to be healed; surely the right time would come. Since a small child I was shy and insecure, needing the affirmation of others to do everything. My sister Martha was more determined and strong I felt stifled by such power and control. My brother Lazarus was more peaceful and I felt safer near him. Our parents died early and we had to support each other. I was shy and lonely and suffered a lot in my affective relationships since childhood. In fact, I had some fear of men and didn't see myself with good eyes. I thought that I could never please them in any way. Our parents, when alive, had conveyed us a very dangerous and heavy vision of marriage, devaluing the woman a lot before her husband, even more than our society showed. I was a loving person, but was ashamed to show my love openly, even because this feeling came to be repressed and prevented from externalizing in environment as dry as the one I lived in. I can say that I thanked God when Jesus came into our lives, for His sweet presence started to break the barriers in our relationship. I went growing up and my friends got married, leaving me alone. Some embittered women nearby began to make fun of my solitude and call me an 'unhappy spinster', causing me to take action in this regard. They began to instruct me on the ways to 'hunt' men. I felt so ignorant in this area that I accepted the advice, but after these 'theoretical classes' it was

necessary to have ‘practical lessons’ and then it all begin to fall in my life. I thought that Martha knew nothing. She didn’t know the whole truth, it is certain; however, she was suspicious of my furtive strolls during the day and sometimes even at night. I was worried about the people’s cold attitude regarding the true friendship and especially towards us women. It seemed that we were just a disposable object in the hands of men. Many with whom I shared a relationship had family, wife and children, but they saw in me just an enjoyable pastime. I, on the other hand, wanted to find a way to be loved and be able to shed the feeling that seemed to be stuck inside of me; it had been so much repressed and distorted that it seemed to be something impure, limited only to sex. It didn’t flow as I wanted, in its totality. It was then, after many failed attempts and many hurts and disappointments, that Jesus came into our house one day, brought by Lazarus who had known Him in the street. I loved Him, really, when I saw Him. With Him, my love was full and could flow without barriers. This began to broaden my way of thinking and feeling. I learned from Him the proper way to love; however, my flesh, after so many bad customs and practices, insisted to prevail and, sometimes, without wanting, I returned to sin. Then, when Simon the leper invited Jesus and my family for dinner that night in his house, I decided to take a definitive decision to be purified and freed from all the dirt that was inside me. I waited for the right moment. I was very ashamed of so many good people sitting at the table with Jesus, but I plucked up courage and went sneaking behind everybody along the wall until I approached the Master. Without realizing I fell at His feet, and His soft and comforting presence in that room was the encouragement to pour the alabaster jar with nard that I had taken years to earn enough money to buy. I cried my life there at His feet, kissing them, and my hair served as a towel to dry them. As I did so, my soul was being cleansed. Our conversation seemed invisible to men, but my spirit felt as if He spoke to me, forgiving me, healing, sanctifying and restoring everything that had been broken inside me. That’s when He said to Simon, ‘Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.’ Although He was saying this publicly I had no shame of anything, for a particular word put me in honor before everyone there: ‘love.’ He knew that even though having committed mistakes, what I did was for love. I felt the most important person in the world, for love made me like Him, made me strong and different from anyone there. None of them had this power I had. They never knew what love was; that’s why they had not risked so much and therefore had not sinned so much, at least that’s what I thought. Sisters, the search for love often leads us to sin, because in our eagerness to have it, we chose the wrong way; however, even wrong in our choices, when we discover the right path, we began to feel restored, honored and worthy, for we begin to realize that being chosen by God as a channel of true love is not for everyone. It’s for the brave who do not mind of taking risks, who do not mind of being humiliated, persecuted and even injured by the hard, dry and materialistic society, which sees virtue in futile and empty things. I felt a real warrior, victorious, cleaned, restored and strengthened, with more authority than any leader in that place because I managed to pass the test. How good was to hear His voice, ‘Woman! Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you, go in peace.’ My name should be *“Cured”*.”

“Martha! After an attitude so bold and so beautiful from Mary why would you feel ashamed of her?”

“Now, knowing the whole story, I am not ashamed, but I ask her, ‘Why didn’t you tell me before?’”

“You wouldn’t understand, dear sister. You were always too much concerned with the practical things of life.”

“Well! Now then, I’ll tell you what I learned from Jesus in the visits He made to our home. If Mary did not tell everything to me before, I also did not tell her the transformation that the Master did within me.”

“Little secrets of Martha.”

“Oooooooooooooo!”

“Ah, gals! Can’t someone keep a secret?”

“It’s more difficult for women to keep secrets; after all, we have a so holy tongue.”

“Be quiet, girls, don’t provoke me; after all, I am the hostess.”

“Come on, Martha, tell everything.”

“The first time that the Master came to our house, I was startled. I had heard of Him, but I didn’t expect to see Him in person in my own home. Lazarus knew very well that I was a systematic woman, always concerned to give a warm welcome to all visitors, so this surprise visit left me irritated. What would Jesus think? He would think that I was a sloppy and poorly educated woman. Moreover, we women were not trained to be good hostess, clean, zealous with the house and the family? There was nothing tastier for food in our pantry; what I had was the trivial. The most famous Rabbi of Israel in my kitchen and I was there with my apron, all dirty with dust, for I was cleaning the rooms. What a shame! My controlling and perfect mind was already punishing me for this disorder and for that situation out of the routine. I left Mary there near Him and rushed to buy food. When I returned, I almost gave her a slap. Just imagine! I alone, busy, running from one side to another, having to make bread, to cook the fish properly and lay the table, and Mary there, languid like melted wax, learning. What was that? What most vulgar attitude to an honorable woman to take! Almost putting the head in the lap of a man whom she had never seen! Although Rabbi, a man of God, this was strange, very strange. I called her, and she stayed there, very comfortable. Then I lost the etiquette and said, ‘Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.’ What was my surprise when He said, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.’ What could I answer? I ran to the cooker and left her there with Him, but the seed of truth had already penetrated my mind. While I was cooking, my life flashed through it like a movie. What had He done? It seems that His words had uncovered an old ark from which all spiders went out for me to kill them. I, always so concerned about cleaning the house and garden, never realized that the greatest cleaning should be done inside me. When my parents died, we were young and I, as the eldest, had to take the lead of the family. Although Lazarus, as male member, should take certain initiatives, he was the middle child and maybe has felt protected by me; he got accommodated and satisfied with my authority as ‘mother’. But I started to think and reflect on all my actions while cooking. I think the sense of responsibility had become a prison where my own mind had put me, and now it couldn’t open it alone. I left ‘my automatic pilot’ turned on, and only at this moment I realized that I had to interrupt its command. I had become a god to myself and to my brothers, just as my home and my chores began to occupy the throne of the true God. ‘Martha, Martha,’ He had said. It was I who asked me now, ‘Martha, where did you leave your sweetness, your joy and your femininity in all these years? You look like more a Roman centurion.’ I don’t remember if it took me too much to prepare lunch. When I returned, He could see the change in my countenance, I know He saw. I started to see the true God in my life, He who I really depended on. I started to see the man who would restore within me the true dignity and would teach me the real priorities. Our eyes met briefly, but it was enough to confirm His healing on my life. From that moment, my practical behavior, my loyalty

to people and my responsibility to assume commitments would be under His mantle of love, mercy and teaching. Things would no longer have the oppressive weight that had so far. Now my yoke would be easy and my burden would be light, because I had learned to do all things with love and for love of Him, not to gain reward or approval of anyone. I could be called "*Priority.*"

"Glory to God! Did you exchange your businessman suit for silk skirts?"

"Wow!"

"Martha, I'm sorry, I didn't know you had so much sensibility."

"That's it, Mary! You was touched in one way, and I in another way. He touches us differently, because He respects us and honors us as we are."

"Sure, 'centurion!'"

"What is it?"

"It's just a joke. You became a fine specimen of our race."

"I just didn't become gossipy like certain sisters out there."

"Take it easy! Jokes are part of life, are they not?"

"Folks! When the adulterous woman, or rather, "*Restoration*", talked about her case, she said it was the scariest, but I would like to ask, 'Is there something scarier than be possessed by demons?'"

"Why, Canaanite woman? Do you want to give your testimony as well?"

"Yes, if I may. Likewise the adulterous woman who gave herself a name, I want to be called "*Faith.*" As all of you know, the Canaanites were the first inhabitants of the Promised Land before Israel arrive. They lived in the region near the Great Sea to the north, so I'm also called Syro-Phoenician. I am from Greek origin, therefore, non-Israelite. The most worshiped god in our land was "*Eshmun*" or "*Esmum*" which, in Greek, was called "*Asklepios*" and, in Latin, "*Aesculapius*", the god of healing. In fact, he didn't cure anything, but I only discovered this when I received Jesus' great blessing. This is what happens when we give our lives, especially our health in the hands of false gods. At that time I was very worried and anxious, for my little daughter had begun to present some weird symptoms. At first I thought it was tantrum, but then I started to suspect that she was possessed by something else. Poor little thing! She had no control of anything, and suddenly, went into crisis. She was slow to return to normal and this took all her strength, and mine too, because as a mother, I could no longer stand to see her in that suffering. Another thing I was not enduring anymore was the antagonism between my pagan people and the people of God. Everybody spoke very badly of the Jews, and if any of them passed through our land, was threatened of being killed. I had already heard of such a Nazarene Rabbi who periodically migrated through Israel and traveled to foreign lands to the north. The rumors began to arrive to Phoenicia and I just thought of the opportunity to see Him as soon as possible to cure my daughter from that torment. That day He was on His way to Mount Hermon. I watched His walk with the disciples from afar. The men were going ahead, twelve walking alongside Him, quiet and meditative. Women traveled several yards behind and next to each other for fear of the citizens of that country. I saw when many people began to approach Him begging for healing and I plucked out courage as well. He didn't stop to talk to anyone; however, people went to Him with a desperate face and turned back quiet and peaceful, with a smile of victory on their lips. The disciples around Him seemed to be irritated with all that happened. I followed them in silence for a while until the crowd dispersed, but I realized I was being observed by His followers, especially by one of them, sturdy and that seemed to be the leader of others, including taking care for the security his Master. He walked practically glued to Him, watching to see that nothing stopped them. Suddenly, anguish invaded my heart and I began to scream loudly and running towards

the group, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David.' At first nothing happened. I was ignored and began again to cry. He was my only salvation. I kept shouting, nothing would make me give up, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.' That's when He stopped. Suddenly, that rude disciple came running towards me as if telling me to shut up. He just didn't put his hand on my mouth because another of them came shortly after, drawing his attention and saying that the Master sent for me. I ran to the Lord and got closer, but His eyes were distant and cold. He said to me, 'I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' I fell down at His feet in anguish, 'Lord, help me, my daughter needs help.' He didn't move, but said, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' I returned the word, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.' Everyone around were not only silent but impressed by the seemingly rude tone of the conversation; everyone knew that the Jews called us dogs. The nations knew they were the chosen people; the problem was that most of their race took on a proud and arrogant stance, despising all human beings that were not sealed by his God, and it contributed considerably to the rivalry between our peoples. I don't know if Jesus said those words only to me or to the citizens of my country who were watching from afar; I just know that my answer moved Him. He knelt in front of me and His face was no longer hard and distant. He looked directly at my eyes and said, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish. Because of this word, you can go; the demon has left your daughter.' I worshiped Him and ran back home where I found my little daughter sleeping peacefully on the bed."

"Amazing! What a wonderful healing! Congratulations on your victory, sister *"Faith."*"

"Dear companions! Since we're talking about faith and gruesome things like demons, I would like to give my testimony, taking advantage of what was spoken by *"Faith."*"

"Be at ease, Mary Magdalene. We know you've been freed from seven demons by the Lord's hands. Tell us your story."

A friendly woman with black hair, loose by the shoulders, looked at us slowly with her brown eyes, full of compassion and tenderness. Her skin was white and her serene posture made us think how that woman one day could have been possessed by demons and disrespected by so many people. Who looked at her now would never think that her image had been so denigrated before mankind. She continued,

"Sisters, you can see before you today a woman who experienced the pain for herself; so, I can understand what *Faith* might feel to see her daughter suffer so much in the hands of evil spirits. The greatest wound in our heart is made by people who never went through such a difficult and embarrassing situation, and humiliate us, not giving credence to our words and our feelings of pain. They think we are crazy, they say we're making it up, or think that we are exaggerating in our emotional expressions. They label us with every name and leave us aside, isolating us in solitude and making us feel worthless and dirty. We women have a sensibility different than men's, which often puts us in very difficult situations before them, who understand nothing of feminine psychology and end up to discriminate us. I don't remember very well how my problem started. I just know that since I was little I felt myself different from other children. It seemed that I felt the world and situations around me in a way more intense than anyone else. I was able to feel the emotions of other people more easily than anyone, even to feel them within myself. I went through many bad experiences in family, of disaffection and violence, of filthy words that denigrated my self-image, for my family had strayed long ago from the paths of the Lord. Cults to various gods were practiced at home and

the light no longer penetrated my life. Everything became very cold, dry, lying, hidden, the relationships were no longer sincere, and falsehood became a rule accepted by all, except for me. It was as if I remembered something that I had never lived, but I knew it existed, that it was beautiful and good, like a true home where I had lived long ago. It seemed to be a silly thought of mine, but even without having known anything better than what I lived, I had inside of me the certainty that there was somewhere, something that would supply deeply my need forever. I went growing up under that darkness until I began to wake up to the spiritual realities. I started going to weird places, looking for answers. After some time absorbing a lot of lies, I began to externalize symptoms that displeased me, made me feel dirty and unclean, while they seized me and I lost control of my own will. When I realized, I found myself trapped by seven demons who did what they wanted with me, and thus my behavior before society started to put me in trouble because my friends fled ashamed, my family kicked me out of home and the bad companies became a routine. After several years of disturbance, my life went weakening, fading and losing its meaning. My health deteriorated excessively and I almost died. Until one day, I saw a Rabbi going through my village, Magdala, and who was doing wonderful cures in those lands. I didn't know Him, but despised Him in my heart. In fact, it was 'they' who despised Him inside of me and forced me to think it was me. Never in my life I felt something like that, at the moment of His entry through the gates of the city; a force within me was emerging as if from nowhere with the desire to solve my suffering once and for all, and it struggled against the other seven that prevented me from leaving out of where I was. I ran towards Him yelling and affronting Him with the intention to put an end to His life. I felt an insane rage against Him. By getting close, I seemed to have hit a wall of iron, invisible, and that made me fall and prostrate myself at His feet. The crowd had moved away and looked amazed, because they had never seen anything like that. He stood firm. His voice was clear and full of authority. He spoke only one time, and suddenly, I felt completely empty from all that force. I seemed to have suffered a great bleeding that left me half dead there. When He bent down and touched me the true life returned to my body and I felt a new creature, reborn and strong, clean and worthy. With His delicate fingers, He pulled my disheveled and dirty hair, wiped away my tears and lifted me up from the floor. I found myself alone like in a broad and clear place, as if the crowd didn't exist there, and heard His voice in my spirit saying things that I had never heard, but that began to give meaning to my life and to give the answers that I was seeking for long. I re-started to weep, and my sobbing seemed to move the waters of an inexhaustible source of life that restored me, cleansed and transformed me. He looked directly into my eyes and said, 'Woman, be free from your suffering; come and follow me.' I was practically paralyzed there, unable to say or do anything until other women who walked with Him held me and took me with them. He continued His work of healing in that place while I was taken to the home of one of them. I was bathed, combed, dressed in new and decent clothes, fed and placed in a clean bed till I fell asleep. I have no idea how long I spent there. I just remember that I woke partially from my sleep and saw a sister in Christ next to me talking about the Scriptures. I slept again and woke up hearing the word of our God being spoken with calm and serenity. I seemed to be fed with a kind of food that I had never ate. When I woke up, I looked like another person. If I could give me another name, I would call myself "*New Chance.*" From then on, He and I talked every day, as He did with Mary, sister of Martha, and I was learning the words of *Truth*. It was a way to strengthen myself and build my inner walls so that nothing could penetrate them. Maybe for safety, He kept me attached to the group so I didn't get lost, and to have a family to share my life. The original family was gone. I never saw them again

but I'm sure that they received news about my whereabouts, for my deliverance was a big surprise for that whole city. After I started walking with the disciples and the women who accompanied the Master, I felt myself a woman completely restored and honored, worthy of the confidence of all, for many other sisters came to me for advice, and the peace that He had placed in my heart was a uniting factor for all there. He made me a messenger of His gospel, and often He sent me with messages to the other disciples, while He was busy with something else. Along with other women: Joanna, Susanna, Salome, Mary (mother of James and Joseph), I served Him in all His needs. All of us felt proud to be able to contribute with what we had in order to make the walk of Jesus more enjoyable. We felt glad to cook for Him, to wash His clothes, to arrange a time for Him to rest after an exhausting day and to buy what was necessary so that the group didn't experience any kind of need. As all know, Joanna the wife of Chuza, steward of Herod Antipas, and Susanna were wealthy women and used their goods to bless us. In return, He blessed all of us with His peace and His love."

"May I speak a little bit?"

"Speak, Joanna!"

"Suzanna and I and many others who followed Him on His walks through Israel, we were transformed by the new values that came into our lives after we knew the Master. The futility gave place to the priorities of the kingdom of God, our selfishness was changed into a more comprehensive love that made us see our fellow men with different eyes, starting to feel their needs and their distress and contributing to their well-being. We no longer appreciated the insignificant things of our daily lives and the weaknesses and mistakes of others but began to value the salvation of their souls. Our children now had several mothers because we took care of everyone of them as if they were our own. When we were serving our husbands or we needed to stay in our homes for some reason, we were sure that the sisters would care for the needs of the children and the disciples of the Master. We also discovered the power of influence that God put in us, directing our feeling, our thinking and our act for the edification of those who were around us, leaving envy, slander and the works of the flesh that saddened our Lord. We were honored by our society, not only for being chosen by Jesus to be with Him daily and learn from Him, but also to let printed on people's hearts a new image in relation to us. We knew the meaning of the word "*Service.*"

"Wow! What an impressive thing! What a pity that I was not there to see. Tell me, what did you feel when you saw the empty tomb?"

"Afterwards we'll talk about it. I find interesting hearing before the testimony of those sisters who have been cured from diseases by the hands of Jesus. Being healed by Him also brings honor, isn't it true, sisters?"

An elegant woman stood up, with pink cheeks and a safe smile of who knows what was achieved in her life. Her blue eyes were bright and full of life and joy. Her bright blue tunic was involved by a mantle of cream color partially covering her brown hair. Her skin exuded the health achieved by a balanced and correct diet. Nobody could imagine that this woman was healed from a flow of blood, and one day she looked more like a corpse than a human being, such was the malnutrition she had experienced. The first name that came to mind was *Zeruah*, which meant '*separation, slit, blood flowing.*' In fact, no one knew until today how she was called in the past, but if it was necessary to give her a name this moment, she would be called "*Life.*"

"*Life*, dear, what a beautiful dress! What elegance! Have you undergone some treatment for skin? It looks like silk. Sit down and tell us your testimony."

"Dear companions, I was hardly recognized by you, right? Who could perform the miracle of life but Jesus? I was, once, the woman who had a flow of blood and that no

doctor on earth could heal. At that time, medicine was very limited and there were no clinical treatments or surgical procedures to save people with problems similar to mine. People made things that more looked like illegal practices of science, so many fanciful solutions that were offered in cases like mine. I had resorted to doctors and spent all my goods without any solution, until I heard of a Rabbi who was traveling through Israel doing healings. He was back to my city in those days and all citizens by knowing of His arrival went to the beach to see Him and touch Him. A leader of the local synagogue called Jairus, whose little daughter of twelve years old was very ill, had already sent ahead him a delegation to warn him as soon as the Master arrived. I was in bed for a long time due to the weakness that had settled in my being. I hardly got up of it. Despite knowing that I had to eat the right way, the food looked like molten lead in my stomach. I couldn't even think about food. My relatives helped me to get out of bed sometimes, but they didn't seem to care about me, if I would live or not. A disease eroded my interior and made me weak, sad and unhappy. When I woke up that morning, something inside me gave me the certainty that my life would be changing; it would never be the same. I thought, 'If I but touch his clothes, I shall be healed.' But how could I see Him with that large crowd being a hindrance to my miracle? A woman without strength, pale, almost to death, with the appearance of a dry leaf, without assistance from anyone, could she cross all these obstacles and get the cure? I seemed to have heard a voice inside me saying, 'All things are possible for him who believes.' I didn't know where it came from, but never mind how high the cost might be I would obey it. I got up with difficulty and walked out the door without anyone seeing me. I almost crawled to the beach. From the top of the rocks I could see Him when He approached the leader of the synagogue. I advanced a little; however, I wouldn't have to come down toward Him. He would come by this way, because there was no other to the town; my part was to wait for Him to pass by there. With so many people around Him it seemed impossible to get near, but I had to try; this could be my only chance. Those who pressed me to touch Him were so many that the only way to achieve my goal would be to crouch and sneak through that 'wall of legs.' I stayed calm and waited. He was coming. Desperate, I stretched out my hand and felt His white garments through my fingers. The miracle happened: the flow of blood stanching immediately. Quiet and happy, I thought of returning home when His clear and unmistakable voice was heard, 'Who touched my clothes?' A cold shiver ran through me spine. What about now? What would happen to me? I had the courage to touch Him, but I never thought I'd have to talk face to face with Him. What would be His reaction, furthermore knowing that a woman with flow, unclean before the Law of Moses, had touched His garment? He spoke again and even the air seemed to stop at that moment. No one spoke. 'Who touched me, for power had gone forth from me?' I didn't realize how I stood up and introduced myself to Him. Everybody moved away and I found myself alone in front of the Master. I opened my mouth and in a small voice I stated my case to Him. I waited until He spoke; His silence seemed an eternity. Then He knelt in front of me and put my head gently on His shoulder, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.' Now I no longer seemed to fear. On the contrary, I showed strength and determination, something that I didn't experience for a long time. My lips showed the smile of a winner. I overcame many barriers to get there. First, the physical weakness in order to get out of bed where I was almost daily; then, the envious, malicious and distrustful voices of those who didn't want my well-being and tried to make me give up; moreover, I had to walk to the beach, to face the crowd that seemed an insurmountable barrier to my miracle and, finally, the shame and the shyness of touching someone who did not even know me and that I didn't know how He would react. But now I knew



what He was capable to do. He had given the *life* back to me and the joy of living, without having asked me anything nor rebuked me for my boldness. Instead, He seemed proud of it. He embraced me with compassion, as if He understood how it had been difficult for me to do what I did. Everyone looked at me differently now, no longer with contempt, but with respect and admiration for my courage. I, who had always been ignored and insignificant, was at that moment, an example of faith and determination. Jesus had put me in honor before the whole crowd and I felt myself the most important person in the world. All my effort was worthwhile! I was healed and honored.”

“Girls! Let’s give a thunderous applause to the Lord. What a wonderful healing!”

“Hurray! Congratulations!”

“What about me? Don’t you want to know also about my joy? I was also healed of a spirit of illness that tormented me for eighteen years and I can feel exactly the joy that *“Life”* felt by seeing herself completely free from disease.”

“Oh yes! You are the bent woman that was touched by Him in the synagogue on the Sabbath day.”

“I *was* the bent woman. You may call me now *“Rightness”*, for all crooked things He straightened in me.”

“Cool! Who says what is crooked can not be straightened?”

“Only who wants stays crooked, isn’t it really?”

“Only that ‘crooked scrawny thing’ that made me eat what I should not.”

“Eve! Forget all that. Aren’t we here supporting you? We expect Him to release you from the bad memories; in fact, He already forgave you for it. Just receive His grace.”

“Do you think so? Am I not guilty of anything?”

“There is no more condemnation for those who are covered by His merciful and forgiving blood.”

“Hmm! I think I’ll call myself *“Freed”*, what do you think?”

“Awesome! That’s it!”

“*Rightness*, start your testimony! Now I feel myself truly *“Freed”* from chains and prisons to better understand His miracles.”

“That morning I knew that He would go to the synagogue. It seems that everyone had the same idea, for by looking the proximities, I even doubted that I could enter. But I soon regained my hope when I heard His voice arguing with the Pharisees. A man whose hand was shriveled had already been healed by Him in there and the controversy had arisen quickly, for it was Sabbath day. To be honest, I was tired of this cheap legalism that determined the right day for God to heal a child of His. I went squeezing myself through the people in order to come very close to the circle of rabbis. He had barely finished His explanation releasing the man, when I put myself before Him quickly. There was no need to say anything; my posture confirmed my request for help. I was in that uncomfortable position for eighteen years, since that a work of witchcraft destroyed my life. A certain person, by jealousy of my right attitude towards life, of my unbiased moral before men even telling the truth they refused to listen, had planned to stop me and dishonor me before the world; more than that, that person had planned to destroy and undermine my faith in God. For years I endured the terrible pains that came to me, forcing me just to look down, to the worldly dirt and to the earthly things, preventing me from raising my head and glorifying my God. I lost part of my daily activities because I was limited in my movements. My husband abandoned me and our children went living with their grandparents. My strange posture seems to have embarrassed those who were around me. Few still were willing to help me in some things, but could not make the desired miracle I needed, in order to have the respect as a

human being again. Furthermore, being now a solitary and despised woman by that society, I practically lived on the alms they gave me. I had to struggle not only against the physical problems, but also against the limiting thoughts that oppressed me. What else could I expect from life? Would my moral rectitude have to be affronted forever? But I would not give up my way of thinking, the loyalty and righteousness that God had placed in my heart. I could be physically unable; however, I would never bend before any kind of oppression. I rarely thought about who had done me so much harm, but I embittered myself against the act of injustice, thinking that God no longer cared about my pain and had forgotten me. If He was so righteous why did He see my suffering without intervening? The years passed and Jesus revealed Himself to our people. That day I saw Him in the synagogue was unforgettable. He stood there, straight, with a serious face against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, but He showed a gentle smile to the man who had been healed. He turned quickly to His opponents and, turning His face again, seeing me there near Him appearing as if from nowhere, He expressed astonishment. He almost laughed at my boldness. I seemed to be confirming before all of them His authority over all things and supporting His attitude in healing the man. His words were few, ‘Woman, you are set free from your ailment.’ He laid His hands on me and at once a great burden went off my back. Life returned to my body. I could hardly hold the joy that entered my soul. I gave glory to God with all my strength. The people present there imitated me, and soon, the entire synagogue cried out and gave praise to God, what left the chief furious. While he discussed with Jesus, who rebuked him sharply, the people shouted and rejoiced. I looked into His eyes, grateful for the healing, and ran to my house. I ran down the road like a child looking at the blue sky and filling my spirit again with the lofty thoughts of the Most High for my life. I ran down the road, but my spirit flew like an eagle. From now on, I could live His rightness. I had gained much more than physical healing; I had conquered the security and authority over evil. No one else would dominate me or would influence me with his poor and limited way of seeing life. He had given back to me the dignity before everybody. Now I would walk with my head held high. My testimony of life would bring revival to that place, putting to the ground the disbelief and smallness of thought. More than anything, my testimony was breaking all the works of idolatry, making it clear to all who the true God was. Nothing could destroy what He determined to a child of His. His beloved Son had come to earth to destroy the works of the devil and I was a living witness of that. I could now walk uprightly before Him, taking His light to those who were in darkness.

“Glory to God! Hallelujah!”

“Blessed be the Lord!”

“Hurray! Long life to *Rightness*.”

“A very important person among us is missing, don’t you think?”

“Of course! How could we forget her? The Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well. Come on, darling, it’s your tum.”

The woman who presented herself had red hair, an attractive posture, an enchanting smile and showing great sensibility. She began to speak,

“I was not always as you see me. Whoever sees me today would never say I was that despised woman who Jesus restored at Jacob’s well in Sychar, Samaria. The rivalry between us and the Jews came from the difference of the place of our worship services. They worshiped at Jerusalem and we, on Mount Gerizim. This to me had no great difference, because I didn’t know anything better and was raised under this tradition, but I believed in YHWH as much as them. I came to draw water from the well of Jacob at the same hour of the day that I always did, alone, without the company of other women of the village. Since I was despised by all and ill-seen, why join them? By

arriving at the well, I could see a man dressed all in white with the red cloak covering his face partially because of the scorching sun of midday. I found strange when He spoke to me, 'Give me a drink.' What was He doing? I replied, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' Our dialogue continued. He said, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink', you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water. Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.' I was not understanding what He meant by all this talk but I told him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.' Then He surprised me again with His speech, 'Go, call your husband, and come back.' The answer came quickly to my lips, 'I have no husband.' Looking directly into my eyes, He confirmed, 'You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!' I soon saw that He was a prophet. Who else could know this, except the inhabitants of that place? And He was a Jew, of course. He started telling me about the true worship and I remembered the promise of the long-awaited Messiah who would come announcing all things to His people. It was then that He revealed Himself to me. At that very moment I was certain that the Messiah was Him. It was as if a scale had been removed from my eyes and understanding was being placed inside my mind. I know that He realized everything that was inside me and seemed to know my life since childhood. Like most of my sisters here, I grew up in a dysfunctional home, learning the wrong things, being deprived of the true love and the respect of all, especially for being a woman in a society where rabbinical influences took of us not only the right to read and write as the right to enter deeper in the knowledge of the Scriptures, therefore, in the presence of God. Moreover, it seems that my family had a weird 'mark', that is, women could not manage to be happy in love. The marriages, when they occurred, didn't last long and were soon undone. I had no explanation for this. My own mother had been married several times, and my brothers were from different fathers. My first marriage was when I was still very young, and soon my husband died of an unknown disease. Not to be discriminated by widowhood, I got married again and the second man also died. The third came with some 'trauma' because everyone already saw me as a 'killer of men'. This third marriage even lasted longer, but by relationship problems, ended up in divorce. Then the fourth husband came, who died after one year. The fifth man I had as husband had become a scandal to the entire city. Another divorce happened soon after. I felt myself so needy that was beginning to think of several solutions. It was better to join with any one than marry again. I felt deprived of support, insecure, for I sought help for my loneliness in the wrong places and in the wrong people. My despair made me even to prostitute myself not to suffer anymore the discrimination of the widowhood or the lack of a family. No one knew about the despair and the deep need inside me, but Jesus knew. Maybe He has purposely made His disciples go together to town to buy food, in order to be alone with me to rescue me from that life. My face looked a little sad and denoted the weariness of the sleepless nights, the crying and the hard work. My soul showed the thirst for life, for comprehension and true support that had been denied to me. I was content with the 'drops of attention' that were given me, sporadically, in the superficial and unsatisfactory relationships that I had lived so far. I didn't know anything better. But I was standing before Him who could quench my thirst and transform my desert into a spring of life and joy, removing the shame from me and the words of charges of those who wanted to see me fall again. I felt the concern of Jesus for me and saw that in His

eyes there was no prejudice or accusation. His eyes crossed my soul with compassion for my suffering and with a kind of love unlike anything I had ever felt, restoring my interior like one restores a broken jar. Now I had my mind and heart open to see the One who was talking to me. He was my real reason to live and my real object of worship. From that day on, I could rebuild my life with the right partner and have a family again. I knew, at that moment, something more than simply a religious ritual. I knew the true and living God who would occupy definitely my heart and would guide me at all times of my existence, helping me to make the right choices. I would be His living witness in that idolatrous and prejudiced city, and from that day on, others would know and serve Him. I could tell everyone how Jesus was able to restore and give back the dignity of someone and remove the lies of someone's heart. I ran back to town to tell others what I had experienced. Yes, He was giving me a time to evangelize all the citizens until He came back there again. I would prepare His way in that village so that other lives could know Him. My name might be "*Achievement*." I not only got married to the sixth man with whom I was living, as I had beautiful children and a model family' for all who had previously ridiculed me. Who said that God does not give *ministry* or *the Gift of the Word* to women? I had just received from Him the ministry of evangelism. I was ready to serve Him in every way and to show His power to those who didn't know Him before."

"You really knew what achievement is, didn't you?"

"Believe me! We feel like a bird free from the cage, free to fly and to be who we really are, without any hindrance from anyone or anything. This is honor."

"Speaking of honor, don't you want to hear what we have to talk about the resurrection of Christ? Don't you remember it was to the women He appeared first?"

"Yes, it's true. Of course we want to hear! Who will tell the story? Mary Magdalene, that is, "*New Chance*?"

"Cool! You remembered my name of honor. I and the women who had come from Galilee and witnessed His crucifixion took the bottles with the aromatic essences and went to the tomb on the first day of the week in order to fulfill the ritual of embalming properly. I ran ahead and got scared when I saw the stone removed from the tomb, for it was too big. An angel had removed it. The others arrived in time to see and hear the two angels in white clothes sitting where He had been placed. Our surprise was even greater when we heard, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. But go, tell your brothers that He is going ahead of you to Galilee.'"

"I, Joanna, ran away from there with Salome and Mary the mother of James the younger. We had never seen an apparition. It is terrifying, even being angels of God. We felt truly mortals in face of such brilliance and holiness. Our jars fell to the ground and we didn't even care about Mary Magdalene, who stood outside the tomb, kneeling and crying, looking into it. Our intention was to tell Peter and the other disciples. Mary, tell them what came next."

"Women of God! I cried so much, thinking that His body had been stolen by robbers that my tears burned my face. I could see almost nothing because of them. That's when I felt a presence behind me, different from the angels'. They had already disappeared. I thought it was the gardener and asked him where he had put Him. I only looked back when I heard His familiar voice calling me, 'Mary.' My amazement only allowed me to say, 'Rabboni'. It was then that He told me to tell everything to the other disciples and asked me not to detain Him, because He had not yet risen to the Father. I didn't understand very well what this meant, but I obeyed. Now, there was no fear or weariness, but the joy that made me more like a cub of a gazelle than a human being. I ran as fast as I could and reached my companions on the way to Jerusalem. I entered

before them in the Upper Room where the disciples were gathered together and gave them the news. What happened next, all of you know. What matters is to describe that I felt much honored to be the first life to see Him after His resurrection. He didn't appear for a man, but for a frail woman like me."

"I bet that the disciples got jealous. At least once we stood on the first place."

"Whoopee! What a victory!"

"Eve, that is, *"Freed"*, do you want to finish these testimonies with an edifying summary?"

"Of course! I think all testimonies had something in common, showing that, deep inside, what is behind all our mistakes and sins as women are: lack of affection, lack of support and the true teaching of the Lord's laws that govern our lives, because we are surrounded by false teachings that destroy us as person; insecurity, idolatry, weakness of character that make us yield to temptations; hereditary curses that bind us to the ancient customs, and the discrimination before society. Fortunately, Jesus came to redeem us from all this, don't you think?"

"Right. Let's finish our tea for women with laughter, praises to the Lord, and then, we'll go to our homes, having much to say to the neighborhood."

"True messengers; after all, missionaries of the Word are 'blessed pigeons.'"

The tea with Eve finished, but each one of them took home a piece of the valuable testimony of her sisters to build the lives of many other women:

*Blessing*

*Cure*

*Faith*

*Freedom*

*New Chance*

*Priority*

*Privilege*

*Achievement*

*Restoration*

*Restitution*

*Rightness*

*Service*

*Life*

*"A capable wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all. Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her a share in the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the city gates." (Prov. 31: 10; 25-26; 29-31)*



*Receive this praise from the Lord for you:*

*I chose, you, my anointed one,  
Virtuous woman  
Rachel, my sheep,  
As fine jewelry*

*Your loins girded  
In the power of love  
Strengthen you, beloved,  
For your labor*

*Your lamp lit  
Never quenches  
Coverings and linen  
Fill your house  
The dignity  
Dresses you to me  
Your sadness  
Is already at the end*

*The wisdom  
The kindness and favor  
I pour on you  
For my praise*

*(Inspired by Prov. 31: 10-31 - This is the literal translation of the song)*