

CHAPTER ELEVEN

HEAVEN IS OPENED

I have seen several miracles in my time, including a number of physical healings. I was present when a deaf mute girl of twelve years old received hearing and could make speech for the first time. I saw a woman, crippled from birth, walk after prayer. I have seen a large goitre disappear from a woman's neck as she was prayed for.

However, as much as these miracles thrilled and encouraged me, they were no more spectacular than the miracles of soul-healing I have witnessed in recent years as wounded believers have used the "key to the kingdom of heaven" to release those who have wounded them, and to release themselves.

The following stories are based on true experiences. To protect the innocent and those involved, and to maintain confidentiality, I have changed the names and locations. However, I have not exaggerated the outcome in any way, and have tried to be faithful in reporting the miraculous work of the Lord.

Marie

I first met Marie when she was twenty eight. Her counsellors were trying to place her under psychiatric care and she was deeply depressed and withdrawn. She told me of her sad childhood, having been brought up in a strict Jehovah's Witness home in Canada where they never celebrated any birthdays or Christmas. There were no memories of affection from either parent and she had never heard her father tell her that he loved her, nor had she ever felt his embrace or received his kisses.

At the age of sixteen, Marie ran away from home. Several years later, she heard the wonderful news of the Gospel. She immediately yielded her life to Christ, desiring to serve Him. A small local church nurtured her in those early years as she wrestled with her identity and emotions. On one occasion an attempt was made to be reconciled with her family, but the experience was very painful as arguments arose about their differing understandings of Scripture. The parting was acrimonious and Marie determined never to see her parents again. "I hate them" she said, at our first meeting.

Over the next months, I spent many hours with Marie. She looked to me as her father and I saw in her the little girl who had never grown up. Many of her actions were those of the adolescent though she was well educated and fluent in German and English. She was a hard worker and very competent at her designated task, but her emotions and attitudes were those of an insecure teenager. We talked about many things but, whenever her parents were mentioned, a barrier grew between us. Finally I was able to explain that God had created her as a 'heart-shaped' vessel, designed to receive love from her mum and dad. Such love is demonstrated, not so much in the giving of sweets and presents, but in nurturing security, self worth, identity, comfort, acceptance, in encouraging ambitions and goals, and so much more. Things that she never received. Marie was eager to agree that her parents had sinned against her in failing to pour this love into her, but it was much harder to explain to her that her parents were no different to the great majority of us. They are walking in darkness, bearing their own wounds, their own dysfunction, as victims of Satan's attacks. They had no desire to hurt Marie and were probably ignorant of the wounds she was carrying.

"I want you to write a letter to your parents," I said. "Don't worry! You won't have to send it but I do want you to think about what you'd say in such a letter. Tell them specifically, just how they have hurt you, with examples. Also tell them how much you long for their love." I do this often in my counselling as it enables the counsellee to bring the subconscious to the conscious surface. The letter will not be sent but it enables them to have something concrete on which to concentrate. It took Marie three tear-filled

weeks to complete the letter. As we prayed for the Lord to direct her thinking, she was amazed at the memories He brought back to her.

When the letter was finished, I was invited to read it. This is not essential for the counsellor and I make it quite clear to all I counsel that they do not have to show me what they have written. There was obviously a great deal of pain in this letter and my heart ached for this lost, little girl hidden inside a woman's body.

I folded the paper and returned it to its envelope. "Marie, will you choose now to forgive your parents and to release them?" I asked. "I cannot!" she cried through her tears. I told her I could do no more, the remedy for her hurts was now in her hands, the 'key to the kingdom' was hers should she choose to use it. Three more weeks passed before Marie knelt in my office and, with much weeping, told the Lord that she was forgiving her parents and wanted Him "not to lay their sin to their charge". She then promised me that she would pray a blessing upon her parents each day.

A few weeks later, as I saw Marie grow in confidence, I told her that I wanted her to go home to visit her parents for a few days. She protested strongly but finally agreed to write to see if they would receive her. It was two weeks later that she rushed into my office, full of excitement. She had received an envelope containing two letters, a brief one from mum saying that she was welcome, and a longer one from dad. The latter was quite clinical and cold, telling her that they had changed homes and that, should she come, it would now be a long journey. She would need to catch an early train in Toronto, change at Montreal and would then arrive at their home quite late at night. He wasn't sure if he would see her as he had so much work to do! However, what excited Marie was that he ended his letter with "Hugs and kisses, Dad"!

As I saw Marie onto the train at Toronto, I told her I would be praying for her and encouraged her not to get into any religious arguments. "Before you leave" I said, "make sure you ask your dad for those 'hugs

and kisses’.” She doubted that she would have the courage but I assured her of my prayers toward that end.

Late that evening I received the telephone call. “Dad, it’s me, Marie.” She sounded so excited and could hardly contain herself as she told me what had happened. As she was changing platforms in Montreal, she suddenly noticed her mother and father standing there! They had journeyed some distance to meet her. Marie was walking toward them when suddenly, her father stepped forward, threw his arms around her and kissed her! - and the angels sang!

What had happened? I believe that Marie had opened heaven for her father by her prayer of release. That morning, her Heavenly father had spoken down through that opened door to her earthly father, prompting him to take a day off work to take his wife on a trip to meet their daughter. Then, He had moved upon the heart, causing him to reach out in love to kiss Marie for the very first time. Of course, dad was unaware that his plans and actions were being directed by God.

Today, just two years later, Marie is a wholesome, beautiful young lady. She is fully reconciled to her family and lives in the same town as they do. She is active in her evangelical church and was recently appointed a deaconess. I’m not sure how much time she will be able to devote to that work however, as a fine, Christian young man has come along to take her to be his wife. They plan to serve the Lord as missionaries. God is so good!

Angela

“What’s wrong with me, Gareth?” Angela cried, when she had settled into my office chair. “I wake up each morning so full of fear that I will be making a mistake if I marry John.” She went on to explain that each morning she was determined to finish the relationship, but, as the day progressed, she knew that she could not, as John was a fine young man whom any girl would be proud to marry. He was a committed

Christian and he treated her with courtesy and love. Their interests were similar and both had a desire to serve the Lord in missionary work. Angela knew that the problem was hers as this was not the first relationship in which she had felt such fear. Twice, she had ended good relationships and then cried for weeks afterwards wondering why she had been 'so foolish'.

In our counselling she told me of a father who was an elder in a fine, evangelical church. She respected him greatly but felt she could never satisfy him. He had made it known that, for his first child, he had wanted a boy instead of a girl. As she grew up, Angela would play cricket with her father and her younger brothers. She was good but never quite as good as her brothers were so she never received the plaudits that they did. When she received an A grade at school, she was asked why it wasn't an A+. When she took her first job in a bank, she was told that she should have applied to another, better, bank. She had never heard her father's commendation or affirmation though she had tried so hard to please him.

I suggested to her that her dad had failed to give her identity and worth. Her self confidence was low as she constantly saw herself as unable to satisfy the men in her life. Satan was using the wounds produced by her father's lack of acceptance of her, to hinder her in developing a Godly relationship with John. Angela saw the pattern and understood how she could break the bondage by healing the wounds through release of her father. We prayed together as she asked the Lord "not to lay this sin to my father's charge".

Some weeks later, Angela developed some kidney stones. She left the area where we were working together, to return to her home state, where she would enter a hospital for surgery. I next met her about two months later. She ran up to me, threw her arms around me and, with great excitement, told me what had happened.

When she had arrived home, her father announced that he was taking five weeks off work so that he could spend it with his daughter! He took her out to meals and to visit local places of interest. They

talked together and discovered so many things about one another that neither had known before. There were many visits to the places where father worked and, at each, she was embarrassed as he boasted about his daughter and the wonderful things she was doing. He was so proud of her!

“Gareth,” she said, “I’ve fallen in love with my father!” Then she added, “and I could hardly wait to get back to see John.” Today, John and Angela are happily married, serving the Lord with joy.

What had prompted dad to take five weeks off work to spend with his daughter? Could it have been the Lord speaking to him through the door opened by Angela’s prayer of release? I certainly believe so.

Tony

It took quite an effort for Tony to pluck up courage to visit me. He did not relate very well to any man, having been brought up by his mother after an angry divorce.

Since leaving school, there had been a succession of jobs, but he had failed to keep any of them. I listened as he gave me his excuses and soon saw a pattern that it was always “my supervisor’s fault”.

We talked together about Tony’s childhood, his loneliness and his dislike of school. It soon emerged that he had a great fear of one of his teachers. He had not been a brilliant student and this particular teacher had been quite cruel in some of the things he had done and said. He seemed to delight in making his pupils uncomfortable in class and would embarrass the more sensitive of them, by mocking them before the other students. Tony was often the target of his barbs. Then there were the threats. Hardly a week went by without Tony being threatened with a trip to see the Headmaster because his work was not ‘up to standard’. Even though he worked harder, he could never satisfy this teacher, and was often given extra work to do. He was so glad when he was old enough to leave school and to start earning some money.

However, it soon became evident that wounds remained, as Tony was unable to relate to any dominant man in some position of authority. Whenever he was given an unpleasant task to do, he took it as

punishment meted out by a supervisor who must have disliked him. He could not see that it was a task normally expected of any young employee of that company.

I explained how we often get wounded by the actions or words of others, and how those wounds hinder us in walking out a life in the freedom Jesus bought for us on the cross. Tony understood how his teacher had been used by Satan to wound his soul. Together we prayed as he choose to forgive, and to ask the Lord to forgive that teacher. He committed himself to pray for his family and, in particular, for his sons who were quite rebellious and causing much heartache to their parents.

Soon another work opportunity was opened and Tony applied. He was given the job and started within a few days. A year later he was promoted to foreman because he had developed such a good relationship with his colleagues. Also, as the company owner declared, “You can give him any task to do and you know it will be done well. He’s a man I can trust!” God had done a good work.