

chapter 11

Back in Charlotte David spent the following week catching up on all that had happened while he was away. Although he had only been gone two weeks, it seemed like he was returning to someone else's life.

As he prepared his sermon for the following Sunday, he found himself drawn in two directions—one toward his rediscovered Jewish past and the other toward reconciliation with his father. Learning about the Jewish traditions he had missed as a child sent him to the bookstore and the public library. There, he found a number of books on Jewish history, the resettlement of modern Israel, and a thousand variations on the historic themes of Judaism.

The thought of going to see his father, on the other hand, was far from inspiring. For one thing, seeing Wally brought up more painful emotions besides those he already had. There was his mother, who sat by quietly while his father beat and berated David and his brothers and sister, the neighbors who surely must have heard what was happening and yet did nothing, and even Aunt Eliana and Uncle Jacob, who were well aware of their circumstances. Eliana was the one person who could have stepped up in dramatic fashion and changed things, but she didn't.

As the week unfolded, David was led deeper into the notion of reconciliation with the past. He kept returning to a passage in John, where Jesus said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." That seemed to be the point of what Yona had tried to say, and

what the Holy Spirit was saying to him. The past wasn't something to fear; it was something to confront and to define in terms of the present. It was what it was, and there was nothing he could do to change it. All he could do was address it as it affected him now.

Sunday dawned bright and sunny. David left the house early and arrived at the church before anyone else. Located on a beautiful campus on the west side of Charlotte, the buildings included a large sanctuary, a separate education building, and a gymnasium. The congregation was composed of mostly upper-middle-class professionals who lived in nearby communities and subdivisions. For many of them, the church was only a place to go on Sunday; but David had developed a strong corps of dedicated believers, who were committed to discipleship. He met with them throughout the week in a rolling schedule of small group gatherings. Then, every Sunday morning, regardless of what had happened the week before, anyone from any of the groups was free to join him to pray. They met in a room off the basketball court in the gymnasium.

David parked the car near the gym and unlocked the back door of the building. Inside he switched on the light and made his way down the hall to a meeting room on the right. He turned on the lights, arranged chairs in a circle, and then walked out to the snack bar. There, he filled the coffeemaker with water, put coffee in the drip basket, and flipped a switch to turn it on. As the coffeemaker heated up, he heard the back door open. Moments later Billy Jones appeared in the doorway.

"Welcome back!" he called, as he came into the room. "Have a good vacation?"

"Yes. It was nice."

"I was sorry to hear about your mother. Where did she live? I don't remember seeing her here."

"Massachusetts. She lived in Indian Orchard, Massachusetts."

"All your family go up for the funeral?"

"No. Just me." David checked the coffeemaker. "You want a cup?"

"Yeah, sure."

David took a cup from the counter, filled it with coffee, and handed it to Billy. “I’ll let you fix it.”

“I like mine just like it is.” Billy took a sip. “I’ve been thinking about you all week.”

“Oh? What about?”

“I keep remembering this scripture from John. ‘You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.’”

“John, chapter eight. I’m preaching about it this morning.”

“Hmm,” Billy said, thoughtfully. “Interesting.”

“Yes,” David chuckled. “That’s a word I’ve been using a lot lately.”

Billy set the cup aside and leaned back against the edge of the counter. “I think it’s more than that.” He folded his arms across his chest and stared ahead with a pensive look. “I think it’s personal.”

“What do you mean?”

“I think it’s a personal word for you.” Billy unfolded his arms and picked up the coffee cup. “I don’t know how it applies.” He took a sip of coffee. “But I think it has something to do with you.”

“Yes,” David replied, his mind suddenly filled with memories of the last two weeks. “Maybe so.”

Billy set the coffee cup aside. “This is important.” He crossed to David. “Let’s pray about this before anybody else gets here.” Before he could react, Billy had him by the shoulder with one hand and rested the other hand atop David’s head. “Lord, we keep hearing this scripture, ‘You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.’ I declare that word over David this morning, and I ask You to show him what it means. Show him how to apply it to his own life. Let the truth—whatever truth You have for him—truth about Scripture, about You, about himself, about the circumstances he faces—whatever truth he needs, let him see it, embrace it, and allow it to have its full effect in his life. Amen.”

“Thanks.”

Billy gave David a pat on the shoulder. “I believe something will

happen.” He turned back to the counter and picked up the coffee cup. “Y’all went down to Carolina Beach?”

“Yes.” David was glad for the change of subject. He took a cup from the counter and filled it with coffee for himself. “We’ve been renting the same beach house down there for the past ten years.”

“That’s a good place. I used to go down there when I was a kid. A little quieter than Myrtle Beach.”

David chuckled. “Not quite as many tourists. Although I guess, in our case, we are the tourists.”

“Yeah,” Billy nodded. “I guess so.”

In a few minutes others from the discipleship groups arrived. As the crowd grew, David guided them down the hall to the prayer room. Soon they were each sharing what they had heard God say during the week, then they moved seamlessly into worship and prayer. David heard the words they were saying, but his mind kept replaying the words Billy had prayed over him, “Let the truth have its full effect in his life.”

David wanted that. He wanted God to work in whatever way necessary to make him whole and fully alive. Nevertheless, as he thought about those words, a sense of dread swept over him as well. Talking about confronting the past was one thing; doing it was quite another. Dark secrets lurked in the shadows of his past. What would happen when he confronted them?

chapter 12

On Monday morning David awakened feeling rested and refreshed. He rolled on his side and lay there staring at Sue, thinking about how blessed he was to be married to her. His mind wandered back to the first time he had seen her. Even now, he could see her walking across campus, her silky blonde hair blowing in the breeze. When he moved past her that day on the sidewalk, she smiled at him. He looked into her big, blue eyes, and that was it. He was hooked. It took him three weeks to get up the courage to ask her out, but when he did he knew he had found the love of his life.

Suddenly Sue's eyes popped open. She looked at him, startled to find him staring at her. "What are you doing?"

"Looking at you."

"And what do you see?"

"I see a beautiful girl coming across the quadrangle."

"Hah," she chuckled, patting her stomach. "That girl doesn't live here any more."

"That girl," David leaned close, "is more beautiful now than she was back then."

"You have been in a really good mood since you got back from Massachusetts."

"I have?"

"Yes. And you've slept well too."