

[Book One in the Breakthrough Encounters Series]

ENCOUNTERS OF THE *Heart*

There's
More to
the Story
Than
Meets the
Eye



CATHY HEILIGER

"A powerful and important book...for all of us!"
Nancy Stafford, actress and author

ENCOUNTERS OF THE HEART

CATHY HEILIGER

EVERGREEN PRESS

Encounters of the Heart

by Cathy Heiliger

Copyright ©2007 Cathy Heiliger

All rights reserved. This book is protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. This book may not be copied or reprinted for commercial gain or profit. Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible and THE HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION ©1978 by the New York International Bible Society, used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers. Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright 1996, 2004. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

ISBN

For Worldwide Distribution

Printed in the U.S.A.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction	xi
Chapter One: A Woman and Her Issue	1
Reflections	11
Chapter Two: Cleaning Jairus' House	17
Reflections	29
Chapter Three: Not Dead, Just Asleep	33
Reflections	38
Chapter Four: Free To Just Be	41
Reflections	52
Chapter Five: He Will Come	57
Reflections	71
Chapter Six: Taking Away the Stone	75
Reflections	85
Chapter Seven: The Anointing	89
Reflections	108
Endnotes:	110

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my husband and best friend, Bruce: I love you for being the closest touch-point of the Father's affection to me for 32 years. The hoisting of this sail on "The Ship" is because of your encouragement and foresight. Thank you, honey, for helping me catch the wind of the Spirit!

To my sons and daughters, Nicole, Joshua, Eric and Stevie: My encounters with you have, and will continue, to teach me more than I could ever have hoped for. I love and thank you with all my heart.

To my grand-girls Gracie, Ava, and Shaelyn Rose: Thank you for reminding me how to stay "little."

Mom: No one on earth has had a greater influence on my life. I am beyond blessed to have been so nurtured, tutored, and befriended.

Bob: Thank you for being such a willing and helpful stepfather/reader/editor, and rocket-scientist!

To my sibs, Rob, Evelyn, Steve, Melissa, and Mary: Thanks for your encouragement and celebration. Hop on the plane and let's take this ride together!

To all the friends who have loved me to life: Brian and Tiffany Woodward, Marge Schultz, Ron and Eleanor Barley, Bill and Pam Twyman, Nancy Stafford, Noma DuCharme, Carolyn Bible, Pam Brown, Dr. Dennis and Pat Conneen, MaryBeth Stafford, Doctors Len and Patty Cerny, Craig and Tamra Holland, Shawn and "V" Johnson, Dan and Michelle

Linscott, Carla Malden, Bill and Betsy Jackson, Nancy Chance (whose therapeutic massage kept my body intact), Ed McGlasson, Dr. Larry Poland, Mike and Marla Maynard, Teri Awad, Mindy Ogden, Carol Pierce, Beth Rowland, Julie Tegeler, Tom and GiGi Hull, John and Paula Sandford, Leanne Payne, and C.S. Lewis: Thank you for your friendship, prayers, encouragements, mentorings, readings, feedback, and dinners out!

And finally to Kris and Lori Huff, and Colin and Melanie Cumbee, whose Big Bear home provided shelter and solace to “lead me beside still waters, restoring my soul.” Your place has helped me find my place.

INTRODUCTION

I've always hungered to read about biblical characters in a dimensional way that helped me relate to them as real-time people with bad breath and dysfunctional thinking. I've yearned to climb into the skins of those whom Jesus encountered. I've wanted to come to know them through their hypothetical "back-stories," and experience his power in rewriting their "future-stories" and mine!

Encounters of the Heart intends to bring fact and fiction together to fill in the blanks, calling biblical personalities to life for the 21st century. As you read these first-person short stories, I would encourage you to sink into the soul of the character about whom you're reading. You just might find their heart is very much like your own.

I have purposed to follow the biblical storyline in all its power while concentrating on the emotional aspect of humans in contact with Jesus as he made himself known as Messiah. I have no intention of adding or subtracting from the Gospel texts, nor of rewriting any of the Scripture. Indeed, I am keenly aware of the biblical warnings against it. I have, however, relied upon scholars who have broken down the original Greek texts into English and have utilized more specific Greek-oriented terminology in Jesus' dialogue than what may be recorded in modern translations.

In this work, I've also begun experiencing more fully the power of a rightly used imagination. My hope is that, by reverently "colorizing" the scriptural encounters of Christ with the scents, textures, and dynamics of conceivable human life in biblical times, the reader will experience a greater personal knowledge of the three-dimensional risen Christ, and the "Spirit of the Word" that resides in all the Scriptures.

Cathy Heiliger

Riverside, California, July 2007

Chapter One

A WOMAN AND HER ISSUE

Luke 8:40-48

I sat on the rough ground, leaning against a tree that morning, attempting to find a precious hour of sleep that would carry me away from the reality of my wretched life. My breathing had become more labored than ever before. I wondered if it was because the air was so hot and humid that day. The sticky weather added an even further burden to my already exhausted frame.

A fly landed in my ear, and the buzzing of it irritated me. Laying my head back against the tree, I scanned the rolling hills that were the color of yellow onions surrounding the Sea of Galilee. I used to hate living here. The hot wind had made my skin dry and leathery, and my mouth always tasted of sand. But in the last twelve years, the desert and I had become close friends. We understood each other's desolation. We comprehended similar places of loneliness and thirst. We both longed for refreshment, but neither of us had found an oasis.

That morning, however, my eyes looked beyond the fa-

Encounters of the Heart

miliar landscape. A clamor arose from the people near the water's edge. Women far from the shore were running toward a boat with three sails that was just docking. Many people seemed to be raising their hands in some kind of odd celebration. Fathers galloped toward the water with little children on their backs, and old people hobbled along on arthritic knees—everyone clamoring for whatever it was that was drawing their attention.

“A load of carp,” I said to myself.

I sank down onto my right side, the only position I could find to stay comfortable. My lower back felt as inflamed as a rack of lamb on a spit. My nose inadvertently passed over my armpit and made me gag. I just couldn't stomach the stench.

Rolling over, my face in the sand, I started to scream, “Let me into heaven! I would rather die than live like this!”

But as soon as my lungs pressed against my thin ribs, that warm, dreaded gush poured out from underneath me, and I had to hobble again behind the tree so no one would see. The rags were so old, so thin that they hardly helped anymore. I had nothing left. What was I going to do?

I fell down in a bundle, hunched over, too tired to cry, and yet, this time, I did.

“How long, O Lord? How long before you let me die?”

The crowd from the shore began sprinting past me into town, their voices vibrating with jubilation. Although I felt too despondent to care, I glanced up to see what was happening. A younger man in the center of the throng was walking with Jairus, who I knew was the overseer of our synagogue here in Capernaum. Jairus looked like he had just gotten out of bed. *Strange for a man of such personal tidiness*, I thought. *Why was he wearing only a tunic?*

One of my former neighbors swept by me and spat on the

A Woman and Her Issue

ground, dismissing me completely. Although I wasn't a leper, I was treated like one. "Unclean" had become my middle name.

I crouched farther away, moving as fast as I could to get away from the throng, but for some reason I was drawn to look again. Suddenly I was captivated by the most dazzling sight I'd ever beheld—two compassionate, magnificent eyes that were looking straight at me. They were the eyes of the man walking briskly with Jairus. I was afraid to hold his gaze, but I couldn't help myself. For a moment I was paralyzed. I don't think I moved until someone shouted, "Jesus! Jesus of Nazareth! The Messiah is come!"

Indescribably, with the very mention of that name, something inside me leapt. Jesus! I had heard of this man! *He heals the sick. Would he...? Do I dare? Oh, my God, my Elohim.*

Unconsciously, I started moving toward him until I remembered the shame of my robe. I cursed at the red on the back of my cloak, reaching for the only thing that made a difference—the water I always carried with me in a flask. I pulled my robe around and poured the water over the stain until it washed away into the sand. Oh that someone would do just that for my heart! But physicians cannot heal broken hearts. And often, they cannot heal broken bodies.

I shuddered, remembering their prescriptions. They made me drink wine boiled with nine Persian onions and then proclaimed: "Arise from thy flux." But that failed. Next, one of them said: "Set her in a place where two ways meet, and let her hold a cup of wine in her hand. Have somebody come behind her to frighten her and say, 'Arise from thy flux.'" They did frighten me, but the only result was their wine-stained clothing! The most humiliating was their instruction to dig seven trenches and burn some cuttings from vines in them. They put a cup of wine in my hand and led me to squat down over each trench. They proclaimed once again: "Arise from thy

flux,” but my legs buckled under me from the cramping. When I fell, the doctors didn’t even pick me up. They couldn’t touch me. I was ritually unclean.¹

It had been twelve years since I had entered the synagogue. My friends used to call me “David’s sister,” because I led the dance worshippers in procession to the Temple. My “issue,” however, prohibited me from even the most casual touch, because if someone touched me, they were unclean for seven days. For too many years, no one’s hand had caressed my face; no friend had knelt down to pray for my heart; no husband had...

Was it any wonder I felt so despairing?

The cramping was so bad I was hunched over most of the time. In some ways, maybe that was a benefit. No one could see who I was. I had come to believe maybe it was easier to be ill than to be well. No one expected anything from me. I had certainly come to not expect anything from myself.

But those eyes had seen me, really seen me. I don’t know how, but I felt like Jesus knew me. I had to hear him. Something was compelling me to draw closer to him. Despite my worry about the odor, I knew I had to reach him. I swung a burlap scarf around my head, and although the day was hot, my head began to cool just at the thought that I might be close, once more, to those eyes.

As I put one foot in front of the other, a strange strength began to propel me. I looked at the massive crowd encircling the young teacher, and being as thin as I was, I thought: *Maybe I can maneuver in through these people just enough to touch the hem of his robe. If I could only touch, for just an instant, something of his... for some reason I know I will be well.*

I plunged into the jostling crowd, but I was pushed away. Someone kicked me, and I fell. A man, smelling like stale wine, stepped on my hand. A woman with fat arms shoved me to the

A Woman and Her Issue

side. The dust began choking me, and my eyes had trouble focusing.

Is this worth it? I wondered as someone stomped on my foot. *Is moving toward him worth the cost?* But I remembered the compassion, the—dare I say—friendship in his eyes? I got up and said to myself, “I must have whatever he gives. No one else has dared to look at me like that since I became ill.”

The frenzy of the crowd was rising, and people were fainting from bodies crushing each other trying to get to this teacher. Some fishermen were surrounding him, locking arms, yelling to each other to stay connected, as though they were a life preserver around a drowning man in the sea. Panic, fear, and anger flashed in people’s eyes. Waves of pressed flesh began squeezing, pushing, and battering Jesus so violently that he had to climb on someone’s shoulders to be able to catch his breath.

It was a frightening pit of people to be in! I came close to leaving, terrified of the stampede. But then I saw my chance. His robe was a yard in front of me! I reached for it, strained for it, but a group of angry men pushed him away. I couldn’t breathe and started to choke. I stood up for air, terrified that someone would notice me and took another deep breath. *One more try.*

I elbowed my way next to one of his fish-smelling friends, a large brute with bad breath and a rowdy laugh. He had to strong-arm a man away from tearing the young teacher’s robe, and as he did, I saw a little opening that I might be able my way through.

If I can just touch his garment, I will be well!

I closed my eyes, pushed, and dove through the hole in the mass of people. I stretched with all my might toward the blue tassel on his robe. Suddenly something brushed me like the feathers of a bird’s wing, and for some reason, I remembered the ancient Psalm: “Under his wings you will find refuge.”

Encounters of the Heart

Oh! Oh, my God!

Suddenly, I felt like warm honey had been poured into my veins. It was like I was being bathed in the sparkles I saw on the sea at dawn. I almost couldn't let go of the robe! Immediately, my hemorrhaging . . . stopped! My heart began to beat stronger. I felt color flowing into my cheeks. Energy roared in like a stampeding lion! *Oh, my God!* The low back pain, the excruciating cramping, the abdominal swelling—all suddenly gone! I shuddered and wept uncontrollably. Those eyes! Those eyes had seen me and healed me!

Almost in disbelief, I stood up straight for the first time in over a decade. My spine felt strong and able to bear my weight. I wanted to dance, to scream, to fall down in worship! All I could do was stand there in awe, aware of only one thing—I was well!

I disappeared into the crowd, privately celebrating my incomprehensible healing. *My God had heard! My God had heard my prayer!*

I was so caught up in what had happened that I didn't notice the multitude had stopped. It suddenly grew eerily quiet, and from my view, I could see the top of someone's head turning around.

"Who touched me?" I heard a man ask.

Fear sliced through my heart. Surely he couldn't be talking about me. I didn't touch anybody. I only touched the hem of a garment. No one could have felt that.

One of his friends laughed a little. "Who touched you, Jesus? How can you ask that? Look at the crowd that surrounds you."

But as the crowd began to part, I could hear the man again ask: "Who touched me? I know that healing power has gone out from me."

Those eyes kept searching. Those eyes kept seeking. I was

A Woman and Her Issue

immobilized. What was I going to do? If I came forward, everyone would know what my “issue” was. They would know about the secret things, the shameful things, the impure and defiled and isolated things. I had gone against the Law of Moses and made my way into the crowd. I was unclean, and I had defiled others. I would be beaten. How could I risk exposure?

You'll be humiliated, I heard a voice inside say. Stay hidden. Nobody needs to know about this. It can be between you and God. Don't expose yourself.

Then it dawned on me that maybe he was angry. *Did I do something wrong? Maybe I defiled him! Oh, I can't tell him. I've got to run away. I need to hide!*

My legs buckled, this time not with pain, but with fear. Now I was immobilized, not for joy, but in terror. I wanted to move, but I couldn't. I wanted to run toward him and away from him at the same time. I knew I had to make a choice. It became clear it was time to come out of hiding, time to put away my pride. I decided to turn toward him. As I began to walk toward him, the closer I got, it was as if the strong grip of some unseen enemy began to tighten its hold. My entire being began to tremble. The voices inside shouted, *Run!* But I was tired of running and exhausted with hiding. Live or die, I wanted to just fall at his feet and rest.

The moment my hands hit the dirt by his side, my mouth began pouring out things I never knew were in my heart. I told him everything that had happened to me. I told him about the secret things I had done, the private things that had happened. I spilled my soul out and told the truth about the God-awful, should-never-have-been-done-to-me defilements I had endured. As I wept, it was as if streams of living water poured out from my eyes. The more I cried, the more I was cleansed.

What I thought was the most fearful thing I could do was becoming my greatest relief, even in front of a crowd of strangers.

Encounters of the Heart

For the first time in twelve years, somebody took my hand and lifted me up! For the first time in twelve years, I was touching someone, and they didn't recoil. I lost sight of everyone else. I didn't care. He was there! He had heard me!

Then he spoke: "Daughter . . ."

What? I was riveted.

He had just heard all the secret things I had done—the private sins and the sordid history of my life—and he called me, "Daughter?" Without a hint of accusation or ridicule, this Jesus was affirming my worth with just one word. With an utterly kind term of endearment, he was setting me back in my place in the family of God. In front of the entire town, he was re-establishing me in my community.

I could hardly believe it.

He continued: "Daughter, your faith—your belief in me and your choice to reach out to me—is what has saved and delivered you."

Was he saying that without my faith—my inching-forward little faith—his power would not have been demonstrated? I was astounded. I could hardly comprehend that he wasn't going to rebuke me for moving toward him in my unclean state. I was dumbfounded to discover he never intended to humiliate me when he had asked, "Who touched me?" He wanted to find me simply because he wanted to commend me!

I moved from condemnation to commendation with one simple phrase!

As he leaned toward me a little closer, my heart fluttered like a bird attempting to fly from its cage. With a strong urgency, he buried something deep in my spirit: "Go in peace . . . withdraw into quietness. Be still and let your entire being rest from the turmoil you have endured."

Rest. I closed my eyes, barely able to remember the word. For all those years I had been required to be responsible for myself. No one else was.

A Woman and Her Issue

But that wasn't all.

"Go," he said. "Live well; live blessed!"

A blessed life? The only blessings I ever knew had come a long time ago. But these words carried a hope with them, a sensation of peace that was so enticing I wanted to devour them.

"And be made whole from your plague," he said.

Plague. The word slapped me like a wet towel. That was the word the Romans use when they scourge a prisoner before crucifixion, whipping them bloody for being a criminal.

I looked at him with alarmed recognition as he again caught my eye.

Bloody?

It was as though his penetrating stare asked me a startling question: "Were you whipping yourself 'bloody'?"

He pressed into my soul more completely, more deeply than he had before, and his spirit said to my spirit:

"Daughter, you are freed, from here on out, from the unrelenting whipping of yourself as a criminal. I say to you, 'Stop beating yourself up! Go in peace. Be made whole from the suffering plague of self-hatred, guilt, and shame for whatever you have done that has contributed to your condition. Be freed now into the peace I have given you.'"

I was breathless. I could hardly take it in. But that wasn't all.

"And hear me in this," he said. "*Continue* to be whole."

My previously dulled senses were reverberating with life. With each word, I felt as if I was climbing out of a thick mountainous fog into the brilliant sun atop a soaring peak. I could hear and see everything clearly. Just as my body had been touched, so my mind was being renewed. It took me a moment to take it all in, but with each word he spoke, I came to better understand his meaning: this is a process! He said that I

Encounters of the Heart

must do this part—continue to enter his rest and let his peace fill me. Just as my faith activated his power, my rest in him, my abiding in him, will maintain my healing.

It was more than I could have asked or hoped for.

It was then I realized that my breathing was no longer labored. I was at peace. I was wearing the same old rags, but I was no longer an old rag myself. I was standing up straight. I was looking others in the eye, and they were not backing away.

He smiled at me, enveloping me one last time with those astonishing eyes and turned around toward Jairus.

He had turned my mourning into dancing, and right there, in the dust, I twirled, just as David's sister would do, again and again and again.

REFLECTIONS

“A Woman and Her Issue”

1. This woman had an issue of blood. What’s your issue?
What are you internally bleeding from?
Where is the hemorrhage in your heart?
2. The scripture records no name, no identity for this woman. We often name ourselves, or let others name us. Did she name herself:
Unclean?
Sick?
Lonely?
Estranged?
Sexually unfulfilled?
Isolated?
Afraid?
Rejected?
Hopeless?
Resourceless?
Unable to contribute?
Incapable of loving or being loved?
Dying?

What do you name yourself?
3. Does your “defilement” (whatever has caused you to feel unclean) urge you to stay out of any relationship or circumstance where you might be touched, physically or emotionally?
4. Does your injury cause you to reach out for touch in inappropriate ways to fill the vacuum of dark need in your heart?

Encounters of the Heart

5. If you're married, what injuries—physical, emotional, or spiritual—have kept you from intimacy with your spouse?

6. Are you hopeless because all the remedies you thought would work (getting married, having children, friends, enjoying health, career, success, or ministry) haven't fixed the hemorrhage inside your heart?

7. Are you disillusioned and bleeding over the fact that you've spent your energy, creativity, nurturing, and time on family or friends that now ignore you, or children who are on a track of rebellion and self-destruction?

8. Do you feel like you've been robbed of your youth, as this woman might have felt?

9. Do you feel that Jesus only takes time for the young?

10. You, with the sea of silver on your head, are you feeling spent, tossed aside, and destitute of purpose? God cares about the mature ones who have been overlooked, passed over, or disregarded because they're middle-aged or older! He cares about their "issues!"

To you, I can hear the Lord say something like this:

My dear friend, I have not forgotten you. I will call forth from your heart works of art that will be a treasure to me. I will not allow your lifeflow to bleed away with you, but I will redirect that flow into others who are desperate for their own touch from the Savior. I am giving you other children, children who have had no mother or father, no nurturing, and no kiss on the face; children who have languished, but children I am calling

A Woman and Her Issue

forth to life! Let me stop the hemorrhaging of your heart and show you purpose, for I have need of you. You are wanted. You are desired, and you are mine!

Dear ones, Jesus still heals the invisible ones. Jesus sees the humble and their secret requests, and doesn't ignore their private longing.

11. If you are young, what's your issue?

Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for out of it flows the issues of life. Have your youthful "affections" pushed you in the right or wrong direction?"

12. Have you put appropriate boundaries on your feelings of love and desire in order to keep your heart protected, to keep it from bleeding and sustaining wounds too early in your life?

The Lord sees your issues! He calls you to protect that most private place—your heart—and oversee it with wisdom. He calls you to not give it or any part of you away to another prematurely because he resides there. He lives in your frame and your body is his home.

13. Are you so desperate for healing that you're willing to tell God and others the truth about your condition and come out of hiding? Are you willing to buck what's been your habit—victimization, isolation, even death—to press into the Lord's presence passing by you right now?

My friends, just like the woman with the issue, the Lord knows our fear. He sees the terror of exposure of our real selves. He sees the torment the enemy has used to keep us from intimacy with God and others, and he has already provided the healing for it. We must receive it and act on it by choosing to:

Encounters of the Heart

Come out of hiding by telling trustworthy, believing friends the truth of our experience. “Confess your sins, one to another, and pray for each other so that you may be healed” (James 5:16).

Forgive ourselves for the sins we’ve committed against others and ourselves. Here’s a sample prayer:

Father, I confess the sins I’ve committed against myself (name them), and I confess my sinful-reactions against those who have hurt me (name them). In my heart I confess the sins I’ve committed against You, and I acknowledge my need for a Savior who came in the flesh to take upon Himself the penalty for my sin. I choose to accept that Savior’s phenomenal love for me, and I ask Jesus, the Christ, to take up residence in my life that I may know the abundance of life he intends to bring me. I receive his Holy Spirit into my being, and I choose to forgive myself and those who have hurt me, and receive your wonderful washing, your new beginnings, and your forgiveness.

I open my mouth to receive your breath. Resuscitate me, Father. Call me to life. Wherever the suffering woman exists, Lord, heal me.

Wherever the flow of life has been drained from me, heal me.

Wherever my hopes for change have been annihilated, heal me.

Wherever my creativity has been discharged from me without it being fully realized, heal me of my disappointment and disillusionment.

Wherever my sexuality has been robbed from me, heal me.

A Woman and Her Issue

Wherever my body has required so much energy just to survive, heal me.

Wherever my soul has longed for friendship and I have been ostracized, ignored, or just been invisible, heal me.

Wherever my attitudes about myself have been critical, hate-filled, or have been without self-care, heal me.

Wherever I have been isolated from or rejected by my spouse, heal me.

Wherever I have looked for you to meet me, and I felt like you passed me by, reach out your hand, and heal me.

Thank you, Father.

Amen.

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved” (Romans 10:9-10 NLT).

“I have read the stories of Christ, listened to them, and seen them portrayed. In the pages of this book, I *lived and felt* them.”

—Larry W. Poland, Ph.D., Chmn. and CEO, Mastermedia Intl.

Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Jairus...

There's more to the story than meets the eye!

We think we know them from the bits and pieces of Scripture we read. But Cathy Heiliger lets us get inside their skin to feel what they might have felt as they encountered the One who healed the sick and raised the dead. These are touching stories of imagination, faith, and incredible love!

“Cathy Heiliger’s ability to connect imaginative back-stories with the biblical narrative of her character’s lives will cause the reader to feel like she is right there, *on the scene*, as Jesus did His wonderful works.”

—Steve McVey, author, *Grace Walk*

“I see *Encounters of the Heart* as a rich resource to support the Christian pulpit by adding poetry and prose to the biblical narrative.”

—Bill Twyman, The Vineyard Churches Natl. Board of Directors

“This book really gives a human picture to biblical truth. This is a MUST read!”

—Randy and Cathy Alward, President, CEO Maranatha Music



Photo: Kristen May Fotts

CATHY HEILIGER is a popular speaker, and the director of women’s ministry at the Inland Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Corona, California. She has had a 25-year ministry in emotional healing, is a certified professional life-coach, and has been trained in the craft of screenwriting. Cathy and her husband, Bruce, have two married children and three granddaughters.