



*God Comes to*  
**Women**

HEATHER FARRELL & JEN MABRAY

*A* special thanks goes to Paige Winfree  
for her beautiful illustrations.

“The cover art is a powerful reflection of the stories inside this book. Much like the doves coming down from above, Heavenly Father guided my mind with a clear image of how to present my own witness that God comes to women.”

—Paige Winfree

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# *When You Can't Climb the Mountain*

by Heather Farrell

*“Draw near unto me and I will draw  
near unto you; seek me diligently  
and ye shall find me.”*

—DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS 88:63

When I was fourteen years old my Young Women group went on a grueling hike. Our destination was the top of a high plateau that had a spectacular view of the surrounding mountain range. The ascent was steep and difficult, and after several hours of climbing one of our leaders had to turn back. Her body simply could not take her any farther. Sobbing, she was escorted slowly back down the mountain by one of the priesthood leaders who had accompanied us.

Several hours later, and after completing one of the hardest physical challenges of my young life, I found myself standing on top of a mountain. The view from the top was spectacular; it literally took my breath away. Standing up there, my perception of things was so different. Things that had

seemed big and important now seemed tiny and insignificant in the face of so much grandeur and majesty. The air was different, thinner and colder, and full of reverence. As my head brushed the tops of clouds, I understood why in the scriptures the temple was referred to as the “mountain of the Lord.” The mountain was as near as you could get to piercing the veil, parting the clouds, and seeing God.

When we came down off the mountain we were greeted by our leader who had waited for us to return. As we eagerly told her about our hike and about the incredible view from the top, she smiled, hugged us, and told us she was proud of us. Only years later, as a grown woman, have I realized how hard that must have been for her. She had wanted to reach the top too. She had wanted to stand in the clouds and feel the majesty of God surrounding her but had been unable to, not because her will was not strong enough but because her physical body was simply not capable of carrying her there. The mountaintop had been completely out of her reach.

Sometimes as women we may feel like we are missing out on potential spiritual experiences because we are unable to climb the mountain. We find it hard to physically separate ourselves from the people, things, and circumstances of our lives. We have babies who need us every hour of the day, children who demand our attention, spouses who need an equal partner, aging parents who cannot be left alone, neighbors who are in need, and the responsibility of dozens of daily tasks necessary to sustain physical life. One of my favorite authors, Pearl S. Buck, wrote about the struggle her mother had between the desire to live a more “spiritual” life and the pressing reality of caring for physical needs. Buck’s mother, named Carrie, and her husband, Andrew, were Christian missionaries in China during the last part of the nineteenth century. Buck wrote:

Andrew, laboring over their everlasting souls, would not have thought of lice and bedbugs. Carie, engrossed in the necessity for cleanliness, saw Andrew praying with some refractory lad and paused to think remorsefully, “How much better he is than I! How is it I forget so about souls”. But the next moment her interest would be caught in the ordering of rice and vegetables or there would be a little boy who looked pale and she must coax him to drink a little milk . . . , or there would be itch on another’s hands and she must run for the sulphur mixture. Souls were more important, that one [she] believed heartily, but bodies were somehow so immediate.

For women, all the physical work required to create bodies and keep them alive is often “so immediate.” It is hard, and sometimes even impossible, for a

woman to separate herself from the pressing demands of physical bodies long enough to reach the spiritual realm where quiet, contemplative communion with God is often found.

This is why God often comes down off the mountain to be with women where they are. He meets us in our kitchens, in our cars, in the street, and in our daily work. He sees the burdens we carry and knows the desires of our hearts to be with Him, and when we can't go to Him, He comes to us. Significant spiritual experiences don't always have to be received on the mountaintop. Sometimes they come to us in the most common and unexpected of places.

### *Thy Faith Hath Made Thee Whole*

Two stories in the scriptures illustrate different ways that God speaks with us: the story of Enos in the Book of Mormon and the woman with the issue of blood in the New Testament. These stories are very different, but both show us that if our souls are truly seeking and desiring communion with God, we will find Him, no matter our situation.

In the Book of Mormon we read about Enos, who, while hunting in the woods for food for his family, found the quiet solitude he needed to pray to God. Enos tells us that his soul “hungered” and he cried unto God “in mighty prayer and supplication for my own soul, all the day long . . . and when night came I did still raise my voice high that it reached the heavens” (Enos 1:4). In response to his prayer Enos heard the voice of the Lord telling him that his sins were forgiven. When he inquired about how this was done, the Lord told him it was “because of thy faith in Christ . . . wherefore, go to, thy faith hath made thee whole” (1:8).

Interestingly, these words spoken to Enos are almost identical to the words Christ spoke to the woman with the issue of blood in the New Testament who, after twelve years of suffering from unstoppable feminine bleeding that no physician could cure, was desperate for relief. She saw Christ walking on the street and, after pushing her way through the crowd, was healed when she reached out and touched the hem of His garment. Despite the throng of people, Christ felt her touch and the power that had flowed into her. When she saw that she could not hide, the woman stepped forward and spoke with Christ. Jesus told her, “Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace,

and be whole” (Mark 5:34). Like Enos, the woman with the issue of blood had also received the healing she was hungering after, but she received it in a very different way and in a very different place.

For the woman with the issue of blood, quiet solitude with Jesus was impossible. Due to her prolonged feminine bleeding she was unable to enter holy places, like the temple or the synagogues, where Jesus often taught. The only possible way she could reach Him was when He was out in public, and when He was in public He was always surrounded by a crowd. Since it was the only chance she had, she reached out to Him on the street, surrounded by people. This could not be any more different from Enos, who reached out to God in prayer in the solitude of the woods, but it didn’t matter. She found access to God, even in a noisy and very public place.

## *Wrestle with God*

The woman with the issue of blood and Enos both wrestled with unanswered questions, one for a whole day and night upon his knees, the other for twelve years of anguish and separation. They both experienced struggle, and both hungered for what only Christ could give them. This hunger prompted them to reach out to God, one with his heart, the other with her hand. Yet while Enos prayed, “wrestling” before God for a whole day and night to receive his answer, the woman with the issue of blood’s answer came instantaneously; she was healed the very moment she reached out and touched Christ.

Why? Why were the experiences of Enos and the woman with the issue of blood so different, and yet the results were exactly the same? I think it is because God understands our circumstances and limitations. He knows that sometimes, like Enos, we *need* to slow down our lives, reevaluate our priorities, and seek Him in solace and peace. He is waiting for us to put aside our distractions and climb the mountain to speak with Him. Yet, He also knows that other times we are like the woman with the issue of blood and all we have is one moment on a crowded street, with people pressing in on us from all sides. Yet it doesn’t matter if we have all the time in the world or none; one moment of faith is all it takes. If we are truly hungering and thirsting for divine communication, reaching out with all that we have, one touch, one moment, is enough.

In college I had an experience that helped me understand how we can be healed and receive answers in a moment. I had been struggling for several months with terrible, immoral thoughts. I felt like my mind had been taken over by an evil influence that constantly bombarded me with thoughts and feelings I did not want. My parents had recently gone through a divorce, and Satan must have known I was in a vulnerable spiritual state. He was waging a war for my mind and spirit. For months I begged God to make the thoughts go away or to at least be able to get some control over them, but nothing happened. I felt like Job in the Old Testament, abandoned by God and helpless against the adversary.

Then one day as I was walking across campus, jostling through throngs of students on my way home, I offered up what must have been my millionth silent prayer, begging God to heal me, to take away the torture. I’m not sure

why this prayer was different, but I do know that in the middle of a crowded street, with cars zooming past and people pressing around me, God heard my prayer. He spoke to me and told me exactly what I needed to do to be healed. I did what He told me, and after months of struggle I was, almost instantaneously, able to get control over the terrible thoughts in my head. It was my own personal miracle. Like the woman with the issue of blood I had reached out to God in faith, and He healed me, even in an unexpected and crowded place.

## *The Power of Separation*

Significantly, both Enos and the woman with the issue of blood received their special experience with God because they were separated. Enos was in the wilderness alone, separated physically from his family and his people. This distance gave him the ability to think, ponder, and pray. The woman with the issue of blood, while very much *not* physically alone, was also separated—spiritually.

In biblical times Jewish women were considered unclean during their menstrual cycles. This did not mean that they were seen as dirty or contaminated, but by having contact with blood (the source of life) they had been in contact with death and were in a state of separation from others and God until the death they had been in contact with had been atoned for through immersion in a special bath called a “mikvah.”

In Hebrew, this state of separation is called “niddah” and is often a uniquely feminine situation. A woman’s separation lasted for as long as she was bleeding and then seven days after she was finished bleeding. For a woman with a normal cycle, this might mean a separation of a week and a half or two weeks. Yet for a woman like the woman with the issue of blood, who had continuous bleeding, it meant that she could go years without ever being able to get out of the state of being “niddah.” She was forever separated from God, not because of sin but simply because of her female body.

Women, by very nature of their female bodies, have a different physical experience upon the earth than men do. There are things that happen to a woman that a man has no way of understanding. As my husband lightheartedly exclaimed once when I tried to explain to him what it felt like to have menstrual cramps, “I’m never going to understand. I don’t even have that organ!”

Today women can still experience this separation from holy places due to their female bodies and female stewardships. Examples include a young woman who might not feel comfortable participating in baptisms for the dead because she is menstruating, a pregnant woman on bed rest who is unable to attend church and take the sacrament for several months, a new mother who cannot leave her breastfeeding baby to attend the temple, a woman suffering from postpartum depression who is not able to feel the Spirit like she normally

does, a mother who misses all of church because she is in the foyer with a fussy toddler, a woman struggling with infertility for whom church and its emphasis on motherhood is painful, and even a menopausal woman whose hormonal changes make participating in public worship difficult. Our female bodies are beautiful, powerful, and the wellspring from which life flows, but they can also be a challenge. Like the woman with the issue of blood, sometimes there is nothing we can do to change our situation; we are just “niddah,” separated because of our femaleness. And God knows this.

This is why the story of the woman with the issue of blood is so powerful. In her state of separation, a unique feminine separation, she reached out to God and found Him and accessed His power. The scriptures tell us that Jesus felt the “virtue” go out of Him when she touched Him. In Greek the word “virtue” means “soul power” or the “power a person or things exerts and puts forth.” In the 1828 Webster’s dictionary the first definition of the word “virtue” is “strength” and refers to strength that comes from “straining, stretching and expanding.” The example given with the definition has to do with plants and how the “virtue” of a plant in medicine is the power that it develops inside of itself, which can be extracted and used to heal or influence other things.

I love this definition of virtue because it helps expand our understanding of what happened when this woman reached out and touched Jesus. Not only did she access His virtue, Christ’s soul power, but she also exercised her own virtue, the power she had gained through struggle, straining, stretching, and expanding. And when she touched Jesus Christ those two powers combined and brought forth a miracle.

At times we, like the woman with the issue of blood, find ourselves separated from God and from others because of our trials and sufferings. Yet those times of separateness can, just like times when we physically separate ourselves from others by going into the wilderness, be times of deep spiritual growth and communion with God. When we have deep grief or difficult questions that separate us, we begin to realize that the only one who can help us is Jesus Christ. They are times when we *must* struggle, strain, stretch and expand; times when we develop “soul power.” We learn to reach out to Him, and like the woman with the issue of blood, we find that no matter where we are, He is always within our reach.

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