A LIFE LENT TO THE LORD

By Renee M.Criswell

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DEDICATION

This book has a two-fold dedication. First, to the Lord for blessing me and trusting me with this talent. I can write nothing without you, Lord, because until You touch them, they are simply words on a page. It's your breath that speaks life unto them and uses them to minister — all credit belongs to You.

And then to my husband, my beau, my kindred spirit — I dedicate this book. Your strength supports me, your love encourages me and your walk with the Lord inspires me as I seek to write what He wants written. With all my love — "for always."

The Playwright
Renee M. Criswell

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HIS OUTSTRETCHED ARM

Cast of Characters

ABIGAIL
An older woman. She's Peter's mother-in-law who was healed from a fever.

TABITHA
An older woman. She was the "bent over" woman whom Jesus healed.

BERNICE
A middle-aged woman. She was the woman with the issue of blood whom Jesus healed.

ANA
A young woman. She's a widow who is unable to cope with her grief.

Costumes: All women are dressed in a time-period tunic, overdrape and sandals.

TUNIC: Pullover ankle-length undergarment, with sleeves that reach elbow or wrist. (A woman's can be sleeveless.)

CLOAK: An ankle-length coat that is usually worn open. It can be sleeveless or have sleeves that extend to wrist.

GIRDLE: A fabric belt. A long scarf can be used for this accessory. It should be approximately 3 - 4 inches wide with the ends crossed in back, pinned and tucked in the sides.

OVERDRAPE: A piece of fabric that has large and full folds. A simple procedure for the drape is to place the end of the fabric at right shoulder. Pin underneath piece to tunic at left shoulder, drape fabric around back, side and stomach, bringing fabric over left shoulder with end hanging down back at ankle length. The second piece needs to be pinned also.

Set: The set has no specific requirements.

Props: Four chairs at CS. Mending for each woman *(It can either be on the chairs or in baskets by the chairs.)*

(AT RISE: LIGHTS up on CS where TABITHA, BERNICE and ANA are sitting, mending garments and laughing. ABIGAIL is standing.)

ABIGAIL: *(Nervously looking around at EVERYONE)* Does anyone need anything? More date cakes? Water?

TABITHA: *(Speaks with insistence)* Please, Abigail, sit down. *(Patting the empty chair next to HER)* After the large midday meal you served us, you think we can be hungry already?

ABIGAIL: Well, *(Sighing as SHE sits down)* all right, but if you need anything...*(SHE picks up her mending.)*

TABITHA: *(Laughing as SHE turns to ANA)* Now, Ana, you won't find it hard to believe that after Jesus healed her, Abigail got up and served a meal to everyone in the house!

ANA: *(Looking at ABIGAIL)* Jesus healed you?

ABIGAIL: Yes. *(Matter-of-factly)* He's healed all of us.

ANA: From the same malady?

ABIGAIL: *(Laughing)* Oh, no! Forgive me, my dear. I forgot that you've just arrived here and don't know the history that runs between us. Would you like to hear our stories?

ANA: *(Nodding HER head yes)* Yes, I would.

ABIGAIL: *(Threading HER needle)* As you know, I live with my daughter and her husband, Peter. One Friday morning as we were preparing for the Sabbath dinner, I began feeling sick. I tried to ignore it because I was looking forward to spending the evening with Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Jesus. I didn't want anything to spoil it. By the middle of the morning, though, I was so ill I had to go lie down. Within a short time the fever of malaria had taken over my body leaving me unable to get out of bed. *(ANA gasps, placing her hand over her mouth.)* When Jesus arrived at our home that afternoon, my friends and family told Him I was sick. Walking over to my bedside, He leaned down and gently touched my hand. Instantly, the fever was gone and I was completely healed. *(Looking at TABITHA)*

ABIGAIL: (*Continued.)* As Tabitha has already told you, I got up and began preparing and serving the Sabbath meal. I was grateful not only to the One who had healed me, but to the ones who had besought Him on my behalf. Now, Tabitha, tell Ana about your healing.

TABITHA: *(Setting down HER mending)* For 18 years I was referred to as "the bent over woman" because I was almost completely bent in half with a crippled back. I couldn't walk without pain, and it was nearly impossible for me to look up.

ANA: Did you have any friends or family to help you?

TABITHA: No, I was alone. But I tried to fill that loneliness by keeping faith in God. So, every Sabbath I went to the synagogue to be taught and have my soul refreshed. On this particular Sabbath, I had heard that Jesus would be teaching. Though I knew He had performed miracles, I was not seeking one. I had learned to live with my pain. Expecting nothing from Him, you can imagine my surprise when, as I slowly shuffled in, I heard His voice gently saying, "Woman, you who are bent over, come near to me."

ABIGAIL: *(Smiling)* He always knows what we have need of before we ask.

TABITHA: *(Nodding HER head in agreement)* When I got down in front to meet Him, He said, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." Then He laid His hands on me, and at once I stood up straight! Oh, praise be to God! *(Reaching over and grabbing ABIGAIL'S hand and raising the other in praise)* He had fulfilled the promise of Psalms 146:8 "The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down." I didn't care who was watching, or what they thought, I began giving thanks to the Almighty God for His healing power.

ANA: And you, Bernice, you too were healed?

BERNICE: Yes. After twelve years of hemorrhaging, I was nothing but bones, weak from the constant loss of blood, pale as a ghost, and penniless from spending everything I had on doctors.

BERNICE: (*Continued.)* The only thing left for me to do was prepare for death. Sadly, I knew I would die as I had lived — alone.

ANA: Why?

BERNICE: Because according to the law, I was considered unclean and forced to live a life set apart from everyone. My only hope was Jesus. I'd heard about Him, and believed that if I could get close enough to even touch a piece of His tunic, I'd be healed. One day, I got news that He was in Capernaum. With little strength left, I walked the few short miles into the city. Once there, it was not hard to find Him. The streets were crowded with people begging Jesus to heal them. As I pressed in through the crowd, I didn't beg or cry out, but stretched out my arm as far as I could. And as Jesus passed by, my hand caught the hem of His outer garment. At that moment, I felt strength return to my body, and I knew I had been healed! Then He stopped and turned around, almost looking directly at me. "Who touched me?" He asked. I was frightened of what He might say to me, but at the same time it was all I could do to hold in the excitement of my healing. *(Setting down HER mending and standing up)* Trembling, I approached Him. *(SHE takes a few steps and looks up, as if speaking to JESUS.)* "Master, I touched you." *(Looking around at the women)* After telling Him of my years of suffering, He said to me, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction."

(EVERYONE joins in praise, except ANA, who begins crying.)

BERNICE: *(Crossing over to ANA and putting HER arm around her)* Ana, what's wrong? Are you not feeling well?

ANA: *(Wiping HER tears with her cloth)* If only Jesus would touch me, like He touched each one of you.

TABITHA: What do you mean, child?

End of Freeview

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