

## Forbidden Faith

By Amelia Garcia

The translator and editor of the Spanish version of this newsletter shares about her childhood in Cuba and how she managed to find God.

*Hello, my name is Amelia Rosa Garcia Tallet. I have been translating and editing the Women of Grace USA newsletter for Spanish-speaking women since last year. Our executive director asked me to meet with you through an autobiography. The truth is, this is a difficult task. Let's see how it comes out.*



*I was born in Santiago de Cuba, in the eastern part of Cuba, in a humble home made up of eight children. Two were girls and the rest were boys. I was the third in the family. My father was a simple railway worker from a very poor family, and my mother, raised in a wealthier family, was first a housewife. Eighteen years after their marriage she went to work in a textile factory.*

*She was a wonderful woman, dedicated body and soul to her children. She never complained, despite the fact that her life was very hard: on the one hand, poverty; on the other, my father was given to drinking. On top of that, they lost the eldest son and another was schizophrenic. All of that made my mother suffer a lot. Even so, she always had an incredible smile and an inner peace. I always had a very close relationship with her and she dedicated a lot of time and care to me, even though she had eight children to care for. She was the one who taught me to read, write, add and subtract.*

*My father identified himself as an atheist while my mother defined herself as Catholic. From what I could observe as I grew up, she believed in God and His Son Jesus and spoke to us a lot about them, teaching us that we should respect and love them. She prayed, although she rarely went to a church. However, she taught us to love, respect, and pray to God as much as she knew about Him, and that was all I learned about our Lord in my childhood. I knew that the Bible existed, and I loved some of the stories, but I never paid a lot of attention to it because I hardly understood what I was reading. What my mother did best was to plant solid moral rules that shaped my character and my behavior.*

*In Cuba at that time, it we were not permitted to show any type of religious involvement. Religion was banned and persecuted. Public education, which was the only one in existence, was totally atheist. Nobody dared to talk about religion or admit to believing in God, as that marked you for life to the point of becoming a social outcast and the target of all political*

associations, some of which you were required to belong. That environment led most of the young people to grow up away from the influence of any church.

I met my husband and the father of our only son in high school. As he attended the Catholic church I began to accompany him, although I did not understand the Catholic rites and was in total disagreement with his criteria about confession and other issues. Even so, I preferred to go there, because it was the way to approach God. I realized that something attracted me to Him. There I learned more about Him, although the figure of Jesus was still unknown to me. I could not understand or accept that my loving and protective God had given His Son to die such a terrible death for "some Hebrews" who gave him up and despised him. Despite my doubts, I allowed my son to go to the Catholic church, where he achieved better religious instruction than me. However, disagreements and different points of view, as well as doubts that nobody clarified, caused him to leave the church as he became an adult.

I have loved reading since I was very little. I devoured books like a little moth! I also loved writing poems and other fantasies that came to mind. But at the same time I was caught by the world of sciences and that's how I ended up graduating first with a degree in Chemistry and then a Master's in Chemical Sciences.

I worked twelve years as a professor and researcher at the same university where I graduated. In my profession I was always writing reports and various scientific articles. In addition, I had to correct reports and grade assignments of the students who participated in research with me. That extended to editing the theses of doctors, dentists, architects and engineers who were looking for me to help them improve their writing. That was my first step in shaping my publication skills.

Then my family and I moved to the Dominican Republic. I worked as a chemistry professor and as a laboratory manager in a university there. Then the Mc Graw-Hill Publishing House hired me to write the Chemistry books for pre-university teaching. Later I was hired to write laboratory manuals for the teaching of chemistry and science. Eventually I was hired by the Spanish publisher SM as a writer and editor of science books, where I wrote and edited several books of natural science.

At this time in my life, I had achieved everything I had fought for: a family I was proud of, a prestigious job with a good salary, house, and cars, all that I had wanted to help me escape poverty. But why did I feel unsatisfied and empty about each achievement? And where was God in my life during that time? I always recognized God as the main protagonist of all my professional successes and thanked him very much. But perhaps I also scored some additional personal points for those achievements, and God noticed that. Maybe He did not see much

humility in me but a lot of pride. I only had time to work at that time: no church, no prayers. Only work.

Then my son moved to the United States. We followed him without thinking twice. It did not make sense to us to stay there alone. So we came after the American Dream, leaving everything we were and had. I will not go into all the failures and bad times we have experienced here, humiliated and minimized to zero, despite a lifetime of experiences and knowledge. I have asked God many times why he let me come here when we had our life made in the DR. But I had to wait a few years for answers.

Then Jesus came to my life to rescue me. It has been a long transformation process that has not ended yet. But I understand now that if I had continued to live in the DR, I might never have achieved this personal relationship with God, and I would have missed the best thing that has happened in my life! For this to happen, however, it was necessary for me to be more humble, without self-sufficiency, and to be broken, because that is how many times He makes us seek Him. This is what the Bible tells us:

Psalms 34:18: "The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the downcast in spirit."

Isaiah 66: 2 "But to him I will look: to him who is humble and contrite in spirit, and who trembles at my word."

Having a broken heart means being humble, contrite, meek and repenting; that is, to be receptive to the will of God. This I am learning here in this country. I do not recognize myself sometimes, as it has changed my way of thinking, my interests and the perspective I have on life. Now I look at past achievements with a different view and they do not seem so important to me. I have learned to be content with what God puts in my life every day, and I am not worried about the future anymore.

I have to say that right now I am as poor as when I was a little girl, but I have confidence in God's provision and know that if I really have faith in him, he does not abandon me. Many times there is no money to cover the basic needs, but I do not torment myself, because in the end, God resolves it in some form, be it an additional bonus that my husband receives, someone who needs tutoring, or my son who takes care of some payment without telling us, but everything is solved. And again the Bible comes to my aid in 2 Corinthians 9: 8-9:

"And God is able to make all grace abound to you; so that, having always in all things all that suffices, you abound for every good work: As it is written, He has poured out, he has given to the poor; His justice remains forever."

And another thing: that emptiness in my soul, which was not filled by the achievements of the world, was finally filled. I have peace despite all the adverse circumstances. That is another gift from the hand of God. I pray every day so that God in his immense kindness will also rescue my son, my daughter-in-law and my granddaughter, who are other gifts from God. I am confident that He listens to me and in His time will do so, according to His will. I hope so for all my loved ones, I ask Him to use me to bring them the light of His truth.

Now my heart burns to work for Him, so I asked myself many times what my contribution could be to God's work. I started working in the children's ministry of my church, and tried other ways to help there, but my physical disabilities interfered with such activities. Then one night God gave me the idea of offering my skills as editor to Women of Grace USA. I spoke to the executive director and here we are collaborating with them, always willing to help in everything God wants me to do.