

Because She Was Called  
From Broken to Bold Book Two

A Novel of the Early Church

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## Prologue

Joanna and her and her husband, Chuza, were assisting foreigners at the open-air courtyard of Mary and Marcus. Joanna smiled when she saw her husband, chief of staff for the tetrarch Herod Antipas, on his knees to wash the feet of a poor widow. It was here at Mary's upper room that Jesus had shared his last supper, washed Joanna's feet, and called her to sow seeds for a harvest of spiritual children of all tribes. Joanna knelt beside Chuza and bandaged the scrapes on the widow's child. She recalled how Chuza had knelt before Jesus and begged him to heal their son, Adnan. After that, Joanna became a disciple and patron.

Joanna gave the widow and child fresh figs as they went their way. Chuza went to bring over another bucket of clean water. She loved working with him, telling their eyewitness accounts of Jesus's healing miracles and showing Jesus's love. She turned to tearing strips of cloth into bandages. Border disputes were bringing more foreign widows and their children to Jerusalem.

Chuza had encouraged Joanna to learn all she could from Jesus and share it. He had persuaded Joanna to sow the seeds of God's word with others. Chuza's acceptance freed her from the prison of hiding her mixed heritage—her Jewish mother and Greek father. Jesus showed her that what she had always hidden was what authorized her to speak about how Jesus loved all people.

Joanna looked up and saw Chuza talking to John Mark, Mary's eighteen-year-old son, who was a good runner and often brought reports of the Perea border conflicts. At first, Herod Antipas had been eager to hear her reports about Jesus. Later, he became jealous that Jesus had so many devoted followers, and angry that he did not come to the tetrarch and show him a miracle. He had asked Chuza to stop speaking about Jesus and to silence Joanna. In the end, Antipas supported the Jewish legalists when they accused Jesus of blasphemy.

Then Jesus rose. Everything changed. The risen Jesus called Joanna and others to make disciples, baptize and teach women and men. They could not be silent. Joanna was with over a hundred men and women at the spring Shavuot Festival when the Holy Spirit filled them and gifted them with different languages. Jewish pilgrims from Syro-Phoenicia, Pontus, Asia Minor, and as far away as Alexandria and Rome had heard Peter announce that Jesus was the deliverer, the Christ. Many had returned to their homes and founded gatherings of The Way of Jesus.

After Joanna and Chuza received the Holy Spirit, they moved from Galilee to Jerusalem. Two close friends, Susannah, and Marie of Magdala, had also relocated to the holy city. Like

Joanna, these noblewomen were healed by Jesus, became his disciples and patrons, and now served The Way.

Joanna thought about how Jesus modelled serving others as she greeted another widow with children, washed their wounds, and started combing the little girl's hair.

In Jerusalem, the assembly of The Way flourished. They greeted one another with a holy kiss of friendship and love. The men and women regularly gathered and prayed, usually at the home of Mary and Marcus, wealthy Pharisees in the upper city. The women and men taught one another and enjoyed fellowship and singing. They shared bread and wine to remember Jesus. They imitated Jesus by washing one another's feet. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they spoke God's word boldly, and more joined their gathering every day.

New believers sold their property and possessions and presented the proceeds to the chief apostles. No one among them was needy since the apostles managed the common pool and distributed it as each believer had need. Wealthy members of The Way made sacrifices, living on less to help those in need. The congregation anticipated that Jesus would return very soon.

Joanna and Chuza moved into her grandfather's mansion, the home where Joanna had lived as a youth. Joanna felt fulfilled when she and Chuza, side by side, boldly shared how Jesus gave believers a spring of water that welled up into eternal life. They taught all that Jesus had commanded, and God confirmed their words by enabling them to perform signs and heal the sick.

Chuza continued to work in his highly-visible role for the ruler of Galilee and Perea, speaking about his faith even as Antipas continued to support those who opposed The Way. When the tetrarch's half-brother passed away, Antipas assumed governance and moved settlers into Philip the tetrarch's territories. Chuza opposed the tetrarch, recommending that he wait until Emperor Tiberius appointed the ruler for Philip's territories. But Antipas moved ahead, and now Chuza was faced with addressing attacks on the Galilean border with Philip's land and the Perea border with his own homeland, Nabatea.

Chuza returned with more water and told Joanna that John Mark had reported a shortage of grain at the square. Joanna's heart warmed when she thought of the square. Together with Susannah and Marie she had pooled funds to buy a square of land near the Sheep Gate. Most residents avoided the area around this temple gate. It was smelly and dirty from shepherds bringing sheep to be sacrificed. The area was inhabited by poor labourers or those unable to labour. The women used this square to provide the Greek newcomers with food or assistance.

Chuza loaded grain bags into a wheelbarrow. They had just enough time to make the delivery before meeting Adnan after his Hebrew studies.

Some of the apostles had thought the women's funds should have been donated to the pool the chief apostles controlled. Joanna pointed out that as Jesus's patrons, the women had contributed to fill the needs they noticed, and they had acted in the same way as patrons of the congregation. Thomas explained that the women should have told the apostles about the need, and the apostles would decide which need was the greatest for the funds available. Joanna described the great need of the foreign widows and orphans. Jude Thaddaeus and James the Less, who often helped at the square, verified the need of the hungry widows. Simon the Zealot said Jews did not have to help foreigners; Greeks should go home. Matthew said that the women's money should be spent on the teaching ministry. Andrew and Peter admitted they had not noticed the problem. John argued that feeding the hungry was a way to show Jesus's love. In the end, James decreed that the ministry at the square would help the reputation of The Way with the religious authorities.

As Joanna walked beside Chuza, she dreamed of working with him for many years to come, reaching women and men with the news that God accepts all ethnicities. There was a bounce in her step as she thought about seeing Susannah, who was serving at the square. Joanna had first met the other noblewoman years before, when she bought new custom-made clothing from her in Galilee. Susannah had built a profitable business, importing flax grown in Palestine and weaving it into creations that Antipas's courtiers demanded. These days, Susannah was either working on her clothing business or serving the widows and orphans.

## Chapter 1

“There is no more food.” Susannah avoided eye contact as she announced the news to the desperate crowd of widows and poorly-dressed children. She shook her head. She had been a wealthy and influential patron of Jesus. But now—she had no money and could not feed these poor foreigners.

The risen Jesus called Susannah to speak so that many would understand God’s messages, but lately she questioned if she was doing as she was called. She had thought she could show God’s love to these widows and had put all her savings towards buying this square near the Sheep Gate. Some of the congregation had helped set up tables in the square, and widows and children crowded forward to receive food.

“You missed us yesterday also!” The woman shouted in Greek, the language in common between Jews, Hellenists, and foreigners. Greece had conquered Israel before Rome, and most Jews hated their former enemies. Hebraic pilgrims were in Jerusalem for the Sukkot harvest festival, but they did not bring food for the Greeks. The Jewish visitors gave their thank offerings to the temple.

“And we got none of the figs or dates,” said a young woman, holding a baby in a Greek-style shawl tied at her waist.

“We didn’t even get bread!” said the older Greek woman.

“I apologize. We’ll be sure to serve you tomorrow if you come a bit earlier.” Susannah flushed, her face growing as red as her hair. She still earned good revenues from her sewing business, but the guardianship rules required that she send a part of it to her brother, Noah. She also contributed to the pool managed by the chief apostles. The apostles were not concerned that she barely had time to speak about God’s messages. It seemed The Way only wanted her to donate funds and serve food.

“No,” said another. “I came with Desdemona early this morning, and the Hebrew women who came after us went in front of us. They said the bread must go to the children of Israel first.”

Susannah’s green eyes blinked in shock. She was with Jesus in Syro-Phoenicia when he said he wanted to feed the children of Israel first, but she didn’t think Jesus was talking about actual bread. And he never let people go home hungry.

“It takes time to teach all that Jesus explained to us.” Susannah stood straighter and spoke confidently. The risen Jesus had called her to speak and interpret, even if the apostles did

not seem to believe it. She could speak while she served. “Jesus offered himself as the bread of life first for the Jews, then the Gentiles. God is equipping Israel to bless all nations.”

During her three years as a student and patron, Jesus had trained her and her friends well. Joanna balanced her time between volunteering and taking care of her son. Marie was usually at the temple courts, planting seeds of faith as Jesus had commanded.

“Our children need food!”

“We are doing our best.” Men often said that God only blessed women who gave birth to sons, but these mothers did not seem blessed. Then Susannah remembered that Jesus said God blesses a woman for hearing God’s word and following it. Feeding these fatherless immigrants was putting into practice what Jesus taught. Susannah knew she was called to explain God’s word so many would understand it; she did not know whether she was called to marry or give birth to sons.

“The Hebrew widows would not let us come into the square. They waved us aside and said eating with us would make them unclean! They told us to wait until they were finished and satisfied,” said Desdemona.

Susannah panicked. Keeping separate while eating was a key teaching of the Jewish legalists. They could shut down the ministry in the square if The Way disobeyed the religious policies. Susannah and the other Jewish servers ate, drank, and laughed with each other. They did not eat with Gentiles. “I’m sure they are just trying to obey the teachers of the law.”

“But by then, the food was gone!” said Anna.

“I didn’t know the others delayed you or went in front of you.” Susannah blushed as she looked behind her at the tables with dirty plates of scrap food. They served people whether or not they joined the congregation of The Way, and meeting their needs was becoming a strain. She had been run off her feet with cooking the fish and rice and serving the women and children at the tables. She hadn’t noticed it was Greek faces always waiting in the crowd outside.

“Our husbands fought alongside theirs in battle,” said the Greek widow.

“I’m sorry for your loss.” Susannah lowered her eyes again. Many who had poured into the city were homeless because of the armed border conflicts. After Herod Antipas moved settlers into Philip the tetrarch’s land, Philip’s men had used guerrilla tactics against the settlers. Men impoverished by taxes lost their property and hired themselves out as soldiers. Rome did not authorize Antipas to have an army, so he poorly equipped the men

to defend the border. Each day, more wives became widows, and more children became orphans.

“You’re making it worse! You’re making promises you don’t keep.”

“This is temporary. Jesus warned us of famine, of wars and rumors of wars, of nations rising against nation,” said Susannah. “These are the birth pains of God’s new realm. Jesus will return as fast as lightning flashes from east to west.”

“You’re as heartless as the legalists. You say love sets apart followers of Jesus, but you don’t show love. Religion is useless,” said Anna.

They pressed forward. Susannah felt they might crush or trample her. She reached back towards a table, stumbled, and fell backwards.

She landed against a warm, firm body. Lifting her head, she looked into Philip’s deep-brown eyes. He tucked a loose strand of her auburn hair back into her headscarf. She often worked with Philip to plan menus, buy supplies, and distribute food. It was the bright spot in the task of serving the widows. She relaxed against his tall, muscular form.

“Whoa, there. It’s going to be okay.” Philip smiled as he steadied her. Philip’s name meant ‘lover of horses’ and he bought and sold horses for a living. He said firmly to the crowd, “Is this the example you want to set for your children? Settle down.”

Susannah straightened her skirt and stood up. “I am sorry we overlooked you in the food distribution. We didn’t know Hebrew women took your place and went in first.”

“Anna and Desdemona, you can count on us serving you tomorrow.” Philip had an uncanny ability to remember names. Being one of seventy-two apostles sent out by Jesus gave Philip experience speaking with calm confidence. He was a natural talker and had a knack for connecting with people.

The widows still grumbled but they eased away. They looked reassured that they had been heard. “Thank you for telling us about this issue,” said Susannah.

“You have my word we will bring it forward to the chief apostles immediately,” said Philip.

“What can the apostles do?” Susannah wrung her hands and spoke quietly to Philip. “What can anyone do? The Hebraic Jews won’t eat with the Greeks. And they won’t take second place in their own city. They didn’t want foreigners to move here. The apostles cannot change that.”

“God’s wisdom will guide us. Meanwhile, let’s clean up this mess.” Philip always had a story to take her mind off her worries. As he lifted heavy trays of dirty dishes, he told about how

his muscles burned as he pulled on the ropes while taming a spirited and powerful stallion. She teased him for showing off his strength. Philip switched to a soft tone, saying he didn't overpower the horses by muscle but by whispering in their ears and giving them treats of fruit. He said when we are strong-willed, God will whisper to us and guide us if we listen.

Susannah's hand brushed Philip's as she wiped a table, and she started, blinking up at him. He teased her about being as skittish as an untrained horse and told her she had nothing to fear. She poked fun at him treating her the way he treated his beloved brown-haired Arabian. He countered that she had better watch out, or he might whisper in her ear.

She wanted to trust in God's wisdom. But she also wanted her concerns taken seriously. There was good reason to be uneasy. *What could the apostles do?*

## Chapter 2

"Great work, Adnan!" Joanna complimented her eleven-year-old for the way he copied letters in a beautiful script. He was benefitting from studying with the best Jewish rabbis in Jerusalem. "We'll show your father as soon as he gets home!"

Joanna stood and stretched, enjoying the freedom and protection of living in her grandfather's palatial home in the upper city. He was like a father to her and had always cherished her. She had been upset when she learned he had ostracized her father for being Greek, but she was grateful she was now in touch with Zander. Like other teachers of the law, Theophilus condemned The Way. Joanna told him that Jesus healed her and Adnan, but he denied it. They had agreed to disagree, and Joanna continued to speak freely about all she had seen and heard, boldly telling everyone that Jesus was the Messiah.

When Chuza was in Jerusalem, Joanna and he went out on the streets as a team, sharing their story about how Jesus healed her and their son. Chuza had pleaded with Jesus when their son was gravely ill, and Joanna herself was quarantined with skin lesions. Adnan and Joanna survived. When she prayed about the infertility left by the illness, God turned it into good, calling her and Chuza to bear spiritual children. Chuza had been the first to encourage her to share Jesus's teachings. He had arranged for her to meet with Manaen and his wife, Nadira, when they wanted advice. He had passed her stories of Jesus to the tetrarch. He had accepted her after she revealed her bi-racial heritage, and he shared her passion for preaching that God sought to embrace all people.

The door opened, and she ran to greet Chuza with a kiss and a squeeze. He was returning after being away for several days near the border disputes in Perea. Adnan ran to his father



also, and Chuza held them both in his arms. Joanna went to prepare a snack while Adnan showed him his careful script.

“It’s beautiful, son. You’re going to make a wonderful scribe someday.”

“Will you play with me now? I’ll get my horse and soldier collection!”

“Not tonight, son, but we can set up the game tomorrow.”

Joanna returned with some nuts and dates and a basin of water. She asked Adnan to get ready for bed.

Chuza grunted as he sat on the Roman couch and untied his sandals. As Joanna wiped Chuza’s worn feet, he said, “It is getting worse. We thought it would be a mere matter of marching. Antipas was sure that God wanted him to rule Philip the tetrarch’s lands when Philip died.”

“Susannah tells me there are more widows each day. The city is getting overrun with newcomers.”

“Antipas thought he had the right to take over Philip’s territory. He says his father made last minute changes to his will because of a mental illness, and Caesar Augustus should have honoured Herod the Great’s earlier will, which gave Antipas all of his father’s territory.”

“I’ve heard his old complaint. He wants to be called a king. Being the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea is not enough for him.” Joanna dried Chuza’s feet and dumped the basin of dirty water.

“It’s understandable! His father had promised it! Then his brother, Archelaus, received all of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea! Even his aunt, Salome, governed Jamnia, Ashdod, and Phasaelis. These territories are now provinces of Rome. The land of his half-brother, Philip, is Antipas’s last chance to receive a larger piece of his father’s legacy.”

“But Philip has scarcely been buried! Why didn’t he wait? Why did he act without the emperor’s approval?”

“It’s a good thing you’re not speaking to Antipas. He raged against me when I suggested waiting. He didn’t want to lose out again. He wants to rule the territory his father ruled,” said Chuza.

“He has been a capable tetrarch of Galilee and Perea for over thirty years. Maybe the emperor will name him to rule over Philip’s territory.”

“But he wouldn’t wait. And like I said, he thought there would be no resistance to him moving settlers into Philip’s territory. He said his governance kept the peace on behalf of Rome.”

“Was there any sign of resistance?”

“I warned him about small bands of Jewish fugitives hiding in the hills, but they were disorganized and unarmed. We were shocked when Antipas’s settlers faced attacks.”

“But the widows! Why have there been so many deaths?”

“The renegades formed an alliance with Nabatea, got weapons, and attacked us. We weren’t prepared for a rebellion. Now he blames me for treacherous advice!”

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