



The Key

*U*nder crystalline blue skies, my wife, Gail, and I basked in the tranquility of St. John, US Virgin Islands. The warm, azure waters washed our feet as we waded through the gentle waves. The unhurried pace and friendly banter with the locals were a welcomed respite from our hectic Californian lives.

We drank in the spectacular vistas of Cruz Bay and the Caribbean from the veranda of our rented condo perched atop a steep hill. The balmy onshore breeze and melodic cadence of steel drums wafted in, making our stress float away. What a relaxing spot! Everything was perfect until . . .

One evening, we strolled down to the swimming pool, the perfect vantage point to view the glistening harbor lights on one side and the shimmering moonlit sea on the other. Periodic boat horns droned in the distance. After we sauntered back to our unit, I fished through my belt pouch and pockets for the key, but I couldn't find it. All week I had used extreme caution putting the key back into my pouch. I peered through the kitchen window and saw the key sitting on the counter. "OH, NO! There's no night manager. How will we get in?"

"Something always happens on our vacations. I usually ask for a second key," Gail chided herself.

After collecting my thoughts, I grabbed a condo brochure from the display case outside the dark office. The manager's phone number was on it.

We drove down the steep road in our rental Jeep and pulled into a hotel. I called the manager and left a message telling her we were locked out and to call the hotel lobby.

I found her home address in the telephone book. While Gail waited in the lobby, I drove off to find the manager's house. The streets meandered in endless confusion. The same names seemed to identify different streets. On top of that, house numbers were either missing or hidden behind the tropical foliage. I asked several people for directions, but they were tourists. After an hour, I gave up and drove back to the hotel.

Gail prayed in the hotel lobby. "Jesus, please help us with this problem!" After praying she urged me to call the manager again. When I called, the answering machine beeped. Her eyes sank to the floor. "We can stay in the hotel tonight, but it's \$175 on top of what we already paid."

"Maybe the manager shut off her phone for the evening. We can sleep in the Jeep. The seats fold down."

She scowled. "But I'm wearing my contact lenses, and I can't sleep with them."

I thumbed through the Yellow Pages to search for a locksmith. "This island doesn't have a locksmith? The only ones listed are clear across the sea channel in St. Thomas."

"You've got to be kidding." Gail prayed again and rebounded. "Nothing is too difficult for the Lord. Perhaps the manager is back at the condo. Why don't you drive over there while I wait by the phone?"

When I arrived at the condo complex, the parking lot was empty. *No sign of the manager here.* I was about to drive back to the hotel when something compelled me to get out of the Jeep and walk over to our condo. A woman in the adjacent unit

was preparing dinner. I knocked on the door and her husband answered.

“I’m locked out,” I said. “I called the office but kept getting the answering machine. Do you know how to contact the manager?”

“I don’t know,” he replied. “Let’s see if my key will work. I don’t think it will, but what the heck.”

Is he kidding?

We strode down to my unit. He slid his key into the door lock and turned the knob. The door whooshed open. I stared bug-eyed with my mouth wide open. *Whoa! How can that be?* I exuberantly thanked the man and drove back to the hotel to pick up Gail.

“What?” she shrieked and burst into laughter. “I can’t believe it. Thank You Jesus!”

After returning to the condo, I left another message for the manager, letting her know we got in.

“I wonder if any key would open any unit,” Gail said. Just to test this possibility, we descended the stairs to try our key on an unoccupied unit. The key slid into the door lock, but it wouldn’t turn. “Hmm—maybe we share a common key only with our neighbor?”

The following morning, the manager and the housekeeper scurried over. “How did you get in?” the manager asked.

After we explained everything, the housekeeper covered her mouth with her hand. “Ohh! I misplaced a master key.”

Out of the ten condo units, the people in the unit adjacent to us just so happened to be in that night and just so happened to have that improbable key.

Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble; He delivered them out of their distresses. (Psalm 107:6)