Susan was a teacher at one of the larger high schools in her city. Her husband was a government official who did a lot of travelling, and they had been married for 3 years. They were both healthy and hoped to have a child soon.

 One day, Susan felt like she was getting a sore throat, so she gargled with some mouth wash for a few days, but the feeling of soreness in her throat didn’t go away. She began to realize that what she was feeling wasn’t in her throat, but towards the back of the roof of her mouth. And when she looked in a mirror, she could see a large, red sore there.

 There was a nurse at the school, and one afternoon after classes Susan asked if the nurse could take a look at her mouth.

 “I’ve had this very raw place on the roof of my mouth for about a week now, and it doesn’t seem to be getting better,” Susan told the nurse.

 The nurse used a flashlight and noticed a large, red, slightly raised patch on the right side of the roof of Susan’s mouth. It hurt just a little when she touched it with a cotton-tip.

 “Susan, this looks like some type of injury, maybe with something hot. That’s the most common cause for a sore place in the mouth. Do you drink hot tea or coffee? Do you remember eating or drinking something hot last week that might have done this?”

 Susan said she does drink hot tea but doesn’t remember burning her mouth. But since she does drink and eat hot things, what the nurse said made sense to her.

 “Rinse your mouth out a few times a day with some warm salt water, you can mix it yourself at home,” the nurse told Susan. She wanted to see Susan again in a week if the red spot didn’t go away.

 Susan noticed that the nurse had a Bible on her desk, and she asked the nurse if it was a religious book, like the Koran.

 “Well, the Bible is different than other religious books, because it’s the only book that talks about God’s plan to offer hope, friendship, forgiveness, and life after death to all human beings,” the nurse said. “It’s the only book that explains how this is all possible by believing in God’s Son, Jesus Christ.”

 “I’ve heard about Jesus,” Susan replied. “I know I have my faults, but I try to be a good person, a good wife to my husband, a good teacher. I guess I’ve never been very religious.”

 The nurse smiled and said, “Susan, God does not save religious people, he saves people who realize they can’t save themselves.”

 She briefly told Susan the story of God’s creation of the earth, and how the first man, Adam, disobeyed God and brought sin into the world. God had told Adam he would die if he disobeyed, but God loved Adam so much that he allowed him to live, along with the rest of mankind, even though all humans were weak like Adam and would sin.

 “So why are we still here, if we’re sinful,” Susan asked.

 The nurse showed Susan the verse in the Bible, John 3:16. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

 “That verse means that God’s Son, Jesus Christ, died in our place,” the nurse explained. “God made the supreme sacrifice by allowing evil men to kill Jesus two thousand years ago. And then God raised Jesus from the dead. So if you believe in Jesus, all your sins will be taken away because of His death. And you will be raised from the dead some day, just as Jesus was.”

 This seemed almost too good for Susan to believe, but it did sound wonderful to her and she thought about it for the next several days.

 A week later, she went back to the nurse, because the sore in her mouth was still there, and she was starting to worry about it.

 “Susan, I think it would be best if you went to see a dentist because I’m not sure why this place in your mouth won’t get better,” the nurse said. “It’s apparently not an injury like I thought, otherwise it would have gone away by now.”

 Before Susan left, the nurse said, “Oh, have you had a chance to think about what we talked about, about Jesus? If you want to know more, you can come to our group meeting tomorrow night, it’s at my apartment.”

 Susan said she would be there, but for now she wanted to know what was wrong in her mouth. After school, she went to the dental clinic nearby and was able to see a dentist that day. He asked Susan if she had any health problems or took and medications, if she smoked, and how long the sore place had been in her mouth.

 After examining her, he told Susan that he agreed with the nurse that the red spot was probably not an injury from something hot, because it had been there for so long and wasn’t getting better.

 He then explained that there are several other things that could cause this, including a Herpes virus. Approximately 40% of all people carry the Herpes virus, and usually does not cause any problems, but occasionally it can cause ulcers on the roof of the mouth or on the outside of the lips. Some people call these “fever blisters” or “cold sores” and they seem to come up after a lot of sun exposure, sickness, or stress.

 Another possibility would be something called an aphthous ulcer, or “Canker sore,” but these are usually smaller and occur on the inside of the lip, cheek or on the tongue. They usually last only a week and can be caused by eating spicy foods, or from some type of irritation in the mouth.

 He told her other common mouth sores can be caused by “thrush,” which is a common fungus known as candidiasis, but these are usually white patches. The thrush can also cause long-term cracks at the corners of the mouth, but Susan said she has never had anything like that.

 At this point, the doctor said, “Susan, there are a few other possibilities that are more serious than what I have just told you, and we have to discuss them.”

 He said there was a slight chance the sore place was some type of growth, either non-cancerous or possible cancer. Since she didn’t smoke or chew tobacco or betel nut, was only 28, and there was no history of cancer in her family, he said she was at low risk for oral cancer, “but we still need to be sure, since if it is oral cancer, it can be very dangerous.”

 He referred her to an oral pathology clinic at the nearby University, and they made her an appointment for the next week.

 Since her husband was out of town, she decided to go to the Christian meeting the next night that the school nurse had invited her to.

 At the meeting, Susan felt very comfortable because all the people there were very accepting and supportive of her, and they seemed to genuinely care for each other. One of the Christians led a prayer thanking God for all his blessings, for His love and for their salvation in Jesus Christ.

 Then several of the members told stories, or “testimonies,” about how God was working in their lives that week.

 They read some passages from the Bible, including:

 “For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”

(Ephesians 2:8).

 Susan learned that Christ is the head of the Christian church, which is known as the “Body of Christ.”

 “And He is the Head of the Body, the church.” (Colossians 1:18).

 She also learned that Christ will some day return to earth, to gather all His Church together.

 “When Christ Who is our life shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory.”

(Colossians 3:4).

 One member of the group explained all these scriptures, telling the group, “We are God’s heavenly people; our citizenship is in Heaven, and we are looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” (Titus 2:13).

 Another member explained to Susan that when a person accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, he or she receives the Holy Spirit, which is the same Spirit that is in Christ.

 At this point, Susan felt an overwhelming sense that this was where she belonged. She began to think about what the doctor had said about her possibly having mouth cancer. She tried to hold back the tears as she spoke up and told the group how afraid she was.

 They all gathered around her, some put their hands on her shoulders, and they prayed that the Lord would give her peace, comfort and healing. They also prayed that the doctors would be able to help her and that she would feel the presence of Christ during this trial.

 The next week, Susan went to the oral pathologist. The red sore in her mouth was still there.

 “Susan, I need to ask you some personal questions,” the pathologist said. “There are some sexually transmitted diseases that can cause a sore like this in your mouth.”

 The doctor was quiet for a moment, he wanted to give Susan a chance to respond.

 “I’m married and I have only one sexual partner,” she said. “This has been for at least five years.”

 “How about your husband,” the doctor asked, “is there a chance he has other sexual partners?”
 This really took Susan by surprise. She had never considered that her husband might be having sex with other women. She had heard some of the other men were doing this, but she had always thought her husband was being faithful when he travelled out of town.

 The pathologist took a sample (biopsy) of the red spot and also did a blood test. A few weeks later, the doctor contacted Susan and asked her to come in to his office.

 “The good news is it’s not cancer,” he said. “But unfortunately, you have a sexually transmitted disease known as Syphilis. It can be treated at this stage with a good success rate.”

 He said mouth sores were a frequent early sign of some sexually transmitted diseases, such as Syphilis. The worst case would be HIV (the AIDS virus), which can also cause multiple sores in the mouth know as Kaposi’s Sarcoma, as well as other oral conditions such as thrush, hairy tongue, aphthous ulcers, herpes, and papilloma “warts.” But in the case of HIV, the patient is usually very sick by the time the mouth sores are present. Many times, the dentist is the first health care professional who will notice these things.

 Susan eventually found out that her husband had been having sex with prostitutes on his trips. Several sexually transmitted diseases, including Syphilis, HIV and others, are spread in this way.

 Susan received treatment and she responded well to the treatment, but the damage to her marriage was much more serious. Her husband moved out and her life was suddenly turned upside down.

 She was thankful that she had started meeting with the Christian believers and looked forward to the weekly gatherings. Despite the disappointment and turmoil she was experiencing, she could feel in her heart that God was reaching out to her, and she knew the Holy Spirit was at work in her life.

 She felt that all the members of the group supported her, and some even called her during the week and visited with her. But when she was at the meetings, she couldn’t help but feel that she was unclean and unworthy of being with God’s people.

 Then one night, they read a passage of Scripture from the Gospel of Luke. Jesus was criticized for spending time with “sinners,” and he said: “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.” (Luke 5:31).

 Susan knew the Lord was speaking to her. She accepted Christ as savior that night, and from that moment on, she knew she was spiritually healthy.