THE DAILY BREAD

The Fiat of the Beloved



The Living Word

Scripture for Women

A FORMATION BOOK BY

Kendall Peterson

The Everyday Apostle

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INTRODUCTION

A Letter Addressed to You

Most Catholic women have a respectful but distant relationship with the Bible. They hear it read at Mass. They own one, perhaps a beautiful one, that sits on a shelf. They may open it occasionally, in a hard season or out of a vague sense that they should, and they usually come away feeling that it is someone else's book, ancient and difficult, a reference work for scholars and priests rather than a living word addressed to them. And so the Scripture that the Church calls the living word of God remains, for many women, closed, admired from a distance but never really received.

This book is an invitation to open it, and to discover what it actually is. For the Bible is not a dead text, not a religious reference book, not someone else's ancient story, but the living word of a God who is still speaking, addressed personally to every woman who opens it with the right disposition. It is, in a sense, a letter written to you, by a God who knows you and wants to speak with you, waiting on the shelf to be read. The aim of this book is not to add one more obligation to your life but to open a door, to help you discover that the Scripture you have kept at a respectful distance is in fact a living conversation addressed to you, and to show you how to enter it.

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword. — Hebrews 4:12

We will begin with what Scripture actually is, the inspired word of God Himself. We will see that this word is alive, living and active, not a dead text but a voice that still speaks. We will discover that God is still speaking through it, addressing you personally, and how to learn to listen. We will take up the way to read Scripture to meet God, prayerfully rather than merely informationally, through the ancient practice the Church calls Lectio Divina. We will see that the whole of Scripture points to one person, Christ, giving it its unity. We will consider how to make Scripture part of your daily life. And we will see how the word, received, begins to dwell in you and to form you from within.

CHAPTER ONE

What You Hold in Your Hands

The Word of God Himself

Before a woman can rightly receive the Bible, she must understand what it actually is, for the whole of how she approaches it depends on this, and most women have never grasped the astonishing claim the Church makes about the book on the shelf. It is not merely a collection of ancient religious writings, not merely the wisdom of inspired human beings, but the inspired word of God Himself, the very revelation of God to humanity, carrying His own voice and authority. Understanding what Scripture actually is, the word of God, is the foundation of every right approach to it.

> *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. — 2 Timothy 3:16-17*

Breathed Out by God

The Scripture's own claim about itself is startling: that it is breathed out by God, inspired by Him, so that the words on the page, though written by human authors, carry the very breath and voice of God. This does not mean the human authors were mere stenographers taking dictation, for they wrote as themselves, with their own styles, languages, and historical situations, but it means that God so worked through them that what they wrote is what He wanted written, His own word expressed through their human words. The Bible is therefore the word of God in the words of men, divinely inspired through human authorship, carrying God's own authority and truth while bearing the marks of its human writers. This is why the Church receives it not as human wisdom but as divine revelation, the self-disclosure of God, the word by which He has chosen to make Himself known. What a woman holds when she holds the Bible is not a human book about God but God's own word, breathed out by Him, and this changes everything about how she should approach it.

God Revealing Himself

Scripture is, at its heart, God revealing Himself, drawing back the veil to show a woman who He is, what He is like, how He loves, what He has done, so that the Bible is not information about a distant deity but the self-revelation of a God who wants to be known. A woman could never know God by her own searching, for He is beyond her reach, but He has chosen to reveal Himself, to make Himself known, and Scripture is the record and the vehicle of that revelation, the place where God discloses Himself to those who would know Him. In its pages God shows His character, tells the story of His dealings with humanity, reveals His love and His purposes, and finally, in Christ, shows His own face, so that Scripture is the great self-revelation of God to the woman who reads it. To open the Bible is therefore to open the place where God has chosen to reveal Himself, to receive the self-disclosure of the God a woman longs to know, and to approach it is to

approach not a book about God but God making Himself known. Scripture is God revealing Himself, the place where the God beyond a woman's reach has chosen to make Himself known, so that the Bible is not information about a distant deity but the self-revelation of a God who wants to be known, disclosing His character, His love, and finally His own face in Christ.

Why This Changes How You Read

To grasp that Scripture is the word of God transforms how a woman reads it, for one approaches the word of God Himself very differently than one approaches an ordinary book, with reverence, attention, and the expectation of meeting Him. If the Bible were merely an ancient religious text, a woman might read it as she reads any book, with detached interest or scholarly distance, taking from it what she found useful. But if it is the word of God Himself, His self-revelation, His living voice, then it must be approached differently, with reverence for what it is, with the attention due to God's own word, and above all with the expectation of meeting God in it, of hearing Him speak. This changes the posture of reading from detached study to reverent encounter, from taking information to receiving a word, from reading about God to listening for God. The woman who understands what she holds reads the Bible not as an ancient book but as the word of God, approaching it to meet Him, and this right understanding of what Scripture is opens the way to the living encounter that merely studying it never finds. Why this changes how you read is that one approaches the word of God Himself with reverence, attention, and the expectation of meeting Him, so that understanding Scripture as God's self-revelation transforms the posture of reading from detached study into reverent encounter, from reading about God into listening for His voice.

CHAPTER TWO

The Word That Is Alive

Not a Dead Text but a Living Voice

The most important thing to know about Scripture, after knowing that it is God's word, is that this word is alive, living and active, not a dead text from the past but a living voice that still speaks, still works, still accomplishes what God sends it to do. This is what the Church means in calling it the living word of God, and it is the truth that transforms the Bible from an ancient document into a present encounter. Understanding that the word is alive, living and active in the present, is what makes Scripture a living conversation rather than a dead text.

So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose. — Isaiah 55:11

Living and Active

Scripture describes itself not as a record of God's past words but as living and active, presently alive and at work, sharper than any two-edged sword, able to penetrate and judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. This means the word of God is not a dead letter from the past but a living thing in the present, carrying a power to work in the one who receives it, to penetrate the heart, to reveal, to convict, to comfort, to change. When a woman reads the Scripture, she is not merely reading about what God once said but encountering a word that is presently alive, presently active, able to work in her here and now, reaching into her heart with a living power. This is why Scripture can speak so personally and powerfully, why a verse read a hundred times can suddenly come alive and pierce the heart, for the word is living and active, not a dead text but a living voice at work. Living and active, the word of God is presently alive and at work rather than a dead letter from the past, carrying a power to penetrate and change the heart of the one who receives it, so that reading Scripture is encountering a living word at work in the present rather than merely reading about what God once said.

The Word That Does Not Return Empty

God promises that His word does not return to Him empty but accomplishes what He purposes, so that when a woman receives the Scripture, the word is actively working to accomplish God's purposes in her, not falling to the ground unfruitful but achieving what He sends it to do. The word of God is effective, carrying within it the power to accomplish what it says, so that it does not merely inform a woman but works in her, planting, convicting, comforting, transforming, accomplishing God's purposes in her heart. This means a woman's reading of Scripture is never merely her taking in information but God's word actively working in her, doing what He purposes, so that even when she does not feel much happening, the word is at work, not returning empty but accomplishing its purpose in her over time. The woman who receives the word can trust that it is working, that it does not return empty, that God is accomplishing His purposes in her through the Scripture she receives, whether or not she perceives the effect. The word that does not return empty is actively working to accomplish God's purposes in the woman who receives it, not falling unfruitful but achieving what He sends it to do, so that reading Scripture is never merely taking in information but receiving a word that works in her, accomplishing God's purposes whether or not she perceives the effect.

Expecting Something to Happen

Because the word is alive and active, a woman should come to Scripture expecting something to happen, expecting to meet God and to be worked on by His living word, rather than approaching it as a dead text from which little is expected. The way a woman approaches Scripture shapes what she receives, and the woman who expects a dead text to yield little will find little, while the woman who expects to encounter the living word of God, to meet Him, to be addressed and worked on by a word that is alive, comes with the openness that receives much. This expectation is not presumption but faith, the trust that the living word will do what it promises, that God will meet the woman who comes to His word expecting to encounter Him. The woman who comes to Scripture expecting something to happen, expecting the living word to speak and to work, approaches it rightly, with the openness that the living word fills, while the woman who expects nothing closes herself to the encounter the word offers. Expecting something to happen, coming to Scripture with the faith that the living word will speak and work rather than approaching it as a dead text, opens a woman to the encounter the word offers, for the way she approaches Scripture shapes what she receives, and the expectation of meeting the living God is the openness the word fills.

CHAPTER THREE

God Is Still Speaking

A Word Addressed to You

The living word of God is not addressed only to its original hearers long ago but to you, personally, now, so that when a woman opens the Scripture, God is still speaking, addressing her through the ancient words with a word meant for her. This is perhaps the most transformative truth about Scripture, that it is not merely a record of what God said to others but a living word addressed to the woman reading it, and learning to receive it as personally addressed changes everything. Understanding that God is still speaking through Scripture, addressing you personally, and learning to listen, opens the Bible as a living conversation.

And Samuel said, Speak, for your servant hears. — 1 Samuel 3:10

Written for the Original Hearers, Addressed Also to You

The words of Scripture were written in particular times to particular people, and understanding their original meaning matters, but the living word of God, while written for its original hearers, is addressed also to you, carrying through the ancient words a word God intends for the woman reading now. This is the mystery of Scripture as living

word: it has a genuine historical meaning, written to real people in real situations, and yet it is not confined to that original setting but reaches through it to address every reader, so that the woman reading today receives not only the word God spoke to the ancient hearers but a word He speaks, through those same words, to her. The Scripture is not therefore someone else's mail that she is permitted to read over their shoulder, but a living word that, while historically addressed to others, is also personally addressed to her, carrying a word from God meant for her own life. God is still speaking through the ancient words, addressing the woman who reads them now, so that Scripture is a word written for its original hearers and addressed also to her. Written for the original hearers and addressed also to you, the living word of God reaches through its genuine historical meaning to address every reader, so that the woman reading today receives not only the word God spoke to ancient hearers but a word He speaks, through those same words, personally to her.

Learning to Listen

If God is still speaking through Scripture, then the task of the reader is to learn to listen, to come to the word not to master it but to hear it, adopting the posture of the servant who says, Speak, for your servant hears. Much of the reason women do not hear God speaking through Scripture is that they come to it to study rather than to listen, to extract information rather than to receive a word, and so they treat it as an object to be analyzed rather than a voice to be heard. Learning to listen means a shift of posture, coming to the Scripture quietly, attentively, expectantly, asking God to speak and listening for what He would say, like the boy Samuel who, taught to recognize God's voice, answered, Speak, for your servant is listening. This listening posture, coming to receive rather than to master, to hear rather than to analyze, is what opens a woman to the word God would speak to her through the Scripture. Learning to listen, coming to Scripture to hear rather than to master and adopting the posture of the servant who says Speak, for your servant hears, is the task of the reader if God is still speaking, for women often fail to hear God because they come to study rather than to listen, and the shift to a listening posture opens them to the word God would speak.

When the Word Comes Alive

Every woman who reads Scripture attentively over time comes to know the experience of a word suddenly coming alive, of a verse she has read many times suddenly speaking directly to her situation, addressing her with a personal word, and this experience is God speaking to her through the living word. There are moments when, reading the Scripture, a word leaps off the page, speaks directly to what a woman is facing, answers a question she carries, comforts a grief, convicts a sin, or illuminates a decision, and in these

moments she experiences the Scripture as what it is, the living word of God addressing her personally. These moments cannot be manufactured, but they come to the woman who reads attentively and expectantly, who listens for God's voice, and they are the experience of God still speaking, of the ancient word becoming a present and personal address. When the word comes alive like this, a woman knows from the inside that Scripture is not a dead text but the living voice of a God who is still speaking to her. When the word comes alive, a verse read many times suddenly speaking directly to a woman's situation, she experiences God speaking to her through the living word, and these moments, which come to the woman who reads attentively and expectantly, are the experience of God still speaking, the ancient word becoming a present and personal address.

CHAPTER FOUR

Reading to Meet Him

Praying the Scripture, Not Just Studying It

If Scripture is the living word of a God who is still speaking, then the way to read it is not merely to study it but to pray it, to approach it as a means of personal encounter with God rather than only as a text to be understood, and the Church has an ancient method for exactly this. Studying Scripture has its place, but the reading that meets God is a prayerful reading, a receiving of the word as a conversation with the One who speaks it, and this prayerful reading is the primary way a woman encounters God in Scripture. Understanding how to read Scripture prayerfully, to meet God rather than only to study, through the ancient practice the Church calls Lectio Divina, opens the Bible as personal encounter.

And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.
— Luke 10:39

Reading That Receives

There is a difference between reading Scripture to extract information and reading it to receive a word from God, between studying the text and sitting at the Lord's feet to listen, and the reading that meets God is the receptive kind, like Mary of Bethany who sat and listened. Informational reading approaches the Scripture as an object to be analyzed, a text to be understood, a source of knowledge to be mastered, and it has its value, but it is not the reading that meets God personally. Receptive reading approaches the Scripture as a word to be received, a voice to be heard, a conversation with the God who speaks,

coming not to master the text but to sit at the Lord's feet and listen, like Mary who chose the one thing needful. This receptive reading, coming to receive rather than to extract, to listen rather than to analyze, is the reading that opens a woman to personal encounter with God in the Scripture, the reading that meets Him rather than merely studying His word. Reading that receives, coming to Scripture to receive a word from God rather than to extract information and sitting at the Lord's feet to listen like Mary of Bethany, is the reading that meets God personally, for the receptive reading that comes to hear rather than to master opens a woman to the encounter with God that informational study alone never finds.

The Ancient Way of Lectio

The Church has a time-tested method for this prayerful, receptive reading, called Lectio Divina, divine reading, which guides a woman through the movements of reading, meditating, praying, and resting in the word, turning the reading of Scripture into a conversation with God. In Lectio Divina a woman first reads a passage slowly and attentively, letting the words sink in; then she meditates, pondering the word, turning it over, asking what God is saying to her through it; then she prays, responding to God from the heart about what she has received, speaking back to the One who has spoken; and then she rests, simply remaining quietly in God's presence, receiving His love. These four movements, reading, meditating, praying, resting, turn the reading of Scripture from informational study into a prayerful conversation with God, a receiving of His word and a responding to Him, and they are the Church's ancient path into personal encounter with God through the Scripture. The woman who learns this ancient way of Lectio has a method for meeting God in His word, for turning her reading into the living conversation Scripture is meant to be. The ancient way of Lectio Divina guides a woman through reading, meditating, praying, and resting in the word, turning the reading of Scripture into a prayerful conversation with God, and this time-tested method of the Church is the path into personal encounter with God through the Scripture, a receiving of His word and a responding to Him.

Quality Over Quantity

Reading Scripture to meet God means valuing quality over quantity, lingering prayerfully over a small portion rather than racing through large amounts, for the goal is not to cover ground but to encounter God, and a single verse received prayerfully may do more than many chapters read quickly. There is a temptation to approach Scripture reading as a task to be completed, to measure it by how much is read, to race through chapters to meet a goal, but this informational, quantity-driven reading is not the reading that meets God. The prayerful reading that encounters God lingers, takes a small portion and dwells

on it, reads slowly and attentively, lets a single verse or phrase sink in and speak, valuing the depth of encounter over the amount covered. A woman meets God in Scripture not by reading much quickly but by reading a little deeply, lingering prayerfully over a small portion until it speaks, so that quality of encounter matters far more than quantity of coverage. The woman who reads a little slowly and prayerfully, dwelling on a small portion until God speaks through it, meets Him more than the woman who races through much, for the goal is encounter, not coverage. Quality over quantity, lingering prayerfully over a small portion of Scripture rather than racing through large amounts, is the way to meet God in His word, for the goal is encounter rather than coverage, and a single verse received prayerfully may do more than many chapters read quickly.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Story That Points to One Person

How the Whole Bible Holds Together

The Bible can seem to a new reader like a bewildering collection of disparate books, histories and laws and poems and letters written across many centuries, but it holds together as a single story, and that story points to one person, Jesus Christ, who is the key that unlocks the whole. Understanding that the whole of Scripture, Old Testament and New, is united in pointing to Christ, gives a woman the thread that runs through the entire Bible and makes sense of its unity. Understanding the story that points to one person reveals how the whole Bible holds together and how to read it as a unity.

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. — Luke 24:27

One Story, Not Many

Though the Bible contains many books written over many centuries by many authors, it tells, in the end, one story, the single unfolding story of God's dealings with humanity from creation to redemption, so that the apparent collection of disparate writings is actually a unified narrative. From the creation and fall in Genesis, through God's calling of a people, His promises and His law, the long history of Israel, the prophets' expectation, to the coming of Christ, His death and resurrection, and the birth of the Church, the Bible tells one continuous story, the story of God's plan to save and restore a fallen humanity. The individual books are chapters in this one story, each contributing to the whole, so that the Bible is not a random anthology but a unified narrative with a beginning, a center, and an end. Seeing the Bible as one story rather than many

disconnected books helps a woman read it as the unified whole it is, each part finding its place in the single great story of salvation. One story, not many, is what the Bible tells, the single unfolding narrative of God's dealings with humanity from creation to redemption, so that the apparent collection of disparate books is actually a unified story of salvation, each book a chapter in the one great narrative.

Christ at the Center

The one story the Bible tells has a center, a person toward whom the whole of it points and in whom the whole of it is fulfilled, and that person is Jesus Christ, so that the entire Scripture, Old Testament and New, is finally about Him. Jesus Himself, after His resurrection, walking with two disciples, interpreted to them in all the Scriptures, beginning with Moses and the prophets, the things concerning Himself, revealing that the whole of the Old Testament pointed forward to Him. The Old Testament anticipates and prepares for Christ, promising Him, foreshadowing Him, longing for Him; the New Testament reveals and proclaims Him; and so the whole Bible is united by pointing to Christ, who is its center and its key. To read the Scripture rightly is to read it as pointing to Christ, to find Him in the Old Testament's promises and types and in the New Testament's fulfillment, so that He is the thread that runs through the whole and the person in whom it all holds together. Christ at the center is the key to the Bible's unity, for the whole of Scripture, Old Testament and New, points to and is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, whom Jesus Himself showed to be the subject of all the Scriptures, so that reading the Bible rightly means reading it as pointing to Christ, its center and its key.

Reading It All as His

Because the whole Bible points to Christ, a woman can read all of it, even its difficult and ancient parts, as finally His, as part of the one story that leads to Him and finds its meaning in Him, which both unifies her reading and gives even the hard passages their place. The difficult parts of the Bible, the strange laws, the violent histories, the obscure prophecies, can bewilder a reader who sees them in isolation, but read as part of the one story that points to Christ, they find their place in the larger whole, contributing to the unfolding narrative that leads to Him. This Christ-centered reading does not dismiss the difficult parts but situates them, reading the whole Scripture as leading to and illuminated by Christ, so that even the hard passages are read as part of His story, their meaning found in their place in the whole that points to Him. The woman who reads it all as His, as part of the one story centered on Christ, has a key that unlocks the whole Bible and a thread that runs through even its most difficult parts, reading the entire Scripture as finally about the One it all points to. Reading it all as His, as part of the one story that leads to Christ and finds its meaning in Him, both unifies a woman's reading and gives

even the difficult passages their place, for the hard parts of the Bible, situated within the one story that points to Christ, find their meaning in the whole that leads to Him.

CHAPTER SIX

Making It Part of Your Days

Scripture in the Life You Actually Live

The living word of God is meant not to be read occasionally and set aside but to become part of the fabric of a woman's daily life, woven into her days so that it forms her decisions, sustains her in suffering, shapes her thinking, and accompanies her through the ordinary hours. Scripture bears its fruit not mainly in occasional dramatic encounters but in the steady daily receiving that lets it soak into a life over time. Understanding how to make Scripture part of the life a woman actually lives, woven into her days, translates the encounter with the word into a sustained practice.

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night. — Joshua 1:8

A Daily Habit, Not an Occasional Visit

The first key to making Scripture part of a woman's life is to make it a daily habit rather than an occasional visit, a regular, protected practice woven into the rhythm of her days rather than something she turns to only in crisis or when she happens to have time. Scripture read only occasionally, in a hard season or a rare free moment, never becomes part of a woman's life or forms her over time, for its deepest fruit comes through regular, sustained receiving. The woman who would let the word shape her makes a daily habit of it, a regular time, however brief, protected in the rhythm of her day, when she comes to the Scripture to receive a word from God, so that the word becomes a daily presence rather than an occasional visitor. This daily habit need not be long, for a few minutes of prayerful reading each day, sustained over time, forms a woman more than hours spent rarely, but it must be regular, a settled part of her days. A daily habit, not an occasional visit, is the first key to making Scripture part of a woman's life, for the word read only in crisis never forms her, while a regular daily practice, however brief, woven into the rhythm of her days, lets the word become a daily presence that shapes her over time.

The Word in Decisions and Suffering

Scripture becomes part of a woman's life when she brings it to bear on the actual stuff of that life, letting it guide her decisions and sustain her in her sufferings, so that the word is not confined to a reading time but accompanies her into the real challenges of her days. The word of God is meant to be a lamp for a woman's path, guiding her choices, and a comfort in her afflictions, sustaining her in suffering, so that she brings the Scripture to bear on her real decisions, seeking its wisdom and light, and turns to it in her sufferings, finding in it comfort and strength. When a woman faces a decision, she can bring it to the Scripture, seeking the guidance of God's word; when she suffers, she can turn to the Scripture, finding in its promises and its comfort the sustenance she needs; and so the word moves from the reading time into the living of her life, guiding and sustaining her through its real challenges. The word in decisions and suffering is Scripture brought to bear on the actual stuff of a woman's life, guiding her choices and sustaining her in affliction, so that the word is not confined to a reading time but accompanies her into the real challenges of her days, a lamp for her path and a comfort in her suffering.

Meditating Day and Night

The deepest way Scripture becomes part of a woman's life is through meditation, the pondering and turning over of the word through the day, so that it is not read and forgotten but carried, dwelt on, allowed to work in the mind and heart through the ordinary hours. Scripture counsels meditating on the word day and night, which does not mean constant formal study but the habit of carrying a word from one's reading through the day, pondering it, returning to it, letting it accompany and shape one's thoughts. A woman can take a verse or a phrase from her reading and carry it through the day, returning to it in spare moments, turning it over, letting it sink in and shape her thinking, so that the word is not confined to the reading time but accompanies her, meditated on through the day. This meditation, the carrying and pondering of the word through the ordinary hours, is how Scripture most deeply becomes part of a woman's life, soaking into her mind and heart through the day until it begins to shape how she thinks and sees. Meditating day and night, carrying and pondering a word from one's reading through the ordinary hours rather than reading and forgetting it, is the deepest way Scripture becomes part of a woman's life, for the word meditated on through the day soaks into the mind and heart until it shapes how she thinks and sees.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Letting the Word Dwell in You

When Scripture Begins to Shape You

The final fruit of receiving the living word is that it begins to dwell in a woman, to make its home in her, to shape her from within, so that the Scripture is no longer merely something she reads but something that lives in her and forms who she is. This is the deepest purpose of all Scripture reading, not merely to inform the mind but to dwell in the heart, forming a woman from within into the likeness of the Christ the word reveals. Understanding how the word comes to dwell in a woman and to shape her reveals the transforming purpose of all her receiving of Scripture.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. — Colossians 3:16

The Word Making Its Home in You

Scripture speaks of letting the word of Christ dwell in a woman richly, making its home in her, taking up residence in her heart and mind, so that the word is not merely visited in reading but dwells within, a permanent and rich presence. When a woman receives the word regularly and deeply, it does not merely pass through her but begins to dwell in her, to lodge in her memory and her heart, to become part of the furniture of her inner life, so that the Scripture lives in her, available to her, shaping her from within. This dwelling of the word is the fruit of sustained receiving, the word read and meditated on and received over time until it makes its home in her, a rich indwelling presence rather than an occasional visitor. The woman in whom the word dwells richly carries the Scripture within her, its truths and promises and the voice of Christ Himself lodged in her heart, a living presence that shapes her inner life. The word making its home in you, dwelling richly within rather than merely being visited in reading, is the fruit of sustained receiving, the word lodged in a woman's memory and heart until it becomes a rich indwelling presence that shapes her inner life from within.

Formed by What Dwells in You

The word that dwells in a woman forms her, shaping her thinking, her desires, her character, from within, so that over time she is changed by the Scripture that lives in her, formed into the likeness of the Christ the word reveals. What dwells in a woman forms her, and the word of God dwelling richly within her works to shape her mind according to God's truth, her desires according to His will, her character according to Christ, so that she is gradually transformed by the word that lives in her. This formation is the deepest purpose of receiving Scripture, not merely to know more but to be changed, to be formed from within by the indwelling word into the likeness of Christ, so that the Scripture does its deepest work not in informing the mind but in forming the person. The woman in whom the word dwells is formed by it over time, her thinking, desires, and character shaped by the Scripture that lives in her, transformed from within into the likeness of the

One the word reveals. Formed by what dwells in you, a woman is shaped by the word that lives in her, her thinking, desires, and character formed from within by the indwelling Scripture into the likeness of Christ, which is the deepest purpose of receiving the word, not merely to know more but to be changed by the word that dwells within.

The Word Becomes a Voice Within

Finally, when the word has come to dwell richly in a woman, it becomes a voice within her, a living presence that speaks to her in the moments of her life, so that the Scripture she has received returns to her when she needs it, guiding, comforting, and strengthening her from within. The word that dwells in a woman does not lie dormant but becomes active within her, rising to her mind in the moments she needs it, a verse of comfort surfacing in grief, a word of truth arising against temptation, a promise returning in fear, so that the indwelling word becomes a voice within, God speaking to her from the Scripture she has hidden in her heart. This is the rich fruit of letting the word dwell in her, that the Scripture becomes a living voice within, available to her in every moment, guiding and sustaining her from the word she has received and that now lives in her. The woman in whom the word dwells richly carries within her a living voice, the word of God rising to meet her needs, speaking to her from within in the moments of her life. The word becomes a voice within, a living presence that rises to a woman's mind in the moments she needs it, so that the indwelling Scripture speaks to her from within, guiding, comforting, and strengthening her, the rich fruit of letting the word dwell in her until it becomes God's living voice within her heart.

CONCLUSION

Open It, and Listen

The Bible that so many women keep at a respectful distance is in fact a letter addressed to them, and this book has been an invitation to open it and receive it for what it is. We have seen that Scripture is the word of God Himself, breathed out by Him, His own self-revelation; that this word is alive, living and active, a voice that still speaks and works; that God is still speaking through it, addressing each woman personally; that it is read rightly not by studying but by praying it, meeting God through the ancient way of Lectio; that the whole of it points to one person, Christ, who is its center and key; that it is meant to become part of a woman's daily life; and that, received deeply, it comes to dwell in her and to form her from within.

Through all of it runs a single invitation, the one the Scripture has been extending from its place on the shelf: open it, and listen. Not merely admire it from a distance, not merely hear it at Mass and set it aside, but open it as the living word of God addressed to you, and listen for the voice of the One who is still speaking through it. For God has not stopped speaking, and the word He speaks is waiting to be heard by the woman who will open the book and listen.

So open it, and listen. Approach the Scripture as the word of God Himself, with reverence and the expectation of meeting Him. Come to it expecting the living word to speak and work. Receive it as personally addressed to you, learning to listen with the heart of Samuel: Speak, for your servant hears. Read it prayerfully, lingering over a little until it speaks, meeting God rather than merely studying His word. Find Christ at its center, the key that unlocks the whole. Weave it into your days until it becomes part of your life, and let it dwell in you richly until it forms you from within and becomes a living voice in your heart. The living word is waiting, a letter addressed to you by a God who is still speaking. Open it, and listen, and you will find that the book you kept at a distance is in fact a conversation with the God who made you and longs to speak with you.

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