

# As If:

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## God Had Something to Say

Too many times we show up at Mass and listen the Scriptures proclaimed...or we read the Bible on our own...and we don't seem to listen or read as if God has something specific He wants to tell us. We slip into a kind of "divine trance" and tune out while God is trying to give us direction, encouragement, conviction, and wisdom. In the Sacred Scriptures, God reveals Himself. He wants us to know Him. What if we started to read the Bible as if God had something to say to us every time?

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## Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever set out trying to read the Bible? How did it go? Was it a frustrating or seemingly empty experience? Was it challenging? Helpful? Please describe.
2. Have you ever had (or heard) objections/difficulties regarding the Bible? What were/are they? Have you ever sought an answer for those difficulties?
3. The Bible is a collection of 73 books that make up one complete whole. It has a number of different literary genres and contexts. Do you have a favorite "book within the Book"? Why or why not?
4. Read 2 Timothy 3:16. Saint Paul lists a number of ways that Sacred Scripture is useful. Have you ever found this to be the case? Has there be a time when God's Word was helpful or moved you? (In this question, "moved" means to actually "influence or shape one's behavior", not merely "touched my heart".)
5. Do you have a favorite Bible verse? Why is it your favorite? (Most likely, it is because something "speaks" to you in it. We call this "something" a SomeONE: God). If you don't have a favorite Bible verse, take some time now to look through your Bible for anything that sticks out to you.

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## God in Real Life

1. Take time this week to read God's Word each day. You can read any part of the Bible, but choosing to spend "31 Days with Jesus" or "31 Days with the Psalms" can be great way to begin to learn how to listen to God's voice. Choose a time (when are you going to read). Choose a place (where are you going to read). And choose a Scripture (what are you going to read). You don't have to plow through the reading; listen, pause, ponder to what is happening in the text.

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## Be Transformed

God reveals Himself through a number of means. One of which is Sacred Scripture:

- A. "Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, then, are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing, and move towards the same goal." Each of them makes present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ, who promised to remain with his own "always, to the close of the age". (CCC 80)
- B. "There are two distinct modes of transmission: **"Sacred Scripture** is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit." "And **[Holy] Tradition** transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. It transmits it to the successors of the apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound and spread it abroad by their preaching." (CCC 81)
- C. "As a result the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, "does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence." (CCC 82)
- D. "In Sacred Scripture, the Church constantly finds her nourishment and her strength, for she welcomes it not as a human word, "but as what it really is, the word of God".<sup>67</sup> "In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children, and talks with them." (CCC 104).
- E. Still, the Christian faith is not a "religion of the book." Christianity is the religion of the "Word" of God, a word which is "not a written and mute word, but the Word which is incarnate and living". If the Scriptures are not to remain a dead letter, Christ, the eternal Word of the living God, must, through the Holy Spirit, "open [our] minds to understand the Scriptures." In Sacred Scripture, God speaks to man in a human way. To interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm, and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words. (CCC 108-109)

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## To the Heart

"Indeed, the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart. No creature is concealed from him, but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account" (Hebrews 4:12-13)

## **Scripture Reading Essential for Christian Living**

“I am always encouraging you to pay attention not only to what is said here in church, but also, when you are at home, to continue constantly in the practice of reading the divine Scriptures.... For let not anyone say to me those silly, contemptible words, ‘I’m stuck at the courthouse all day.’ ‘I’m tied up with political affairs.’ ‘I’m in an apprentice program. ‘I’ve got a wife.’ ‘I’m raising kids.’ ‘I’m responsible for a household.’ ‘I’m a businessman.’ ‘Reading the Bible isn’t my think. That’s for those who are set apart, for those who have made the mountaintops their home, who have a way of life without interruptions.’

What are you saying, man? It’s not your business to pay attention to the Bible because you are distracted by thousands of concerns? Then Bible reading belongs more to you than to the monks! For they do not make as much use of the help of the divine Scriptures as those who always have a great many things to do.... But you are always standing in the line of battle and are constantly being hit, so you need more medicine. For not only does your spouse irritate you, but your son annoys you, and a servant makes you lose your temper. An enemy schemes against you, a friend envies you, a neighbor insults you, a colleague trips you up. Often a lawsuit impends, poverty distresses, loss of possessions brings sorrow. At one moment success puffs you up; at another, failure deflates you. Numerous power inducements to anger and anxiety, to discouragement and grief, to vanity and loss of sense surround us on every side. A thousand missiles rain down from every direction. And so we constantly need the whole range of equipment supplied by Scripture....

Since many things of this kind besiege our soul, we need the divine medicines, so that we might treat the wounds we already have, and so that we might check beforehand the wounds that are not yet, but are going to be, from afar, extinguishing the missiles of the devil and repelling them through the constant reading of the divine Scriptures. For it is not possible, not possible for anyone to be saved who does not constantly have the benefit of spiritual reading.”

~St. John Chrysostom (347-407)