



At the most recent diocesan convention, Bishop Stanton noted that in his recent visits with congregations, someone would inevitably start a sentence with some variation of the following statement, “Well I am not a biblical scholar but ...” For many years I found myself saying the same thing.

Being a cradle Episcopalian, I considered the Bible to be a foreign object for much of my life. It was for other denominations, for those who had gone to seminary, for experts, for scholars, for priests, and/or for those overzealous types who had little else to do with their time. We Episcopalians had the Prayer Book and that was all we needed. Because I had never read the Bible, I was unaware that the Holy Scriptures permeate the entire *Book of Common Prayer*. I suppose I “overlooked” the part of the Prayer Book that clearly states the Bible “contains all things necessary to salvation.”

In my mid-20s, however, my eyes opened to the riches of the Bible. My mother was ill with cancer and some Christian friends asked if they could pray for me. Week after week they would pray, using Scripture. It went something like this — “Lord, in your Word, you promise us that ‘you will never leave us nor forsake us,’ so we know you are here with Carrie and her family. May they experience and know your presence with them now ... Lord, you

A word on the Word

by Carrie Boren, Missioner for Evangelism

promise that ‘nothing can separate us from your love.’ Lord wrap your arms of love around Carrie and her family ... Lord Jesus, you say ‘Come to me all who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest,’ Give this restoring rest to Carrie’s mom and her family...” These words brought me comfort, strength, and peace — something I did not have in my life at that time when I was facing my mother’s illness.

Finally, after the third week of praying together, I asked, “Where can I find these promises of God to which you keep referring?” With surprise and cloaked shock, they responded respectfully, “The Bible.” That day I went out and bought my first Bible, locked the door to my room, and began to read. My friends suggested I begin with the Gospel of John.

I poured over the Gospel of John many times, well into the night. What surprised me at first read was that Jesus was clearly claiming to be God. As a sceptical college student, I had argued, even in public debates, that Jesus was no more than a good teacher and wise prophet. John was clearly demonstrating that Jesus was nothing less than God on earth — “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” As I read the Gospel of John over and over again that night, something profound happened to me. The only way to describe it is to say, “I encountered God.” The Bible was no longer merely an ancient document; it was a living, breathing, alive, dynamic Word. I fell asleep reading with the deepest peace I had ever experienced — “the peace, which passes all understanding.”

Since that night, reading, studying, meditating, and praying the Holy Scriptures has become a vital part of

encountering Christ and allowing Him to form me. In the coming months, I will share with you an article on the Bible in each issue of *Esprit* — What is it? What is its content? Who decided which books should go into it? When was it put together? How do we read it? Where do we begin? Can we trust it? Why bother with it at all?

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Join me in exploring the richness of the Bible. The Holy Scriptures are for all of us — to nourish us, shape us, guide us, and form us. The Bible is God’s gift to us — all of us. It is as relevant today as it was when it was written. I encourage you to begin unwrapping this gift. Until next month’s article ... read the Gospel of John and remember the words written by the author of Hebrews, “For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the division of the soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” One cannot help but be changed by God’s Word to us. Don’t miss out on all He has for you.