



## Chapter 7

*“There is no one holy like the Lord, Indeed, there is no one besides You, nor is there any rock like our God. 1 Samuel 2:2*

*Our God is a jealous God. [Exodus 34:14] He surprised me by drawing me further away from all that I knew and was comfortable with...and deeper and deeper into Him. He now made it very clear that He did not just want a part of me, He wanted all of me...*

## **The Rock**

My beautiful Marian encounter taught me that there was a great deal more “treasure” to discover in the field of the Church than I had realized. Being an avid Bible reader and teacher, I was a bit skeptical that Catholic teachings were all biblically based. Much to my great relief, the more I studied and the more I applied myself, the more I began to see the biblical basis for Catholic truth—and the treasure just kept on coming.

I had spent my entire life reading and studying the Bible. It was not only my passion but had also become my identity. Although I was not an academic, I had been reading sacred scripture, commentaries, sitting under several great mentors, and teaching women for so many years, that in some circles I was considered an authority of sorts on spiritual matters.

By God’s grace, greater even than my head knowledge of scripture, was the zeal for it in my heart. I truly loved God and His Word, and for me, the two were inseparable. Telling people about Him through His Word was my greatest love; I was an evangelist down to the very marrow of my bones.

The library of our home was filled with biblical commentary books. I had inherited some from my grandfather, the Baptist minister, and I had spent umpteen dollars on maps, charts, diagrams, and models—anything to help me understand and make it come alive for those to whom I would try to explain it. I loved it—all of it. It was my pride and joy and the knowledge and love I had for it was such an integral part of my identity. *It was me and I was it.*

It became quite clear to me, that as great as my passion was for my books and sacred scripture, if I were to become a Catholic, much of my collection, and therefore my own personal “knowledge,” would become obsolete. I would now become the student, not the teacher. Giving up my theology and my identity and becoming a very humble beginner once again was a daunting prospect. I had dreamed of going to seminary, and even recently had applied and was discerning a call to the priesthood through the Anglican Church. If I were to convert, all of this would be over.

But beyond this humbling thought was an even more horrifying realization... I would also need to buy a new and unfamiliar translation of the Bible. I loved my Bible. It was my “Sword” as it is called in Ephesians 6, and I could use it quite nimbly. When questions arose, I could, in a flash, find the answer. In the third grade I had the illustrious honor of being “The Sword Drill Bible Champion” of my Sunday school class. I had won my very own copy of a *Sword Drill Bible*, and I was very proud. And now...I would be fumbling even to find the right pages, and all of the

scripture that I had memorized since age eight would be the “wrong translation”—not Church-sanctioned.

Along with my treasured books, I also kept in my library a fossil and mineral collection, and some other findings from nature: butterflies, bones, wasps nests, interesting plant matter, all things that reflected God and His creative genius. One day as I sat pondering my rocks, I felt the Lord nudge me and ask, “Melissa, would you give these to Me?”

“What, Lord? My rocks?” I asked rather puzzled.

“Yes,” He said lovingly.

“Well...” I was a bit hesitant, as I *loved* my rocks. I had been collecting them since I was a child and they were a part of me—full of memories I relished. My father and I would hike into the hills of Texas and scramble up fresh-cut road passes, rough and crumbly, or creep over cliff edges to gather fossils and interesting mineral samples. We visited rock shops on just about every vacation, filling out the collection. I truly hated to give them up, but I thought, “It is *God* asking for them. He did make them. They are really His. I sort of just borrowed them so...I guess I should say, ‘Yes!’” By a sheer act of will, I said, “Yes, Lord, You may have them.”

And then He said, “What about your other collections... can I have them too?”

I looked around and thought, “Well, if He wants the butterflies, bones, and beehives, I guess that is alright as well, as they are also all His creations.” So again, I said, “Yes, Lord, You can have those, too.”

Then I realized that the Lord actually wanted something so much more dear to me than rocks or wings or feathers. He wanted something at the core of who I was. He wanted the books...no He wanted my THEOLOGY. You see, I had used my theology like rocks, not only to build my life upon, but also to ashamedly chunk at people who did not agree with me. I had not always used my knowledge of Him and His word to lovingly build bridges or paths, but often as weapons to fire at my opponents...and sadly, I had a pretty good aim.

Now I realized, what He wanted, He wanted me! He wanted the very rock-bed of who I thought I was, who I had built and studied myself to be. He wanted all of what and who I had put my trust in... He wanted *me*. Could I give Him me in this way? The very core and identity of me? Could I give Him that too? Could I trust that He knew what He was asking for, and that He would not leave me de-constructed, alone, and hanging? Sitting on the small oriental carpet on my library floor, I cried, “If I give You *this*, I will have no idea who I am anymore.”

And then I began to remember another wonderful revelation He had so lovingly shown me in the Adoration Chapel. It was of the mountain I had seen earlier. The mountain was large and rough and covered with huge boulders, just like before, only this time it was snowing and dimly lit. The pilgrims, as in the prior scene, were making their way up the smooth trodden path worn into the

mountain facade. I could see them in their coarse, textured white robes. Up they went, single file, one behind the other, pointy hoods up, covering their heads from the snow. But this time, instead of seeing it from a distance, suddenly I was one of the pilgrims. I was shuffling up the mountainside. I was following the person in front of me. Then, without warning, the person I was following turned around so I could see His face. It startled me, but then my eyes focused and He was smiling a very warm smile. It was Jesus! He was in front of me! I then had an urge to look behind me, so I glanced backwards, and once again, it was Jesus! He was following behind me, too! “How astonishing!” I thought. He is before me and behind me! And then, as dreams and visions often do not make perfectly rational sense in the way in which they unfold, I was able to see myself from a distance, and yet I was also still on the path trekking upward. Looking at all of the faces on the path, I could see that they were all Jesus! “What could this mean?” And then I thought, “If everyone on this path has the face of Jesus...” With much trepidation, I was able to look upon my own face, and much to my great and very humbling surprise, it was Jesus’ as well. I am almost unable to write of it, because I in no way want to equate myself to our Lord. But what I realized is this...it was Him all along, enabling me to sure-footedly make my way upward on the path of life—all of these years, in spite of bad weather or strenuous conditions, it was Him, all Him. He was surrounding, encouraging, filling, enabling—it was Jesus. My true identity was *Him*, not my theology, or anything else I could put my trust in, no matter how “good” it was. My truest core was not and is not me, but Him, by and through His Holy Spirit. And if I became a Catholic, that would still remain the same.

With this thought in mind, I was able to say, “Yes, Lord, You can even have my books, my theology, all of who I am. You can have me down to the very deepest center of my being, as I want nothing else to build my life upon, for You alone are my Rock.”

And then I pictured in my mind’s eye, gathering all of my books, and all of my rocks, and all of my other collections, and laying them out on the carpet for Him. And lastly, on top of it all, I laid my very beloved, marked up, dog-eared, coverless Holy Bible, which was my greatest material, earthly treasure, as my Bible represented all I knew and loved about Him...and I gave it to Him.

When I did, it was as if He took it all upward to heaven, a bit like Peter’s vision of the sheet come down from heaven in the book of Acts. And with it, He took me as well! I felt completely swept up in love, as if I was going for a magic carpet ride. I was no longer earthbound. The core of my very being was tied only to Him in faith, and I trusted that He would guide and keep me safe, no matter what. And then, as suddenly as we went up, we came safely back to earth, right where we started from—my library floor.

A few days later, one of my friends handed me a beautifully wrapped package. It was rather heavy, and I was not sure what it could be. As I opened it, I began to laugh. It was a new Catholic Bible! It not only contained Holy Scripture but it had deep and insightful biblical commentary sandwiched in between each page—all that I would need to help me through my transition. Shortly after that, I received another—and another. I received several Catholic Bibles of different translations, all inspiring in their own way. The truth began to dawn on me...I had

given the Lord my one Bible with sixty-six books in it, and He gave me several back with seventy-three books in each! Something I had known and now had become a reality to me was this: “You can never out-give God.” God is certainly the most extravagant Giver!

**Praise:** Thank You God, Creator, that You prompted my answer to be “Yes” to “Would you give these to Me?”

**Prayer:** Most loving heavenly Father, Creator of all things in the universe, seen and unseen, including me, help me to trust in You to fill me and be my All. Let me not fear anything You would ask of me, even if You ask for the very core of my being! Please give me enough faith in Your great love and goodness, that I would happily give You all of me as You have given me all of You. Take me and make me into Your image, more and more each day. Amen.

**Promise:** The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He. Deuteronomy 32:4

**Proof of the Promise:** I have learned that God will never ask us to give Him something that would be harmful to us, and if we yield, He will give us abundantly more in return than we ever had the courage to give Him.



**Ponder: Journal here** about what makes *you* -you? From where do you get your identity and your value? Is it from God? Do you trust God enough to place all of who you are in His hands and get all that you are from who HE says that you are...*His* beloved?<sup>1</sup> Write to Him about this...

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<sup>1</sup> Colossians 3:12