**Psalm 119:130 The doorway to your words lets in light. It gives understanding to the inexperienced.**

Sermon series on the four ways God encourages us to use his Word

1. **Devotions/Commentaries (Psalm 119:130)**
2. Worship in Church services (Psalm 122:1)
3. Group Bible Study (Proverbs 27:17)
4. Individual Reading of the Bible (Psalm 1)

Friends in Christ,

Connecting with God’s Word can be confusing and intimidating. The feeling of not knowing how to use God’s Word, where to start, and in general just how to do it can be boggling. As Christians, we want to cultivate and strengthen our faith but what is the best way to do it. In fact, it’s not one way but four. In the Bible, God encourages four ways for Christians to connect with God’s Word. He even gives us the command to do so as he gives us the 3rd Commandment: Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy. What does this mean? We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and his Word but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it.

What are the four ways God that encourages us to connect with his Word? Through the use of devotions, worship in Church services, group Bible study & Individual reading of the Bible. Over this and the next three weeks, we will look at each of these. We will consider the benefits and sinful traps of each way. As we do so, we will use illustrations of maintaining and using our physical bodies to explain the care of our souls with God’s Word.

Today, as we consider how God encourages us to connect with his Word with the aid of the comments of others, do so with the help of **Psalm 119:130 The doorway to your words lets in light. It gives understanding to the inexperienced.** This passage speaks about using those things that point out getting a boast up so that we build from our inexperience and get help for using the Word. It’s talking about making use of what other people know as they explain or serve as a doorway through which we come in contact with God’s Word. Such means through which this is done would include things like devotional materials (*Meditations*), commentaries where the author explains a part of God’s Word, sermons, and others. Each of them is like training with a coach who has experience and shares that to improve and help the one they train.

A good coach takes a will take what they know and lead another through the skill giving aid along the way. It starts by taking a new skill that likely isn’t known. It’s like Jesus who was in the temple explaining God’s Word to the people that were around him (Luke 4). On that day as Jesus gave instruction to the people, he place before them a very new idea—the idea that one person would be the one to bring the favor of God to people. It wasn’t a completely new idea for all but the new part was that Jesus himself was that person. This was Jesus sharing something he knew about God’s Word and sharing it with people who did not yet know him as the Savior. He was coaching them in something new to give them understanding.

When we use a devotion, one of the things we hope to do is learn new information about our Savior. The devotion teaches us things we likely haven’t realized about God’s Word or what he has done. Things we never knew about God’s Word at all. It’s like someone coaching someone to do a weighted squat for the first time. They introduce the skill by showing or explaining to their student, the reader or hearer, as they include such things as proper form and benefits of doing squats.

The coaching in God’s Word doesn’t just place new information before the learner. The coaching also serves to stop what is wrong and harmful. Jesus taught his inexperienced listeners when they diminished his importance. When they said he was just a common person, Jesus rebuked them for their incorrect idea by pointing out to them where they had gone wrong. They had fallen into the belief that Jesus was just like them, no different. It was dangerous because it denied Jesus as the only Savior from sin. And the people were at risk of not understanding who Jesus was.

When we read a devotion or listen to commentary based on God’s Word, we are rebuked for our false beliefs, things we understand or do incorrectly. When we are inexperienced with God’s Word, we do run the risk of understanding or believing it incorrectly. It’s like someone who does a weighted squat and bends over at the waist. Such a person harms their back and puts it as risk of injury by using the incorrect form.

The coaching didn’t not stop there. It encourages a correct action. Through the application of verses, we are able to find out how to use them in our lives. By the words we hear and read about God’s Word, the explanation let’s us see why it’s important. We can also see how God’s Word yields the results God want which are blessings to us. Through devotional reading and hearing the comments others make based on God’s Word, we are strengthened in faith as the Holy Spirit works through what he has given to others and now passes on to us. Such connection with God’s Word is a doorway by which God’s Word shines on us.

We do need to be careful not to fall into the sinful traps that can appear if our only connection to God’s Word is through reading devotional material and listening to what others say based on God’s Word. Whenever we read or listen to what others tell us about God’s Word, it is vital for us to take it in carefully. We must remember that they too are sinful and their words are the words that come from sinful minds. Because sinners are involved, we need to be careful to avoid being led astray by them and by ourselves. Let me explain both traps.

First, the trap of being led stray by false teaching. We like to know we are doing well. Our ears perk up when we get complimented or are made to feel we have done something exceptional. False teachers, intentionally or unintentionally, while using God’s Word through such lead us into false belief. Especially when we don’t have a solid, clear understand of exactly what is in God’s Word, false teachers can easily harm us. They make things that sound close to good while not being the truth. This trap is dangerous because it doesn’t matter how small the falsehood appears to be. When the words of others go against God’s Word and we believe them, our faith is weakened rather than strengthened.

This is why there are so many differences amongst people who say they are Christians. The misunderstanding, intentionally or unintentionally, of one sinful person is past on to another. Like poison might not lead to death or incorrect squat form might not lead to immediate injury, damage is being done no matter how seemingly insignificant. When reading or listening to the explanation of another person, this trap is possible to be sprung on us because when it is just us, individually taking in their words, we are the only one who can recognize the false teaching. This is why whenever we connect with God’s Word through the words of another person, we must honor God by carefully shifting and examining what is told to us with the true Word of God. Don’t foolish take the bait and get caught in this trap.

Second, the trap of placing too much confidence in a sinful person. It is certain that we do benefit from more from one certain person than another. It is also true that God placed certain individuals in our lives through which there are greater impacts on our faith. Personalities, amount of time, etc. play into the us trusting them more and more. We need to remember that our faith is fed by the Word of God; not by the word of those you give us God’s Word. This is what leads to too many people placing their faith that is to trust solely on God into the care of someone else.

As we drive into a devotion book, listen to a sermon, or watch a video of someone talking to us about God’s Word, we must remember that they too are sinners. They too are servants of God. As we enjoy the blessings of close relationships and growth of faith coming as God use another person, we need to make sure we don’t start to give them the honor, love, and trust God has reserved for himself. When we place our trust in what one person say about God’s Word, we are eating the bait that kills the soul. (For one example of what placing someone in the place of God looks like see 1 Corinthians 3.)

Devotions, commentaries, sermons, and the like are valuable resource to give understanding about God’s Word. Through them, God brightens his light as he shines his grace on them. This is why we do well when we make use of them. They are doorways through which God strengthen our faith in the Savior who died for us. They guide us to the arms of God who gives us his grace to forgive our sins. They help us mature and move past inexperience with God and his Word and close to a maturity of our faith. But fortunately, they are not the only way that God encourages and commands and blesses us to connect with his Word. We will look at the three other ways in the next weeks. Amen.

Points to consider as an individual or with a small group:

Devotional Bible study is like connecting with God’s Word with…

Devotional Bible studies would include…

List 2 benefits of devotional Bible study.

What are possible sinful traps of only doing devotional Bible study?

\*The idea of learning new things (teaching), stopping what we have wrong (rebuking), training in the proper way (correcting), and repeating or reviewing what have right (training) are taken from 2 Timothy 3:14-17.