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)**

**Psalm 1:1-2 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the advice of the wicked, who does not stand on the path with sinners, and who does not sit in a meeting with mockers. 2But his delight is in the teaching of the Lord, and on his teaching he meditates day and night.**

Taking things in first hand just is different. If you go right to the source without having anyone else as a go between or mediator the message comes off and more impressive. They command your attention more. There a presence that can’t be found anywhere else. It’s just different. It’s different listening to your favorite artist live at a concert than it is to hear their music through your speakers. It’s different watching athletes play on their field than it is to watch them on the TV. It’s different to talk to someone in person than it is to chat on the phone.

It’s different to read the Bible one your own without anyone else there than to do it from a devotional book, in a worship service, or even with a group of fellow Christians. It’s just different. When it’s just you and your Bible, it’s just you and God. It feels like there is no protective equipment. No one else to step in. No one to shield you from what he says. Just you and him. God and you, the reader. Just you and the Almighty. When it’s just you and your Bible, you get to spar with God himself.

God doesn’t pull punches. And he doesn’t soften the blows either. When it’s just you and your Bible, the gloves are off. It’s bare-knuckle boxing with the LORD. He comes down hard. During individual personal reading of your Bible, God hits you. God himself. Not God speaking to you through someone else to show how you are sinful. God, the LORD. The Almighty. The Great I Am.

As it’s just him and you, he lets you take your best shots. You can really let it rip. You can come at him with all you got. With your cunning, your intelligence, your reason. Your jabs will be blocked. Your skill made to look foolish. And dodging won’t make one swing miss. When you are actually standing in there with just you and God, the guard you use to defend your sinfulness is going to drop. If you are actually standing in there as you as an individual engage with God’s Word by yourself, just you and your Bible, just you and God, you are going to be beat up. Now do you understand why I said this way of connecting with God’s Word, individual reading of the Bible, is the most intimidating?

This is why people run from their Bibles; because their sinfulness makes them step away from God to try to get out of his way. Your sinful natures think that if we just keep that book closed, he won’t be able to get to us. If we just deny that he is there, we won’t have to face him. Our sinful natures find all kinds of reasons to make it reasonable to not be one who actually reads the Bible: I don’t have time. I have other ways that I connect with God’s Word. I go to church. I don’t like to read. It’s hard to read. I don’t understand it. I can’t read. Even when we do actually make time to read our Bible often it is just a rushed task to get it over with and done so we can say we did it. No wonder we feel like we didn’t get anything out of it. We have avoided actually engaging with the Word and in unbelief we ducked out of engaging with God personally.

Yet, when all the excuses and distractions are gone, it gets rough to stand in there and take what God throws your way. You get beat to a pulp. You learn that at any time God could bring his all at you. He’s not teasing you but he shows what he can do and exactly who he is. Individual personal Bible reading will beat a sinner up. It’s a difficult practice. Because everything is exposed: all that you think, all that you believe, all the you know. When you really engage with God’s Word, just you and your Bible, just you and your God, God is going to work you over. God is going to have his way with you.

What to know how you can tell that will happen? Because when Jesus was on the cross, he was deep into his own personal reading of the Bible. As God punished Jesus for all the sins of the world, as Jesus received the beating from God for the sins of everyone to every lived, Jesus remembered the reasons why. He meditated on all that God had said he would do against those who have done evil against him. He recalled all that God had said. There was no one else to be between God and his Son, Jesus, at the time. Just God bring is all upon Jesus and Jesus knew God was right to do what he did because Jesus remembered God’s Word especially the word written about him, God’s Only Son, the one who is True God and True Man, and yet, faced all of God. (See Psalm 22 for an example of Jesus remembering God’s Word on the cross.)

When an individual reads the Bible by themselves such things hit us hard. We look at how sinful we are and what our sins deserve. When we see how seriously God punishes sin because we see how he punished Jesus in our place, we fear standing before God. It good that we carry that with us. That we see it frequently as we read our Bible. That we recall passages from the Bible as we face the temptation or make choices of what we will do. As we meditate, consider and think about God’s Word deeply, and apply it to what we do, we stand as just one individual before a God and see that he should bring all his force against us.

It’s good for us to be intimidated by God’s Word and terrible about where each of us is because we are all sinful. Individual reading of the Bible causes the sinner to cower before God. By showing us clearly without any debate what sins causes and leads to, God lets us see something amazing.

He lets us see the value he brings. The reason why God reveals such horrific truth as an individual is so that you see the downfall that it is life live without him. In the Bible, God lets people clearly see what a life of avoiding, mocking, ignoring God leads to because when you see your helplessness, your desire to be with him grows. It is delightful news to know what God can do and realize that Jesus already took the beating God should have given you.

Instead, this is why it’s a blessing follow what God tells us to do and also take in what he says. Individual personal reading of the Bible is intimate time just you and God, just you and the God who died for you, just you and your Savior. In place of him bring down on you all the ways he could destroy you, he let you see he wants you to be with him. Inn the Bible, he tells you that. You! He doesn’t merely tell you through what someone else has told you, God speaks to you directly when you read his Word. He tells you of all that he in all his almighty power did for you.

The Christian who reads and thinks about, considers and mediates on God’s Word gets to be in one on one with God. They get to be star struck, twitterpated, completely excited to be allowed in the presence of such greatness.

And this is the reason why Christians spend time reading their Bible. It makes it such an experience to learn more about God. To have minds focused on the LORD while there are so many things that appear to be going poorly or even going well. The relationship with the One who uses his Almighty power for your benefit speaks to you, desires to be with, wants to go with you, chooses you. It’s just different being able to spend that time just you and God, first-hand.

Over these last four weeks, we have considered the four ways God encourages us as Christians to connect with his Word: devotional/commentaries, worship is Church services, group Bible study, and individual reading of the Bible. With each of them, God works faith. They all are a bit different from each other with the same goal: a Christian who is well rounded in their relationship with their God and Savior. They all have their place and are all to be used by a Christian to continue in their faith, to strengthen and mature in faith, to live a life of faith. As we make use of them our life becomes more and more about God and his goodness to us. They help us keep a clear understand of who we are. It lets us have a place we know we can have something real, one who cares for us, and even something that will not change while we live in a world of so much uncertainty.

It is a delight to one who uses God’s Word daily and lives life by it. Amen.

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

Individual Reading of the Bible is like…

List 2 benefits of individual reading of the Bible.

What is a possible trap of only connecting with God’s Word by individual reading of the Bible?