

A number of years ago, a video was released about a misfit nun and a classroom of unmotivated music students. One of the lead songs in that video contained these words, "If you want to be somebody, if you want to go somewhere, you better wake up and pay attention." Whether the video was based on a true story or not, the words in that song still ring as true. In our text, Peter essentially says the same thing as he encourages each one of us to pay attention to everything contained in God's Word.

I. Paying attention to God's Word is definitely advantageous. A. Even so, we live in a world that has an attention deficit. 1. We fail to pay attention because we are so easily distracted. I see it in my Catechism class and I believe every other teacher experiences the same thing. Students aren't focused on learning. Too many other things are occupying their minds. It's no different for us and God's Word. Our world pours on the glamor and the glitz, does its best to get our attention using whatever means possible. In the end, our minds drift elsewhere and God's Word gets the short end of the stick, as it were because, like the classroom, we're so easily distracted.

2. We fail to pay attention because we don't believe God's Word has any power. Suppose someone handed you a box and said, "Inside this box is something that can change your life, carry you through your toughest times, and give you a new purpose for living." Would you believe them? In our instant gratification world, we want answers immediately and when God's Word doesn't magically deliver on the spot, we are quick to look for an instant answer that will fix our instant problem. But what we forget is that life is all intertwined. This event connects to that event and also to that other event. Instant fixes for instant problems won't help us in the long run. Until we believe God's Word has the power, we will never see it work in amazing ways.

B. Aware of that reality, what motivates us to pay attention? 1. We're motivated by God's instruction. When a parent tells a child not to touch the stove because it's hot, what's their motivation? They looking out for the best interest of their son or daughter, right? When God speaks, He speaks with purpose, with intention, with a particular outcome in mind. God never speaks a single word as idle conversation. Our motivation comes from the realization that this is God speaking, and when God speaks, we do well to pay attention. God never wastes a single word. Every word He speaks is motivated by love and is spoken for the betterment of our lives.

2. We're motivated by the evidence of its power. When Moses stood before Pharaoh saying, "Let my people go," how many plagues did God bring on the people? How many times do we see evidence of God's Word, evidence that when God speaks, things happen? In the New Testament, what does Jesus do in the majority, if not all of the miracles He performs? He speaks. "Go show yourselves to the priest." "Get up and take your mat and go home." If we need motivation to pay attention, God says, "Look in My Word. There you will find evidence that it works, that it does what appears impossible. There you will discover that I do My greatest work when I speak!"

3. We're motivated by God's promises. How important is a promise? When you promise your kids that you will take them out for pizza, do they expect pizza? When you promise them that you will arrive at your vacation destination tomorrow afternoon, do they hold you to that promise? How many promises has God made in His Word? How many of those promises apply directly to you? Now, the most important question, "How many of those promises has He failed to keep?" When God makes a promise, it's a done deal. It will happen, period. When God says, "I will," it will happen. Answered promises - they are great motivation for us to pay attention.

C. All this leads us to ask, "What do we gain when we pay attention?" 1. We gain strength. In the past ten years, how many times have you found yourself against a brick wall, lacking the power, out of strength to do what you need to do, what you believed God wanted you to do? When God created you, did He say, "Go out there and give Me your best?" What He said was, "As My child, I created you to depend on your Father, to rely on Him, to run to Him for strength when you have no strength, for power when you know that you are powerless. I created you for relationship and through that relationship, I promise to bestow on you the power you need when you need it."

2. We gain confidence. How do you instill confidence in a child? As a parent or grandparent, you know how it's done. Encouragement. Reassurance that you are there for them. Cheering them on. Being there in their best and worst moments. Our Father does all that and even more through His Word. In that Word, He encourages us when we need encouragement, promises, "I will be with you always, to the very end of the age," and surrounds us with cheerleaders that speak on His behalf. When you need confidence and encouragement that you are going the right direction and doing the right thing, go to His Word and expect Him to encourage you.

3. We gain comfort. How many heartaches have you faced in the past ten years? How many times have you hurt for someone else during that time? How many times have you faced some type of heartache? The need for comfort is one of our greatest needs. Everywhere we turn, there is heartache; there is pain; there is someone hurting. Surrounded by all that heartache and pain, Jesus says, "Come to Me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest." His promise to you? He will comfort. Directly at times, indirectly at other times. But as we turn to His Word, we can expect comfort because God has already promised to deliver.

4. We gain renewed sense of purpose. As Peter, James, and John left the mountain, was the day after or the week after, or the year after the same as it would have been had that event not occurred? As we mentally step into God's Word, as we pay attention to every word in His Word, the Holy Spirit is working in your heart. He is tweaking this, adjusting that, realigning another part. Every moment we spend in His Word is a moment God uses to realign our purpose, to set us on His path, to redirect us to a plan that is bigger and better than anything we could ever imagine. It's happening each time we open His Word and pay attention.

5. We may not be unmotivated music students, yet our God still speaks loud and clear as He says to our hearts, "Class - pay attention to Me and My Word." Amen.