

Introduction

- Church history is the study of Christianity and the church since Christ's resurrection.
- It is a spiritual study of history.
- 2 Timothy 2:2 "And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others."
- Hebrews 12:1 "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,"

Objections

- Common objections: They aren't my fathers. I only need the Bible. That's catholic. Church history starts at the reformation.
- There are two primary ditches to avoid with church history.
- One ditch treats the church fathers as inerrant authorities on par with scripture.
- The other ditch treats church history as irrelevant and unimportant.
- My primary argument is studying church history will help you love Jesus and the Bible more.

Bible Study Aid

- Studying church history helps us study the Bible.
- Imagine being the first person to try and understand Revelation or the Trinity.
- We have access to more sermons, books, and theology than all of human history.
- It would be arrogant to ignore it and think we could do it alone.

Guard from Error.

- We are often doomed to repeat the failures of the church in the past if we do not learn from them.
- Studying the Roman Empire and English reformations can teach us the pitfalls in having a "Christian" nation.
- Church history can also help us avoid heresies.
- Most heresies are the same ideas repackaged and renamed.
- It is a fence that shows us the boundaries of the universal faith.
- If you have a Bible interpretation no one has ever had before, you are wrong.

Explains Today

- Studying church history explains the current shape of the church.
- It explains the origins of denominations.
- Azusa Street revival in LA led to Pentecostalism.
- An independent church, like TBF, would have been unthinkable until the 16th century.
- It helps us understand how theology develops over time, like mariology.
- Church history is our family tree of origin.

Encouragement

- Studying church history encourages us.
- We can hear story after story of faithfulness.
- I have been encouraged by David Brainerd and Maximus the Confessor.
- We can be encouraged the church has survived challenges and failures in the past.

Different Perspective

- Studying church history sharpens us.
- It helps us see what it looks like to follow Jesus in a different culture, time, and place.
- Each age and culture makes mistakes, but we make different ones.
- Reading the past helps reveal our own blindspots.
- C. S. Lewis essay on reading old books is the best example.

Cloud of Witnesses

- Studying church history is a look at the cloud of witnesses.
- We get to hear the stories of all those before us who have born witness to Jesus through the ages.
- They are no longer nameless and faceless.
- It reminds us of universal nature of our faith.

Apostolic Fathers

- The apostolic fathers are the second generation of believers after the apostles.
- This is one of the most unique and significant areas of Church History to study.
- Studying them reveals what the earliest Christians believed about Jesus and the Bible.
- Studying them helps us apologetically when people question our faith.
- Most of the apostolic fathers were killed for their faith.
- This collection has the earliest Christian sermon, letter, book, and record of how the church operated.

Application

- You do not have to become a church history scholar nor be scared of them.
- We do need to recognize and appreciate our heritage of faith.
- Don't disparage the saints who have been faithful before us.
- You can only reject church history if you reject the study of all history.