

Life Notes

THE HISTORY OF CHRIST'S CHURCH

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#1. Why Church History is Important

Why in the world would we spend 52 weekly studies about church history? Are you afraid it will be boring? Are you worried it will be too much to keep up with? Well, let me assure you we'll keep it both brief and interesting. In fact, there are several reasons Church History is important.

First of all, our Life Notes insert will be a continual TESTIMONY to the faithfulness of God toward His People. Every week we will celebrate another account of God's ongoing miracle of "The Church."

Secondly, in Deuteronomy 8:2 we are commanded to REMEMBER the way He has led us through the years, and to pass on those stories and lessons to our children (Psalm 78:5, 6).

Thirdly, observing Church History helps to CLARIFY what we believe, and why. Many church leaders are saying that doctrine doesn't matter, but in reality, nothing could be more untruthful. What they are trying to say is that people don't care about doctrine, but I think the problem is that people don't care for the warfare that often accompanies doctrinal division. Church History can actually give us a context and understanding on why such matters are actually vital. There is a lot of wisdom that has emerged from the church in the past 2,000 years!

Fourthly, understanding the errors and heresies of the past will keep us from repeating those same mistakes in our generation. Church History is about LEARNING FROM THE PAST. President Harry Truman used to say there is no new history, just old history that hasn't been read. Many of the doctrinal or behavioral aberrations of today are nothing more or less than a re-do of problems and issues the Church has already worked through, perhaps centuries earlier.

Finally, these vignettes will introduce us to new MENTORS whose faith and lifestyles are worthy of emulation. We will meet heroes (and a few villains) that will teach us valuable lessons about the Christian life.

Jude reminds us of the necessity of anchoring our lives to a clear faith that has been "once and for all" delivered to the Saints.

Not every story will be happy. The Church has experienced moments of unbelievable victory as well as days of unfathomable despair. But through it all, we remember that He is The Builder. The strategies of Hell cannot possibly prevail. "He who began a good work in you will be faithful to bring it to completion" (Philippians 1:6).

As we work through 2,000 years of Church History, we will first paint with broad strokes, summarizing a century or so at a time, then we will come back and fill in some details. Obviously not every event or person can be covered in detail. Indeed, some may not be mentioned at all. But our emphasis will be on how Jesus has worked to gather His people, how He has transformed us for His purposes, and how He has given us victory even in times of incredible distress. He assures us that "all things are working together for the good of those who love God—those who are called according to His purposes" (Romans 8:28).

So buckle up, and join us next week as we learn about the Apostolic Foundations of the first century church.

1.6.19