

Tell me, have you had this particular type of experience? Let's say your name is Maria, and you are intently watching an event live on TV or the internet, and the nature of what's happening is really quite clear to you. Then a TV reporter or internet host named Ivan starts recapping a version of that very event, and his narrative varies so significantly from what you just saw and heard that you are stunned by Ivan's interpretation. But Ivan's off-base interpretation is being represented as completely obvious or factual!

So you switch to another channel or internet source named Sally who is seeing and reporting on the exact same event, and what Sally says is at significant variance in observations to what Ivan just said! But Sally's reporting has itself also taken significant liberties in its version of the event, creating a narrative you hardly recognize. So you, Maria, who took all of it in with your own eyes and ears, have yet *another* version of the narrative of what is going on. Then, you call your friend Lee who has been monitoring the same events and, amazingly, he has yet *another* take on the event—a different narrative!

Well, now, each and every day, you are actually *living* out the events that will be recorded for people to read in the future, to learn, and to ultimately *receive* as "history." But which of the four narratives above will ultimately be the dominant version of what will be labeled the "history" of the event? Or will it be a blend of several viewpoints that an imaginative historian weaves together to get at an overarching "truth" of events? But wait, what are the biases of that historian decades after the event—what does he or she "see" in the recording of film when not actually experiencing the consequences of the event first-hand?

Let's back up a minute. History is important, very important, to every decision maker. That's right, every decision maker, including you and me! In fact, as followers of Jesus, that *especially* means you and me!

Take economic history. Buying a house? Does it matter what the history of home values are in your targeted neighborhood? Of course! You may be making a great decision or a very poor decision—and the histories of home values, zoning, school districts, property taxes, and lots of other factors are important!

How about participating in the stock market, targeting several companies for investment? The history of the companies, the track record of their executives, the current status of the industry sectors in context of history...well, all of those dimensions matter deeply—they can significantly alter your financial future!

Take political history. Considering moving to another country? How about going to East Asia or perhaps South America? Are the countries you are looking at stable? Do they have a history of honoring private property? Are there numerous workplace opportunities? How about political structures honoring freedom? What are the trends...towards socialism and government control or towards free markets?

What about your own country? Does your country honor historical precedents in its legal system? Or are legislators and judges constantly on the move towards modifying or obliterating established ways of handling social transactions? Or is there lots of structural corruption routinely embodied in legislation?

Take the personal history of people you might marry or partner with in starting a new company. Well, you surely know how that might go! Be very careful here, even while maintaining a hopeful measure of optimism. And always remember that someone with a rocky past can actually be a new creature in Christ!

History is an indispensable dimension of the research needed for astute decision-making! Over a hundred years ago, George Santayana said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Wow, is that ever true! And the 20th century that unfolded after Santayana wrote that is chock full of perennially failed socialism, world wars, politically-engineered famines, genocides, astonishing technical advancement, billions lifted out of poverty...just so many lessons to be learned from studying the past!

But are people's takeaways about history accurate? Sometimes, yes. Sometimes, no. Remember Maria, Ivan, Sally, and Lee a few moments ago? Each has a different take on the event, inevitably with one

actually more accurate or astute than the others. That's because truth exists independent of individual perception. But truth *is* sometimes captured *well*, while other times bypassed by laxity or by design! Plus, no one person has a totally full grasp of events. And the historian who follows up is not necessarily better in research habits, in perspective, in wisdom in pursuing the research needed in order to put it all together.

Enter the revisionism of history that comes even later. "Revision" happens to history when additional sources are discovered—perhaps relevant source documents are newly discovered, perhaps recent archaeological finds have shed new or more intense light on current understandings. But perhaps the people doing the revising have a self-serving agenda—perhaps a religious agenda, a political agenda, a power-acquiring agenda. So, yes, a proper measure of revision is normative and desirable for the writing of history as new, legitimate evidence is uncovered. But the crucial question always has been this: is the revision really being done for the sake of real truth...or for the sake of a self-serving ideology and agenda?

Here's the key point. Sure, you have lived enough history to know that even a simple high school event can easily spur a different memory for each of the persons who lived the moment. But living out our own roles in history as believers is directed by God for His purposes, if we are willing to live for God each day!

Now we're getting to the nub. Every experience we live can be informed by the Holy Spirit in real-time—that's what John 14:26 tells us, that the Holy Spirit teaches us all things. That brings us to four other chroniclers of events—no, not Maria, Ivan, Sally, and Lee—but rather Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, these four scribes documented amazing, history-altering, epic events, producing infallible, fully compatible narratives of the gospel of the Kingdom of God. This history is utterly reliable and useful as revelation for instruction and training. In short, the Bible is truth...history...insights...understanding that we can purposefully *receive* without reservation! That's right...*receive* that history!

So, by God's providence, we have the unparalleled Word of God as the key foundation for life, and, further, the Holy Spirit teaches all things to you and me as believers, including remembrance of the Word, Jesus Himself. This directs our personal living out of history in our time and place, the legitimate making of history that God will use in us and through us by the word of our testimony and by our actions.

But what about a fully encompassing perspective that history that is properly foundational to our thriving—you know, what we have said about economics, politics, the business world? Well, to reach the fullness of what God has for us in every nook and cranny of our vocations and personal life, we must reach for a full understanding of all relevant dimensions that can feed our lives in Christ...including history!

So, to help us *make* history well in our lives, we must work at *receiving* history well. That means it must be relevant history and, more important, truthful history. We must dig in, research, and cross-check what we learn with multiple sources whenever possible—that's how we establish reliability of what history we can rely upon. And don't forget the Holy Spirit in your foundational discernment in these areas, too—remember that the Holy Spirit teaches us *all* things and, again, is the key in our discerning what is true and what is not. We discard the chaff, of course. Then we have gained wisdom and can take fruitful action!

But some have an obstacle right here. Because of widely varying Christian backgrounds and biases, they ask something like this: *how does a Christian engage the Holy Spirit in learning?* Well, as Jesus promised to all believers, the Father sent the Spirit to dwell in you when you are born again. Our simple task is to ask every time we need guidance and clarity, asking the Holy Spirit to provide that guidance and clarity. Go see Jesus's words in Luke 11:9-13. Join the countless, utterly rational believers who have richly engaged the Spirit for millennia—you will gain fresh insight and understanding that you know came from Him.

So, your correct *receiving* of history? By great research and learning by the Spirit! And your personal *living* out the history being made right now? *Yes*, by the light of the Word and leading of the Spirit! Amazing.

A&A: Application & Action

1. When was the last time you studied multiple sources about an historical era, person, or event— instead of reading only one source? How could you expand your current research methods to enhance the historical perspectives you are forming? (Or, if you don't have a habit of studying history, how could you start to grow in this?)
2. Many theologians and pastors foundationally disagree with one another about key dimensions of Scripture and history. By definition, then, some are wrong. How have and how do you select which beliefs are vital to a vibrant Jesus-following life full of fidelity to God's Word? Identify one key idea or practice that you used to wrongly believe and how you departed being on that path.
3. Are you engaging the Holy Spirit every day for the fruitful fullness of *living* the history you are making by your life's work? Likewise, are you fully engaging the Holy Spirit in your *receiving* of history? Give a testimony to some examples of that.