**“History is Boring” – By Thailer Jimerson**

If those words have ever snuck past your lips, then this article is for you.

Let me start with a question. Do you know that person – maybe in your family, at the workplace, someone at school – who leads an extremely privileged life, but who virtually possesses little to no appreciation for the backbreaking work of their forebears? I’m talking about that backbreaking, migraine-creating work that Grandpa or Grandma had to do to rise to the top and build their family from the ground up, just to secure them in such a privileged state. Sadly, as is so often the case, the generation that rises with silver spoon in mouth, doesn’t (and often can’t) appreciate what it took to earn that privilege. Or, even on the most basic level, we all remember that kid on the block that was given everything and because of the spoiling couldn’t fathom what was given them.

*The person who eschews history is that kid*. We are standing on the shoulders of giants: living in their culture, using their roads, reading their textbooks, flourishing by their theories, blessed through their mistakes, comfortable by their bravery – so, shouldn’t we know their stories?

**FC Lectures**

It’s for this reason Amber and I had a wonderful time in Tampa attending the annual Florida College lectureship. The title for their 2018 theme was “Inquire of Past Generations,” and it was based on questions revolving around the 16th century Protestant Reformation, spurred by Luther’s ghost this 500th year since he posted the 95 theses on the chapel door in Wittenburg in October 31st, 1517. A great summary of the lectureship was given by my wife, Amber Jimerson, in her article *A Call for Civil Disagreement*:

“During the week, I heard gratitude expressed for various aspects of Reformation thought and unflinching critiques of Restoration thought. I was impressed with the leisurely and thoughtful lesson against instrumental music in worship. My head bobbed in agreement when speakers discussed our gross exclusion of the majority of Scripture in our lessons and the way we tend to overuse topical and New Testament-based sermons at the expense of other parts of God’s Word. I noted the warnings about the limits of apologetics and the danger of misusing poetic Scripture as basis for scientific claims. I witnessed the respect shown for our fellow travelers in church history, regardless of church affiliation, and I equally respected the critiques against Reformation theology. I scribbled the quote ‘traditionalism is what gives tradition a bad name.’ My mind was overloaded with the lessons of history and the importance of knowing our past.”

The many lessons were like opening a window in spring, filled with fresh insights of the many successes (and failures) of the reformers. Such a freshness can be likewise experienced by anyone opening the windows of history – be it through the Bible, church history, biography, and the manifold histories of the world.

**Scripture on History**

I think it should be obvious to most that the Bible itself is not a collection of disparate inspirational stories and sentimental sayings, like stapling 66 of your favorite Hallmark cards together – no, it’s history. It’s a true story about God’s work in the world. And as such the consistent call of God to his people throughout the Bible is to consider its story often:

* I remember the days of old, I meditate on all that thou hast done; I muse on what thy hands have wrought. (**Psalm 143.5**)
* Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. (**Isaiah 46.9**)
* But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings. (**Hebrews 10.32**)
* And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you. (**Deuteronomy 8.2**)

As you see, we’re told to “remember” and “recall” – to consider history – because it teaches us about God’s work, about his power, and it encourages us to stay faithful, and humbles us. History has many things to teach, and the aforementioned scriptures are but a few in vast collection calling us to do the same.

**History’s Benefits**

So why should we study history, and mine church history in particular? Two main reasons:

1. **Studying history helps us overcome “chronological snobbery**”. Lewis is famous for coining the phrase “chronological snobbery” by which he meant that peculiar pride that comes from a progressive view of the history as if the age in which we live is the highest and best, from which we can look down our noses on the generations who’ve come before, upon whose shoulders we stand. Truth be told, the people who’ve come before us were not dumb people – far from it. And I once heard somewhere that even with our current technology, we could not recreate the pyramids of Giza. We have no clue how they did it. In all seriousness, we should ask the question How can we avoid the blindness of our time and place without history? Lewis goes on to say in another place: *“And between different ages there is no impartial judge on earth, for no one stands outside the historical process; and, of course, no one is so completely enslaved to it as those who take our own age to be, not one more period, but a final and permanent platform from which we can see all other ages objectively."*
2. **Studying history develops our characters for the days ahead**. I believe it is a God-ordained tool for the benefit of his people to learn from the mistakes of others and to appreciate their strides towards excellence. There is no point in repeating the mistakes of the past. There is a trust fund of historical advice made from the hits and failures of the ancients. Don’t waste their mistakes and the lessons they have to teach. It’s yours if you only read about it. I couldn’t state it better than John Piper: *“The past is a record of setbacks and how people coped with them. It is a reservoir of folly to be avoided and wisdom to be loved, of lessons to be learned and warnings to be heeded, of heroes to be admired and villains to reject. It is full of the sovereign hand of God and the sinning hand of man. It keeps us from exaggerating the present. It makes us mature and steady in the storms of change.”*