



How come you write in your Bible? Doesn't the Bible tell us not to add to God's word?

That's a great question that came from a student at one of our Wednesday "All Stars for Jesus" sessions. I opened my Bible to read and the student saw that my Bible was filled with notes in the margins and underlined and highlighted passages.

When I read my Bible I will often underline or highlight certain passages that summarize what God is telling us or that I want to be sure to remember. I will often make notes in the margins that record insights God gave as I read the passage, (since I am prone to forget things, these notes are extremely helpful reminders for the next time I read that passage). Often my notes will refer me to a passage in another part of Scripture where God deals with a similar situation. Sometimes I will record a modern-day example of what God has referred to.

Indeed God tells us through Moses in Deuteronomy 4:2:

"Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it,

but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you."

And just a couple verses from the end of the Bible we read:

"I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: [referring specifically to the book of Revelation] If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book." Rev. 22:18-19

A pretty stern warning. It is obviously important for us to know what these words mean.

In those passages God is not warning against make notes for future reference in the margins of our Bibles. He's not saying we shouldn't underline or highlight passages that we found helpful.

What God is saying is that the commands and revelation he gave are not to be changed or altered. We are not to say, for example, "What God *really* meant was..." and then say something that contradicts what God said. "Contradicts" is the key word.

A great example of this "adding to" or "taking away" (contradicting what God has said) is found in the current controversy in our country over whether homosexuals can have marriages blessed by the church - or can serve as pastors. (Looking at the following Bible passages about homosexuality will also serve to answer a question that came up in Confirmation class: "Why is it wrong for homosexuals to marry?")

In the Old Testament book of Leviticus God says that homosexual acts are "detestable" to him (Leviticus 18:22). And in the New Testament we read:

"Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit

the kingdom of God." 1 Cor. 6:9-10 (A 'wake-up call' for anyone who continues in any of these things without repenting.)

People who read those passages and then say things like "Times have changed. What God *really* wants are people who live in committed, loving relationships. He would applaud homosexuals who want to commit to a life-long, loving relationship," have changed and contradicted his words. They have changed "detestable" to "acceptable." They have put words in God's mouth that are just the opposite of what He has said - and would say today. They have "added to" and "taken away from" what God has said.

Another example of "adding to" what God has said is found when we make rules that God hasn't made and impose them on people. For example, to make a rule that "Christians can't go to dances" is to "add to" what God has said. Some dances may be places of great temptation for actions God *has* forbidden. But to say that God forbids dancing is going beyond what God has said.

The bottom line is this: It's 'ok' to make notes in your in the Bible. I've found it to be a great help in my study of the Bible. But if you don't feel comfortable doing it - that's 'ok' too

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net