



How were the books of the Bible chosen, and how do we decide which we should observe or ignore?  
(Such as the Mormon books.)

This question came from one of our Daily Devotion listeners.

It's a timely question, because there's no shortage of YouTubers and TikTok-ers who post videos where they tell how there was some grand conspiracy to keep certain books out of the Bible. Unfortunately, people can spout totally unfounded, illogical and blatantly false ideas on videos, and those ideas will be repeated as fact.

It's also a great question, because people often notice that Catholics and Orthodox Christians have more books in their Bibles than Protestant and Lutherans do.

Here's how I answered the question:

The easiest part to answer is how we got the New Testament books. The books had to have been written by an eyewitness of Jesus' ministry, or someone close to an eyewitness (like Luke). The book had to have been widely used by the early Christian congregations and considered authoritative by them. All the major Christian traditions (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Lutheran) are in agreement that there are 27 books that fit those criteria.

There's also general agreement on the 39 books that make up our Lutheran/Protestant and Old Testament - books written by prophets and recognized as relating the true messages of God. Catholic and Orthodox also have these 39 books.

The major difference is in the "intertestamental" period. ("Time between the Testaments." Roughly 430 b.c. to 50 a.d.) Books of the Apocrypha in the Catholic Bible and most of the books in the Eastern and Ethiopian Orthodox Bibles fit into this category. Jews in Jesus' time made use of most of these books, but didn't consider them part of the Old Testament scripture, so we treat them the same way: Useful for study and for gaining information about life in that 500-year period, but not authoritative for our Christian faith. (In case anyone is interested in checking out the books of the Apocrypha, I have a copy of that has very helpful explanatory notes - similar to the notes in a Study Bible.)

The Mormon books, on the other hand, contain lots of things that actually contradict teachings in our Old and New Testament, so they are easily assigned to the "non-Christian writings" category. (Mormon leadership would definitely not consider their religion a part of Christianity, although they allow their laypeople to present it that way as a means of "getting a foot in the door.")

Thanks for asking,  
Pastor David

Send your questions to [pastor@livingwordlutheran.net](mailto:pastor@livingwordlutheran.net)