



How to Teach History with Wes Callihan

Lesson 1: What is History and Why Study It?

Outline:

The teacher of history remains a student of history

- The assumptions about history need to be questioned.

What is history? It is the study of the past. But we don't have direct access to the past—we only have access to records.

- *What are the records to which we have access?*
 - Written records, material records, oral tradition
 - These records are witnesses to what happened in the past.
 - We have to listen to the witnesses, and read and evaluate them.
 - Law court analogy: since we cannot replay the actual event, we call on witnesses.



History is an art, as much as it is science.

- As an art, history involves artifacts, skills, and a maker/producer.
- Habits of a historian: addressing particular questions, making historical judgments
- *What are the chief historical questions?*
- Genres of history: political, military, biographical, social
 - Political history is the history of human civilization.
 - Military history is a kind of political history.
 - Biography focuses on the lives of single individuals.
 - Social history is the study of art, literature, philosophy, and of the study of history.
- *Why study history at all?*
 - Christians should be concerned with church history.
 - History is the beginning of us now.
 - Think of history as a tree, our current time is the new growth of a great flowering tree. We are the end result of a long process that is upholding us.



- The modern disregard for history, and this is to deny the trunk that upholds the tree.
- Modern examples of what has made us what we are and why:
 - Knowing about parents and grandparents help us to know ourselves.
 - We need to study the history of literature to understand clichés.