

The Importance of Not Adding to Nor Taking Away from the Word of God

Deuteronomy 4:2

“You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you.”

Deuteronomy 12:32

“Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.”

Proverbs 30:5–6

“Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.”

Revelation 22:18–19

“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.”this document

Understandings

1. **We Can Understand:** God treats His spoken and written words as **fixed and authoritative**; therefore, altering them is a serious violation rather than a minor error.
2. **We Can Understand:** Adding and subtracting are **equally destructive**; there is no "safe" direction to err.
3. **We Can Understand:** Faithfulness is defined by **preservation**, not innovation or creative development.
4. **We Can Understand:** **Human intention does not mitigate the standard**, as the texts do not offer exceptions for good motives or clarity.
5. **We Can Understand:** Because these statements are **direct prohibitions** rather than advice or symbolic suggestions, any act of adding or taking away leads necessarily to the stated outcomes of **rebuke, loss, or judgment**.
6. **We Can Understand:** God treats His words as **covenant-defining authority**. Consequently, altering them is not just a mistake but a **transfer of authority from God to humans**.
7. **We Can Understand:** Adding to the word inserts a second human voice beside God, while taking away effectively **silences God** where He has spoken.
8. **We Can Understand:** God’s words are **not raw material for refinement**; they function like legal decrees, sealed covenants, or calibrated measures where integrity depends on exact preservation.
9. **We Can Understand:** The role of the hearer is **custodial, not editorial**.
10. **We Can Understand:** To alter the message is not to assist it, but to **replace the authority** behind it.

11. **We Can Understand:** Altering God's words causes **misalignment** between God's will and human action.
12. **We Can Understand:** Adding to the words causes **falsehood** (being "found a liar"), while subtracting causes **loss of inheritance**.
13. **We Can Understand:** Human alteration results in **spiritual rupture**, whereas preservation is the necessary cause for remaining aligned with God.
14. **We Can Understand: Honesty requires restraint;** moral integrity demands saying only what God has said.
15. **We Can Understand: Silence** is often the most faithful response when God has not spoken.
16. **We Can Understand:** Faithfulness is measured by **accuracy**, not by how effective or persuasive an addition might be.
17. **We Can Understand:** Handling the word is a **moral responsibility**; crossing the line of addition or subtraction is an ethical failure.
18. **We Can Understand:** The command is **central to Scripture**, given its distribution across independent literary categories.
19. **We Can Understand:** The behavior is **inherently dangerous** because there are zero recorded positive outcomes for alteration and multiple recorded negative outcomes.
20. **We Can Understand:** The **risk of over-speaking is higher** than the risk of under-speaking, as the "cost" of innovation is portrayed as severe while the cost of restraint is none.
21. **We Can Understand:** Handling Scripture is not a neutral intellectual exercise but a task requiring **moral self-awareness**.
22. **We Can Understand: Restraint is an active spiritual discipline** requiring self-control.
23. **We Can Understand:** One must be willing to **stop speaking where God has stopped**.
24. **We Can Understand:** God's word is a **sacred, covenantal reality**—similar to the sanctuary pattern or a sworn testimony—that is non-editable.
25. **We Can Understand:** To alter the word is not "creative participation" but a **trespass against something holy**.

2 Timothy 2:15

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

We Can Understand (2 Timothy 2:15)

By integrating these methods with the command to "rightly divide the word of truth":

- **We Can Understand: Diligence prevents shame** because it prevents the boundary-crossing of alteration.
- **We Can Understand:** Approval from God comes from **respecting the "outer fence"** of the word, while shame results from the assumption that the worker can improve or change what God has made complete.