

In light of my previous post, I thought I should address a question I get asked a lot. Or rather, a rhetorical question that I hear posed a lot — especially by evangelical apologists who want to insist that even though there are hundreds of thousands of differences in our manuscripts, none of them really matters for anything that’s important. (This was a perennial objection to my book [Misquoting Jesus](#).) Is that true? I dealt with it many years ago on the blog, and it’s time to address it again.

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#### QUESTION:

I got the impression (I can’t remember where or if you said this... or if Bruce Metzger said it) that no significant Christian doctrine is threatened by text critical issues... and so, if that is the case, who cares if, in Mark 4: 18, Jesus spoke of the “illusion” of wealth or the “love” of wealth. I mean, who cares other than textual critics and Bible translators?

#### RESPONSE:

The first thing to emphasize is a point that I repeatedly make and that many people seem never to notice that I make (especially my fundamentalist friends who very much object to my views about textual criticism): of the many hundreds of thousands of textual variants that we have among our manuscripts, most of them are completely unimportant and insignificant and don’t matter for twit. Why should any of us care that much if a scribe spells a word one way or another way, if it’s the same word? Many of \*them\* didn’t seem to care! But each different spelling counts as a textual variant!

There are many (many!) textual variants that are (virtually) impossible to replicate in English. That is to say, if a verse is worded in two different ways, they mean exactly the same thing, even though in Greek they appear different. So variants like \*that\* don’t matter much. And that’s most variants.

But there are other variants that matter a \*lot\* — variants that.....

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