

Students who are thinking about signing up for my undergraduate Introduction to the New Testament sometimes ask me whether they will have an insurmountable disadvantage if they haven't ever read, let alone studied, the New Testament. It's a completely understandable question.

Other students almost certainly take the course precisely because they think it will be easy-shamey for them: they grew up in church, and went to Sunday School their entire life, and so how hard can a course on the New Testament be? They already know all about it!

Obviously in some ways if a student already knows things about the New Testament they have an advantage. But actually, as it turns out, there is a HUGE advantage to not knowing anything at all about the New Testament, and often my best students are precisely the ones who come in without any background in the field at all. (As I'll explain below.) And so when students ask me if they'll be at a disadvantage, I tell them not at all.

But why is that?

It's because ...

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