

Deacon Andrew's Bible Study Toolbox  
How Lutherans Interpret the Bible Series  
Scriptural Priority

Put simply, scriptural priority means that some things in the Bible are more important than others.

“.....but Deacon Andrew, ALL of the Bible is important!”

The Bible is a collection of writings which allows God to speak to us through human writers across the centuries, but the Bible is not a monolithic book. It has numerous writers, literary texture and variety, many cultural influences, and broad literary and historical contextual settings.

ALL of scripture is the Word of God, but what the Bible says about loving one's neighbor is more important than what it says about the length of Noah's ark. What the Bible says about grace and justification by faith in Christ is more important than what it says about not eating foods sacrificed to idols from the marketplace.

Jesus himself gives us principles for determining which matters are most important (e.g., Matt. 7:12; 22:37-40; 23:23) as does Paul (1 Cor. 15:3-4; Eph. 2:8-9) and other biblical writers (Ex. 20:1-17; Mic. 6:8; Heb. 6:1-2).

Deut. 6:4-9 is a perfect example of scriptural priority for us Christians:

4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. 6 Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. 7 Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. 8 Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your fore-head, 9 and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Verse 4 gives us some contextual clues about this passage. This is Moses speaking to the Israelites, exhorting them to listen and hold fast to their faith in God. Even though we are not Israelites, we would agree with Moses wholeheartedly! Verse 5 is one of the most famous verses in all the Bible. When asked which is the greatest commandment, Jesus gives this verse as his response. Verses 6-7 encourage dearly holding on to these words, and the importance of passing down these words to our children, and teach them frequently in daily life. We would also agree with and aspire to living by these words.

Verses 8-9 are more specific to the actual faith practices of the Israelites, the Jews. These words are meant literally, and are taken as such by many modern Jews. They literally place these verses on their bodies (see: phylactery) and their doorposts (see: mezuzah).

For us as Christians, verses 8-9 are not part of our daily faith practices, at least not literally. In this passage, our focus is on verses 5-7. They are the scriptural priority for us here.