

What About the Bible?

true man, so the Bible is truly the Word of God and also the writing of human beings. Even as our Lord Jesus took on human flesh free from sin and error, so God used human beings to provide a written revelation of Himself that is free from error. Thus, we believe that the Bible is both incapable of error (infallible) and free from error (inerrant).

The Bible has a very important distinction one needs to keep in mind in order to understand the Bible correctly: the difference between Law and Gospel. The Bible reveals God's perfect holiness and righteousness, and His expectation of perfection. His Law, summarized best in the Ten Commandments, reveals our sinful rebellion and our inability to save ourselves. The Gospel is the joyful news that our Lord Jesus Christ has given us complete forgiveness from our sins through His life, death and resurrection for us. The proper distinction between Law and Gospel is the key to understanding the Bible correctly.

The most important message of the Bible is not the Law of God. The Bible is not merely a collection of principles for daily living. The Bible is not a textbook that answers every possible question we may have. Nor for that matter is the Bible a book that predicts every last detail about the future. The central and most important teaching in the Bible is the Gospel, the good news of God's gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. The Gospel is the message that predominates throughout the Bible, from Old Testament to New Testament. Thus the Bible is Gospel-centered.

We know that the Bible was not given merely for the sake of itself. We are not saved because we own a Bible. We are saved by our Lord Jesus Christ, who is revealed in the Bible. We believe the Bible because it is the Lord's Word. We believe in Him, thus we believe His Word to be true. We receive what He has given. He has given us the Scriptures. Thus, the Bible is the foundation and touchstone for everything that the church believes, teaches, confesses and practices. Why? Because the Bible is the inspired, Christ-centered and Gospel-centered Word of the Lord.

How Do We Use the Bible?

The Bible is foundational for the church's ministry. The Bible was never intended to stand alone or apart from the community of faith we call the Christian church. It is sad when some people think that, if they just read the Bible, they can stay away from church. We receive our Lord's gifts with joy and do not say, "We want this, but not that." It would be misleading if our high respect for the Scriptures was used to drive a wedge between the Bible and the church. The church is the gathering of God's people around the Lord's Word and Sacraments. The

Scriptures are the sure and certain revelation of God's Word and thus are to be read, studied and meditated on by Christians at church and at home.

We Lutherans realize that Scripture must be interpreted according to the central truth of the Bible, the Gospel, not picked apart and made to teach things that actually conflict with the Gospel. Therefore, we pay close attention to the grammar and words of the Bible, seeking out the intended meaning, which is the plain sense of the text. We recognize that God the Holy Spirit works through the Scriptures to create and sustain the church as it comes together around the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments.

Whenever the Word of God is preached, taught, studied, read, learned or meditated on, the Holy Spirit is actively turning people from their sin and drawing them to Christ for their salvation. Thus, we will want to be in the Word daily. At home we read and meditate on the Word through our private and family devotions. At church, our hymns and liturgy are anchored in the Word of God. Our pastors preach to us on the basis of the Scripture lessons appointed for each Sunday in the church year. Our school teachers lead our children into a deeper knowledge of the Word of God. In Sunday school, children learn the biblical accounts and thus have a foundation for their lives. In youth and adult Bible studies, the Scriptures are studied in a variety of ways so they can inform and enlighten us and help us understand how we live out our lives as God's people.

What a blessed gift the Holy Scriptures are to us and to all people! Everything God wants us to know about Himself is contained in His Word. Through the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit reveals the truth about our sinful condition and the joyful news of God's saving work for us through His Son, Jesus Christ. Truly, God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light for our path (Ps. 119:105). For that reason we pray, "Lord, keep us steadfast in your Word."

— Dr. A. L. Barry
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