

Weekly Scripture and Sermon Study: History & Context Guide
Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Matthew 19:13-15

History, Culture, & Context

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is one of the most quoted sections in the Bible. "...The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all soul, and with all your might."

Jesus called this the first and great commandment, and in Mark 12:30, added to it the phrase "with all your mind." According to the NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible commentary, "Putting words on one's heart and soul is expressed in loyalty oaths of the ancient Near East, as in Hittite treaties of Mursili II and oaths of allegiance to Assyrian king Esar-haddon.



Orthodox Jews refer to this section as the *Shema* and recite it every morning and every evening! According to rabbinic tradition, the *Shema* originally consisted of only verse 4, but then was later expanded to include Deut. 6:5-9; 11:13-21; and Numbers 15:37-41.

Matthew 19:13-15 is the story of Jesus blessing the children. "Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; but Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.' And he laid his hands on them and went his way."

2 Kings 4:27 offers some insight into this verse: (1) disciples tried to protect the teacher from distraction. In 2 Kings, there was a woman who tried to approach the man of God, but Gehazi (his servant) pushed her away; and (2) the man of God in this story could overrule his servant (or disciple) from keeping the faithful away.

Questions to Consider

1. In what ways does Deuteronomy 6:4-9 set a pattern to relate the Word of God to our daily lives?
2. How do you do what these commands require?
3. What is the lesson(s) learned from Matthew 19:13-15?