How many of us have tried to read through the Bible only to become frustrated (usually at about the book of Numbers- all those genealogies and *"begats"* typically get us!) **and give up?**

Perhaps at least part of the problem is that we don't really know how to understand the Bible.

So, let's see if we can learn…

How to Understand the Bible

Keys to Understanding the Bible (review)

#1- Get the "Big" Picture first.

- **The problem of "Picture Window" knowledge-**
- **Not seeing "between the windows" produces disconnection…**
- **This disconnection, in turn, produces confusion and frustration…**
- **Confusion and frustration causes us to decide that we can't understand the Bible, or even worse, that nobody can…**
- **And then we quit even trying to do so!**

Keys to Understanding the Bible (review)

#1- Get the "Big" Picture first.

- **How?**
- **Read the "last page" first (not literally, but the N.T.), Eph.3:1-6.**
- **If you know where the story is going, it's easier to follow, cp. 1Pet.1:10-12.**
- **Eternal salvation through Jesus Christ is that *single thread* that runs from Gen.1:1 to Rev.22:21…**
- **and connects everything together into a continuous, understandable, great, and real story.**

Keys to Understanding the Bible (review)

#2- Understand that the Bible was written _for_ us, but not _to_ us.

- **Because Rom.15:4 and 1Cor.10:11 say so.**

- **Having a _myopic_ (_short-sighted_) or _self-centered_ view of the Scriptures- that everything was written about or to us, leads quickly to problems of _interpretation_, cf. Gal.1:2 → 4:21-31…**

- **And therefore also to problems of _application_, Gal. 5:1-4; 6:1ff.**

Keys to Understanding the Bible

#3- Context is critical.

- **"Context" simply means "surroundings"- sometimes, the verse before and after is sufficient, <u>Acts 2:1</u>.**

- **In other passages, entire paragraphs, chapters, or even books are essential to true comprehension, <u>Romans</u>.**

- **On other occasions, the context includes everything previous, <u>Hebrews</u>.**

- **Never assume you fully understand a passage until you at least know *to whom* and *for what specific purpose* it was written, <u>Matt.18:20</u> (it's not really about "worship" at all, <u>cf. vv.15-19</u>!).**

Keys to Understanding the Bible

#4- It's not <u>all</u> figurative- but some parts are.

- **Figurative language is *part* of the biblical text- to assume otherwise would be disastrous, <u>Luke 14:26</u>.**

- **The first rule of interpreting figurative language is to not force the text to figurative explanations unless one is required by: *context*, <u>Luke 13:32</u>; *impossibility*, <u>Luke 9:60</u>; *contradiction*, <u>John 11:26</u> → <u>v.25</u>; *statement*, <u>Gal.4:24</u>; or *common sense*, <u>1Cor.3:2</u>; <u>Matt.5:29-30</u> → <u>Col.2:23</u> (summarized and adapted from <u>Hermeneutics</u>, D.R. Dungan, pp.195-198).**

Keys to Understanding the Bible

#4- It's not <u>all</u> figurative- but some parts are.

- **Basic figures of speech employed:**
  - ✓**Simile**- statement of comparison using *like* or *as*, <u>Matt.11:16ff</u>;
  - ✓**Metaphor**- statement of comparison using *is*, <u>Matt. 26:26</u>;
  - ✓**Parable**- an *earthly story* with a *heavenly meaning*, <u>Matt.13:10-17</u>, <u>18-52</u>;
  - ✓**Allegory**- similar to a *parable*, except the *story* is taken from *real events* in history, <u>Gal.4:21-31</u>;

Keys to Understanding the Bible

#4- It's not <u>all</u> figurative- but some parts are.

- **Basic figures of speech employed:**

  ✓**Hyperbole- exaggeration** for the sake of emphasis, <u>Matt.11:20-24</u>;

  ✓**Metonymy**- a (usually related) word is used to replace and refer to another, <u>Luke 22:17-18</u> → <u>42</u>;

  ✓**Synecdoche**- a *part* is used to refer to the *whole*, or vice versa (considered by some to be a sub-class of *metonymy*), <u>Matt.11:16ff</u>.

Keys to Understanding the Bible

Conclusion:

- **Please know that God provided His Will in words that we can, and should, correctly interpret, understand, and apply.**

- **These words are *living*, *active*, and *divisive* (even between *thoughts* and *intentions*), Heb.4:12.**

- **So, "Get the Big Picture," know that the Bible was written "For Us" but not directly "To Us," remember to "Get the Context," and understand that "It is Not All, but does contain, Figurative Language," and get busy!   It *does* take some effort, but you can do it!**