

Understanding

Joe Slater

Do you understand the Bible? One of the New Testament words for understand has “mind” as its root. Another comes from “send with,” connoting a joining of things together in the mind (putting the pieces together, as it were, thus coming to an understanding). Forms of both words are used as commands. Jesus said, *“Hear me, everyone, and understand”* (Mark 7:14). Paul wrote, *“Understand what the will of the Lord is”* (Ephesians 5:17).

But how can we understand? Some have been misled into believing they cannot understand the Bible; they must accept what their church hierarchy says about it. That would mean, however, that Jesus and Paul commanded the impossible! Paul himself told the Ephesians, *“when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ”* (Ephesians 3:4).

To be sure, there are places in the Bible that are *“hard to understand”* (2 Peter 3:16). Hard, yes; impossible, no!

Sometimes the lack of understanding comes from an unwillingness to accept truth. *“For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing and their eyes they have closed”* (Matthew 13:15). The Ethiopian queen’s treasurer had a better attitude. When Philip asked him, *“Do you understand what you are reading?”*, he replied, *“How can I, unless someone guides me?”* Then he invited Philip to sit with him, and Philip taught him about Jesus.

Some Bible passages are easily understood; others pose more of a challenge. Understanding takes time, patience, study, and a willingness to learn (even asking for help). But yes, you **can** understand the Bible!

Whatever it Takes

Someone once noted that there are two kinds of people in this world: those who say “whatever,” and those who say, “whatever it takes.” “Whatever” is the response of the shrug. It is a “who cares?” attitude, one of indifference and apathy. “Whatever it takes” is the response of the committed. It is a “can do” attitude, one that is optimistic and refuses to give up or give in.

Think about those two responses when it comes to some of the commands Christians are given in the Scriptures. We are admonished to avoid sin and pursue holiness (2 Timothy 2:22). “Whatever,” is the reply of most. We are told to love our neighbors (Matthew 22:39). “Whatever,” many respond. We are directed to help the needy (Ephesians 4:28). “Whatever,” is the cynical reaction. We are instructed to fellowship with the brethren (Hebrews 10:24-25). “Whatever,” some say. Jesus said to go and make disciples of all people (Matthew 28:19-20). “Whatever.”

Now, let’s change those responses to “Whatever it takes.” Avoid wrongdoing. Love your neighbor. Help the poor. Fellowship with the church. Speak to the lost. “Whatever it takes” should be the reply and action of the faithful. Can you truly say when you read a command in the Bible, “Whatever it takes. Whatever it costs. Whatever the consequences. I will do what God wants me to do”?

-- Edd Sterchi (Campbellsville, KY)

Falling Apart?

Sometimes when things seem to be falling apart they may actually be falling into place.

--Jon Roe (via Facebook)

PUNCHING HOLES IN THE DARKNESS

A young boy had his face pinned to the window and he watched with fascination as an old lamplighter came down the street. One by one, he was lighting the old-fashioned gas streetlamps. Excited, the young boy called out to his grandmother, “Nana! Nana! Come quickly. There is a man outside who is punching holes in the darkness!”

Similarly, the responsibility of Christians is to “punch holes into the darkness” of this world. The problem is, we can’t do this by our own light. This can only be done by reflecting God’s light. Without the righteousness and morality that God has brought into this life (John 1:1-5, 3:19-31), there is no other way to truly break up the darkness.

Jesus said it clearly, *“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven”* (Matthew 5:14-16).

Christians have a great responsibility here. The world isn’t getting any brighter. Let’s punch holes in the darkness.

--Brett Petrillo

Weather

All of us should take a lesson from the weather; it pays no attention to criticism.