

## BIG QUESTION UNDER INVESTIGATION

*We're in... Unit 12: God's People Live for Him*

### Unit 12 Big Question and Answer and Song:

"How Should God's People Live?

They Should Live Like Jesus!" *PFI NIV Songs 12, Tracks 3,4*

### Unit 1 Bible Verse and Song: Ephesians 5:1-2

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

*PFI NIV Songs 12, Track 5*

## BIBLE TRUTH

*We're learning... Bible Truth 8:*

**God's People Read His Word, the Bible**

The Bible is God's Word. It tells us about God and His wonderful plans. It tells us about this world, about who we are and what Jesus has done for us. God's Word is very different from our words. His Word is perfectly true. It tells us everything we need to know to live the way God wants us to live. And, it doesn't just tell us what we need to know, it can change us, too. The Holy Spirit works in God's people when they read the Bible. He gives them wisdom and helps them to know, love and obey God. He uses it to help their faith keep growing strong.

## BIBLE VERSE

*How do I know this is true? The Bible tells me so!*

### Bible Truth 8 Bible Verse: Psalm 119:11,15-16, ESV

"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you...I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word."

## CASE STORY

Deuteronomy 6,9,31; Ezra; Nehemiah 8-10

### Our story is called:

#### The Case of the Missing Words.

**As you listen to the story, see if you can figure out:**

1. What were the missing words? Why did they go missing?
2. Why was it so important that these words be found?

This story takes place over many years in Old Testament times, in the years before Jesus came to live on earth.

For forty years Moses had led the Israelites through the wilderness, waiting to enter Canaan, the land the LORD had promised them. Now at last the time had come! At the LORD's command, Moses was handing the Israelites into Joshua's care. Moses was going to be with the LORD forever. But before he did, Moses gathered the Israelites together to speak the LORD's words to them one last time.

"Never forget the words I've given you to live by," the LORD urged the Israelites through Moses. "Teach them to your children, too, so they will know and obey them, too," He told them. "Don't follow other gods. Remember my commands and worship only Me. If you do, I will bless you and take care of you. If you don't, then I will discipline you by destroying Jerusalem and taking away from you all the beautiful land I have given you. Crash, bang, boom! It will all be in ruins. You will be taken away from it and will be the prisoners of people from another country for a long, long time--until at last your hearts turn back to obey and worship Me," the LORD warned them through Moses. "You are my treasured people whom I love. As a father disciplines the child he loves, so I will discipline you."

To the leaders the LORD gave special instructions about the big scroll of His words that Moses had written down for them: "Take good care of this copy of My word. Keep them right next to the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle.. Teach the people how to make the offerings to Me to stay in fellowship with Me. Teach them to hold the special celebrations to Me," the LORD told them.

"Teach the people all My words so that might know and obey Me. Every seven years, gather all the people. Have them make tabernacles for their families--tents made out of branches and leaves. Have they all camp out together, like you used to do when you wandered in the wilderness for forty years. When all the children, the parents and even

the foreigners (people from other countries) are all settled in their tabernacles, I want you to read this whole, big scroll of my words to them, even though it will take days to read the whole thing. It will never be enough for My people to have the beautiful land I am giving them or a place to make sacrifices and hold celebrations to Me. They must know My words, if they are to obey and worship Me.”

Sometimes the Israelites obeyed and worshiped the LORD. How richly He blessed them when they did, just as He had promised!! He gave them bountiful crops of figs and olives, pomegranates, wheat and barley. Lots of sheep and goats, lots of children and happiness. He gave them victory over all their enemies. He gave them good kings, like David and Solomon, to lead them and to build Jerusalem. Jerusalem became a splendid, mighty, walled city. It was the home of the palace of the king and the magnificent Temple to the LORD—the center of all worship to the Lord and the resting place of the very Ark of the Covenant itself. How they loved Jerusalem—the city of the kings, the city of the LORD! Oh, how good things were when the kings and the people remembered the LORD and obeyed His words!

But all too often, the Israelites forgot God’s words and they didn’t teach them to their children, either. They turned away and worshiped other gods instead.

Even the leaders forgot the LORD. They didn’t remind the people to hold celebrations to the LORD or offer worship sacrifices to Him. They even set up idols in the Temple and worshiped them instead. Worst of all, they didn’t gather the people together to camp in tents and read His words aloud to them. Instead, they put the big scroll of His words away until finally almost everyone forgot about it.

The Israelites may have forgotten the LORD, but the LORD did not forget about them. They were His treasured people. He would discipline them like a good father disciplines His children, just as He had promised. Crash, Bang, Boom. Everything in the beautiful land the LORD gave His people was about to come down.

Far to the north and east a powerful people led by fierce, warrior kings had arisen. The LORD would use them to discipline His people. The kings eyed the land of Israel with interest. They told the Israelites to obey them; and, when the Israelites refused to, they sent their warriors in to attack.

Crash! Boom! Bang! Down went the walls of Jerusalem, the Temple and all the people’s houses. Then the soldiers

grabbed all the golden treasures of the Temple and many of the people, carrying them back to their capital city, Babylon and forced them to be their slaves.

At last in Babylon, the hearts of the Israelites began to soften: “How we miss the beautiful land the LORD gave us!” they cried. “How we miss Jerusalem and the Temple! We have sinned against the LORD! Didn’t He warn us that this would happen to us, if we didn’t obey Him and His words? We deserve this punishment and more,” the people sadly admitted. “We have broken our solemn covenant promise with Him. We don’t deserve to be rescued by Him. Yet, perhaps He will have mercy on us if we confess our sins and return to Him. Perhaps He will free us from slavery and bring us back home,” they hoped.

The Israelites were right to hope. The LORD had promised to rescue them after 70 years in slavery and so He did. On the last day of the seventh year, the LORD worked in King Cyrus’ heart to send the Israelites back home to rebuild Jerusalem.

Crash, bang, boom! What had once been the sound of destruction now is the sound of construction. First, the Temple and the houses were rebuilt. Then eighty years later, the mighty walls of Jerusalem rose high once more. How happy the Israelites were to be living back in their beautiful land with their newly-built houses and plentiful crops! How wonderful it was to enjoy the Temple and to see Jerusalem’s strong walls in place again!

Yet something was very wrong. Something was missing that they needed more than their land, houses, and fields. Something they needed more than the Temple and great walled city, “We need the word of the LORD!” they realized. “It will never be enough to just have our beautiful land and our beautiful Temple. How will we ever obey and worship the Lord if we do not know His Word?” they exclaimed. “Get Ezra the scribe. He has the book of the Words of the LORD. He must read them to us!”

Crash, bang, boom. Men cut down trees and built a high, wooden platform in the big, open square near the Jerusalem’s Water Gate. When all was finished, Ezra and thirteen other readers climbed up the tall platform and stood before all the thousands of Israelites gathered below. When Ezra picked up God’s Word and opened it, the whole, great crowd rose to their feet out of honor. “Praise the LORD, the great God!” Ezra exclaimed.

“Amen! Amen!” the people shouted back, and they all

bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. Then the people stood back up and listened as Ezra and the other readers took turns reading from the Word of God, They read it from start to finish, reading a section, then explaining it, so that everyone would understand what was read.

As the Israelites listened to God's Word, the Holy Spirit worked in their hearts. One person after another began weeping as they all came to realized how they had sinned against the LORD."

"Don't weep! This is a good day, one holy to the LORD!" Ezra told them. "You are wanting to please Him by hearing His Word and wanting to obey it. Go now, celebrate with rich food and sweet drinks and make sure to share with others who cannot provide for themselves. The joy of the LORD is your strength!"

Then all the people went away to eat and drink to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.

Ezra and the leaders of the people read on in God's Word to find out what they should do next.

"Every seven years have all the people gather together and camp out in tabernacles of branches and leaves and listen to all of the words of the LORD. This is how they will know how to obey and worship Him," they read in the Bible.

"This is what we must do," the leaders exclaimed. "The people must go out and get branches to make their tabernacles, like in the old days then listen to all of God's Word.

Crash, bang, boom. Out into the countryside the people went, gathering olive branches and leaves and dragging them back into the city. In streets, on the tops of houses, in the courts of the Temple, itself, all of the people built their tabernacles. Every day the people gathered to hear God's Word; and every day, the LORD worked in their hearts. "Forgive us for sinning against You, O LORD," the people prayed. "We want to serve You alone. Bless Your people, once more," they prayed. And the LORD did just that!

**Our Bible Truth is:**

**God's People Read His Word, the Bible**

**Our Bible Verse is: Psalm 119:11,15-16**

"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you...I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word."

That was a great day that was when the Israelites repented of their sins and turned back to worshipping the LORD! At last the Israelites treasured the words of God as they always should have! They knew that it was only His words that could show them how to live for Him and help them live them out. They hungered to know His Words and obey them.

What about you and me? Are we bored with God's Word or try to ignore it like the Israelites did before they were slaves in Babylon? Or, are we hungry to know what it says so that we can please the Lord, like the Israelites who stood listening to the Word of God for long hours?

I'm afraid that too many times our hearts are as hard and bored with God's Word as the Israelites had been. Yet God offers to forgive us, too, when we turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior.

Let's praise God for giving us His Word so that we can know, worship and obey Him. And let's ask Him to work in our hearts, helping us to turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Let's ask Him to send the Holy Spirit to give us a hunger and thirst to know His Word and a desire to obey it.

**SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU**

**1. A Question about the Bible Truth, True or False:**  
 God's Word tells us about God, but it doesn't tell us anything about His good plans.  
*Answer: False. God's Word tell us about many of God's good plans.*

**2. Crack the Case Questions:**  
**a. What were the missing words? Why did they go missing?**  
*Answer: God's Word. The Israelites chose to ignore and forget them. They didn't teach them to their children.*

**b. Why was it so important that these words be found?**  
*Answer: The Israelites needed God's Word to know who God is and how He wanted them to live. They needed to know God's Word if they were to be His people.*

**3. Fill in the missing words from the Bible Verse:**  
**Psalm 119:11,15-16**  
 "I have hidden your word in my \_\_\_ that I might not sin against you...I \_\_\_ on your precepts and consider your ways. I \_\_\_ in your decrees; I will not neglect your word."  
*Answers: heart; meditate; delight.*

**BIBLE TRUTH HYMN**

**Trust and Obey**  
*PFI NIV Songs 12, Track 24*

**Verse 1**  
 When we walk with the Lord  
 In the light of His Word  
 What a glory He sheds on our way!  
 Let us do His good will;  
 He abides with us still,  
 And with all who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey,  
 for there's no other way  
 To be happy in Jesus,  
 but to trust and obey.

*Words: John H. Sammis Music: Daniel B. Towner*

God's people read the Bible so that they can "walk in the light of His Word", living their life in loving obedience to Him. There are times when they may not understand completely why they should obey what God's Word says, but they have known God long enough to trust Him, even when they don't understand. They know that He is perfectly wise and good. He loves them and knows what is best. They know that they glorify Him when they live this way; and, that this is the happiest way to live.

**AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY**

*A=Adoration, C=Confession, T=Thanksgiving, S=Supplication*

**A** God, we praise You for being the Giver of Your Word and the Keeper of All Your Promises.

**C** God, we confess that even though we have Your Word that we are often like the Israelites were: we do not read it like we should or could. Our love for You and for Your Word is often cold.

**T** God, we thank You for being so good to Your people! Even though they do not love you or your word as they should, you are patient with them and even discipline them so that they will turn and seek after You. Thank you for being faithful to Your promises even when they are so unfaithful to You!

**S** God, work in our hearts. Help us to turn away from our sins and trust Jesus as our own Savior. Help us to read, understand, love and obey You and Your wonderful Word, the Bible.

**BIBLE VERSE SONG**

**I Have Hidden Your Word**  
*PFI NIV Songs 12, Track 25*

Refrain:  
 I have hidden your word in my heart,  
 That I might not sin against you,  
 I have hidden your word in my heart,  
 That I might not sin against you.

I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.  
 I delight in your decrees,  
 I will not neglect your word, *Refrain*

Psalm One-nineteen, eleven through sixteen.  
*Words: Psalm 119:11,15-16 Music: Constance Dever ©2011*

These verses remind us that God's people delight in God's Word, the Bible. It is full of God's precepts and statutes (His good laws). It tells of His ways (what God is like). They meditate on God's Word ((think about); and, even hide it in their hearts (memorize it) so that they might not sin against God. They know that God's Word is not just true. It is powerful to change them to be more like Jesus. They don't want to neglect it, because they want to know God and please Him more than anything else in life.