

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

Our story is called:

The Case of the Sly Soap-Makers.

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

1. Who were the soap makers and why were they sly?
2. What were they really doing and why was that so important?

This story is not in the Bible. It is a true story about some of God's people who worked in Antananarivo, Madagascar in the 1830's.

In their house, high above Antananarivo, a little group of missionaries worked furiously to finish translating the Bible into Malagasy--the language of Madagascar. Queen Ranaivalona wanted to stop her people from becoming Christians and the best way to do this was to get rid of the missionaries and their Bible. They would have been thrown off the island already if it had not been for some very quick and very sly thinking.

The Queen had sent a messenger ordering them to stop teaching the people about Jesus and start teaching them something useful instead. She gave them one week to prove they had something of value to teach the people, such as soap-making.

Soap-making! How could these missionaries learn how to do that...and in just one week! (Remember, this was many, many years before telephones or the Internet, or television, or airplanes or even fast boats. They couldn't get soap-making supplies from other places. They would have to figure it out themselves, with what they had there on the island.) It seemed impossible, but they asked God to help them and they got to work. They would do whatever was needed to stay on the island and keep on translating the Bible. God was faithful. By the end of the week, they had figured out how to mix plant oils, animal fat and ashes to make soap. On the last day, they sent the Queen a large bar of soap, the first ever made in Madagascar. She was so delighted with it that she ordered a large quantity and allowed the missionaries to remain in Madagascar until they had completed her order.

The missionaries praised God! This gave them a few more weeks' to finish their Bible. So while one of them was made soap, the others printed the Bible. There were no computers, copy machines or even electricity back then.

They made each page of the Bible one at a time, by setting blocks of letters (backwards) in place in a flat wooden frame to form the words that would appear on the page.

Once all the words had been put in place, they dipped them in ink, then pressed the moistened letters down upon paper with a heavy printing press. When the frame was lifted from the paper, the words were left behind on the paper in ink. It was hard, slow work; and, they still had part of Job and all the books from Ezekiel to the end of the Old Testament to complete!

Everyone was given their own job. David Jones worked to finish off the translation and giving the final touches on each page, Cameron set the type, while Baker worked at the heavy hand-press. Their wives took their share too. They stitched the printed sheets together into book form as they came from the machine, then put on the book cover. Sometimes they relieved Baker from his work at the press by lending a hand at turning the great wheel. None of them hardly stopped for sleep or for meals. They knew they were running out of time. At last, Baker burst into his David Jones' room with the exciting announcement, "We have finished; here is the whole Bible in Malagasy!"

David Jones took the book and said, "Thank God it is done. Now Queen Ranavalona can do her worst. Even if she turns us all out of the island there will be a great witness for Jesus left behind. For the Bible isn't just any book. It's God's Word. It will keep telling the people what God was like and how He wants them to live for Him long after we are gone. The Holy Spirit will use it to work in their hearts and help them grow strong in their faith. None of the Queen's threats or tortures would make them give it up. They were determined not to let this go, too." he exclaimed.

Now that this first Bible was made, they began to make as many copies as they could until the Queen forced them to leave. In the end, these sly soap makers had printed hundreds of Bibles, most of which they buried in deep pits lest they should be destroyed by the Queen's order.

The missionaries had hardly left the island when the Queen called her councilors and told them, "Now that the missionaries are gone," she said, "we can crush the Christians. Issue a command in my name that no one may worship the Christian God. Anyone who gathers together for Christian meetings shall surely die," she vowed. "I will cast them off the great Rock of Hurling."

The Queen's orders were announced, but God gave His

people comfort from His Word and gave them faith to keep on living for Him, even though it cost them their lives. The Queen was sure this would be the end of the Christians, but it was not! To her horror, she discovered that now even more people were becoming Christians as they saw the faith of those who died.

"Why is it that the Christians have not yet been crushed?" the Queen asked her advisers.

"The reason, your Majesty, is that they still have the Bible. They believe the Bible is God's Word. They read it daily in their homes, and they hand it round to their friends, so that many people are becoming Christians though reading its words. If your Majesty would stamp out Christianity, you must destroy all the Bibles."

"Issue a command in my name," replied the Queen, "that all Bibles must be handed over to me. Anyone who fails to turn over even a page of the Bible will be killed."

This was a terrible threat, but it wasn't enough to make the Christians hand over their Bibles! They depended upon God's Word and they would never let it go! They hid their books. Some buried them in the rice-pits underneath the floor, or hid them in holes of the earth; others concealed them in the thatch of their roofs, or in the hollow of trees. Some took their Bibles to pieces, page by page, and hid some of the portions in caves and gave other pages to their friends, who sewed them into their clothes.

Sometimes the message would be whispered round the village, "Tonight we shall meet at John's Gospel," or, "You will find us where Romans is hidden this evening," or, "Let us gather at Psalm 53 after the evening meal."

One night a little group of Malagasy Christians crept out of the city and met in a small cave in the mountain. A tiny lamp was lighted and its flickering flame lit up the faces of the people gathered round. One man had a hunted look in his eyes, for he had been living in dens in the mountains and forests for five long years; another, who had once been an important man, was now wearing around his neck, hands, and ankles the chains of slavery; an old woman's head was bowed with grief, for both her children had been sold as slaves, and she did not know whether they were alive or dead; many bore scars from being punished for being a Christian. It did not matter to them who were rich and important and who were merely servants and country folk. They all had one thing in common: their love for God and His Word.

Together they whispered a hymn they had written:
Where can we find a place for rest?
Save dens and caves, with hunger pressed?
Yet Thy compassion is our bliss,
Pilgrims amidst a wilderness.
O God, our God, to Thee we cry,
Jesus our Savior be Thou nigh:
O Sacred Spirit, hear our prayer
And save the afflicted from despair.

When they finished, one of the elders said, "Have you got it, Rehara? It is time for the reading."

"Yes, I have it here under my lamba, wrapped in leaves." Rehara handed over his Bible. It was torn and mildewed and rat-eaten through being buried in the rice-pit and hidden in the thatch. Holding it close to the lamp, he began to read: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident..."

After a short pause, the old man whispered, it's your turn now, Ravelo. Have you got your with you?"

"Yes," replied the young man coming forward, "I have a page sewn into my lamba." He pulled out his page of the New Testament and read, "Aza kivy ny fonares" (Let not your heart be troubled.)

Then the old man spoke again. "My brothers and sisters," he said, "these are bitter days, and none of us knows how long they will last. But our faith is firm, for God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Every week our numbers grow. New believers come to join us, and there are some here now who wish to become Christians."

Then a few young Malagasy stood up and proclaimed themselves followers of Jesus. The others greeted them in whispered words, and then the little company knelt down on the floor of the cave to commend these new believers to God's care, praying that if any of them were called to die for their faith, they might be made brave and loyal.

Queen Ranavalona's terrible persecution of the Christians lasted for almost thirty years, until she died. And Despite the worst of her efforts, the number of believers only grew throughout all of those terrible days. God kept His people

strong through the reading of His Word and the work of the Holy Spirit through it, in their hearts.

Our Bible Truth is:**God's People Read His Word, the Bible****Our Bible Verse is: Psalm 119:11,15-16**

"I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways...I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word."

The Malagasy Christians lived out their love and honor for the Bible. We talk about the Bible being God's Word. We talk about it being the most important book of all, but they risked their lives for it. They knew they lived by the Word of God. If they could not have it, they would rather die. Why did risk their life for this book? That God might be glorified and sinners might be saved! That the world might know that by turning away from their sins and trusting Jesus as their Savior, they can be forgiven their sins and adopted as God's dearly loved people. They longed to see the people of Madagascar do this!

Let's praise God for giving us His Word so we can know Him and how to please Him with our lives. Let's praise Him for sending the Holy Spirit to use the words of the Bible to change sinful people like you and me when we read them. Let's ask God to help us to turn away from our sins and trust Jesus as our Savior. Let's ask Him to help us to treasure His Word as much as the Christians of Madagascar and ask Him to help us to read it and grow from it every day.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

1. A Question about the Bible Truth, True or False:
 God’s Word is different from our words. It is perfect. It tells us everything we need to know to live God’s way.
Answer: True!

2. Crack the Case Questions:
a. Who were the soap makers and why were they sly?
 Answer: They were missionaries who had come to bring God’s Word to the people of Madagascar that they might believe the good news of Jesus and be saved. They were sly because they were only making the soap so the queen wouldn’t kick them out of the country and destroy the Bible they were printing.

b. What were they really doing and why was that so important?
 Answer: They were translating the Bible into Malagasy so the people of Madagascar could have it to read in their own language. This was so important because only the Bible is God’s Word. And, it would mean the people could continue to learn about God even when the queen got rid of the missionaries.

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

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 One Who Sends Out Your Word. Not even the most powerful enemy is strong enough to keep your Word from going out!

C God, we confess that even though we have Your Word that we don’t treasure it or read it like we should or could. Our love for You and for Your Word is often cold.

T God, we thank You for giving Your Word to Your people to give them courage and help them to know You and how to obey 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.