

BIG QUESTION UNDER INVESTIGATION

We're in... Unit 7: The Law-Giving God

Unit 7 Big Question and Answer and Song:

"What Are God's Laws Like?

God's Laws Are Perfect!" PFI NIV Songs 7, Tracks 3,4

Unit 7 Bible Verse and Song: Psalm 19:7,9,11

"The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward."

PFI NIV Songs 7, Track 5

BIBLE TRUTH

We're learning... Bible Truth 5: The Heart of God's Law is Love

Love is more than just a good feeling we have inside our hearts. Real love acts in love towards others.

God gave us His laws to tell us how we should live if we would love God and others. They tell us that we should always love God most of all. They tell us to love others as much as we love ourselves. Jesus said that to love God most of all, and to love others as yourself, sums up all of God's Laws.

Jesus lived a perfect life of love that fulfilled all of God's laws. He lived this way because He loved God most of all. This is the only way He would ever want to live. He also did this as part of God's plan to save His people. Jesus offered up His life, lived in perfect obedience to God's laws, as the perfect sacrifice for their sins when He died on the cross. All who turn away from their sins and trust in Him as their Savior are forgiven for their sins. No longer does God hold against them all the ways they break His good laws. He gives them eternal life with Him as His free gift.

But just because Jesus has paid for their sins, that doesn't mean God's people don't care about God's laws anymore. God's laws are how God wants His people to live. They are always the best way to live because they are perfectly good and loving. Like Jesus, God's people want to keep God's laws because God's people love God and want to please Him. The Holy Spirit living in their hearts helps God's people keep God's laws so that they love God and others in ways they never could before.

BIBLE VERSE

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

Bible Truth 5 Bible Verse: Matthew 22:36-40

"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest command. And the second in like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

CASE STORY

Ezra, Nehemiah, Malachi

Our story is called:

The Case of the Two-faced Lover.

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

1. To be two-faced means to say one thing, then do another. Who was the two-faced lover? How did they show they were two-faced?
2. Who loved the two-faced lover? How did He show His love to them?

This story takes place in Old Testament times, in Jerusalem, starting about 600 years before Jesus lived on earth.

Weeds and rocky ruins. That's all the people of Judah saw as they entered Jerusalem. Just seventy years earlier, this city had been magnificent. It had been the home of their kings and the glorious Temple. Thousands of people had lived within its great walls. Thousands more came from all over Israel to worship the LORD, bring their offerings to and learn God's laws. What did they learn from His laws? What did they see when they came to the Temple? That the LORD was a holy God who called them to live holy lives. And, He was a loving God who called them to live lives of love towards Him and others. For the heart of this holy God and His good laws is love.

Yes, Jerusalem had been very special: the one place in all the earth where people could come and draw near to the one, true God. The one place they could hear His Law and learn how to live in love. But something terrible had happened and it started where most troubles start: in the hearts of the people. For, the heart of God's Law might be love for God and others, but the heart of the people and their kings was sinful rebellion. They knew God's laws were perfectly loving and good, but they chose to break them. They worshiped idols instead of the LORD. They acted selfishly and hatefully towards others. God sent many prophets to warn them to repent or face destruction of their land and seventy years of slavery in Babylon.

But they refused to change and the LORD sent Nebuchadnezzar and his mighty Babylonian army into Judah to smash Jerusalem and everything else. Down it all went and the Temple with it. Nebuchadnezzar carried back to Babylon thousands of people and all the best things in Jerusalem—including 5400 articles of gold and silver from the Temple. The land of Israel lay abandoned and in ruins. The people of Israel were taken far away from home,

forced to serve the Babylonians, and then the Persians, as slaves for seventy years, just as the LORD had warned them.

But now the seventy years was over. The LORD worked in the heart of King Cyrus of Persia to let them return to Judah and rebuild their land and the Temple. The LORD had Cyrus free 50,000 slaves, and send them home with great riches. He gave them 100 priestly garments of the finest white linen; a half ton of gold and 3 tons of silver; 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels, and 6,720 donkeys, and all 5400 articles of silver and gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the LORD's Temple years earlier.

The people set out across the miles of deserty wilderness for Judah, their home. They settled their families back in their homes, then gathered back together in the weeds and rocky ruins of Jerusalem. It was time to rebuild the altar of the LORD. With humble, repentant hearts, they dedicated themselves to the LORD. The priests offered up their best lambs as a sacrifice to Him. This was a day of new beginnings for the people. Once more, they promised to love the LORD most of all and love each other too, by learning and living by His good laws.

Over the next twenty years, more of the people came back to Judah. Together they rebuilt their land. Best of all, they rebuilt Jerusalem, their beloved capital city: its houses, its walls, and of course, the Temple. Once more they came together in Jerusalem for feasts, to make sacrifices and to listen to the priests read God's Law. They confessed their sins and committed themselves to the LORD. The heart of God's Law was love; and now the heart of the priests and the people seemed to love God and each other, too. Could it be that the people had learned their lesson? Could it be that the days of hearts full of sinful rebellion were over? Only time would tell...and so it did.

As years passed, the people began to forget the hard years of slavery in Babylon. Sin began to creep steadily back into their hearts and the hearts of the priests, too. Their love for God began to grow tired and cold. It showed in their sacrifices. Oh yes, they kept bringing sacrifices to the Temple, but not the best animals of their flocks that the LORD required. Now they brought Him only animals they did want themselves: those who were sick, injured, blind. When their crops came in, they kept all of the best grain for themselves. They didn't love Him enough to give the full portion that they were to supposed to present to

Him. Not only that, but they began to marry women who worshiped idols. No longer did they care that their families worshiped the LORD and lived according to His good laws. Some of them even began to practice witchcraft.

Their love for each other grew selfish and hateful again, too. They didn't take care of widows and orphans. They cheated the people who worked for them out of the money they deserved. They treated unfairly the people from other countries that came to live among them. Husbands didn't want to live with their wives anymore.

The priests should have helped the people. They should have refused their bad sacrifices. They should have warned the people to repent and turn back to the LORD, but they did not. They didn't care about honoring God any more than the people did.

The people and the priests didn't care, but the LORD did. Out of love for them and the glory of His name, He began to discipline them. He withheld His blessings from them that they might see their sinfulness. Their crops did not grow very well. The enemy nations around them began to hate them. Did the people repent of their sinful ways? No, they did not. They kept on sinning and blamed everything on God saying, "What does it matter if we keep God's laws? What has He ever done for us? He doesn't listen to our prayers!"

The LORD sent the prophet Malachi to warn the people. "Listen up, you priests! Listen up, you people!" Malachi said to them. "The LORD sees everything you are doing. He is a great King, yet you give Him only poor sacrifices. He sees how you are treating each other. He hates it! The heart of God's Law is love: love for Him and love for others. It is clear that you do not love Him or each other. It's because of your sins that He has been withholding His blessings from you. Turn from your sinful ways! Turn back to Him! Start obeying His good laws again!" Malachi urged them.

"Return to Him and He will return to you. Don't just honor Him with your lips. Honor Him with your lives. Bring good sacrifices with repentant and grateful hearts that show you really love Him," he told them. "Start to treat each other in loving ways according to His good laws and see if He doesn't answer you with blessings."

Some of the people listened to what Malachi said. They confessed and repented of their sins. They turned back to the LORD and offered Him right sacrifices. They treated others as God's good Law commanded. But most of the

people and many of the priests did not repent.

“How could our people keep being so stubborn?” the godly wanted to know. “Will there be a day when the hearts of God’s people are filled with love for God and others and the wicked will be gone forever?” they wondered.

The LORD gave them the answer through Malachi, “Yes, a very different day is coming. The day when the LORD will send the Messiah. He will come to save God’s people from their sins once and for all,” the LORD promised.

“The Messiah will be the good priest who will really teach you God’s Law. He will turn many from sin. He will be the “Sun of Righteousness” who will live a perfect life. Then He will offer it up as the final sacrifice for the sins of all who would ever repent and trust Him as their Savior. He will send the Holy Spirit to give them new hearts full of love towards God and others,” he told them.

“Then, at the end of time, this Messiah will come back to earth again,” the LORD promised. “He will bring final punishment to the wicked who refuse to repent and trust in God. But for God’s people, all those who repent of their sins and trust in Him, He would bring complete and everlasting healing from sin and death,” He promised. “And on that Day, so great will be the rejoicing of God’s people that they will leap as calves do when they are released from their stalls. The heart of God’s Law is love; and at last on that Day, it would be the heart of God’s people, too,” He said.

The godly people rejoiced at these wonderful promises. They didn’t know His name, yet they looked forward in faith to the day the Messiah would come. But we do know His name, don’t we? It’s Jesus! He is the Messiah who God sent to save God’s people from their sins and whom God will send back again one day to bring an end to sin and death and a beginning to perfect life with God forever. Come, Lord Jesus, come!

Our Bible Truth is: The Heart of God’s Law is Love

Our Bible Verse is: Matthew 22:36-40

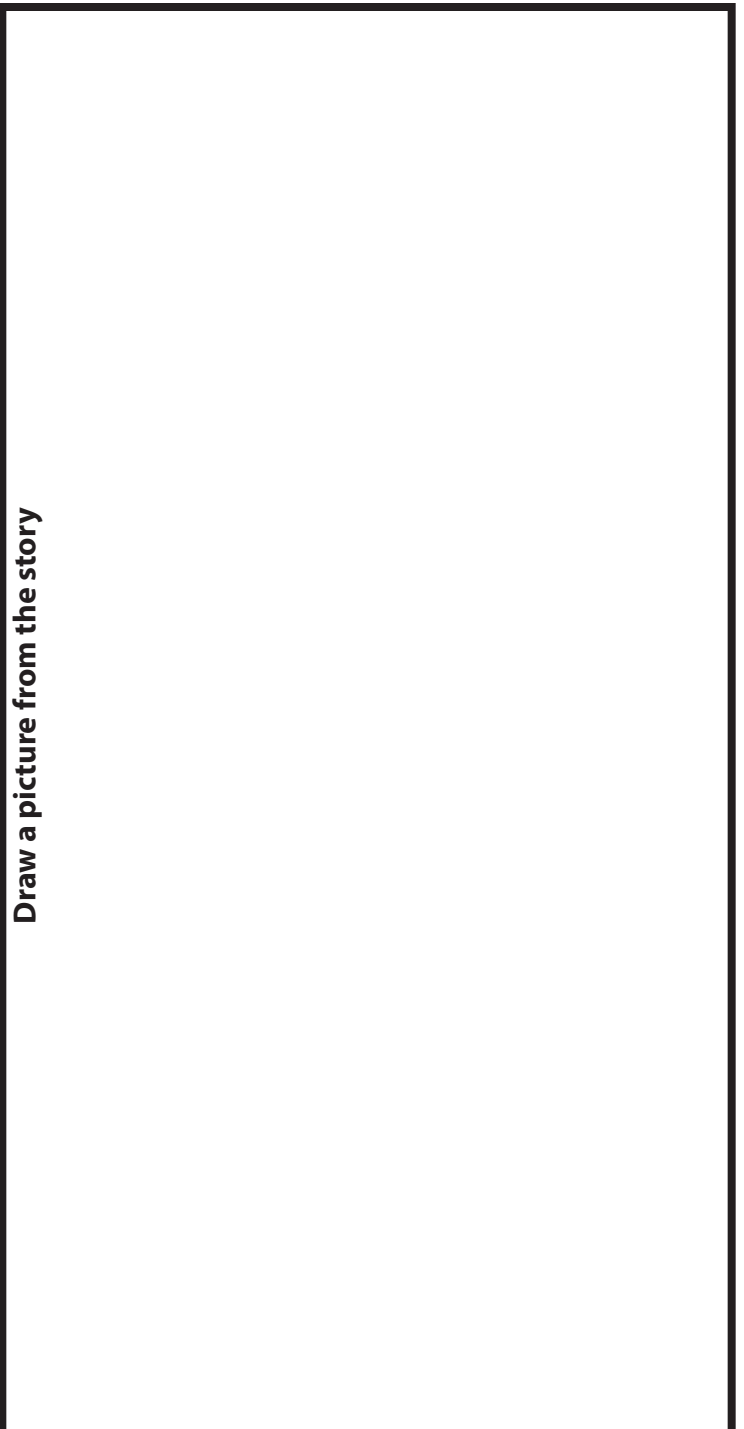
“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest command. And the second in like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

What about you and me? If we are honest with ourselves, we know there are too many times that we are just

like those people of Judah. How often do we only honor God with our lips, but our hearts are really far from Him? Do we know the right answers to questions about loving God and others, but don’t look to see if we really love them as we know we should?

Let’s praise God for giving us His Law so we can know how to love Him and others. Let’s ask Him to work in our hearts that we would repent of our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Let’s ask Him to work in our hearts so that we do not just honor Him with our lips, but truly honor Him with hearts full of desire to keep His Law by loving Him and others.

Draw a picture from the story



SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

1. A Question about the Bible Truth, True or False:
 Love is just a good feeling we have inside our hearts.
 Answer: False. Love sometimes includes a good feeling in our hearts, but love is much more. Love acts in loves towards others.

2. Crack the Case Questions
a. To be two-faced means to say one thing, then do another. Who was the two-faced lover? How did they show they were two-faced?
 Answer: The people of Israel. They promised to love God: to worship Him and keep His laws of love. But, they did not love Him in their hearts, with their worship gifts or by keeping His good laws.

b. Who loved the two-faced lover? How did He show His love to them?
 Answer: The LORD did. He showed His love by being patient, by disciplining them to help them to repent, and by sending Jesus to save from their sins, all who would ever turn from their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior.

3. Fill in the missing words from the Bible Verse: Matthew 22:36-40
 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "___ the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest ____. And the second in like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the ___ and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."
 Answers: love; command; Law.

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN

Take My Life
PFI NIV Songs 7, Track 18

Verse 1
 Take my life and let it be,
 Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
 Take my hands and let them move
 At the impulse of Thy love,
 At the impulse of Thy love.

Words: Frances R. Havergal Music: Henri A.C. Malan

To consecrate something means to set something apart for a special purpose. This hymn is a prayer to God, asking Him to take our life and use it to live out His good will, according to His good laws. In doing this, we live by the very heart of His laws: love!

AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY

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

A God, we praise You for being the rescuer of Your people from slavery to sin and to death. You give them eternal life.

C God, we confess that too many times, like the Israelites, we are sinners who choose to use the good things You have given us to do what we want to do, instead of using them to worship and serve You. We need a Savior!

T God, we thank You that even though we have often disobeyed Your good ways and misused the good things You have given us, that You offer us forgiveness through Jesus.

S God, work in our hearts! Help us to turn away from our sins and trust Jesus as our own Savior. Help us to use all the good gifts You have given us to serve You.

BIBLE VERSE SONG

Love the Lord
PFI NIV Songs 7, Track 19

Love the Lord your God with all your heart,
 Love the Lord your God with all your soul,
 Love the Lord your God with all your mind,
 This is the first and greatest command.

And the second is like it...

Love your neighbor as yourself,
 Love your neighbor as yourself,
 Love your neighbor as yourself,
 All the law and prophets hang,
 On these two commandments.
 Matthew Twenty-two, thirty-seven through forty.

Words: Matthew 22:37-40 Music: Constance Dever ©2011

God has given us many laws in the Bible. It's good to know them all. But Jesus tells us that the purpose behind them all is to love God most of all, and to love others as we love ourselves. When we live out all His good laws, we are loving God and love others as He wants us to.