

BIG QUESTION UNDER INVESTIGATION

We're in... Unit 11: The God Who Saves

Unit 11 Big Question and Answer:

How Can We Be Saved?

It is God's Free Gift!

PFI NIV Songs 11, Tracks 3,4

Unit 11 Bible Verse: Romans 6:23, NIV 1984

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

PFI NIV Songs 11, Track 5

BIBLE TRUTH

We're learning... Bible Truth 4:

The Holy Spirit Changes Our Hearts So We Can Be Saved

Ever since Adam and Eve rebelled against God, each of us have been born with a spirit dead with sin. That means that on our own, none of us can know God or choose to live for Him, just like a dead person can't bring his body back to life.

But God can do what we cannot do. He can bring dead hearts to life, so that we can know Him and want to live for Him. He does this by sending His Holy Spirit to work in our hearts. As we hear God's Word, the Holy Spirit can help us see our sins and help us want to turn away from them. He gives us faith in God. Faith to trust that Jesus died on the cross for sinners and rose from the dead in victory. He gives us a new heart that can know God and want to live for Him.

Jesus called this being "born again, born of God." He calls this being born again because this change in heart is so radical that God actual makes us into a new creation--a brand-new person on the inside! He calls this being born of God, because this change comes from God. And with it, He makes us a part of His family forever.

We can ask God's Holy Spirit to work in our hearts like this. God delights to answer this prayer. He loves for sinners to ask Him to change them and make them into His people.

BIBLE VERSE

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

Bible Truth 4 Bible Verse: Titus 3:4-7, NIV 1984

"But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."

CASE STORY

Acts 9

Our story is: The Case of the Surprising Sky.

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

1. What was surprising about the sky? Who saw the surprise? What happened to him after he saw it?
2. What did God change inside the man that was so surprising? How did He make this change?

This story takes place in New Testament times only a few years after Jesus rose from the dead and went back up to heaven. It starts out in the streets of Jerusalem, the beautiful capitol of Israel.

Bang! Bang! Bang! "In the name of the high priest Caiaphas, I command you to open up or I'll bust down the door!" ordered Saul.

The door opened Saul went in. He glared hatefully at the surprised men and women. "By the high priest's order, you are under arrest for blasphemy. You have dishonored the Lord's name by becoming followers of that fake Messiah, Jesus," he told the Jewish Christians.

"The Jewish people must stay pure in their worship of the Lord," Saul said. "Your blasphemy, your worship of Jesus, cannot be tolerated." Saul turned to the soldiers with him and said, "Seize them!" The temple soldiers grabbed the Christians and took them to prison.

Word of Saul's raids spread quickly all over Jerusalem. "What can we do?" exclaimed the other Jewish Christians. "There seems to be nothing to stop him! Saul has such a hard heart towards Jesus. He is convinced that Jesus is a fake Messiah and thinks that only by getting rid of us will Israel remain pure in their worship of the Lord," the believers exclaimed.

"We have no choice but to leave Jerusalem if we are to survive," others replied. So all the believers, except Jesus' original disciples left Jerusalem and scattered throughout Judea, Samaria, and beyond.

But to the horror of Saul and other Jewish leaders, this only made the problem worse! As Christians left Jerusalem and settled in new areas, they told more and more people the good news of Jesus. As the Christians told about Jesus, the Holy Spirit worked in the listeners' hearts and gave them faith to believe.

News of more and more Jews becoming Christians made its way to Saul. He was furious! He must do something to stamp out these Christians!

Saul went to the high priest, Caiaphas and said, "I have terrible news for you. The soldiers and I have put in jail almost all the Christians here in Jerusalem, but many have escaped to other parts of Judea and Samaria, and even as far as Damascus. These blasphemers are going into the synagogues and spreading their lies about Jesus to Jews and God-fearing Gentiles there," Saul told him. "I am especially worried about Damascus. There are three, large synagogues there and many thousands of Jews and God-fearing Gentiles. If they begin to preach about this fake Messiah there, many good Jews might be tricked into believing in Him, too," he complained to Caiaphas.

"To make things worse, Damascus is one of the most important cities on the trade route that goes from here all the way to Babylon," Saul continued. "If these Christians spread their lies to the hundreds of merchants passing through Damascus, soon this Jesus will have followers all over the world. We must get to Damascus quickly and crush those Christians!"

"I agree. What is your plan?" replied Caiaphas.

"Give me some soldiers and send me to Damascus, to hunt down the Christians, arrest them and bring them back here to put in jail," Saul replied.

"Done!" Caiaphas answered. "Be on your way quickly! Damascus is 175 miles away—a good week's walk—there is no time to lose."

"Yes, sir. I will do my job and return as quickly as I can," Saul promised him.

Soon Saul and his men were on their way. Saul was anxious to get there and stop those Christians! The Lord's worship must stay pure. The laws must be obeyed. The lies about this fake Messiah, Jesus, would end!. Saul would make sure of that...or would he? For as Saul and the soldiers neared Damascus, something completely unexpected happened. Something that would change Saul forever.

They were almost to Damascus, when suddenly a heavenly light shone down on Saul. He fell down to the ground and heard a voice say, "Saul, and heard a voice say, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but didn't see anyone. Saul got up

off the ground. He opened his eyes, but found he couldn't see anything. The soldiers took Saul by hand and led him to their lodgings at Judas' house in Damascus. For three days, Saul sat, blind and unwilling to eat or drink anything. What was happening to him?

A change was happening in Saul. Not only had he seen with his eyes and heard with his ears that Jesus really was the Messiah; but in Saul's heart, the Holy Spirit had begun to work. He was giving Saul the faith to believe in Jesus. He was cleansing Saul's heart of sin and filling it with true knowledge and love for God.

"How could this be?" Saul wondered. "I thought Jesus was a fake Messiah, but now He has shown me that He is no fake at all. I thought I was so good and righteous by being a Pharisee and by working so hard to get rid of the Christians. But now I know that I was the one being unrighteous, not them. I thought they were being disobedient and deceived by sinfulness. Now I know that I was the one being disobedient and deceived by my own sinfulness! This is awful! I have hated and killed many of the Lord's true people! I am the chief—the greatest—of sinners," Saul thought.

But even though Saul had done such terrible things, the Lord loved him. He hadn't spoken to him from heaven just to tell him to stop harming the Christians. He was calling Saul to be one of His followers and serve Him in great ways.

While Saul sat in darkness and the Holy Spirit worked in his heart, the Lord called in a vision to Ananias-- one of His disciples who lived in Damascus.

"Ananias!" the Lord said.

"Yes, Lord," he answered.

"Go to Judas' house on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight," the Lord said.

Ananias was scared to obey. "Lord, I've heard about this man and all the harm he has done to your people in Jerusalem. He's come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all your people," he prayed.

But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! I've chosen Saul to take the good news of salvation to both the Jews and the Gentiles (non-Jews). I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

So Ananias went to find Saul at Judas' house. He placed his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord--Jesus,

who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here--has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

The Lord has made me a new person!" Saul exclaimed. "In His mercy He has given to me the gift of faith to hear and believe the truth, even though I had been so disobedient and deceived. He saved me not because of good, righteous things I had done but because of His mercy. Through Jesus Christ my Savior, He has poured out on me His Holy Spirit generously on me, cleansing my spirit of sin and making my heart new by filling it with the Holy Spirit. I have been the chief of sinners, but now the Lord Jesus has forgiven me to show to others how great His mercy is. Everything else is nothing compared with knowing Jesus. I will spend the rest of my days praising His name and telling others about the glorious riches of knowing Him," Saul decided.

Saul spent several days with the Christians in Damascus. At once he started preaching in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. All those who heard him were shocked and asked, "Isn't he the man who was putting the Christians in jail in Jerusalem? Didn't he come here to arrest more Christians and take them as prisoners to the chief priests?"

But that was the old Saul, who was gone. Now there was the new Saul, completely changed by the Holy Spirit working in his heart. And this Saul grew more and more powerful by the Holy Spirit. And he proved to the Jews living in Damascus that Jesus is the Christ.

Our Bible Truth Is:

The Holy Spirit Brings Us to God

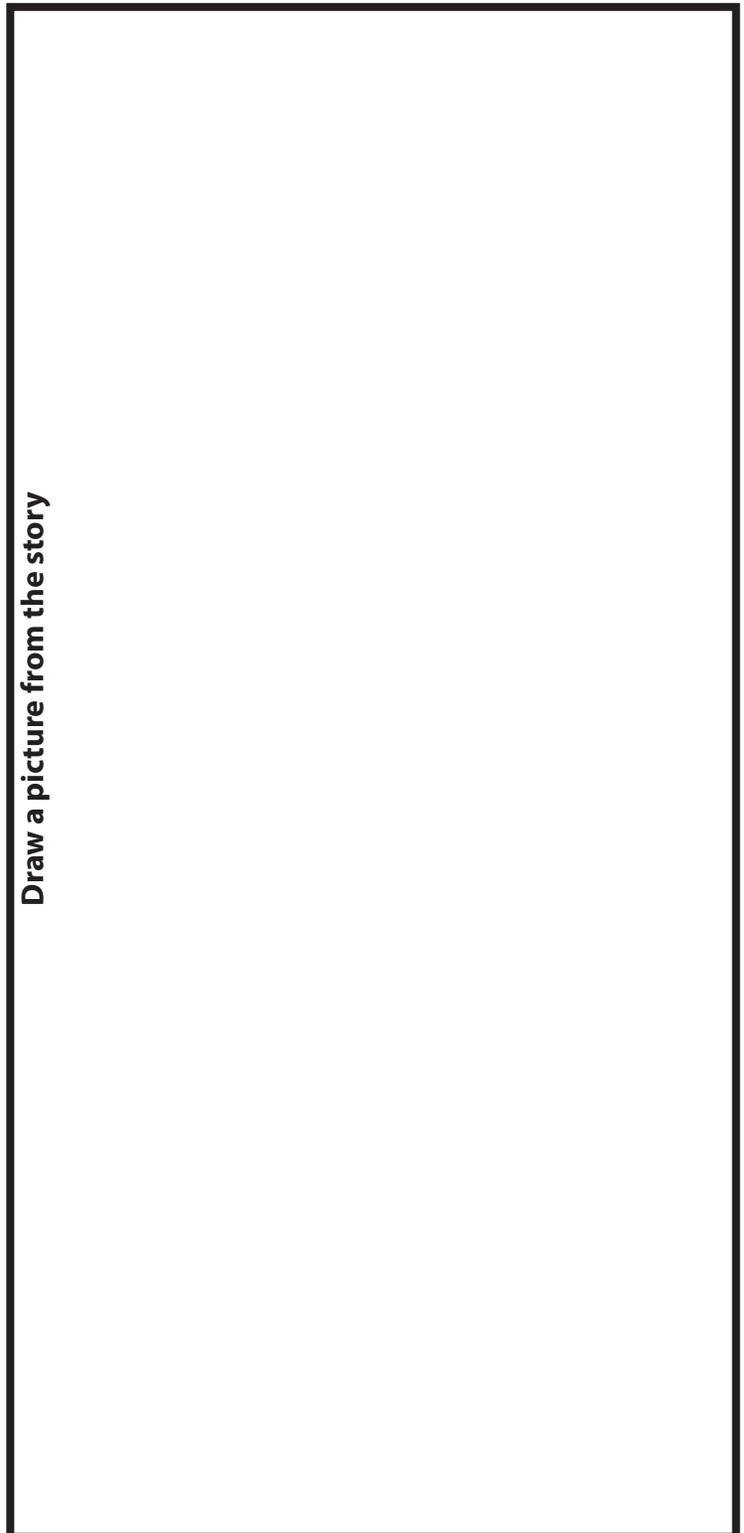
Our Bible Verse is Titus 3:4-7:

"But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."

Saul was completely changed man. The old Saul was gone, the new Saul had come. The Lord even gave Saul a new name--Paul--as a picture of the great work He had done in his heart. It was by the Holy Spirit that Saul's hard,

hard heart was changed and he believed in Jesus.

Let's praise God for His mighty Holy Spirit! He can change any heart! Do you have a stubborn heart towards God? Do you know someone who does not believe in Jesus and has a stubborn heart towards Him? God can change your heart, if you ask Him to. He can change the hearts of anyone! We should never give up praying for others because we know that no one has a heart too hard for the Holy Spirit to change.



Draw a picture from the story

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

1. A Question about the Bible Truth, True or False:

Being born again is what Jesus called the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of God’s people, helping them turn from their sins and trust in Him as their Savior. This is because we have to be born as a baby again.

Answer: False. Jesus did call this being born again, but not because we have to be born like a baby again. It’s because the change of heart the Holy Spirit works is so radical that God actual makes us into a new creation—a brand-new person on the inside.

2. Crack the Case Questions

a. What was surprising about the sky? Who saw the surprise? What happened to him after he saw it?

Answer: Suddenly a heavenly light shone down on Paul. Paul saw the surprise. Jesus told him to stop persecuting Him (and His people). Jesus caused Paul to become blind and told him to go into Damascus and wait. Paul obeyed.

b. What did God change inside the man that was so surprising? How did He make this change?

Answer: Paul became a believer in Jesus. He boldly explained to others that Jesus was the Christ and urged them to repent of their sins and believe in Him. God sent His Holy Spirit to work in Paul’s heart and change him.

3. Fill in the missing words from the Bible Verse:

Titus 3:4-7

“But when the kindness and love of ___ our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of ___ things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and ___ by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become ___ having the hope of eternal life.”

Answers: God; righteous; renewal; heirs.

AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY

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

A God, we praise You for being holy, yet providing the way through Jesus for unacceptable sinners (like all of us!) to be accepted by You as Your own, dear people.

C God, we confess that we are sinners who have chosen to disobey You and Your good ways. We are unacceptable to You, on our own. We need a Savior!

T God, we thank You for choosing to include people from every tribe, nation and language—not just Jews– as Your people.

S God, work in our hearts! Help us to turn away from our sins and trust Jesus as our own Savior. Send Your Holy Spirit to work in our hearts that we might know and love You. Keep strengthening Your people to go out and tell everyone about Jesus that they might be saved

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN

Amazing Grace

PFI NIV Songs 11, Tracks 12,13

Verse 1

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now am found.
Was blind but now I see.

Verse 2

‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

Words: John Newton Music: Virginia Harmony: arr. Edwin O. Excell

We would all be lost in our sins and rebellion forever, if it were not for God sending His Son Jesus. Jesus kept God’s laws perfectly and offered up Himself as the perfect sacrifice needed for sin. Then He gives to all who repent of their sins and trust in Him the amazingly gracious gift of salvation. He first gives them “sight” to make them aware of their sinfulness and to fear His judgment, then as they turn to Him, He relieves their fears by taking away their guilt the hour they believe.

BIBLE VERSE SONG

He Saved Us

PFI NIV Songs 11, Track 14

He saved us, he saved us,
Through the washing of re-birth
And renewal by the Spirit.
He saved us, he saved us,
Through the Holy Spirit.
The Holy Spirit whom he poured out,
On us generously,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
The Holy Spirit whom he poured out,
On us through Jesus Christ.

Words adapted from Titus 3:4-7 Constance Dever © 2011

We could never please God with our own good works. Only through Jesus’ perfect life offered up in the place of sinners can we be saved. And what a salvation it is! God, Himself, sends His Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of His people. He gives them the gift of faith. He helps them turn away from their sins. He makes them clean of their sins and all new on the inside. This is how we become God’s people—His heirs, that is, His children who will receive eternal life with Him forever.