

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 11:
God's People Tell Others about Him*

We've all rebelled against God and deserve His just and eternal punishment for our sins. But God, in His great love for sinners, chose to send His Son, Jesus to be our Savior. Jesus came and lived the perfect life that pleases God. On the cross, He offered it up as the perfect payment for the sins of God's people. On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead in victory. He had conquered sin and death, once and for all! Now all who turn from their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior are forgiven and receive eternal life with God. This good news is what Christians call the gospel--and everyone needs to hear it! God calls His people to tell it to everyone, in every part of the world. Jesus promises to come back after the gospel has been taken to every people on earth, all according to God's good plan.

BIBLE VERSE

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

Bible Truth 11 Bible Verse: Romans 10:13-15, ESV

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'"

CASE STORY

Jonah 1-3

Our story is: The Case of the Reluctant Messenger.

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

1. Who was the Reluctant Messenger?
2. What was he reluctant to do? Why was it wrong for him to be reluctant?

In Iraq lie two great mounds the people call "Nebi Yunis" and "Kuyunijik." In 1850, Henry Layard dug into Kuyunijik and uncovered an ancient city known by that name. There were pieces of tall, arched gateways with great, winged, stone lions. A stately hall leading to a huge, royal palace, guarded by gigantic, winged, stone bulls. There were temples to Ashur and other idols. Layard had discovered one of the greatest capitals of the ancient world!

But the mound called "Nebi Yunis" was a different matter. No one has ever been allowed to dig into it. It is considered too sacred. It was named after a man named Nebi Yunis who brought a special message from God to the people of Kuyunijik thousands of years ago. This case is the story of this man, this city and the message he was reluctant to bring to it.

Long ago in Old Testament times, about 1000 years before Jesus was born, Kuyunijik was a big, beautiful city. Kuyunijik may have been beautiful to look at, but it was hated by many, especially the Israelites and Nebi Yunis, the prophet The LORD had given them. It was the home of the Assyrians-- some of the cruelest, fiercest people who have ever lived. Always greedy for more land and riches, they would invade and conquer the peoples around them. And when they did, they prided themselves in forcing the people to be their slaves or hurting them in terrible ways. Israel dreaded the thought of being invaded by this terrible and powerful enemy.

The Israelites and Nebi Yunis, the prophet the LORD had given them, especially hated the Assyrians. They had been disobeying The LORD and He threatened to discipline them through an Assyrian invasion if they did not repent. And while they didn't turn back to the LORD, they did keep a watchful eye towards Assyria.

How horrified Nebi Yunis was when one day the Lord told him: "Go to the great city of Kuyunijik and preach against it because of its wickedness. "

"No way! I won't do it!" Nebi Yunis flatly refused. "I won't

take the LORD's message to them. The LORD will spare them if they hear this message and turn from their sins. I don't want them to be spared. I want them destroyed. I will not go!

The LORD wants me to go north and east 200 miles to Kuyunijik, but I will go south and west to the other end of the world – to Tarshish! I will get as far away from Kuyunijik and the Lord as I possibly can!" Nebi Yunis decided.

So Nebi Yunis went to Joppa and boarded a Phoenician merchant ship headed to Tarshish. He settled himself in the hull, under ship's deck and fell asleep, satisfied that he had dodged his duty.

But Nebi Yunis was wrong! The LORD wanted this message of repentance and mercy to go to the Assyrians. Nebi Yunis could not stop His plans. So He sent a great storm that tossed the merchant ship up-and-down, to and fro. Every sailor cried out to his god for help. They threw cargo out the ship into the sea to lighten it's load. But still the ship was close to sinking.

The ship's captain found Nebi Yunis sleeping and said, "Wake up! Call when you're God! Perhaps he can save us."

The sailors gathered everyone together to cast lots. "Perhaps God will show us if one of us is to blame for the storm," they hoped. And sure enough, it was Nebi Yunis who drew the losing lot.

At last Nebi Yunis confessed what he had done. "I am a Hebrew and I fear the LORD, the God who made land and sea," he told them. "But I am fleeing from Him and the message He has told me to tell the Assyrians."

"How could you do this?" the men asked. What should we do to end this storm?"

"Pick me up and throw me into the sea and it will become calm for you. I know this storm has come because of me," he replied.

Together the sailors Prayed, "Oh LORD, don't let us die on account of this man's life." Then they picked up Nebi Yunis, threw him into the sea, and the sea became calm. The sailors saw what the LORD did and believed. They offer to sacrifices and promised to serve the LORD. Without even realizing it, Nebi Yunis been used to turn these men away from their gods to worship the LORD instead.

Down, down, down, Nebi Yunis sunk into the sea. He deserved to die, but the LORD, in His mercy, had other plans. He sent a great fish to rescue Nebi Yunis by swallowing him up. Gulp!

What would it be like to be swallowed by a great fish? Sailors from whaling days in New England were sometimes swallowed by whales then cut out of their bellies alive. They have left us with a first- hand description. Dark, cramped, and in company of whatever else the fish was digesting, is how they described it. But worst of all, was the acid in fish's stomach which burned their skin terribly and bleached it bright white!

No matter how uncomfortable it would've been for Nebi Yunis in that great fish's stomach, he was grateful to be alive! He was the LORD's messenger and he had deliberately disobeyed Him! He didn't deserve to be rescued at all. The LORD worked in his heart as he sat in that fish for three days. He repented of his disobedience and cried out to the LORD, "I'm sorry, God. Salvation comes from You. I will obey you now."

The LORD heard Nebi Yunis' prayer. He commanded the fish to spit him out and up onto dry land. How good the sand must have felt! Nebi Yunis had time to do little more than pick the fish muck off himself before the LORD spoke to him again: "Go to Kuyunijik and proclaim my message to the people there."

Nebi Yunis still hated the Assyrians, but he would disobey the LORD. He set off walking the two hundred miles through dry, desert country to Kuyunijik. After about a month's journey, he reached the city.

For three days Nebi Yunis traveled from city gate to city gate, and temple to temple – all the important meeting places of the city – that everyone might hear his message. "Forty more days until Kuyunijik will be overturned. This is the LORD's warning to you," Nebi Yunis told the Assyrians.

The people stared at this Israelite was strange, bleach – white skin and hair. They heard his stern message of the LORD's coming judgment for their evil ways. They had to decide: were these the words of a crazy man or of the LORD God?

They decided they were the words of the LORD?! Heard the message and believed, even the king, himself. He rose up from his throne, laid aside his robe, and covered himself with sack cloth and sat in ashes. He issued a proclamation to all the people: "In Kuyunijik, by the degree of the king and his nobles: all people and even sheep, goats and cattle must not taste a thing nor drink any water. They must all be covered with sackcloth. Then, all my people, earnestly pray to the LORD and turn away from your wicked ways.

Who knows, He might turn his fierce anger from us and not bring the punishment upon us that He has promised."

When the LORD saw their deeds, and that they had truly turned away from their wicked ways, He had mercy on them and did not bring the punishment upon them that they deserved. It was just had Nebi Yunis had thought! The LORD was so gracious and compassionate that He even chose to show mercy to these terrible Assyrians.

Our Bible Truth is:

God's People Tell Others about Him

Our Bible Verse is: Romans 10:13-15

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'"

Did you guess that Nebi Yunis was the man we know as Jonah? And that Kuyunijik is the city we know as Nineveh? We just used the Iraqi pronunciation of these names so perhaps you would listen to this very familiar story in a different way.

It's really not so much a story about a big fish, as it is about an even bigger message. A message so important that it's a message of life or death that God wants His people to take to everyone on earth! A message of our failure to keep God's good laws. A message of His coming punishment upon our sins. But also a message of His mercy to those who repent of their sins and trust in Him to save us. Jonah and the people of Nineveh didn't know the name of the Savior the Lord would send, but we do. It's Jesus, God's Son! Through Him, we can be forgiven our sins and know eternal life with God.

Let's praise God for being so gracious and compassionate to sinful people--like the Assyrians, like Jonah, and like you and me! Let's ask Him to work in our hearts that we would turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Let's ask Him to help us to tell others about Him--no matter who they are--that they might be saved, too.

Draw a picture from the story

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

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

God has always planned for His people to be the ones who share the gospel with the people of the world.

Answer: True.

2. Crack the Case Questions:

a. Who was the Reluctant Messenger?

Answer: Jonah.

b. What was he reluctant to do? Why was it wrong for him to be reluctant?

Answer: He was reluctant to tell the people of Nineveh to repent of their sins and avoid the LORD's punishment because they were enemies of Israel. None of us are good enough to deserve to receive God's mercy.

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

Romans 10:13-15

"Everyone who calls on the name of the ___ will be saved.' How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they ___ without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are ___? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'"

Answers: Lord; hear; sent.

AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY

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

A God, we praise You for being-so merciful to sinful people like us.

C God, we confess we, like the people of Nineveh and even like Jonah, are sinners who choose to live life our own way rather than obey Your good ways. We deserve Your punishment! We need a Savior!

T God, we thank You for being so patient with Your stubborn people, like You were with Jonah.

S God, work in our hearts! Help us turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Please send out Your people to tell others about You. Please help them repent of their sins and know You as their Savior.

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN

Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy

PFI NIV Songs 12, Track 31

Verse 1

Come ye sinners, poor and needy,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity, love, and pow'r.

Refrain:

I will arise and go to Jesus,
He will embrace me in His arms.
In the arms of my dear Savior,
O there are ten thousand charms.

Words: Joseph Hart Music: Walker's Southern Harmony

"All people suffer the effects of their sinful rebellion against God. Everyone is poor and in need of a Savior. Everyone is weak and weary, sick and sore from sin. God, in His great mercy, chose to send Jesus to save sinners. Yes, Jesus paid for the sins of all who would ever turn and trust in Him. He welcomes them tenderly to come to Him and know the ten thousand charms of His love. If we do this, He will welcome us as our dear Savior, too."

BIBLE VERSE SONG

How Beautiful

PFI NIV Songs 12, Track 32

Refrain

How beautiful! How beautiful!
How beautiful are the feet.
How beautiful! How beautiful!
Are the feet of those who preach the good news.
Ev'ryone who calls on the name of the Lord,
Will be saved.
Ev'ryone who calls on the name of the Lord,
Will be saved.

Yes, but I have some questions....

How then will they call on Him they've not believed in?
How are they to believe in Him they never heard?
How are they to hear without someone preaching?
How are they to preach unless they are sent?

Well, it all goes back to those feet! Refrain

Romans Ten, thirteen through fifteen.

Words: Romans 10:13-15, ESV Music: Constance Dever ©2011

This verse reminds us that God has chosen for others to hear the good news of salvation by sending His people to tell others about Him. They must go, if others are to hear. The feet of people who go tell others about Jesus are beautiful, not because they have pretty toes and ankles. This is a way of saying that people who are willing to go and tell others about Jesus bring wonderful news of eternal life to those who would otherwise have no hope of salvation.