

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

Luke 10:24-37

Our story is: The Case of the Shema and the Scribe.

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

1. What is the Shema? What is a scribe and what did he do to keep the Shema?
2. What did Jesus teach the scribe about the Shema?

This story takes place in New Testament times, when Jesus lived on earth.

Jesus was headed towards Jerusalem. A man joined the large crowd which had gathered to hear Jesus teach. The people around him needed only one look to know that this man was one of the most important men in Israel. His long, flowing robes, the phylactery strapped around his forehead said it all: he was a scribe—an expert in God's Law. For thirty- five years this man had studied every in and out of God's Law to know the meaning of the verses tucked inside that phylactery and be able to teach it to others. What were the verses in that little black leather box tied to his forehead? The Jews called them the Shema: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) These were the most important verses in Torah, "the Law"—the Jewish name for the first five books in the Bible that Moses wrote down.

From the time he was a boy, this man began studying the meaning of those verses. When all the other little boys had gone to the local synagogue school to learn the basics of Jewish Law, this very smart little boy one went to a special academy called the Beth Hammedrash to become a scribe.

"You must know God's Law perfectly and be able to teach it to others. There is nothing more important than God's Word and the writings of the scribes and other great teachers. You must be like a hedge of protection around the Law, making sure that our people know it and keep it just as God requires," his teachers told him.

This little boy worked hard. As soon as he learned to read and write the Hebrew letters, he studied Bible, then the Midrash and the Talmud--two books of other rules the scribes thought all should obey. Last of all, the boy was taught how to make a copy of the Bible--the greatest honor of all. There were lots of rules he had to follow to write it down correctly.

"Never write down even one word by memory," his teachers told him. "Always have another copy of it in front of you. Before you write a word, you must say it out loud. Always remember to wash your hands before and after each time you write down the name of the LORD because His name is so holy. Make sure there is white space between every single letter of God's Word you write down--the words must never touch each other. Do not leave out or add even the smallest mark. A scroll with even the smallest mistake must be fixed within thirty days or buried. We must never have anything but perfect copies of the Bible!" they told him. "That is why you must be so careful. Remember: you are the hedge of protection around God's Law. You must always protect it!" they warned him.

It wasn't until his fortieth birthday, that this boy was at last considered a full scribe. Now he was the expert and keeper of God's Law. After all his years of studying, what had this scribe decided those verses in his phylactery meant? How should we love God? By staying pure by keeping all the scribes' little rules and staying away from sinners like tax collectors and Samaritans. That's what all the teachers taught--well not quite all the teachers! This new teacher, Jesus, disagreed. He hadn't trained to be a scribe, yet He taught His new teaching as if it was the only right way to understand God's Word. He didn't keep all the little rules the scribes had added to God's laws.

As you can imagine, the Jewish leaders were furious with Jesus. They wanted to get rid of Him. And that's exactly why this scribe was in the crowd with Jesus that day: to do something to make Jesus look bad.

The scribe stood up in front of the crowd and asked Jesus a favorite question debated among the scribes. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Perhaps Jesus' answer would show Him up as a bad teacher; or better yet, cause Him to say something that would get Him in trouble, the scribe hoped.

Jesus didn't answer his question but turned it back to the scribe. "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

The scribe answered back with the words of the Shema in his phylactery and a verse from Leviticus: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and

you will live."

"But who is my neighbor?" the scribe asked.

Jesus knew what was going on inside this scribe. He didn't really want to know how to keep these commandments better. He had only come to find fault. The words of the Shema tucked inside his phylactery had never made it into his heart at all. He could give clever answers, but his heart was cold. He knew nothing of the real heart of God's Law: love for God, love for others. This scribe had come as an enemy, but Jesus responded with the loving rebuke of a friend. He would tell a story that would answer this man's question and reveal what true love looked like. Perhaps he would be convicted of his sin, and truly turn to God.

"A Jewish man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho," Jesus began. "As he came to that dangerous stretch known as the 'Red and Bloody Way,' robbers hiding in the deserted cliffs jumped out at him. They stripped him of his valuable clothes and belongings, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be the first person to travel down that same road after the attack. He had just finished his service at the Temple offering sacrifices before the LORD and was on his way home. He saw the man, bloody and bruised along the side of the road, either dead or almost dead.

"What should I do?" thought the priest. "I can't tell if that man is dead or just almost dead. If he's alive, I guess I could help him. But if he is dead, it's a completely different matter. The little rules of the scribes clearly say that not even a priest's shadow must touch a dead man or he will become unclean. Aren't I supposed to love God by keeping all the little rules and staying pure? I better not take a chance. I'm sure someone else will come by and help him soon," he decided.

The priest was right. Someone else did come along soon. It was a Levite. Like the priest, he had just finished serving in the Temple, too. He had helped lead the worship services to the LORD and now he was on his way home, just like the priest. As he came down the rocky path, he saw the man, too.

"Is that man dead or just almost dead? I guess I can get a little closer to see," he thought to himself. He nudged up as close to the body as he dared, but saw no sign of life.

"He might be dead. If he is, I will become unclean if I help him. Hmmm...the scribes' little rules tell me to love God by staying pure. How can I do that, if I touch this man and

he's dead? Surely, someone else will come by soon to help the man." So the Levite, too, passed by the man on the other side of the road and continued on home.

The Levite was right. Someone else did come along soon. It was a Samaritan merchant passing through enemy territory on business. If anyone was in a hurry to get out of Israel, it was him. He had probably felt the spit of disgust of many a Jew on his face already this trip. Any decent Jew would refuse to talk to him, give him a place to stay or a bite of food to eat. According to the scribes' little rules, a Jew became impure if he touched a Samaritan or anything a Samaritan owned. But as this Samaritan man saw the dying Jewish man lying in the road, and went to help him. He didn't care that the Jew usually would have cringed at the very thought of a Samaritan touching him. This was a man was almost dead. Nothing else mattered. He tore some cloth into bandages and poured oil and wine into his wounds to clean and soothe them. Putting the man on his donkey, he took to him nearby inn, and took care of the man all night. The next day the Samaritan man took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'I have business that can't wait. Take this money. It should be enough to cover his food for three weeks. Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will pay you back for any extra expense you may have.'"

His story finished, Jesus turned once more to the scribe and asked, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

"The 'one' who showed mercy on him," the scribe answered, refusing to even say the word "Samaritan."

"Go and do likewise," Jesus urged the scribe.

The Bible never tells us what happened to the scribe after hearing Jesus' story. He had given Jesus the right answer, but what was going on in his heart? Did the true meaning of Shema tucked in his phylactery come into his heart? Would today be the day when he would give up his clever answers for true love for God and for others? We can only hope that he did receive Jesus' rebuke and in repentance and faith, turned to truly keep the heart of God's Law by loving God and loving others.

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

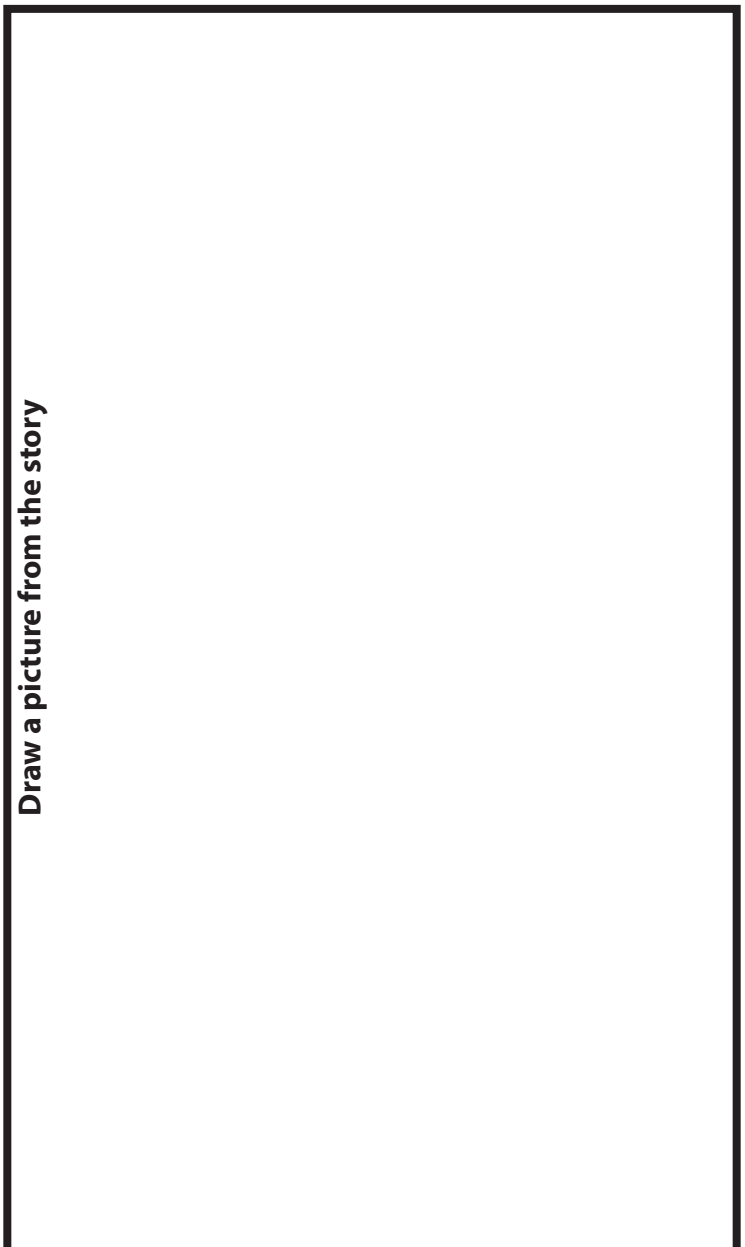
Our Bible Verse is: Matthew 22:36-40

"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."

But what about you and me? How much are we like the scribes in Jesus' day? Is there pride growing in our hearts because we know so much? Do we only know Bible verses about loving God and loving others, but do not really love God and others, like the heart of God's Law tells us to? Let's praise God for giving us His laws that show us how to truly love Him and others.

Let's ask Him to help us turn away from our sins and trust Jesus as our own Savior. Let's ask Him to help us, like the Samaritan, desire to show love and mercy on whoever needs it—even if they are our worst enemies.



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. What is the Shema? What is a scribe and what did he do to keep the Shema?
 Answer: The Shema is the name for Deuteronomy 6:4-5: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." A scribe was a man who trained many years to write down copies of the Bible by hand.

b. What did the scribe think the Shema meant? What did Jesus teach the scribe about the Shema?
 Answer: He should be careful to keep many extra laws and teach others to do the same. This would protect them from breaking God's laws. Jesus taught that this was not how to keep God's laws. Loving God and loving others and showing them mercy were how God's laws were fulfilled.

3. Fill in the missing words from the Bible Verse: Matthew 22:36-40
 "Teacher, which is the greatest ___ in the Law?' Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your ___ 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.' ___ the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."
 Answers: commandment; heart; all.

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 Maker of Your Perfect Law that shows us how to love You and others.

C God, we confess that many times, like the scribe, we know the right answers, but do not really love You or others. We need a Savior!

T God, we thank You for promising to save all those who turn from their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior. Thank You for being so willing to forgive us and to work love for You and others in our hearts, if we ask You.

S God, work in our hearts! Help us to turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Send Your Holy Spirit to change our hearts so that we love You most and love others as much as we love ourselves.

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.