

BIG QUESTION UNDER INVESTIGATION

We're in... Unit 8: The God Who Loves

Unit 8 Big Question and Answer and Song:

"What Is God's Love for His People Like?"

PFI NIV Songs 8, Tracks 3,4

Unit 8 Bible Verse and Song: 1 Chronicles 16:34 NIV 1984

"Give thanks to the LORD for He is good. His love endures forever."

PFI NIV Songs 8, Track 5

BIBLE TRUTH

We're learning... Bible Truth 3:

God Showed the Depths of His Love By Giving His Son Jesus to Save His People

God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Three persons, but just one God. God could live forever happy, in the wonderful, perfect fellowship of love He has within Himself. He has never needed anything or anyone to be complete.

No, God didn't need anyone else to love, yet He chose to create people with a heart to know and love Him. He wanted to share Himself with these people--especially His people: all those who would ever turn and trust in Jesus as their Savior.

But even before He created the world, even before He created them, God knew that His love would be very, very costly. All people--including His people-- would rebel against Him. They would break fellowship with Him. They would deserve His punishment, not His love. Only a huge act of love on His part would rescue them. And right then, before the beginning, God chose to make it!

He chose to give His one, dear Son Jesus to take the punishment for their sins. So at just the right time, Jesus left the wonderful, perfect fellowship with God the Father and Holy Spirit in heaven and came to earth to live as a man. He lived the perfect life needed to please God. On the cross, He offered it up as the perfect sacrifice for sin. He took all the terrible punishment for the sins of God's people so they could be forgiven. Because of Jesus, they would get to know God and delight in His wonderful love.

God has shown His love for His people in many ways, but the greatest way He has shown His love is by giving Jesus to save them. We can become God's people when we turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior.

BIBLE VERSE

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

Bible Truth 3 Bible Verse: 1 John 4:10

"This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."

CASE STORY

Numbers 21:4-9; 2 Kings 18:4; John 3:1-1

Our story is called:

The Case of the Lifted-Up Lifesaver.

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

1. Who was lifted up long before Jesus lived? How was that used as a lifesaver?
2. How was Jesus like what was lifted up? How was He a lifesaver?

This story takes place in Old Testament times, about 1400 years before Jesus lived on earth.

Hot rocks, shadeless, scrubby bushes and heading south! What could be worse? That's what the Israelites thought as they headed back through the wilderness toward Elith. For thirty-eight, long years they had wandered those hot, deserted lands with their parents. Why? Because of their stubborn unbelief in the LORD. They refused to believe that the same great God who rescued them from the mighty Egyptians would also help them conquer the mighty enemies who lived in the Promised Land He was giving them.

"For forty years, you will wander through the wilderness until all you unbelieving adults die," the LORD had told them. "Your children will be the ones I take into the Promised Land, not you." So wander in the wilderness they did, year after year.

Now in the thirty-eighth year, the LORD was leading them to the banks of the Jordan River. Here they would settle for the last two years before entering the Promised Land at last.

There were two ways to get to their camping spot: a long way and a short way. The long way took them through more of that terrible, hot wilderness. But the short way took them through the pleasant, green lands of Edom. I bet you can guess which way the Israelites wanted to go: the short, pleasant, green way!

But this was not to be. The King Edom refused to let them pass through his country, no matter how much they pleaded. So it was back south through hot rocks and shadeless, scrubby bushes they had to go, many hundreds miles out of their way.

The Israelites should have trusted the LORD. They should have remembered all He in love had done for them and trusted that there was a wise plan behind their journey south through the wilderness again. But they did not.

Instead they spoke against the LORD and Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable [manna]," they said.

What a terrible thing to say! What a terrible thing to do! To forget what the Lord in His love had done for them! Had He not done amazing miracles to rescue them from slavery in Egypt? Had He not loved them and made them His special people, even though there was nothing very lovable or special about them? Had He not kept His covenant promises to them even when they broke their covenant promises to Him? Had He not cared for them out in the wilderness, providing them with manna—bread from heaven— each day to eat and making delicious water gush forth from wilderness rocks? Had He not kept their clothes and sandals from wearing out all these 38 years? Hadn't He given them Moses to be their patient and wise leader? Yes, they should have remembered His love and trusted Him. But they did not; and the LORD now disciplined them again.

So from underneath those hot rocks and scruffy, shadeless bushes, He caused lots and lots of vicious, red striped snakes to come out and bite them. The bites swelled up and hurt terribly. What was worse, these snakes were deadly poisonous. The Israelites became very sick; many of them even died!

The people immediately knew why these snakes had come. They knew it was the LORD's just punishment for complaining instead of trusting God, yet again. How sorry they were! They came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that He take away the snakes from us," they pleaded.

Now, the LORD didn't have to do anything. He would have been completely just to let them die after how they had treated Him yet again. But the LORD was still full of love for His people. He chose to not punish them as their sins deserve. He offered a way to heal their bodies and save all who would trust in Him.

The LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery snake like the ones biting the people and set it on a pole. Everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live."

Moses did as the LORD said. He made a fiery-red snake out of reddish-colored bronze (the Hebrew actually says copper), set it on a pole and lifted it high in the sky for all

to see.

Word spread quickly through the camp: "The LORD has provided a way to save us! Look at the snake lifted up on the pole and live," they said. "The LORD will save from death all those who put their trust in Him."

Those who refused to look up to the snake died of their bites; but, those who showed their faith in the LORD by looking up to the snake were healed, just as God had promised.

The people praised the LORD. They deserved to die, but once more He had saved them. Moses wrote down the story of the lifted up snake in the Bible for all to remember. Others named the snake on the pole "Nehushtan" and kept it. God's people looked at it and remembered what in His love He had done for them. Through hundreds, even thousands of years God's people looked back to the story of the lifted up snake and remembered what God, in His love did for them.

Yet God had greater plans for the story of the lifted-up snake than for people to just marvel at what He, in His love, had done for His people. He planned for it to be a picture of the greatest display of His love that the world would ever know. A picture of how He would save not just His people's bodies from the consequences of their sin for awhile, but would send His dear, one and only Son, Jesus to save both their bodies and souls from sin forever. Jesus explained this to a great Jewish teacher named Nicodemus, late one night. Nicodemus had heard Jesus' powerful words about God. He had seen the amazing miracles Jesus had done. Nicodemus was sure God had sent Jesus to do something, but what? He had come through the dark and empty streets streets of Jerusalem to where Jesus was to find out more. Jesus told him what God in His love for His people planned to do next.

Jesus told Nicodemus: "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man [the Messiah] must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

"Lifted up? Would the Messiah be lifted up like a snake on a pole? Who was this 'One and Only Son of God?'" Nicodemus wondered. "Was Jesus saying talking about

himself?" Nicodemus tried to understand Jesus' words, but it was very hard. No one had ever spoken like Jesus did. No other rabbi (Jewish teacher) had taught that the Messiah would be lifted up."

Perhaps it became a lot clearer to Nicodemus a few years later as he and his fellow teacher, Joseph of Arimathea, looked up at Jesus' dead body lifted up high above them on the cross on the Friday Jesus died. And even clearer still, a few days later on the Sunday, when the amazing news spread that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Did Jesus' words echo in Nicodemus' head then? What had Jesus said? "...the Son of Man must be lifted up that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." Did Nicodemus understand what God in His love for His people had done? That God had loved His people from every language and nation in the whole world so much that He had not even held back the One He loved most to save them from their sins?

I can't answer that question for the Bible doesn't tell us what happened to Nicodemus. Only in heaven will we know. But I certainly hope that he came to believe that Jesus was the beloved Son of God, given up by His loving Father. I hope he put his trust in Jesus as His Savior, lifted up on the cross to suffer and die for God's people's sins.

Our Bible Truth is: God Showed the Depths of His Love By Giving His Son Jesus to Save His People

Our Bible Verse is: 1 John 4:10

"This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."

Perhaps we can't know if Nicodemus understood what God in His great love for His people had done through Jesus; but, there is someone else who can know: you and me! God has let us hear the story of the bronze snake. He has let us understand that in His great love, He gave His only Son Jesus to be lifted up to suffer and die on the cross so that you and I, if we confess our sins, turn from them, and believe in Him, will not perish but have eternal life. Let's praise God for His great love for sinners. Let's ask Him to give us faith to believe in His Son Jesus as our own Savior.

Draw a picture from the story

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

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

God made people because He was lonely all by Himself.
False. God has always lived forever happy in the wonderful, perfect fellowship of His love.

2. Crack the Case Questions

a. Who was lifted up long before Jesus lived? How was that used as a lifesaver?

Answer: A bronze snake. The LORD promised to save from the deadly snakebites all who looked to the snake on the pole. The snake had no power. God counted it as an act of faith in Him when people obeyed His command and looked to the snake.

b. How was Jesus like what was lifted up? How was He a lifesaver?

Answer: Jesus was lifted up on a cross. He suffered and died for the sins of all who would ever turn from their sins and trust in Him. He is the only way any of us can be saved. He saves us for eternal life.

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

1 John 4:10

"This is ___: not that we loved ___, but that He loved us and sent his ___ as an atoning sacrifice for our sins."

Answers: love; God; Son.

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN

To God Be the Glory

PFI NIV Songs 8, Track 10

Verse 1

To God be the glory,
great things He hath done;
So loved He the world
that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life
an atonement for sin,
And opened the lifegate
that all may go in.

Refrain:

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, thro' Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory,
great things He hath done

Words: Fanny Crosby Music: William H. Doane

We give glory to God for giving us His Son who He loved so much to be the payment for sins. Sinners could never pay for their sins. Only by Jesus giving up His life in the place of sinners could there ever be a way for them to come to the Father.

AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY

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

A God, we praise You for being the Great Lover and Savior of Your undeserving people.

C God, we confess that many times, like the Israelites, we grumble against You, even though You has treated us so much better than we deserve. We deserve Your punishment, but You have given us a Savior!

T God, we thank You for promising to send a Savior to save all those who turn from their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior.

S God, work in our hearts. Help us to turn away from our sins and trust Jesus as our own Savior. Fill our hearts with love for You and thankfulness for all You have done for Your people.

BIBLE VERSE SONG

This Is Love

PFI NIV Songs 8, Track 11

This is love,
Not that we loved God,
But that He, that he loved us,
He sent his Son,
And He sent His Son,
An atoning sacrifice for sin.
He sent his Son,
And He sent His Son,
An atoning sacrifice for sin.
First John, Four, ten.

Words adapted from 1 John 4:10 Music: Constance Dever © 2011

We are all sinners who have rebelled against God, yet God chose to love us and do it in the deepest way possible: He sent Jesus to save us. Yes, He sent His dearly loved Son, to come to earth to be the atoning sacrifice that would pay for our sins. He would live a perfect life then offer it up as the payment that would bring the forgiveness we needed. And He chose to do this while we still were rebelling against Him! How wonderful is this free gift of God! How deep is His love! This atoning sacrifice is for us, too, when we turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior.