

BIG QUESTION UNDER INVESTIGATION

We're in... Unit 10: The Holy Spirit, the Indwelling

Unit 10 Big Question and Answer:

What Does the Holy Spirit Do In God's People?

He Changes Their Hearts to Be Like Jesus!

PFI ESV Songs 10, Tracks 3,4

Unit 10 Bible Verse: Ezekiel 36:26, ESV

"I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you."
PFI ESV Songs 10, Track 5

BIBLE TRUTH

We're learning... Bible Truth 4:

The Holy Spirit Builds God's Church

Many people think that a church is a building, but it's not. Church is the name for all of God's people.

God's Church is built by the Holy Spirit, one person at a time. The Holy Spirit works in the hearts of people, giving them the gift of faith as they hear God's Word, the Bible. The Holy Spirit helps them believe God's Word, turn away from their sins, and trust in Jesus as their Savior.

God has always planned for the Holy Spirit to bring people from everywhere in the whole world to be part of His people, the Church. The Bible tells us that the Church will be made up of people from every single people group and language in the world.

Every week, groups of God's people meet together to worship God in gatherings all over the world. This is what we call going to church. But in heaven, the whole Church--all of God's people, from everywhere and every time--will gather together to worship God forever. What a gathering that will be! The Bible tells us that it will be so many people that we won't even be able to count them.

We can be part of God's Church--God's people--too, 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 4 Bible Verse: Acts 9:31, NIV 1984

"[The church] was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord."

CASE STORY

Acts 2,10

Our story is: The Case of the Forbidden Soldier. As you listen to the story, see if you can figure out:

1. Who was the Forbidden Soldier? Who thought he was forbidden? Why?
2. How did God show that he wasn't forbidden? What were God's plans for this soldier and others like him?

This story takes place in New Testament times, very soon after Jesus rose from the dead and went to heaven.

On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit filled the hearts of the 120 believers in Jesus gathered for prayer at the Cenacle. They burst out of the Cenacle and by the power of the Holy Spirit, began to speak in the languages of the visiting Jews. Thousands of curious Jews gathered before Peter to understand how it was they could hear about Jesus in their own language.

"Long ago God promised: in the last days I will pour out my spirit on all people and all who call on the name of the LORD will be saved. This is what you see. Turn away from your sins and trust in Jesus as your Savior and you, too, will receive the Holy Spirit."

How powerfully the Holy Spirit worked that day as over three thousand Jews from all over the world heard Peter's message and believed that day!

But God's promise was to save all people--that is, peoples from every nation-- not just Jewish people...and this was news to Jesus' disciples. Not even Peter, who quoted God's promise understood. He was a Jew and like other Jews, believed that people had to become Jews if they were to be God's people. The Jews called all other peoples "Gentiles", or "Goyim." What does Goyim mean? It means dogs. Dogs were dirty, no good animals and that's just how the Jews felt about the non-Jews. Have nothing to do with them!

The Jews had many rules about the Gentiles: Don't eat or drink with them. Don't touch them or their stuff. Don't talk with them. Don't let them in your house...and certainly don't go in their house. If you did these things, you might become "unclean," which doesn't mean you were dirty, but that you wouldn't be allowed to worship in the Temple area without first making a sacrifice for your uncleanness. One thing was clear: Jews and Gentiles should not mix!

But God's plan for His Church was clearly different from what these Jews understood. And when we look around our church, not many of us were ever Jewish. Most of us are...well....Goyim!--Gentiles! What happened? This story is about just that.

Our story starts in Caesarea, the magnificent city the Romans named after Caesar Augustus. As Roman headquarters in Israel, it was filled with luxurious, Roman palaces, huge government buildings, and an Olympic stadium with seating for four thousand. There even was an enormous temple dedicated to Rome and Caesar, with a forty foot statue of Caesar in it!

Caesarea was not just a city filled with Roman buildings. It was filled with Romans! Hundreds of Roman soldiers and their leaders--centurions--were stationed here until they were sent out to other parts of Israel or the world. There were some Jews who lived in Caesarea, but most wanted nothing to do with it or the Roman Goyim living there.

But God had other plans. By His Holy Spirit, He was building His Church and He had always planned that it would include many Gentiles in it as it was about to make clear to the disciples. At Caesarea there was a centurion named Cornelius, a member of the Italian Regiment. Cornelius and his family were different from most Romans. They worshiped the LORD and lived for Him. Cornelius was known as a man of prayer and as someone who helped those in need, but Cornelius did not know about Jesus... yet.

One afternoon, about 3 pm, Cornelius had a vision. An angel of God, said to him: "Cornelius!"

Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?"

The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have been noticed by God. Send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. He is staying near the sea with Simon the tanner," he said.

Cornelius called two of his servants and one of his soldiers who also loved the LORD, and told them everything that had happened. He sent them to Joppa, a about thirty miles south, to find Peter.

About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he had a special dream. He saw heaven opened and something like a large linen sheet being let down to earth by its four

corners. It contained all kinds of unclean animals, reptiles and birds. Not DIRTY creatures but the kinds the Gentiles ate, but the Jews thought it was wrong to eat.

Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

"Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything unclean." Peter wanted to be a "good" Jew. He did not want to be like the Gentiles.

The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything unclean that God has made clean."

This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

While Peter was wondering about this special dream, the men sent by Cornelius arrived at Simon's house. They stood at the gate and called out, "Is Simon Peter staying here?"

The Holy Spirit prepared Simon for what was about to happen, "Simon, three Gentiles men are looking for you. Go downstairs to them and go with them, for I have sent them."

Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?"

The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. An angel told him to have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say."

Then Peter did something unthinkable for a Jew. He invited the men into the house to be his guests.

The next day Peter and some other Jews who had become Christians went with the men to see Cornelius in Caesarea.

When Peter and the others came to Cornelius' house Cornelius fell at Peter's feet to honor him, but Peter said, "Stand up, I am only a man myself."

Talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of Cornelius' friends and family, eagerly waiting to hear what Peter had to say....and they were ALL Gentiles, just like Cornelius! God was indeed building His church bigger than anything Peter or the other Jews could have imagined!

Peter said to them: "You know that it's against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man unclean. So when I was sent for, I didn't hesitate to come. May I ask why you sent for me?"

Cornelius told Peter the message the angel had given him a few days earlier, then said, Now tell us everything the Lord has given you to say."

Then Peter began to speak: "God has showed me that He accepts not just Jews, but people from every nation who fear him and do what is right.

God sent the Jews the goods news of peace through Jesus, who He anointed with the Holy Spirit and power. We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by death on a cross, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen...by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

The Holy Spirit was at work in the hearts of all those present, giving them each faith to turn from their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior, as God made quite clear as by the Holy Spirit, God gave these Gentile believers the same gift of speaking in many languages as He had on Peter and the other Jewish believers on the Day of Pentecost.

Then Peter said, "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days."

What were the words from the Bible that Peter had spoken to the crowds on Pentecost? They were: "In the last days, I will pour out my Spirit on all people and everyone who believes in the name of the LORD will be saved." Now Peter knew the truth of those words. God, through His Holy Spirit, was building His Church. He was gathering in people from every nation, every language, every kind of Gentile.

And that is why even today, in our church, there are so many Gentiles. The LORD's mercy upon all peoples, first shown to Cornelius and his family, has continued on and on to many others, through the thousands of years since that day in Joppa.

Our Bible Truth is: The Holy Spirit Builds God's Church

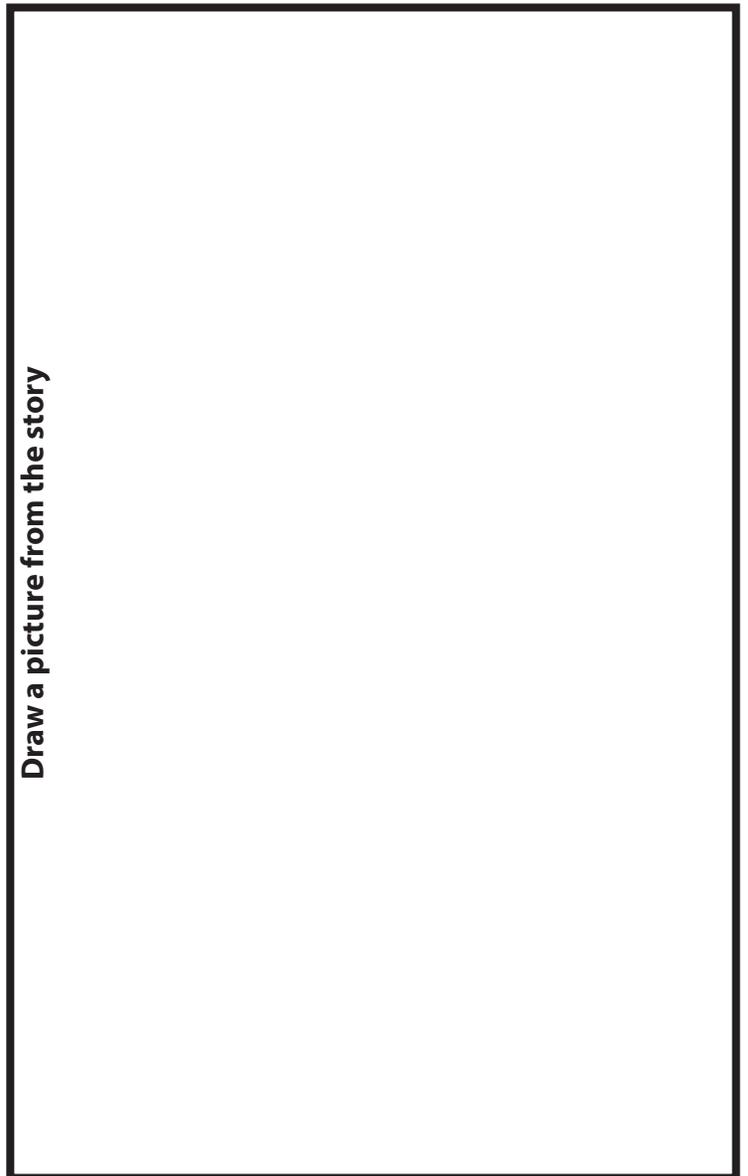
Our Bible Verse is: Acts 9:31

"[The church] was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord."

What about you and me? Can the Lord's mercy extend even to us? Could God really plan to build His Church even with you and me? Yes, the Lord promises us that if we confess our sins to Him and turn from them to trust in Jesus, He will fill us with His Holy Spirit and we can be part of His People, His Church, just like Cornelius and his family.

Let's praise God for choosing to build His Church from all peoples, even people like you and me. Let's ask Him to work in our hearts, helping us to turn from our sins and trusting His as our own Savior. Let's ask Him to send the Holy Spirit to live inside us and make us part of His glorious Church.

Draw a picture from the story



SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

1. A Question about the Bible Truth, True or False:
 In heaven, all of God’s people will gather together. There will be so many people that we cannot even count them.
 Answer: True. At last all of God’s Church will be together!

2. Crack the Case Questions

a. Who was the Forbidden Soldier? Who thought he was forbidden? Why?
 Answer: Cornelius. Peter and all the first believers. They were all of a Jewish background and mistakenly thought that God’s people would all come from the Jews or people who first became Jews.

b. How did God show that he wasn’t forbidden? What were God’s plans for this soldier and others like him?
 Answer: God gave Peter a special vision and then explained to him what it meant when he met Cornelius. For them to be part of His people, too. His Church would come from every people, not just Jews.

3. Fill in the missing words from the Bible Verse:
Acts 9:31
 “[The church] was strengthened; and ___ by the Holy Spirit, it grew in ___, living in the fear of the ___.”
 Answers: encouraged; numbers; Lord.

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN

The Church’s One Foundation
PFI ESV Songs 10, Track 25

Verse 1
 The Church’s one foundation
 Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
 She is His new creation,
 By Spirit and the Word:
 From heav’n He came and sought her
 To be His holy bride,
 With His own blood He bought her,
 And for her life He died.
 Words: Joseph H. Gilmore Music William B. Bradbury

Church is the Bible word for all of God’s people. Jesus Christ is the Church’s foundation because He is the only one who could save His people. Without Him, no one could ever be forgiven their sins and come to know God. He bought all of God’s people by paying for their sins with His own blood when He died on the cross. The Holy Spirit works in each of God’s people, helping them turn from their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior when they hear God’s Word.. He gives them a new heart that knows and loves God and want to serve Him. One day the whole Church will be together with Jesus. The Church will be like His bride whom He loves and delights in forever. And how the Church will love Jesus! Like a bride loves her new husband, but far, far more!

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 VERSE SONG

The Church Was Strengthened
PFI ESV Songs 10, Track 27

The church was strengthened,
 and encouraged,
 By the Holy Spirit,
 by the Holy Spirit,
 It grew in numbers,
 it grew in numbers,
 Living in the fear of, the fear of the Lord.
 Acts Nine, thirty-one.
 Words: Acts 9,31 NIV 1984 Music: Constance Dever ©2012

The Holy Spirit strengthens and encourages God’s people, the Church. He works in their hearts, giving people faith to repent of their sins and believe in Jesus as their Savior as they hear God’s Word. He fills their hearts and helps them to grow in understanding God’s Word and in loving God. He helps them to live in the fear of the Lord– that is, He helps them want to honor and obey God most of all.