

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 ESV Songs 12, Tracks 3,4*

Unit 12 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 ESV Songs 12, Track 5

BIBLE TRUTH

We're learning... Bible Truth 12:

God's People Suffer According to God's Good Plan

God has promised His people that though they will suffer in many ways here on earth, they will only suffer according to His good and perfect plan. God promises to only use their sufferings to do good to them and bring glory to His name. He will use their sufferings to make them holy and to strengthen their faith, their love and their dependence on Him. God's people don't like to suffer, but they trust in God's good purposes in allowing them to suffer and in His promise to use it for their good and His glory. They know that God's Holy Spirit will always give them the strength they need to endure the suffering He allows. God's people count it an honor to suffer for Jesus, the One who suffered most of all, when He took the punishment for their sins upon the cross. But, they also look forward with great excitement to the day when they will live with God and their sufferings and sadnesses will be gone forever.

BIBLE VERSE

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

Bible Truth 12 Bible Verse: 1 Peter 1:6-7, NIV 1984

"...for a little while you may have suffered grief in all kinds of trials. These have come that your faith—which is of greater worth than gold which perishes though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

CASE STORY

Acts 9,18, 2 Corinthians 11:16-33

Our story is: The Case of the Suffering Speaker.

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

1. Who was the Suffering Speaker? What did he speak about and why did he suffer for it?

2. What helped him endure his sufferings?

This story takes place in New Testament times, in the days after Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead.

Like a great, stone oasis, the towering walls of Damascus rose out of the dry, Syrian desert. As the only source of freshwater for miles around, Damascus was a welcome stop for merchants with their heavy-laden camel caravans on the way along the great trade break that stretched from Babylon in the East, down through Jerusalem, and then all the way to Egypt. Each day, hundreds streamed into the city gates seeking to be refreshed, to sell their goods, and to exchange news from abroad.

These days, much of the gossip from Jerusalem had to do with Saul, A young, extremely eager Jew who was trying to rid the city of all Christians. He was hunting them down, throwing them into jail, and even helping to have them killed. And now it seemed that Saul was expanding his hunt to cities outside of Jerusalem, as was now on his way to Damascus to arrest the Christians there.

You can imagine the shock and fear of one Damascus Christian named Ananias when the Lord Jesus called him in a vision, saying, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord," he answered.

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

"Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard about this man and all the harm he's done to your people in Jerusalem. The chief priests have sent him here to arrest your people here in Damascus."

But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go!" I have chosen this man to declare my name to the Gentiles and their kings as well as to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

"Could it really be," thought Ananias, "that this hater and killer of Christians might now have become a believer, himself? Will he who has caused so many believers to

suffer and die will now also suffer greatly so that Jews, Gentiles and even their kings might hear and believe in Jesus, too?" It was almost more than Ananias could believe. He certainly hoped it was true. If it wasn't, Ananias was walking straight into the hands of one of a man Who would happily have him arrested,, sent to prison, and even killed. But Ananias trusted in the Lord. He knew whatever the Lord would have him do --even suffer--it would be part of his perfect plan. It would be for his good and God's glory. So Ananias obeyed the Lord and headed down the dark, narrow passage called Straight Street to find Paul.

But it was all true! Ananias placed his hands on Paul and said, "The Lord Jesus has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately, something like scales fell off of Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized.

Had once Paul began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. He out-argued even the wisest Jews living in Damascus, proving the Jesus is the Christ. Everyone who heard him was shocked, Isn't this the man who caused so much trouble in Jerusalem? Hasn't he come here to take the Christians back to the chief priests as prisoners?" they asked each other.

The Lord was quickly fulfilling His promise to use Paul to powerfully spread the gospel of Jesus to Jews and Gentiles; but, the troubles He promised were quick to come, too. "Paul must be killed!" The Jews decided. They got the governor of Damascus to help them, too. "Search the whole city for Paul. Shut the city gates," the governor demanded. "Find this troublemaker and bring him to me."

But Paul was never to be found. The Lord protected him. The believers put him in a large basket, lowered him with ropes through a window in the wall, and Paul escaped. Paul was to suffer for the Lord, but only has He had planned for Paul's good and God's glory. Being caught by enemies in Damascus was not part of His plan. The Lord enabled Paul to slip out of their grasp.

Damascus was only a beginning of what the Lord had planned for Paul. Paul traveled many hundreds of miles by foot and by boat, telling both Jews and Gentiles about Jesus. Many heard the good news and believed; but even more were angered by Paul's preaching and tried to kill him. And oh, how Paul suffered, just as Jesus had said! Jews hated him for proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior, the Son of God. Five times they caught him and

gave him forty lashes minus one with a whip—just one lash short of the number that would kill a man. The Romans hated him for stirring up trouble and turning people from worshipping the Roman gods. Three times he was beaten with rods, once he was stoned. Many times he was chained and thrown into jail by them. Three times he was shipwrecked, and once even spent a night and a day in the open sea. Constantly he was being hunted down by enemies. Many times he was hungry and thirsty, cold and even naked! In the city, in the country, from the Jews, from the Romans, Paul suffered and faced death over and over.

There always seemed to be someone who hated Paul. Did this make him give up and stop telling others about Jesus? No, it did not. No matter who hurt him or how he suffered, Paul rejoiced. He thought about how Jesus had suffered and died to save him and he was honored that the Lord had chosen him to suffer for His sake. He was grateful that the Lord had promised to use his sufferings to grow his trust and obedience to Him. He knew that no matter how terrible were his sufferings, the Lord was in control. He would give him strength to endure them; and in the end, all these sufferings would result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus came back. Believing, suffering, living, dying, whatever the Lord would have him do, it would be part of His perfect plan that would both be for his good and to God's glory. These sufferings only strengthened Paul's faith and made him want to trust and obey God more.

But the same God who planned so much suffering to be part of Paul's life, also protected him from much suffering, too. When Paul went to preach about Jesus in the city of Corinth, he stirred up many Jews and Greeks with his message. The Jews didn't LIKE that Paul called Jesus the Messiah. But they HATED that he took this message to the Greek (non-Jewish) Corinthians. The Greeks weren't happy with Paul, either. Many stopped worshipping the Greek gods, Apollo and Aphrodite and turned to follow Jesus, instead. Both Jews and Greeks began to grumble and plot how they could get rid of this trouble-maker. Paul began to fear that soon he would once be suffering at the hands of these angry Corinthians. It was tempting to stop preaching before something terrible happened to him again.

One night, the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision, "Don't be afraid. Don't stop sharing the gospel! I am with you! No one is going to harm you, because I have many people in

this city. I will protect you and make sure they all hear the gospel and are saved.”

And so it was, Paul stayed in Corinth another year and a half. And, while both Jews and Greeks tried to hurt him, the Lord allowed no suffering to come to Paul. None at all!

Our Bible Truth is:

God’s People Suffer According to God’s Good Plan

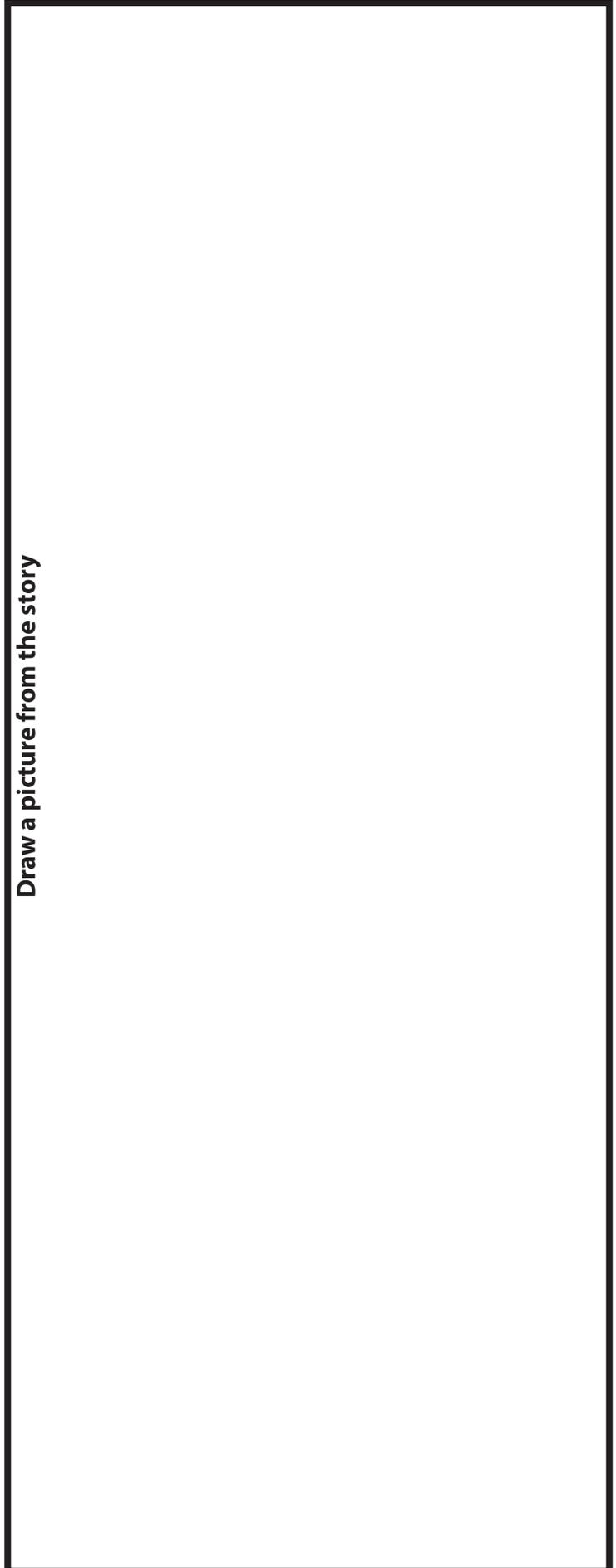
Our Bible Verse is: 1 Peter 1:6-7 NIV 1984

“...for a little while you may have suffered grief in all kinds of trials. These have come that your faith—which is of greater worth than gold which perishes though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

What about you and me? Does it sound scary to think that God’s people will suffer? It’s not surprising, if it does. No one likes to suffer! But isn’t it wonderful to know that in heaven, there will be no more suffering for God’s people? And, that here on earth, they will only suffer in ways that their good God, who loves them so much, has chosen for them. He will always be with them, giving them the strength they need to endure their sufferings. And, He will use them all to bring both Him and them praise, glory and honor when Jesus comes back!

Let’s praise God, the Perfect Planner of all His people’s sufferings. Let’s ask Him to help us to turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Let’s ask Him to make us-- like Paul—to be people who love Him and are honored to suffer for His name.

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 Suffering Speaker? What did he speak about and why did he suffer for it?

Answer: Paul. He spoke the gospel of Jesus to both Jews and Gentiles. He suffered at the hands of many who wanted him to stop sharing that message.

b. What helped him endure his sufferings?

Answer: He knew that his suffering would only be according to what God had chosen for his good and God's glory. He counted it an honor to suffer for Jesus, the one who died to save him.

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

1 Peter 1:6-7

"...for a little ___ you may have suffered grief in all kinds of ___. These have come that your faith—which is of greater worth than gold which perishes though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in ___, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

Answers: while; trials; praise.

AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY

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

A God, we praise You for being the Perfect Planner of all Your people's sufferings. Nothing will happen to them except what You have carefully chosen to be for their good and Your glory.

C God, we confess that many times we don't trust Your choice of sufferings. We don't want any at all, even if they are for our good and Your glory. Please forgive us.

T God, we thank You for sustaining Your people through all their sufferings. Thank You for not wasting a single one of them. Thank You for putting loving, wise limits on everything they go through.

S God, work in our hearts! Help us turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Make us people who love You more and are honored to suffer for Your name. Use all our sufferings to make us more like Jesus and to honor Your name.

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN

How Firm a Foundation

PFI ESV Songs 12, Tracks 41,42

Verse 3

"When thro' fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
 My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;
 The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
 Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.

Verse 4

"The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose
 I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
 That soul, tho' all hell should endeavor to shake,
 I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake!"

*Words: John Rippon's Selection of Hymns
 Music: Joseph Funk's Genuine Church Music*

God's people know all God has an unbreakable plan to use all things in their lives for their good. He has planned that even their "fiery trials"—the hardest things that happen to them—that God will use them all to make them like Jesus. They do not have to like the fiery trials, but they can praise God for how He will use them for their good and His glory.

BIBLE VERSE SONG

For a Little While

PFI ESV Songs 12, Track 43

For a little while you may have suffered
 Grief in all kinds of trials.

These have come that your faith,
 May be proved genuine, be proved genuine.

Refrain:

Faith! Faith! Which is of greater worth than gold,
 Which perishes though refined by fire.
 Faith! Faith! Which is of greater worth than gold,
 Which perishes though refined by fire.

For a little while you may have suffered
 Grief in all kinds of trials.

These have come that your faith,
 May result in praise, glory and honor. *Refrain*
 First Peter One, six through seven.

Words: 1 Peter 1:6-7, NIV 1984 Music: Constance Dever ©2011

God's people suffer, but only according to God's perfectly wise and good plan. He will only use their sufferings for His glory and their good. What kind of good? He will use their sufferings to grow their faith in Him, making it stronger, truer, and deeper. That's what this verse calls proving faith genuine. What other kind of glory? God has planned for all their sufferings to result in praise, glory and honor. That's because God is the one who perfectly planned their sufferings and gave them the strength to endure them. We may think gold and riches are worth a lot in this world—and they are because we can get many things with them. But, how God's people will thank God and praise Him for all the great things He did through their sufferings! For through them, God will give them something worth far more than all the gold in the world could get them.