

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 5:

God's People Are Good Stewards of His Gifts

God is the Creator of all things and all things belong to Him. There is nothing that we have that God did not give to us: our bodies, our belongings, our money, our lives. Yes, everything is a gift from God to us.

What does God want us to do with all these good gifts He have given us? He wants us to be good stewards of them. What is a steward? A steward is someone who takes care of someone else's things.

God tells us in His Word how He wants His people to be good stewards of His gifts to them. He wants them to serve Him with their bodies—with their hands, their mouths and all of their strength. He wants them to freely share what they have with others. He wants them to use their money generously to take care of their families, to help others and to spread the good news of salvation through Jesus.

In heaven, God promises to reward each of His people according to how they stewarded His gifts during their lives on earth. God's people know that they can't be good stewards of God's gifts on their own. They know that it is the Holy Spirit, working in their hearts, who helps them be the good stewards He wants them to be. 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 5 Bible Verse: 1 Peter 4:10-11

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ."

CASE STORY

Adapted from *How Cyrus Hamlin Came Out of a Missionary Box, My Life and Times*, by Cyrus Hamlin, D.D.

Our story is called:

The Case of the Bulging Box.

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

1. What was the box for? What did it bulge with?
2. What came out of the box besides money? What did he mean?

This story is not in the Bible. It is a true story about God's people who lived in America in the 1820's.

Have you ever heard of a missionary box? Perhaps it sounds like a box with a missionary in it; or perhaps a box that belongs to a missionary. But the truth is, it is neither. A missionary box is a little box with a little slot to put money in on the top. Many churches used to keep these by the door to collect money for missionaries who had gone to faraway places to help others and tell them about Jesus. Money goes into the box until it fills up and then it all comes out of the box and gets sent to the missionaries. That is the way that missionary boxes worked. But our story today is the story of what happened when a little boy named Cyrus put his money into a missionary box, only to find years later that something far more than just money came out of the box.

A request was made to Cyrus' little church to help out missionaries working in India who were starting a school to teach young boys how to read and tell them about Jesus. "Just twelve dollars a year will educate a boy!" Cyrus and the others were told. "That's a dollar a month, boys and girls. Any amount is welcome, but why don't you try to bring in one cent a week and we shall do nicely."

Now perhaps one cent a week sounds like only a very small amount of money to you, but back then even a penny was hard to come by, for a couple of reasons. First of all, most people didn't even use money, they simply traded and swapped things (this is called bartering). Perhaps you grew corn and your neighbor had chickens and eggs. You wouldn't use money to buy eggs from your neighbor, you would just trade your corn for their eggs.

But not only that, pennies went a long way back then. Nowadays there is almost nothing you could buy with a penny, but then you could buy many things with one. It would take a lot of hard work and sacrifice if a boy or girl would make a penny a week, but Cyrus and his friends at

church were willing to do it. Why? Because they knew that the best thing they could do with their hands and feet, their hearts and their minds, their money and their time, any day, was something that loved others and might help them to know about Jesus. They wanted to be good stewards of the gifts God had given them.

So how did the children try to raise money? Some of the boys got big, heavy shovels and gathered ashes from fireplaces to sell at the potash (fertilizer) factory. By the end of the day, they were covered in grey ash and their muscles were tired, but they had made a little money. Other boys grew potatoes to sell at the market. Each day they worked hard in their little plots of land: clearing a new patch of ground with a hoe, planting deep holes in which to plant the little potato eyes (seeds), then day after day of pulling out weeds, killing potato bugs, and lugging water in heavy buckets to water the little plants in dry spells. It was hard work! and sixty pounds of good potatoes sold for just ten cents. Girls braided straw for hats or knitted woolen clothing that they could sell. They worked their fingers long and hard. Adults helped the children by putting some of their few spare cents into the box, as well. What came of all their hard work? Every month, by hook and by crook, the missionary box collected its dollar a month.

Cyrus, like the other children, worked hard month after month to put in his share in the missionary box. But there was one fine morning, when what Cyrus put in the missionary box was to change his life. This particular day happened to be Cyrus' favorite day of the whole year: "Muster" Day, as they called it in his little town. All the men of the town would dress up like soldiers and act out a famous battle from a war. Cyrus rushed through his chores that morning then reported to his mother, looking for her final approval of his work and permission to go off to watch the Muster.

"Cyrus, you've done a good job on your chores. Now be off to the Muster," his mother told him. "I know you won't be back until dark, so here is seven cents for you to buy lunch and some of that special gingerbread you love, plus whatever else you need all day. That's a lot of money, Cyrus, perhaps you will want to think about sparing a cent or two for the missionary box."

As Cyrus started off to the Muster, he began to think about the missionary box. "Shall I drop in one cent or two? I wish mother hadn't said one or two. Let's see, how much

can I spare? Well, five cents should be enough to cover everything I could eat, more. Perhaps, I can give two cents." But as Cyrus kept walking along, more thoughts came to him: "Five cents for me and only two cents given away to help those who have never heard about Jesus? Five cents for gingerbread and only two for Jesus? That can't be right. Let's make it four for gingerbread and three for Jesus," Cyrus decided.

But soon even that did not seem like enough, by the time he reached the missionary box. "Hang it all!" Cyrus exclaimed, "I'll dump them all in and have no more bother about it. Don't I know that the best thing I can do with hands and feet, my heart and my mind, my time and even my gingerbread money, any day, is something that loves others and might help them to know about Jesus? I want to be a good steward of the good gifts that God had given me." So that is just what Cyrus did and went away contented.

All day Cyrus enjoyed the glories of the Muster: the men in their bright uniforms with shiny buttons and old-fashioned guns, acting out a battle just as Cyrus and his little friends often did. All around the field were refreshment stands with lemonade and gingerbread and all sorts of other good things to eat. The other children were enjoying the food as much as the muster, but Cyrus stayed clear away of the stands for even the smell of the freshly baked goodies seemed to tease his nose and make his stomach grumble.

Yet even with pangs of hunger, never did Cyrus doubt that he did the right thing with his seven cents. "I love gingerbread and lemonade just as much as everyone else," thought Cyrus to himself, "but the best thing I can do with hands and feet, my heart and my mind, my time and even my gingerbread money, any day, is something that loves others and might help them to know about Jesus. I want to be a good steward of the gifts God has given me. Today that means doing without a little gingerbread and lemonade."

By four o'clock, Cyrus was starting to feel a little weak he was so hungry. He had been up on his feet since dawn with nothing to eat since breakfast. He left the muster and started the long walk home.

When he got there, he burst into the house and cried out, "Mother, I'm as hungry as a bear! I haven't had a mouthful to eat today."

"Why, Cyrus, have you lost the money I gave you?" she asked him.

"No, mother; but you didn't give it to me right," Cyrus answered. "If you had given me eight cents, or six cents, I would have divided it half and half between me and the missionary box. But you gave me seven. I couldn't divide it, and so I dropped it all into the box together!"

"You poor boy!" she said, smiling in tears. And soon Cyrus had a huge bowl of milk and bread that Cyrus thought was fit for a king.

But why do you think Cyrus' mother cried? Did she think he had done something bad by giving the money all away? No, not at all. It was because she, like Cyrus, knew that the best thing anyone could do with their hands and feet, their heart and mind, their time and even their gingerbread money, any day, was something that loves others and might help them to know about Jesus. Her son had even chosen to deny his own needs that day to do this. She knew that he night she worked to heal him. The next day, the chief awoke!. Each day he improved. The people celebrated. Thanks to the White Ma, not only would the chief live, wanted to use all that he had and was for Jesus. He wanted to be a good steward of the gifts God had given him.

But remember I told you that on this day, Cyrus put his money in the missionary box, but that years later something very different came out? Now it's time to tell you what came out. Well, you see, Cyrus never ever forgot that day when he chose to deny himself to help the missionaries tell others about Jesus. As he grew up, there were many more times when he weighed his desires for smaller things against the great need of telling others about Jesus, deciding their needs were more important than his. Finally one day, Cyrus thought, "You know, it's not enough for me anymore just to give money to help the missionaries. I really do believe that the best thing I can do with my hands and feet, with my heart and mind, my time as well as my money, is to love others and help them know about Jesus! I want to be a good steward of the good gifts God has given me. For me, that means being a missionary! I never realized that when I put that money in the missionary box, what would come out of it would be a new missionary—me!

Our Bible Truth is:

God's People Are Good Stewards of God's Gifts

Our Bible Verse is: 1 Peter 4:10-11:

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ."

Cyrus was not the only missionary that came out of that little missionary box. Five of the other children from that one little church also grew up to be missionaries to different parts of the world. And they all said that it was learning to work and give and even sacrifice for that little missionary box that made the difference.

What about you and me? Do we think about being stewards of the gifts God has given us? Do we ever work hard or think about doing without something so that the good news about Jesus might spread to new places and to more people who have never heard about Him? What do we think is the best thing to do with our hands and feet, our hearts and minds, our time and money?

Let's praise God for the good gifts He has made us stewards of. Let's ask Him to work in our hearts that we might turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our own Savior. Let's ask Him to work in our lives that we might use everything we have and everything we are for Jesus. Let's ask Him to make us good stewards of all the good gifts He's given us.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

1. A Question about the Bible Truth, True or False:
 A steward is someone who takes care of their own things.
Answer: False. A steward takes care of someone else's things. We are all stewards of everything we are and have because it all belongs to God and was given to us by God.

2. Crack the Case Questions
a. What was the box for? What did it bulge with?
Answer: To help missionaries who had gone overseas to tell others about Jesus. Money.

b. What came out of the box besides money? What did he mean?
Answer: Money to care for the missionaries came out of the box, but also Cyrus did! He didn't really come out of the box. He meant that because of that box and the money he gave, God gave him a heart to want to go tell people in faraway places about Jesus, too.

3. Fill in the missing words from the Bible Verse:
1 Peter 4:10-11
 "Each one should ___ whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone ___, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone ___, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through ___ ___." *Answers: use; speaks; serves; Jesus Christ.*

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN

Be Thou My Vision
PFI NIV Songs 12, Track 16

Verse 2
 Be Thou my Wisdom,
 And Thou my true Word;
 I ever with Thee
 And Thou with me, Lord;
 Thou my great Father,
 I Thy true son;
 Thou in me dwelling,
 And I with Thee one.
Words: Ancient Irish; tr. Mary E. Byrne
Music: Traditional Irish Melody; harm. David Evans

God's people want God to be their Wisdom, that they would know how to use their lives to please Him. They want Him to be their true Word, that they might believe His Word and obey all it tells them about how to use the good gifts He's given them. They want His Holy Spirit to be dwelling in them so that even in their hearts they might have the wonderful fellowship with God He created them to have. They want Him to ever be with them, so that everything in their lives, from the thoughts of their hearts to their words and their actions, please Him and might be used as He wants them to be used. This is how they can be good stewards of all the gifts God has given them.

AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY

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

A God, we praise You for being the Sender of Your people to tell others about Jesus that they might be saved from their sins.

C God, we confess that many times we do not act like Cyrus and the other children. We would rather keep all our money for ourselves rather than giving it away to help tell others about Jesus

T God, we thank You that You give Your people the desire and the strength to give and even sacrifice what they want that others might hear and believe the good news of Jesus.

S God, work in our hearts. Help us to confess our sins, turn away from them and trust Jesus as our own Savior. Make us like Cyrus. Make us willing to even sacrifice our own wants and sometimes needs so that others might hear about Jesus. Give us a heart that wants to go and tell others the good news of Jesus.

BIBLE VERSE SONG

Each of Us Should Use
PFI ESV Songs 12, Track 17

Each of us should use whatever gift,
 Gift he has received, to serve others.
 Faithfully administering God's grace,
 In its various forms.
 First Peter Four, ten and eleven.

Words: 1 Peter 4:10-11 Music: Constance Dever ©2015

This verse reminds us God is the one who gives us everything we are and have. He wants us to be good stewards of them. He wants us to use these gifts to help and encourage others; and, to bring praise to His name. He gives us the strength to do this, through His Holy Spirit, when we turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior.