

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 8:

God's People Read His Word, the Bible

The Bible is God's Word. It tells us about God and His wonderful plans. It tells us about this world, about who we are and what Jesus has done for us. God's Word is very different from our words. His Word is perfectly true. It tells us everything we need to know to live the way God wants us to live. And, it doesn't just tell us what we need to know, it can change us, too. The Holy Spirit works in God's people when they read the Bible. He gives them wisdom and helps them to know, love and obey God. He uses it to help their faith keep growing strong.

BIBLE VERSE

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

Bible Truth 8 Bible Verse: Psalm 119:11,15-16, ESV

"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you...I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word."

CASE STORY

Acts 9:32-43

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

1. Who were the Synagogue Stalkers? What was their message?
2. What was so special about the synagogues that they always told their message there first?

This story takes place during New Testament times, not many years after Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead.

Timothy, Paul and Silas started the long journey from Philippi to Thessalonica. The hundred-mile walk along the Egnatian Way wouldn't be too bad for Timothy, but it would be a painful one for Paul and Silas! Sharing the gospel with the Philippians had led to the salvation of some, but to painful beatings for these two men. Jesus had once said that Paul would suffer much when he shared the gospel; and now, as they limped down the highway, Paul certainly felt the truth of what Jesus had said. This beating had not been Paul's first and he doubted that it would be his last. For Paul was not headed to the synagogue in Thessalonica to get away for some rest. He was headed to the synagogue in Thessalonica to tell more people the good news of Jesus, and that almost always led to more trouble. Yet off to Thessalonica Paul went, even with more beatings likely in his future.

Thirty miles down the road, the three men came to the beautiful city of Amphipolis, set high on a hill and surrounded on three sides by the breath-taking Strymon River. Wouldn't this be a wonderful place to heal their wounded bodies and rest their sore feet for a week or two? But, no. Paul and the others were determined to get to Thessalonica!

Another seventy miles later, Paul, Silas and Timothy passed through the gigantic Arch of Galerius and into the busy streets of Thessalonica. They passed through the agora--the marketplace--filled with buyers and sellers. Along each side of the market towered the huge temples to the Greek gods and to Caesar, the Roman king. These temples were magnificent, but Paul passed them up in search of the simple, stone building that was the Jewish king. These temples were magnificent, but Paul passed them up. He wasn't searching for a fancy building, but a

simple, stone one—the Jewish synagogue. It was there, and only there, that the people could gather to hear God’s Word, the Bible.

You see, back in those days, only very rich people had their own Bibles. Everyone else had to come to the synagogue if they were to learn God’s Word. Bibles weren’t even books, like our Bibles are. They were long, paper scrolls, rolled up on wooden poles. And there weren’t computers in those days either. Every word was hand-written. It took months and months to copy down a whole Bible; and the scribe had to check his work to make sure it was completely correct. When it was finished, the Bible was stored in a special wooden container and covered with protective cloth so no bugs, rodents, moisture could harm it. After all, this was God’s Word—and often the only copy in town. They must take good care of it.

How excited Paul was when at last he found the synagogue! Here is where he would find the people who cared about what God’s Word. and desired to live for God. Many might have hearts already softened by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, made ready to receive the gospel. Paul would read to them the prophecies about the Messiah that Jesus had all fulfilled with His life and death. When they saw how Jesus fulfilled the prophecies, he hoped they would believe.

When Sabbath day came, many Jews and Greek people filled the synagogue’s stone slab benches, ready to worship the Lord. They sang psalms and prayed; then, they were ready to hear from God’s Word.

“Does anyone have something they would like to say?” one of the rabbis asked.

Paul spoke up right away. “Friends, the Messiah has come,” Paul told them. “His name is Jesus. He suffered, died and rose victorious over sin and death, just as the Scriptures told us He would. He now reigns in heaven and will one day return to judge all peoples and to establish His everlasting Kingdom. Repent of your sins and turn and trust in Him!” Paul urged them. “All who do will be saved!” Then Paul opened the scroll of God’s Word and read many passages to them, proving that Jesus really was the Messiah promised by God.

The people were surprised by Paul’s teaching. “Can this be? Could the Messiah really have come? Was He really this Jesus Paul was telling them about?” they wondered. No one had heard these things before.

But faith comes by hearing and hearing about Jesus by the Word of God. As Paul read the Bible to them, the Holy Spirit began to work in the hearts of some of the Jews and many of the Greeks who listened. Their hearts were filled with faith, trusted in Jesus and were saved.

These new believers joined together as the first little church in Thessalonica. Eagerly they met together each week to hear Paul teach from the Bible. They began to do the good works that pleased the Lord: not only praying and worshiping the Lord, but also helping the poor and sharing the gospel. One of them—a man named Jason—gave Paul, Silas and Timothy a place to stay at his home. Paul, Silas and Timothy were overjoyed at the Lord’s work done in these Thessalonians through the reading of His Word and the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts.

But not everyone listening in the synagogue was pleased with Paul’s new teaching—especially a lot of the Jews. Even when he read from the Bible the passages that showed that Jesus was the Messiah, they were hard-hearted. And when many people who had worshiped in the synagogue became Christians, they became very jealous.

“We must do something about Paul! We can’t let him keep teaching like this!” they exclaimed. “Let’s get him in trouble with the Romans. Surely we can think of something he’s said to use against him,” they decided.

Soon they came up with a evil plan. They went to the agora (market place) and offered money to some men to help them. “We want you to spread lies about Paul. Tell everyone that he’s trying to get people to follow a new king named Jesus, instead of Caesar, the Roman king. Make a big scene. We want a riot! Then go down to Jason’s house, beat down the door and grab Paul and his friends. The crowd will take care of the rest!” they told these men. The men agreed to this evil plan.

Before long, these men had stirred up an angry mob, who went pushing, shoving and destroying their way down to Jason’s house. They had come to kill Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

The new Christians acted quickly. They hid Paul and his friends, leaving only Jason and some other Christians in the house. When the angry mob burst in and found no Paul, Silas and Timothy, they grabbed Jason and the others instead. They dragged them down to the Thessalonica leaders for punishment. “Paul and his friends are telling people to follow a new king named Jesus instead of

Caesar. These men have been taking care of them. Punish them!" they demanded.

Jason and the others were questioned. As punishment, they had to pay money to the leaders and promise to have nothing to do with Paul and his friends.

That night, Paul, Silas and Timothy came out of hiding and met with Jason and the other believers. "You must leave town now or the crowds will kill you," they warned Paul and his friends. "We will sneak you out with two of our men as protection. Where do you want to go?" they asked him.

"To Berea, in the mountains about fifty miles away," Paul answered. "We'll go to the synagogue there!" he told them. "Perhaps there will be more people gathered there with hearts softened by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, ready to receive the good news of Jesus. I will go to them and show them from the Bible that Jesus Christ is indeed the Messiah," Paul said.

So off they went: Paul, Silas, and Timothy along with their escorts. Slipping away from danger and death once more so that faith might come to others by hearing, and hearing about Jesus, by the Word of God.

Our Bible Truth is:

God's People Read His Word, the Bible

Our Bible Verse is: Psalm 119:11,15-16

"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you...I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word."

Paul knew that the Lord used His Word and the Holy Spirit to soften the hearts of people and make them ready to receive the good news of Jesus. He loved to show these people from God's Word how Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah. He was overjoyed as he saw them eagerly listen and believe.

What about you and me? Do we spend time reading the Bible? If we do, God can use it to work powerfully inside our hearts, just like He did in the people of Thessalonica, long ago.

Let's praise God for giving us His Word to read. Let's ask Him to use it in our lives, to help us turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Let's ask Him to use it to change us so that we might live to love God and others, like Jesus.

Draw a picture from the story

