

BIG QUESTION UNDER INVESTIGATION

We're in... Unit 5: God, the Good Creator

Unit 5 Big Question and Answer:

Can You Tell What God Made?

God Made All Things Good!

PFI NIV Songs 5, Tracks 3,4

Unit 5 Bible Verse: Genesis 1:1,31, NIV 1984

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth...God saw all that He had made, and it was very good."
PFI NIV Songs 5, Track 5

BIBLE TRUTH

We're learning... Bible Truth 3:

God Created the World to Praise and Glorify Him

God did not create the world because He was lonely or bored. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have always been perfectly happy, enjoying each other in perfect fellowship. He had no need for anyone or anything else to be happy. God created the world because He wanted to. He created it all as a display of His glory (who He is).

Everything God created praises and glorifies Him by being little pictures of what He is like. Because God made people in His image, we have the greatest ability to praise and glorify Him. To people alone, of all the earthly creatures, did God give a spirit to know and love Him. Only we can understand how His creations tell us about Him as we look at them.

God placed us in this wonderful world of His creation to enjoy it, and for the pleasure of praising, glorifying and enjoying God, as we see what it shows us about Him.

BIBLE VERSE

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

Bible Truth 3 Bible Verse: Psalm 148:7-10, NIV 1984

"Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds, kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth, young men and maidens, old men and children. Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens."

CASE STORY

Our story is called:

The Case of the De Beata Vitae.

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

1. What was the De Beata Vitae? Who wanted it?
2. Where did he look for it and where did he find it?

This story doesn't take place in Bible times. It takes place about 1650 years ago in Tagaste, a little farming town in the green, fertile mountains of Algeria, North Africa.

Among the schoolboys of Tagaste was a boy named Aurelius Augustine, or just Augustine as everyone called him. Now Augustine was a very, very clever little boy. He had a mind so quick that he only had to read something once and it was memorized. Augustine was good at everything, but he loved learning Latin and giving speeches most of all.

You might think Augustine would be the teacher's favorite student since he was so smart; but, that was far from the truth. Augustine was so bored with the simple lessons, that he entertained himself by playing mean tricks on the other children. It was an unusual week when Augustine did not feel the "Whack! Whack! Whack!" of the teacher's whip across his back as punishment for something he'd done. But no matter how many times Augustine was punished, he kept getting into trouble.

His parents—especially his mother, Monica-- were troubled by his behavior. Monica was a strong Christian and she raised Augustine knowing the good news of Jesus. "Augustine, why do you keep getting into trouble?" she would ask him. "It will lead to nothing good. God created you in His image to praise and glorify Him. He has given you such great gifts of mind and speech. Use these to know Him and find your pleasure there, not in these childish pranks. Turn from your sins and believe in Jesus. That is the happy life," she told him.

But Augustine refused to listen. He thought being a Christian meant giving up everything fun, and Augustine loved to have fun. Sometimes he would pray to God, but it wasn't a real heart-felt prayer. Usually it was just to ask God to spare the teacher's whip for the last mean prank he had played on another child. These are not the kinds of prayers God answers! When Augustine saw that he couldn't use God for his own mischievous purposes, he gave up on Him completely.

One day, Augustine talked his friends into skipping school and stealing all the pears off of his father's prize pear tree. They ate their fill of the juicy, sweet fruit and then when they could eat no more, they tossed the rest to the pigs. Augustine knew what he was doing was wrong, but he didn't care. He lived for the happy life; and for Augustine, that meant doing whatever he felt like doing.

When Patricus, Augustine's father, found out what had happened, he was furious! He punished Augustine and sent him to sleep that night out with the pigs who ate his pears! Once more, Monica pleaded with her son to turn from his wicked ways, but Augustine refused to change.

Not too long after this, Augustine's parents decided the best thing for their smart, trouble-maker would be to send him away to get good teaching. Augustine could become a great teacher or lawyer, if only he could get good training and stay out of trouble. So off Augustine went. He went to high school in the nearby town of Madaura. When he finished there, he went to university in Carthage, a great city near the Mediterranean Sea.

At last Augustine had the good teachers he needed, yet even they were amazed at his gifts. What beautiful Latin he wrote! What powerful speeches he made!

Augustine loved the challenge of these new schools, but he loved the new thrills of life he now had even more. He was away from home and could do whatever he wanted to do. He went to the theatre. He watched the gladiators fight. He found friends to join him in playing mean tricks on others. Best of all in Augustine's mind, there were lots of girlfriends to have and lots of wine to drink. Surely this was the happy life he was looking for.

All the time Monica worried about her son. By letter or in person, she kept pleading with him, "Augustine, why do you do spend your time on all of these terrible things?" she would ask him. "It will lead to nothing good. God created you in His image to praise and glorify Him. He has given you such great gifts of mind and speech. Use these to know Him and find your pleasure there, not in wasting your life on all this wickedness. Turn from your sins and believe in Jesus. That is the happy life." But Augustine refused to listen.

Augustine finally finished his schooling and began to start teaching. For the first time in his life, he began to ask such deep questions as "Who am I? Why am I here in the world?" None of the sinful pleasures he had tried really

made him happy. Monica pleaded with him to become a follower of Jesus Christ, but Augustine still refused. Even though his wicked ways did not make him happy, Augustine still did not want to give them up.

Augustine was a good teacher. He started out in a little school in Tagaste, but before long he was made a professor of Speech at the university in Carthage, then in Rome and finally in the great city of Milan.

Milan was one of the most important cities in the world. It was home to two very, very important men: King Valentinian II, the king of the great Roman Empire; and Bishop Ambrose, a great church leader and powerful preacher.

Augustine was treated like an important man in Milan, too. He was given a huge, beautiful villa to live in there with room enough for all his friends, cousins and his mother, Monica, to come live with him. Never had Augustine had such splendid things and such good students. Surely this was the good life he was looking for, but to his surprise, Augustine found his life empty.

One day Monica asked Augustine to go hear the great Ambrose preach. Augustine agreed, saying "Well, I am a Professor of Speech. Everyone says what a powerful preacher Ambrose is; I guess I should at least hear him once. I will go with you, but not to listen to WHAT he says. I am only going to listen to HOW he says it. I will decide for myself about his skills as a speaker." Monica was overjoyed. At last her son would hear the Word of God preached.

From the moment Ambrose began to preach, Augustine was impressed. "How well he speaks. Surely he is as good a speaker as I was told," Augustine thought. But before long, Augustine found that he wasn't just listening to HOW Ambrose spoke; He was listening to WHAT Ambrose spoke: "In Christ are all things. Christ is everything to us," Ambrose said.

"Could it be that here is the happy life I've been looking for all along? Could Mother have been right?" Augustine wondered.

Augustine kept going back to hear Ambrose preach. The more he heard, the more the Holy Spirit worked inside of him, showing him the truth of God's Word. Augustine became so ashamed of his sin, but what could be done?

One morning in his garden, things came to a breaking point: "How long will it be until you confess your sins and turn to Christ?" he said to himself. "You always say

'tomorrow, tomorrow': why not now, why not let this hour be an end to my sinfulness?" he thought as he tossed aside his New Testament and threw himself down on the ground under a fig tree.

Just then he heard the voice of a child next door, singing, "Tolle lege, tolle lege! Take up and read! Take up and read!"

The simple words seemed like a message to Augustine. He took up his New Testament to read and when he did, his eyes fell on these words: "Don't keep on living in wicked ways. Let the Lord Jesus Christ take control of you." (Romans 13:13-14, paraphrased)

At last Augustine he took God at His Word. He confessed his sins and believed in Jesus as his Savior. God took away the shame of his sin and filled his heart with peace for the first time in his life. At last Augustine had found the happy life.

The news that Augustine had become a Christian spread quickly. When Monica heard her son's decision, so fell on her knees and thanked God! Thirty-one years of prayers had been answered at last!

When Easter came, Augustine was baptized by Ambrose himself, rejoicing that he had found peace in his heart, trust in his mind, and joy in his life, by giving up selfish pleasures and devoting his life to the service of Jesus Christ.

Augustine had spent his first thirty-one years looking for pleasure in selfish ways. Now he would spend the rest of his life—the next forty-three years—knowing pleasure in praising, glorifying and enjoying God, as he had been created to. Augustine went back to Africa and became a powerful preacher and church leader, like Ambrose. He used the cleverness and ability to speak that God had given him to encourage believers and to fight against those who tried to teach lies about God and the Bible. He studied and prayed to know God better. And the more he knew of God, the greater was his pleasure.

It was all as his mother had told him from the beginning: "Turn from your sins and believe in Jesus. That is where you will find the happy life."

Our Bible Truth is:

God Created All Things to Praise and Glorify Him

Our Bible Verse is: Psalm 148:7-13

"Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds, kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth, young men and maidens, old men and children. Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens."

Augustine spent over thirty years trying to make himself happy in selfish pleasures. In the end, he found the happy life in living for the God who created Him, just as his mother always told him.

What about you? Where are you looking for the happy life? Is it in getting a new toy? Or having more friends? Is it in being the smartest student at school or the best soccer player? If you have parents who know the Lord Jesus as their Savior, they will tell you the same thing that Monica told her son, Augustine: the happy life is only to be found when we live to praise and glorify God as He created us to.

Let's praise God for being the Giver of the Happy Life of knowing, loving and obeying Him, to all who will confess their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior. Let's ask Him to help us to find our happiness in Him. Let's ask Him to help us to use all the good gifts He's given us to encourage other believers and know Him better ourselves, that we might enjoy Him even more.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU
<p>1. A Question about the Bible Truth, True or False: God put people on the earth to enjoy it, to fill it with people and to take care of it. Answer: True.</p> <p>2. Crack the Case Questions: a. What was the De Beata Vitae? Who wanted it? Answer: The good life. Augustine wanted it.</p> <p>b. Where did he look for it and where did he find it? Answer: He looked for it in pleasure--in doing whatever he wanted to do. He found it in knowing and enjoying God.</p> <p>3. Fill in the missing words from the Bible Verse: Psalm 148:7-10 "Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our ____... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and ____ he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have ____ over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Answers: likeness; female; dominion.</p>

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN
<p>The Doxology <i>PFI NIV Songs 5, Track 13</i></p> <p>Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures, here below; Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.</p> <p>Words Thomas Ken Music Genevan Psalter, 1551 Edition, attr. Louis Bourgeois</p> <p>"This hymn reminds us that all creatures here below on the earth and all the heavenly host above in heaven should praise God. He is their Creator and He made them to praise and glorify Him. All the good blessings they enjoy come from Him.</p>

AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY
<p><i>A=Adoration, C=Confession, T=Thanksgiving, S=Supplication</i></p> <p>A God, praise You for being the Source of the Happy Life!</p> <p>C God, we confess that many times we don't think that loving God and obeying Your good ways is the happy life. Many times we want to do things our own way, just like Augustine. We need a Savior!</p> <p>T God, we thank You for Your great patience and mercy towards sinners, like Augustine and like us.</p> <p>S God, work in our hearts that we might turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior, like Augustine. Help us to know the happy life of knowing, loving and obeying You.</p>

BIBLE VERSE SONG
<p>Praise the Lord, from the Earth <i>PFI NIV Songs 5, Track 14</i></p> <p>Praise the Lord, from the earth, All you creatures of the sea, and all ocean depths, lightning, hail, snow and clouds, Stormy winds that do his bidding. Praise the Lord, from the earth, Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, from the earth, Praise the Lord.</p> <p>Praise the Lord, from the earth, you mountains and all hills, you fruit trees and cedars, animals, flying birds, kings and rulers, men and maidens, Praise the Lord, from the earth, Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, from the earth, Praise the Lord. Psalm One-forty-eight, verses seven through twelve.</p> <p>Words: Psalm 148:7-12, NIV 1984 Music: Constance Dever ©2012</p> <p>The Bible tells us God made people in the beginning. He made them in His image, that means, they reflect Him in a very special way. Of all the earthly creatures, they alone were created with a spirit, like God's Spirit, that can know and love God. God created people to be able to see God's glory in everything He made. And, He created them to care for the world He created as caretakers under Him.</p>