

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 4:

God's Plans for His Creation Are Good and Unfailing

Before the creation of the world, God planned each day from first to last. Each one would be just as He planned it to be. Every creature in it would live, grow, and reflect His glory, just as He had planned.

As part of His plans for this world, God created people each with a mind to think and a will to act. They would use these to make their own decisions, every day of their life. Yet in God's mysterious and mighty way, before even the first people were created, He had already perfectly woven His good plans into all that they would choose to think and do.

God's plans would never fail. Not even the sin and suffering that would come into the world would ruin God's good plans for His creation. God would use even these terrible things to display His great love for His people by sending His Son Jesus to save them. God's people--people from every nation and language on earth--would all choose to love and obey Him, just as He had planned. Not a one would be lost. God, Himself, by the great power of His Spirit, would make sure that these good things would happen.

There is much about God's plans we cannot understand because God is so much greater and wiser than we are. That's why God tells us not to lean on our own understanding of things, but trust in Him instead. When we remember God's perfect faithfulness in the past and His promises for the future, we can rejoice that whatever happens. It is always, only, a part of His completely good, unfailing plan.

BIBLE VERSE

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

Bible Truth 4 Bible Verse: Psalm 33:11

"The plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of His heart through all generations."

CASE STORY

2 Kings 20-21, 2 Chronicles 32-33

Our story is:

The Case of the Lost Donkeys.

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

1. Who lost his donkeys? Who did he send to find them?
2. What plan did God use the lost donkeys to fulfill? How did God show that these lost donkeys **were** used

Our story today takes place in Old Testament times, in the hills of Gibeah, only about six miles north of Jerusalem, about 1000 years before Jesus lived on earth.

What was wrong with the grass of Gibeah where Kish's farm lay? Was it not as juicy or sweet as the grasses whose scent drifted on the wind from the distant hills? I guess you would have to be a donkey to know. But there must have been something that day that lured Kish's she-donkeys away from the safety of his farm and far away to the grasses over the hills.

Kish must have been upset when he noticed the missing donkeys. Donkeys were the cars and trucks of his day. You rode them and used them to carry heavy loads; and, they were expensive! To lose she-donkeys was even worse! You weren't just losing a car or truck, but a car or truck factory! Kish counted on the mother donkeys to provide him with baby donkeys to use in the future. Kish looked everywhere for his she-donkeys, but they were nowhere to be seen. This matter of lost donkeys was serious! Before long they might become a lion's dinner or be the happy find of new owner.

"Saul, come quickly! I need you!" Kish called out to his only son, a tall, handsome, young man. "The she-donkeys have wandered off. They are nowhere to be seen," Kish replied. "Take one of the servants and go find them," he said.

Saul obeyed. He and the servant prepared sacks of food and water and set off in a huge, sixty mile circle around the farm. Up and down the hilly country of Ephraim, they went. Then they turned eastwards to Shallim; and finally, back south through the land of Yemini and towards Zuph. They looked down the grassy valleys and up the hills for the she-donkeys, but no donkeys!

"The donkeys are no where to be found," Saul said to the servant. "Come, let's go back, or my father will start worrying about us, too."

Saul's advice would have been good... if this journey had really only been a matter of lost donkeys. But the truth was, this trip was about a lot more. The LORD who works His own good and unfailing plans in the words, thoughts and

into this search. God had planned for this trip to take Saul away from his home in Gibeah and to the city of Ramah in Zuph, where the prophet Samuel would anoint Saul as the first king of Israel.

The LORD had already spoken to Samuel of his plan: "Samuel, the people have been asking Me for a king. About this time tomorrow I will send him to you from the land of Benjamin. He will be with a servant looking for his father's she-donkeys. Anoint him king of Israel. He will deliver my people from the hand of their enemies, the Philistines," the LORD told him.

Samuel heard the LORD and believed. He knew what the plans of the LORD never failed. He didn't know who this man was, nor how the LORD would bring him to Ramah, but Samuel knew that this man would most certainly come...and come exactly when the LORD said he would come!

Samuel began preparing for the special sacrifice and worship feast for this man, as if he had invited the man and set up the time for the feast himself. He went to the market and chose a lamb. He invited thirty, special guests to join them. He ordered the cook to make the feast food. Then, he prepared the worship feast room at the high place outside of Ramah, where the sacrifice and feast would take place.

By the next day, everything was ready. "After the sacrifice is made, set aside the leg, the best portion, for a special guest," Samuel told the cook. "Make sure the two seats of honor next to mine are not taken," he told a servant. "They will be for my guests of honor."

At last it was time for the feast. The guests went up to the high place and watched as the lamb was roasted upon the altar as a sacrifice to the LORD. They went to the worship feast room and watched as the roasted sacrifice was divided among them--all except of course, the leg which was set aside, just as Samuel had ordered. Everyone was ready to eat the wonderful meal, but they waited for Samuel and the special guests to arrive. The feast couldn't begin until they had taken their seats and Samuel had blessed the food.

But where were the special guests? No one knew. Not even Samuel! But he was not worried. This was the LORD's plan and His plans are good and unfailing. The special guests would come, he had no doubt.

Sure enough, Saul was on his way. As they neared Ramah, Saul's servant said, "Look, there's Ramah, the home of Samuel, the prophet. Everything he says comes true.

Let's ask him. Perhaps he will tell us which way to take to find the donkeys," he said.

"If we go to him, we should take him a gift. What do we have?" Saul asked his servant.

."Look," he said, "I have a quarter of a shekel of silver, [a whole week's worth of pay.] I will give it to the man of God so that he will tell us which way to take."

"Good," Saul said to his servant. "Come, let's go."

As Saul and the servant came up the hill into Ramah, they met some girls coming out to draw water. "Is the prophet Samuel here?" Saul asked them.

"He is headed up to the high place for a worship feast," they answered. "Go up now; you should find him. Hurry, you want to catch him before he goes in the worship hall and blesses the food."

Saul and the servant hurried to the high place. As uninvited strangers, Saul and his servant knew they wouldn't be allowed to interrupt Samuel's worship feast once it began--especially for something like a matter of lost donkeys. Little did Saul know that this feast had been prepared in his honor and everyone was waiting for him!

Saul met Samuel at the gateway to the high place. As soon as Samuel saw him the LORD said, "This is the man I spoke to you about; he will be king." Samuel could see God was fulfilling his plans, just as He promised, but Saul still had no idea what was going on. It was still just a matter of lost donkeys to him.

Saul asked Samuel, "Would you please tell me where the prophet's house is?"

"I am the prophet," Samuel replied. "Go up ahead of me to the high place, for today you are to eat with me. In the morning I will let you go and will tell you all that is in your heart. Don't worry about the donkeys, they have been found. We have more important things to talk about. All of Israel's hopes are on you, now," Samuel told Saul.

Saul was happy, but confused. The donkeys were found and Samuel was saying great things about him. But why? "Why do you say this to me? My family is of no importance in Israel!" Saul replied.

But Samuel disagreed. He took Saul and his servant to the worship hall and seated them at the place of honor, next to him. The best meat was brought out and served to Saul. "This special food and these guests are here to celebrate that you have come," Samuel told the surprised Saul.

Saul had much to think about as he sat there at that great feast, the guest of honor of the prophet Samuel. He

had thought this three-day journey was only a matter of lost donkeys, but now he could see that it was part of the bigger plans of God. What did it all mean?

After dinner, Samuel and Saul went to his house, sat on the roof and talked. At daybreak Samuel told Saul, "Get ready, and I will send you on your way."

Saul walked with them to the edge of Ramah, then sent the servant on ahead. "I have a message from God that only you must hear," he told Saul.

Samuel took oil and poured it on Saul's head. He kissed him-- the sign of obedience to a king—and said, "The LORD has made you king of Israel. As you travel home to Gibeah, the LORD will have three special things happen to you to remind you of three important things.

First, you will meet two men near Rachel's Tomb who will tell you the lost donkeys have been found. By this, remember that trip was all part of God's plan--not just a matter of lost donkeys.

Then, at the great tree of Tabor, three men will give you two of the three loaves of bread they are offering to God. By this, remember that God is king over you. He is sharing the rule of His people with you. Care for them His way, not your own way.

Lastly, at the town of Gibeah, you will join a group of prophets who are singing and prophesying about God. God's Spirit will come upon you and you will prophesy with them. Remember that it is only by the power of God's Spirit that you can be the king you should be. Rely upon God!" Samuel said.

"When these things have happened, know that the LORD has prepared you to be king," Samuel told Saul. "Tell no one what has happened today. In a week, I will meet you in Gilgal to make sacrifices to the LORD and present you to the people as king," Samuel told Saul.

Saul left Samuel that morning and everything happened, just as he said it would: the two men gave him news of the donkeys. The three men gave him the two loaves of bread. And by God's Spirit, Saul praised God and prophesied with the singing prophets.

Saul was a changed man and everyone noticed. "What is this that has happened to Saul? Has he become a prophet?"

Saul's uncle had even more questions for Saul. "Tell me what Samuel said to you," he insisted.

"Samuel told us that the donkeys had been found," Saul replied. He kept the rest a secret, just as Samuel had told him to.

And what a secret it was! This trip had been far more than a matter of lost donkeys. It was a part of God's good and unfailing plans!

Our Bible Truth is:

God's Plans for His Creation Are Good and Unfailing
Our Bible Verse is: Psalm 33:11

"The plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations."

Who would have guessed that God had something so important as anointing the first king of Israel woven into something as plain as looking for lost donkeys? Are God's great and mysterious ways only for lost donkeys, prophets and future kings? No, they are not. God has woven His good and unfailing plans into all the thoughts, words and actions of all His creation.

And what is the greatest plan that God has woven into this world? The plan to send His Son Jesus to die for the sins of His people, as He suffered and died on the cross. How amazing God's plans! How amazing His love for His people! You and I can be His people, too, when we turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our own Savior.

Let's praise God for being the great Planner who weaves His wonderful plan into our lives. Let's ask Him to help us joyfully trust His work in our lives as we obey Him.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU	BIBLE TRUTH HYMN
<p>1. A Question about the Bible Truth, True or False: God created the world and just let things happen however they would. Answer: False. Even before God created the world, He planned each day, from first to last.</p> <p>2. Crack the Case Questions:</p> <p>a. Who lost his donkeys? Who did he send to find them? Answer: Kish. He sent his son, Saul, and a servant to find them.</p> <p>b. What plan did God use the lost donkeys to fulfill? How did God show that these lost donkeys were used as part of fulfilling that good plan? Answer: The LORD used the lost donkeys to take Saul to Samuel to be anointed king over Israel. The LORD told Samuel what Saul was doing, when he would arrive and where the donkeys were. It was clear that He had woven His bigger plans into what happened to these donkeys.</p> <p>3. Fill in the missing words from the Bible Verse: Psalm 33:11 "The ___ of the LORD stand firm ___, the purposes of His heart through ___ generations." Answers: plans; forever; all.</p>	<p>He Leadeth Me <i>PFI NIV Songs 5, Tracks 15,16</i></p> <p>Verse 2 Sometimes 'mid scenes of deepest gloom, Sometimes where Eden's bowers bloom, By waters still, o'er troubled sea, Still 'tis His hand that leadeth me!</p> <p>Refrain He leadeth me, He leadeth me, By His own hand He leadeth me; His faithful foll'wer I would be, For by His hand He leadeth me.</p> <p>Verse 3 Lord, I would clasp Thy hand in mine, Nor ever murmur nor repine; Content, whatever lot I see, Since 'tis Thy hand that leadeth me! <i>Refrain</i></p> <p>Words: Joseph H. Gilmore Music William B. Bradbury</p> <p>"This hymn reminds us that God's plans are good and unailing. God's people know this best of all. They know God is always leading them through life, fulfilling His good plans for them. Whether it is something hard or sad or enjoyable and happy, it is all a part of God's good plans that He has woven into every single day. That is why they can be content, no matter what happens.</p>
AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY	BIBLE VERSE SONG
<p><i>A=Adoration, C=Confession, T=Thanksgiving, S=Supplication</i></p> <p>A God, we praise You for being the Weaver of Your good plans for creation into everything.</p> <p>C God, we confess that many times we don't trust that the hard things that happen to us can really be part of Your good, unailing plans. We doubt You and fear. We need a Savior!</p> <p>T Thank You for working Your greatest good plan of salvation through Jesus' terrible suffering and dying on the cross. Because of Him, we can be saved from our sins.</p> <p>S God, work in our hearts! Help us to turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Work out your good plans in our lives, for our good and Your glory!</p>	<p>The Plans of the Lord <i>PFI NIV Songs 5, Track 18</i></p> <p>The plans of the LORD stand firm forever; The purposes of His heart through all generations; His plans stand firm forever, The purposes of His heart through all generations; The plans of the LORD stand firm forever; The purposes of His heart through all generations. Psalm Thirty-three, verse eleven.</p> <p>Words: Psalm 33:11, NIV 1984 Music: Constance Dever ©2012</p> <p>The Bible tells us that God's good plans stand firm for His creation. Throughout all generations, throughout all of history--every single day--God will do all of His will. And because God's heart is completely wise and purely good, we can trust that His purposes, even in the things we least understand, are always good. We can count on that because He never changes.</p>