

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

Our story is called:

The Case of the Sickness that Brought Life.

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

1. Who got sick twice? What was the second sickness and what was so bad about it?
2. How did God use both of the sicknesses to bring life to many?

This story takes place in the late 1800's, high up in the Himalayan mountains.

A young woman named Mary Reed lay sick in bed. As the light of morning flooded her room, Mary looked out her window at the snowy peaks of the mighty Himalayan Mountains. She breathed deeply of the cool, crisp, clean mountain air. "How good it is to be here in the mountains! Thank you, Lord, for bringing me here to rest!" Mary quietly prayed.

"How are you feeling today, Missie Reed?" her Indian nurse asked.

"Better, thank you, but still weak," Mary answered.

"Well, it's no wonder you're still sick with the way you've been living down in Cawmpore!" the woman replied. "Day after day you cared for the Indian women shut up in their stuffy, hot zenanas. Why there's more of death than life in those dark apartments!" she said.

Mary couldn't agree more! Four years ago she had left America and gone to Cawmpore, India to lead the zenana ministry to Indian women. A zenana was the special living area for women that Indian men built for their wives. Indian women were not supposed to come into contact with any men except those in their own family. They weren't even allowed to leave the zenanas except to worship at the Hindu temple or wash in the sacred waters of the Ganges River!

Since these women couldn't leave their zenanas, they received little medical help, little education, and most importantly, little of the good news of Jesus that missionaries had come to share. So, missionary women like Mary Reed asked to go into the zenanas to meet the Indian women. Most Indian husbands eagerly agreed. They were happy for their wives to receive education and medical help. And of course Mary and the missionary women were even more eager to tell these women the good news of Jesus.

Work in the dark, unhealthy zenanas was hard! After four years, the long hours and the poor living conditions had finally hurt Mary. She was too sick to keep on working.

Many women might have just given up and gone back home to America when they got that sick; but, not Mary. She chose to go to Pithoragarh in the Himalayas for rest and fresh air, hoping that she might get well and go back to the zenanas again.

Why did Mary do this? Because Mary chose to live on the plans of God. She knew God plans to save a people for Himself, from every people and language. She knew He had woven her life into His plans. God wanted her to tell the women of the zenanas about Him, that they might become His people, too. Mary trusted that whatever happened to her—even if it was sickness and suffering—was somehow part of His good, unfailing plans. So she stayed in India, trying to get well, so that she could go back to the women in Cawmpore one day and tell them more about Jesus.

The mountain air soon make Mary better. Soon she was out of bed and out of the house, exploring the lush, green valley of Pithoragarh and the tall mountains that surrounded it. How very different this place seemed from the poverty, sickness and darkness of the zenanas of Cawmpore! Or was it? Mary soon found out these mountains hid another people as needy as the women of the zenanas of Cawmpore. They hid over five hundred lepers!

Leprosy was a terrible illness that had no cure back then, like there is now. It could be caught from the cough or sneeze of a leper, much the same way we catch a cold. But instead of getting a runny nose or a cough, the sick person got tingling pain, then numbness in parts of their body. Large, open sores appeared on their skin that didn't heal. Many times the leprosy spread to their eyes and made them blind. Saddest of all, lepers were sent away from home so no one else would catch it. That's why the hundreds of men, women, and even children lived up in these mountains in pitiful mud huts: to suffer and die on their own!

When Mary heard about these poor lepers, she longed to help them. She wanted to bandage their wounds and give them a good place to live. Most of all, she wanted to tell them the good news of Jesus. But what could she do? The lepers refused to come near anyone who didn't have leprosy. Mary didn't know how to reach them, but God did. She lived on the plans of God. She knew the Lord planned to save His people, from every people and language on earth. Surely He had woven salvation even for lepers like these into His good, unfailing plan! So Mary began to pray

Before long, Mary was well enough to return to Cawmpore. Once more she made her daily trips to the zenanas. Back down the crowded streets, past the dirty animal stables, and back up the dark passageways, she went to zenana after zenana. Some opened into luxurious apartments of the rich, but most were simple rooms of terrible poverty. Some women were so afraid of this white woman that they would not look at her or even allow her shadow to fall upon them. Most happily greeted her. Mary cared for them and taught them. She loved to sit down on their beds of woven rope and tell them the good news of salvation through Jesus.

Some days, Mary went down to the banks of the Ganges River, where crowds of women came to worship and bathe. They wrongly believed that the waters of the Ganges were holy and had powers to heal. So, as the women washed in the river, Mary would sing to them about Jesus—the one in whom true hope could be found. Many of the women laughed at Mary. Some shouted mean, angry words at her, but Mary didn't care. She kept telling them about Jesus and gave them little books about Jesus to take home and read.

Mary spent many hours praying for these women, too. And as she prayed for them, she remembered the lepers of Pithoragarh, too:

"Please God, work in the hearts of the women I spoke to today, that they might believe in You and be saved. And please Lord, send someone to help the lepers of Pithoragarh, too. Send someone to bind up their wounds and take care of them. Send someone to tell them about Jesus," she would pray. Day after day, Mary worked hard until once more her body gave out. This time, she was so sick that not even a trip to Pithoragarh would be enough to heal her.

"Mary, we're sending you home," the doctors told her.

"Your health is very bad. You will need a very long rest. You may never even get to return to Cawmpore."

Mary didn't like what the doctors had to say, but she knew she really was very sick. She would have to trust that this, too, was part of God's good and unfailing plan. She sailed back home America to see better doctors and be cared for by her family.

As hard as they tried, the doctors in America could not heal Mary. She had begun to have strange symptoms that the doctors had never seen before: tingling and numbness in her hands, then odd spots that turned into sores began to appear.

“What could this odd disease be?” the doctors wondered. Suddenly Mary realized what it was: it was leprosy!

This was terrible news! No one wants to live their life separated from family and friends to protect them from getting it! No one wants the pain of this terrible disease! But for Mary, leprosy was more than just a terrible disease. For her, it was also an answer to prayer. In this illness, she saw God’s good and unfailing plans. He had answered her prayers for someone to tell the lepers about Jesus! It was her!

Mary kept the secret of her illness between herself, her father and her doctors. No one else was to know. She wrote to the London Mission to Lepers, who happily agreed to put her in charge of the Chandag Asylum for Lepers, up in the Himalayan Mountains not too far from Pithoragarh. Mary packed her bags, said a final farewell to her family and friends, then set sail back to India.

Eagerly, Mary made the long trip back up to the little mountain village of Pithoragarh, then up into the mountains where the lepers lived in their poor, makeshift, mud huts. “Listen, my friends, I have been called by God to come and help you,” she called out to them.

Slowly but surely, the sore-covered faces of the lepers appeared at the openings of the huts. “What was this?” they wondered. “A white lady come to help us? How can this be? No one even from our own people will help us.”

“Come out! I have good news for you!” Mary urged them. Slowly a little group of lepers gathered before her, she told them all about the Chandag Asylum where they could live and be cared for. Then she told them the wonderful good news of Jesus. He was the Son of God who Himself had touched and cared for lepers like them. Best of all, He all, He brought salvation to all who turned away from their sins and trusted in Him as their Savior. Tears fell down their cheeks as they heard all Mary had to say. Such wonderful promises she gave them! Words of kindness and hope.

Mary was as good as her promises to the lepers. She worked as hard at the Chandag Asylum as she had in the zenanas of Cawmpore. Even though she struggled with her own painful leprosy, she bandaged up the other lepers’ wounds. She help to build nice homes for them to live in. She gave them food and love. Best of all, she told them about Jesus, Many heard the good news of Jesus and trusted Him as their Savior.

Mary stayed and worked in Chandag for 52 years--until she died at the age of 89. How did she die? Rejoicing in God! How good and unfailing were His plans for her! He

used her sickness to care for the lepers and tell them the good news of Jesus!

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 stands firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.”

Mary Reed lived a joyful life. Not because life was so easy for her, but because she lived on the plans of God. The plan might many times be woven with sickness and hardship. There might be times she didn’t understand what He was doing; but, she knew that God was perfectly wise and good. Whatever He planned, it had to be good. Whatever He planned, it would never fail. More than comforts or health; even more than family and friends, Mary took joy in God weaving His good, unfailing plans into her life. She was especially happy with those plans gave her the chance to tell others the news of Jesus!

What about you and me? What will we live our lives on? Will we live them on comforts or health, family and friends? Will we live them on our own plans? Or like Mary, will we live on the plans of God? We can, when we turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our own Savior.

Let’s praise God for His perfectly good and unfailing plans. Let’s ask Him to work in us that we might turn from our sins and trust in Him. Let’s ask Him to give us the desire to live on His plans more than anything else. Let’s ask Him to help us to take joy in Him and His good plans, even when suffering or other hard things are part of it.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

1. A Question about the Bible Truth, True or False:
 God created people each with a mind to think and a will to act. They are able to make their own decisions, even though God has planned each day.
 Answer: True.

2. Crack the Case Questions:

a. Who got sick twice? What was the second sickness and what was so bad about it?
 Answer: Mary Reed. The second sickness was leprosy. It was bad because it was so painful and there was no cure. And, because she would have to live far away from her family and other loved ones to keep them from getting it.

b. How did God use both of the sicknesses to bring life to many?
 Answer: The first sickness God used to show Mary Reed the lepers who lived up in the mountains. The second sickness God used to make the way for Mary Reed to care for them and to share the good news of Jesus with them. They would not let her live with them if she was not a leper.

3. Fill in the missing words from the Bible Verse: Psalm 33:11
 "The plans of the ___ stand firm forever, the ___ of His heart through all ___."
 Answers: LORD; purposes; generations.

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN

He Leadeth Me
PFI NIV Songs 5, Tracks 15,16

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!

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.

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! *Refrain*

Words: Joseph H. Gilmore Music William B. Bradbury

"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.

AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY

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

A God, praise You for being the Maker and Fulfiller of Your Perfect Plans for Creation.

C God, we confess that many times we do not react like Mary to hard things that happen to us. Many times we do not see them as a part of Your good and unailing plans. We grumble against You for letting them happen to us.

T Thank You for Your plan to save people from every people group on earth. You even care that people in lonely places, like these lepers, come to know You.

S God, work in our hearts that we might turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Help us want to serve You in Your good plans, however You want us to.

BIBLE VERSE SONG

The Plans of the LORD
PFI NIV Songs 5, Track 18

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.

Words: Psalm 33:11, NIV 1984 Music: Constance Dever ©2012

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.