

BIG QUESTION UNDER INVESTIGATION

We're in... Unit 7: The Law-Giving God

Unit 7 Big Question and Answer and Song:

"What Are God's Laws Like?

God's Laws Are Perfect!" PFI NIV Songs 7, Tracks 3,4

Unit 7 Bible Verse and Song: Psalm 19:7,9,11

"The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward."

PFI NIV Songs 7, Track 5

BIBLE TRUTH

We're learning... Bible Truth 1:

God's Laws Are Written in the Bible

A law is something we are told to do or not to do by someone in authority over us. God is our Maker and the King over everything. He has authority over all. He has given us all His laws to obey. They show us how to live lives that please Him: lives that show His holiness and are filled with love for Him and for each other.

God gave the Ten Commandments and many other laws through Moses. Some of those laws were special laws God gave to the Israelites to follow until Jesus came. But many of them were laws that God gave to all people, in all places and all times to obey. Later, God gave us more commandments to live by through His prophets, through Jesus and through Jesus' first followers, the apostles.

We should all learn God's laws. They are written in the Bible, God's perfect Word, for us to learn and obey. God's laws are unlike any other rules. They are always perfect and good. They always show us the best, most loving and God-pleasing way to live.

God's laws are perfect, but we are not! We are sinners. No matter how hard we try, we will never keep God's laws perfectly. We can never please God with just our good works--only Jesus could do that. That's why God offers us forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus, when we turn from our sins and trust in Him as our own Savior.

BIBLE VERSE

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

Bible Truth 1 Bible Verse: Deuteronomy 5:1,6-21

"Hear, O Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them...I am the LORD, your God...You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything...You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God...Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy... Honor your father and your mother...You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. You shall not covet ...anything that belongs to your neighbor."

CASE STORY

Matthew 14-15; Mark 7

Our story is: The Case of the Lousy, Little Laws.

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

1. Who loved the lousy, little laws? Who did not?
2. How were the laws different from God's laws?

"Did you wash your hands?" Isn't that the question your parents ask you before sitting down to eat? Why do they want you to wash your hands? Because of that nice collection of germs on them that might just get on food you touch, into your body, then make you sick. Your parents have you wash your hands to keep that from happening.

This story is about some people who lived back in New Testament times, when Jesus lived on earth; and, who cared a lot about hand washing, too. They were the Pharisees and teachers of the law. But these men didn't just care about IF you washed your hands. They cared about HOW you washed your hands. They had a special name for the right way to wash hands. It was called Netilat Yadayim—ceremonial washing. They believed that Jews should only wash their hands with cleansing water kept in special jars. Before Jews ate, they were supposed to hold their fingertips up, pour at least an egg shell and a half of this special water out of a special washing cup onto their fingertips, then let it run all the way down over their wrists. After they ate, they were to wash again. They took another egg shell and a half of the special water, but this time they were to hold their hands with fingertips down, pouring the water onto their wrists and letting it flow down off their fingertips. They were supposed to wash their hands exactly like this or they weren't really considered washed. And what would happen if they didn't do it just right? This is the most incredible thing of all. These men believed that Jews who didn't do wash their hands just right should be cut off from God and His God's people. That means going to hell! Wow!

Now let's get something straight. Nowhere in the Bible, does God give a law like this. Nowhere does it say that God's people will go to hell if they don't wash their hands right. But if God's law doesn't say this, then where in the world did these Jews get this crazy idea?

Well, it happened over a lot of years. The greatest Jewish teachers—called the elders—began to pass down their own ideas about how the Ten Commandments and the other laws that God gave them should be carried out in everyday life. Sometimes, they came up with very good

ideas. But, I'm sad to say, all too many times, these teachers came up with new itty, bitty rules that really had nothing to do with God's laws at all. After a while, people began to think that the elders' ideas were just as important as God's laws written in the Bible. These rules about hand washing were some of those itty, bitty rules. And that's how, by Jesus' day, the Pharisees and teachers of the Law had come to think that not washing your hands according to Netilat Yadayim, deserved the punishment of hell. Nobody wanted that, so most did just as their teachers told them to and carefully washed their hands according to Netilat Yadayim.

Then along came Jesus. He wasn't like any other teacher the people had ever known. He taught so powerfully about God. He healed every sickness. He calmed great storms with just His words....and....He didn't wash his hands according to Netilat Yadayim! Before long the Pharisees and teachers of the law in Jerusalem heard about everything this new teacher Jesus up in Galilee. And while they should have been amazed at his teachings and his healings, instead they were furious that Jesus didn't wash His hands properly. And, to make matters worse, He didn't teach His disciples or the huge crowds who followed Him to wash their hands either! One day Jesus used five loaves of bread and two fish to feed thousands of people, but did He make them wash their hands first? Not as far as we know. Yet they all ate, just the same. How shocking!

"We must go see this Jesus, ourselves," the Pharisees and teachers of the law in Jerusalem decided. "We must find out what He is up to. We can't let Him encourage the people not to follow the teachings of the elders. This Jesus is breaking all the itty bitty rules and He must be stopped." So off the Pharisees and teachers of the law went on the long journey to Galilee...looking for Jesus.

Somewhere in Gennesaret, along the west side of the Sea of Galilee, they found Jesus. He and His disciples had just sailed there and already a huge crowd swarmed around Him, eager to hear Him teach and heal their sicknesses. The Pharisees and teachers of the law joined the crowds. They listened to Jesus teach. They watched Him heal sick person after sick person. Why, Jesus was so filled with God's power, that if a sick person just touched the hem of His cloak, they would be healed! This Jesus was amazing, these teachers couldn't deny it. But was His power from

God or the devil? A man from God would keep God's laws AND the teachings of the elders, they believed. A man from the devil wouldn't. Which kind of man was Jesus? That's what they had come to find out.

They didn't have to wait long to find out. They watched in disgust as Jesus and His disciples picked up their food and ate it without washing their hands. No Netilat Yadayim! How outrageous!

"Jesus, why don't your disciples live according to the traditions of the elders? Why do they eat their food with unclean hands?!" the Pharisees demanded to know. "Here you set yourself up as a teacher of the people, yet you are letting them commit this terrible sin! Don't you care that the elders say they are in danger of hell if they don't wash their hands properly?"

But Jesus saw things completely differently. It was the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who were sinning by making their little, itty bitty traditions just as important as God's laws. They were the ones leading people into sin, not He. Jesus said to them, "The prophet Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.' You have let go of the commands of God and are holding onto the traditions of men," Jesus told them.

"You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!" Jesus continued. "God's Law says, 'Honor your father and your mother,' showing them respect and taking care of their needs when they are old. But you say that a man can dedicate the money he would have used to help his old parents to the Temple and then he can't help them out anymore. You do away with the Word of God by your traditions the elders have handed down to you. And you do many other things like this. You accuse me of doing wrong by breaking the elders' traditions, but you are the ones who sin by breaking the laws of the Lord."

Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean.'"

Jesus' disciples could hardly believe Jesus' bold correction of these powerful men. They were the leaders of the Jewish people! No one talked to them like this! They watched the

Pharisees storm away. After the Pharisees and teachers of the Law had gone, the disciples asked Jesus, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?"

"Those men are supposed to be the teachers of Israel who study God's Word and lead His people in keeping His laws," Jesus told them. "But they have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men. Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit. In the same way, if you follow the teachers of the Law, they will lead you to destruction."

Jesus had given them much to think about. Were the teachers really the ones who misunderstood God's laws? Was Jesus really telling them to stop keeping the elders' itty-bitty rules? Would they really NOT go to hell, if they didn't keep them? And what exactly did Jesus mean when He said "nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean.'"? Peter just had to know. After the crowds had gone he asked Jesus, "Teacher, tell us what your parable means," Peter asked Jesus.

"Don't you see," Jesus explained, "whatever enters the mouth—that is, what you eat-- goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of the mouth—things you say-- come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean,'—sinful before God. For out of a sinful heart come the evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander--the things that break God's Ten Commandments. These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.'"

Our Bible Truth is:**God's Laws Are Written in the Bible****Our Bible Verse is: Deuteronomy 5:1, 6-21**

"Hear, O Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them... You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God... Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy... Honor your father and your mother... You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. You shall not covet ... anything that belongs to your neighbor."

The little rules of washing cups and hands seem very different from these Ten Commandments of God, don't they? The Pharisees had left behind the main point of God's

Laws: to love God and to love others. These men studied God's laws every day and washed their hands thinking they were pleasing God,, but they had such hard, unclean hearts. They stubbornly held onto to their traditions and would one day even choose to break God's command not to murder by nailing Jesus, the very Son of God, to the cross.

But what about you and me? Perhaps it seems silly to think that washing your hands before eating your food was more important than keeping God's laws, write in the Bible. But let's look closer at ourselves. Are we really so different from the Pharisees? The Pharisees chose to keep lots of little itty-bitty rules that looked good on the outside, but did not have anything to do with the sin in their heart and lives that broke God's good and holy commands He wrote down in the Bible. Aren't we often perfectly happy to look good on the outside and never deal with the sin inside, just like those Pharisees? Just like them, we are lawbreakers who deserve God's punishment. We need a Savior! And to all who turn away from their sins and trust in Jesus, God will save!

Let's praise God for giving us His perfect laws that show us how to live holy lives. Let's ask Him to give us hearts that remember His commands and lives that are "clean" with His holiness. Let's ask Him to help us to turn away from our sins and trust Jesus as our own Savior.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

1. A Question about the Bible Truth, True or False:

God has given us His laws and He expects His people to keep them without any help.

Answer: False! God promises to give the Holy Spirit to all who turn from their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior. He gives them His Holy Spirit to help them obey His laws.

2. Crack the Case Questions

a. Who loved the lousy, little laws? Who did not?

Answer: The teachers of the law loved the little laws. Jesus did not.

b. How were these laws different from God's laws?

Answer: These laws were made up by men, instead of by God. These laws weighed down people and did not point them to God or help them love Him. These laws only made it harder to follow God's good and right ways. But God's laws DO point people to God and help them love and obey Him. They are God's good and right ways to live.

3. Fill in the missing words from the Bible Verse:

Deuteronomy 5:1,6-21

"Hear, O Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. ___ them and be sure to follow them...I am the ___, your God...You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything...You shall not misuse the ___ of the LORD your God...Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy... ___ your father and your mother...You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not ___. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. You shall not covet ...anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Answers: Learn; LORD; name; honor; steal.

AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY

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

A God, we praise You for being for being the Giver of Perfectly Good Laws.

C God, we confess that we break the good laws You have given us to live by. Like the Pharisees, it's much easier for us to keep itty, bitty rules and not look at our sinful hearts and how we fail to keep your laws. We need a Savior!

T God, we thank You for not just giving us Your good laws, but for sending Jesus to save all who turn away from their sins and trust in You as their Savior.

S God, work in our hearts! Help us to turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Send Your Holy Spirit to live inside us and help us love You and obey Your laws.

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN

The God of Abraham Praise

PFI NIV Songs 7, Track 6

Verse 2

His Spirit floweth free,
High surging where it will:
In prophet's word He spoke of old,
He speaketh still.
Established is His law,
And changeless it shall stand,
Deep writ upon the human heart,
On sea or land.

Words: Daniel ben Judah Dayyan, Translated by Newton Mann

Music: Meyer Lyon

God's Holy Spirit works powerfully, doing everything God wants Him to do. Long ago, in the days of the prophets, God's Spirit spoke to them and gave them His words to speak to God's people. The prophets spoke them to the people, but also, they wrote them down in the Bible. Sometimes, God's words were laws He wanted His people to keep. Sometimes they were words of comfort or warning. Other times, they were words about the future. God's Holy Spirit helped the prophets say God's words just right...and He helped them write them down just right. Even now, we can read God's words that the prophets wrote down when we read the Bible. God can use them to "write" His truth deep upon our hearts. That is, He can use them to teach us His ways and how He wants us to live. He can use them to help us to know Him and obey Him.

BIBLE VERSE SONG

Hear, O Israel

PFI NIV Songs 7, Tracks 7,8

Refrain:

Hear, O Israel, the decrees and the laws I declare,
Learn them and be sure to follow them,
be sure to follow them.

You shall have no gods before Me,
You shall not make an idol,
You shall not misuse the name of the LORD,
Observe the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy,
Honor your father and your mother. *Refrain*

You shall not murder,
You shall not commit adult'ry,
You shall not steal,
You shall not give false testimony,
You shall not covet anything. *Refrain*
Deuteronomy Five,
Verses one, six through twenty-one.

Words: Deuteronomy 5:1,6-21 Music: Constance Dever ©2011

Long ago, the LORD gave the 10 Commandments and many other good laws to the people of Israel. The Israelites agreed to keep them. He would be their God; they would be His people. He would bless them and take care of them. These verses are the Ten Commandments (laws) that God gave them. But even though God gave them to the people of Israel that day, they are laws for all of us to keep. They tell us how God wants us all to live.