

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 5:
The Heart of God's Law is Love**

Love is more than just a good feeling we have inside our hearts. Real love acts in love towards others.

God gave us His laws to tell us how we should live if we would love God and others. They tell us that we should always love God most of all. They tell us to love others as much as we love ourselves. Jesus said that to love God most of all, and to love others as yourself, sums up all of God's Laws.

Jesus lived a perfect life of love that fulfilled all of God's laws. He lived this way because He loved God most of all. This is the only way He would ever want to live. He also did this as part of God's plan to save His people. Jesus offered up His life, lived in perfect obedience to God's laws, as the perfect sacrifice for their sins when He died on the cross. All who turn away from their sins and trust in Him as their Savior are forgiven for their sins. No longer does God hold against them all the ways they break His good laws. He gives them eternal life with Him as His free gift.

But just because Jesus has paid for their sins, that doesn't mean God's people don't care about God's laws anymore. God's laws are how God wants His people to live. They are always the best way to live because they are perfectly good and loving. Like Jesus, God's people want to keep God's laws because God's people love God and want to please Him. The Holy Spirit living in their hearts helps God's people keep God's laws so that they love God and others in ways they never could before.

BIBLE VERSE

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

Bible Truth 5 Bible Verse: Matthew 22:36-40

"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest command. And the second in like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

CASE STORY

Our story is called:

The Case of the Bold Bridge-Builder.

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

1. Who was the Bold Bridge-Builder? How was he bold?
2. Why was he so bold? What was he trying to do?

This story doesn't take place in Bible times. It takes place in the 1760's in Germany.

Fritz Oberlin sat in his cold attic room in Strasburg, Germany, writing in his journal: "January 1, 1760. "Lord, You are God. This day I promise myself to You. I want to use all that I am to love You and others with my heart, mind, soul and strength," he wrote.

Fritz took his promise seriously. He worked hard. He studied the Bible, surgery and medicine, plant life and French in school. He made himself eat only salted bread for dinner and slept on his cold, hard attic floor. Why did he do these things? Because Fritz wanted God to call him to be a pastor in a difficult place where life would be hard and all these skills needed. He wanted to be joyful and content as well as prepared for whatever the Lord wanted him to do.

The Lord certainly was preparing Fritz to serve Him in a very difficult place, but it was not the army, as Fritz thought. And one cold night in February, only about a month after writing that promise to the Lord, Fritz was to find out what that difficult place was to be.

There was a knock at the door:

"Come in," Fritz called out.

"Hello, Mr. Oberlin. My name is Pastor Stuber. You don't know me, but I have heard of you. I've been told that you want to be a pastor in a difficult place. I believe I have the job for you," he told Fritz. I think God has been preparing you to take my place as pastor at Waldbach in the Vosges Mountains."

"But why there? And why me?" Fritz asked.

"For hundreds of years, the mountain people who live there have suffered terribly. War after war between France and Germany has left Waldbach and the other little villages in shambles. The people used to make a good living as farmers and as miners in the copper mines in the mountains, but the soldiers destroyed the roads and bridges, the crops, and the houses. The hundred or so families who still live there barely have enough food

to keep themselves alive. They do not know how to grow good crops. There are few tradesmen among them to build or repair the things they need. The bitter cold winters leave snow on the ground six months of the year and many families have to share clothes and shoes because they don't have enough of for each person to wear. A rich person in Waldbach is someone who has enough bread to eat for the year! When I came to Waldbach, they did not have Bibles. They did not know God's laws. Most of them could not read or sing. Their pastors had not even told the good news about Jesus," Pastor Stuber told him.

"For ten years I have worked with the people in Waldbach and the other poor mountain villages nearby," Pastor Stuber continued. "I have bought them Bibles and started simple, little schools. They are learning to read the Bible and sing hymns. I have taught them the good news of Jesus at school and at church. But all of this is no more than a beginning. Their living conditions are still so poor. The people are slow of heart to change. So much more needs to be done for their bodies and their souls," he said.

"I wish I could stay and help them longer, but my wife is deathly ill. I, myself, am too sick to continue. Someone else must take up the work, but I didn't know who. Then I heard about you, Fritz. God has prepared you well for it. Would you be willing to take the good news of Jesus to them in my place, and help them?" Stuber asked

"Yes, I will go," Fritz replied. "I will go and love these people, both body and soul."

In God's kindness, Fritz was not to go alone. His sister, Sophia begged their parents to let her go and keep house for him. Her love for God and for these people made her eager to endure hardship for them. Their parents said yes. And so it was that Sophia and Fritz left Strasburg for Waldbach in the Vosges Mountains.

As they traveled through the mountains to Waldbach, they could see how right Pastor Stuber had been about everything. Turning off the well-traveled Rothau road, they headed for Waldbach on the only path there was—just a poor, dirt trail. When they reached the banks of the River Bruche near Waldbach, there found there was no bridge. Their only choices were to turn back or risk the cold, swirling waters. They chose the risk. Into the river went horse, luggage and all. Somehow they managed all get across safely.

When they entered Waldbach, what a sad sight it all

was! How miserable looking were the little huts and the poor people who lived in them! Fritz could see why these poor living conditions had left Stuber and his wife so ill. It looked like an impossible job.

But Fritz and Sophia did not turn back. Why? Because of the great love the Holy Spirit had worked in both of their hearts for God and for others: "Lord, You are God. This day I promise myself to You. I want to use all that I am to love You and others with my heart, mind, soul and strength," Fritz had vowed long ago. He would not give up now. Sophia agreed with him completely. They would stay and live out God's Law among these people. They would try to show them what it meant to love God with all their heart, mind, soul and strength; and to love others as themselves. They would love these people, body and soul.

Fritz had come to these people first of all as their pastor. He knew more than anything else they needed to know God's Word. From the very first Sunday, he began to preach the good news of Jesus boldly from the pulpit. "God, our Creator and King, offers forgiveness of sins through Jesus to all who turn from their sins and trust in Him as their Savior. Turn to Him this day and become His people," he urged them.

But the people didn't want to hear that they were sinners. They didn't want to repent and believe. "This pastor wants us to change too much," they grumbled. "We'll teach him a thing or two," some of them said.

"When he passes by on his horse, we'll throw water on them and make his horse spook and run off with him. "We'll sneak up on him and beat him up," others decided. "That should get rid of him."

Fritz found out about both of the plans. But instead of running him off, the threats made Fritz even bolder. He went straight up to those people and told them: "You know neither me nor my horse. My horse is too fast for you to catch. And we are here to love you body and soul. You cannot stop us from telling you the good news of Jesus. You cannot scare us into leaving, no matter what you do to me. I will even leave my horse at home and go on foot, so you can get me wet and beat me up all the more easily."

God used Fritz' boldness and love to change his enemies. They came to church. The Holy Spirit worked in their hearts as they listened. Now they began to love God with their heart, mind, soul and strength and each other, too.

Fritz and Sophia didn't only want to change the hearts

of the people of Waldbach. They wanted to ease their miserable way of life, too. "These people need better education. They need to learn all about the Law of God so that they can live out their love for Him and each other as He has told them to in the Bible. They need to know how to grow better crops and make all sorts of things. They need roads and bridges to connect their village to markets in other towns to sell the good things they will grow and make," they decided.

But once more the people grumbled about the changes Fritz planned. "We don't have money to build school buildings. We don't know how to build bridges or blast rocks to make roads. It would be easier to go to the moon than to do what you plan," they told him.

But Fritz and Sophia did not give up. They would keep on loving these stubborn people, body and soul! They kept trusting that God would help change these people's lives, just like He had begun to change their heart. somehow the LORD would fulfill these plans for schools, jobs, roads and bridges. They were certain.

And sure enough He did! Christians from other places sent money to help them build the schools. Soon children were learning history, English and math, the Bible and hymns. The girls learned how to sew, weave, knit. The boys also learned how to grow good crops and care for fruit trees. Fritz brought in craftsmen from other towns to teach the young men how to be blacksmiths, carpenters, wheelwrights, and shoemakers. The children took home what they learned at school and shared it with their parents at home. Waldbach had begun to change.

Together Fritz and the men blasted rocks, leveled ground and lay a bridge across the River Bruche. At last, Waldbach was connected to the world. Its goods could easily be taken to market and the people begin to make money enough to take good care of their families.

Fritz Oberlin stayed in Waldbach for eight years until he was called away to Pennsylvania in America to help another, even poorer village of people. But never did the villagers of Waldbach forget their dear pastor who had loved them, body and soul. Next to the bridge over the River Bruche stands a plaque that says: "Bridge of Charity," or "Bridge of Gifts Given in Love." How true it was, for this bridge, as well as everything else Fritz did in those eight years, had been Fritz Oberlin's gift of love given to the people of Waldbach.

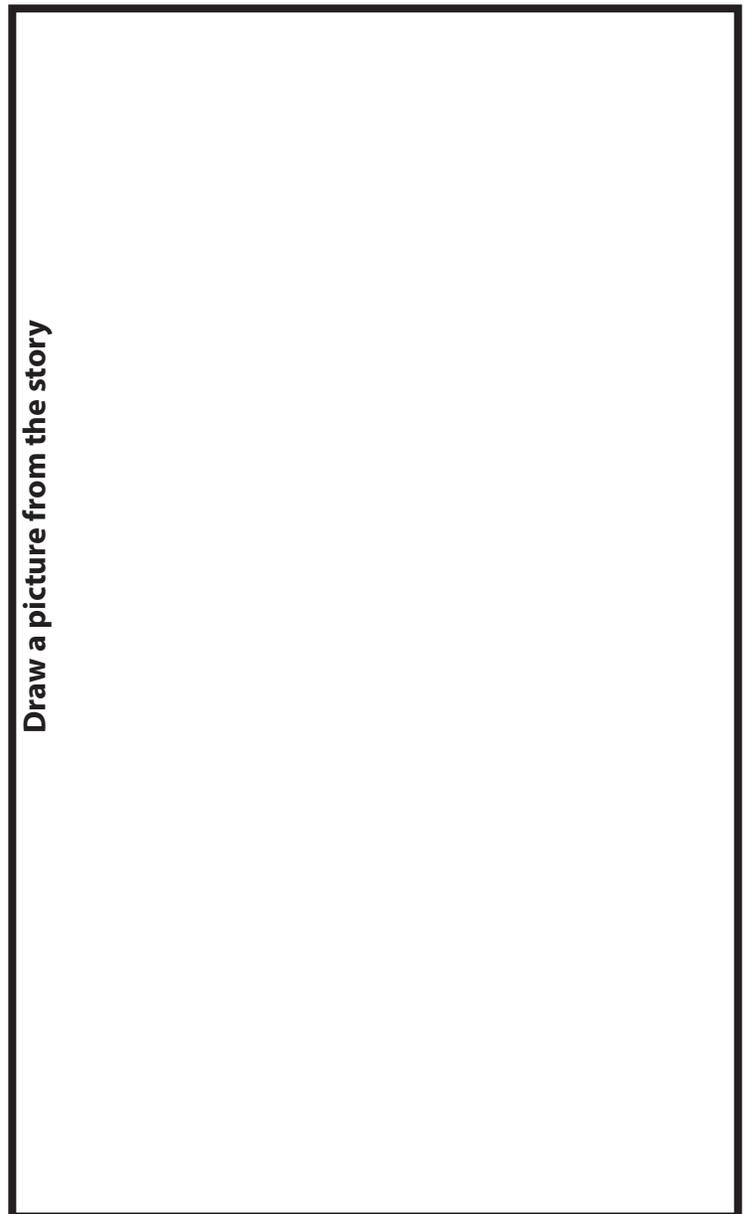
Our Bible Truth is: The Heart of God's Laws Is Love

Our Bible Verse is: Matthew 22:36-40

"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?' Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest command. And the second in like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Fritz longed to love God and others like our Bible Verse says. God helped Fritz to love like this and He can help us, too. How? When we turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. When we do, God will make us His people and send His Holy Spirit to work in our hearts, helping us to love God and others like this, too.

Let's thank God for His amazing power to put love like this in His people. Let's ask Him to work like this in us, even today.



Draw a picture from the story

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

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

Jesus lived a perfect live of love and He offered it up as the perfect payment for sins, for all the laws we break. Because He paid for our sins, it doesn't matter how we live. Answer: False! Yes, Jesus died and paid for the sins of God's people, but God's people want to obey God's laws because they love Him and want to live to please Him.

2. Crack the Case Questions

a. Who was the Bold Bridge-BUILDER? How was he bold?

Answer: Fritz Oberlin. He was bold in how he preached the gospel, helped the people and built the bridge, even when everyone was against him.

b. Why was he so bold? What was he trying to do?

Answer: He was so bold because he wanted to love God with all his life. That meant he would try to love God most of all, and to love others as himself, as Jesus said summed up God's laws. He did everything he could to love the people of Waldbach, body and soul.

3. Fill in the missing words from the Bible Verse: Matthew 22:36-40

"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?' Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your ___ with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your ___.' This is the first and greatest command. And the second in like it: 'Love your ___ as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Answers: God; mind; neighbor.

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN

Take My Life

PFI NIV Songs 7, Track 18

Verse 1

Take my life and let it be,
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love,
At the impulse of Thy love.

Words: Frances R. Havergal Music: Henri A.C. Malan

To consecrate something means to set something apart for a special purpose. This hymn is a prayer to God, asking Him to take our life and use it to live out His good will, according to His good laws. In doing this, we live by the very heart of His laws: love!

AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY

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

A God, we praise You for being the Giver of love for You and for others. It is only by Your grace that Fritz and his sister could keep loving the people of Waldbach the way they did.

C God, we confess that many times, we are not like Fritz and his sister. We do not try to love You the most or love others as much as we love ourselves. Many times we only want to do what is easiest for us.

T God, we thank You that You care for the needs of both the bodies and the souls of people. Thank You for the powerful way You work in the hearts of Your people to selflessly care for others, even when they are mean and ungrateful.

S God, work in our hearts that we see our sin, turn away from it and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Help us to love You most of all. Help us to selflessly love others, as Fritz and his sister did.

BIBLE VERSE SONG

Love the Lord

PFI NIV Songs 7, Track 19

Love the Lord your God with all your heart,
Love the Lord your God with all your soul,
Love the Lord your God with all your mind,
This is the first and greatest command.

And the second is like it...

Love your neighbor as yourself,
Love your neighbor as yourself,
Love your neighbor as yourself,
All the law and prophets hang,
On these two commandments.
Matthew Twenty-two, thirty-seven through forty.

Words: Matthew 22:37-40 Music: Constance Dever ©2011

God has given us many laws in the Bible. It's good to know them all. But Jesus tells us that the purpose behind them all is to love God most of all, and to love others as we love ourselves. When we live out all His good laws, we are loving God and love others as He wants us to.