

BIG QUESTION UNDER INVESTIGATION

We're in... Unit 8: The God Who Loves

Unit 8 Big Question and Answer and Song:

"What Is God's Love for His People Like?"

PFI ESV Songs 8, Tracks 3,4

Unit 8 Bible Verse and Song: 1 Chronicles 16:34 ESV

"Give thanks to the LORD for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever."

PFI ESV Songs 8, Track 5

BIBLE TRUTH

We're learning... Bible Truth 5:

God Uses Everything in His People's Lives for Their Good and His Glory

When we turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior, God becomes our Heavenly Father and we become His adopted children.

God promises His children to use everything that happens to them in their life on earth for their good and His glory. Ahead of time, God prepared special good works for each of them to do. He has also planned to carefully allow hard times and suffering in their lives for His special, good purposes.

What are these special, good purposes? To bring glory to His name, showing the world what He is like. And, to change them so that they become more like Jesus, who loves His Father completely and delights in Him and His perfectly good will. These are the two things God's people want most of all!

No one likes to suffer--not even for the best of purposes! But, God's people are so happy to know that there is nothing in their lives--from the easiest, most enjoyable thing to the very saddest, hardest thing--that their loving Father has not chosen very carefully to use for their good and His glory.

BIBLE VERSE

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

Bible Truth 5 Bible Verse: Romans 8:28-30, ESV

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. For those God foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those He predestined, He also called; and those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified."

CASE STORY

Matthew 9; Mark 4-5; Luke 8

Our story is called:

The Case of the Man and the Diving Pigs.

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

1. What was wrong with man? How did this cause the pigs to dive?
2. How did Jesus use this man's struggles for God's glory and for the good of this man and many more?

This story takes place in New Testament times, when Jesus lived on earth.

It was getting late. "First Evening" had passed—the time of day when the sun first began to sink down into the west. "Second Evening" was upon them. The shadows were deepening and the moon was on the rise, when Jesus and His disciples beached their boat near Gadara, on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Too far from their home on the other side of lake, they would be spending night here and the disciples were probably not very happy about that. Why? Because this side of the Sea of Galilee was "the Decapolis" or "the Ten Cities," named after the ten cities the Romans had taken from Israel and put under the control of Syria, the country that lay to the east of Israel. This was Gentile country--home to non- Jews who lived life in their very non-Jewish-y way.

But this wasn't the worst of it. You see, Jesus had them put to shore near hills covered with thousands of pigs and filled with caves of dead bodies! For a Jew, it doesn't get much worse than that! Pigs and dead bodies were two things that made Jews unclean. That is, they made them unfit to be around other Jews and to worship the Lord in the Temple.

Gentiles, pigs and dead people! These were all very good reasons for a Jew to get back in the boat and row to some other place for the night, but they weren't good enough reasons for Jesus. He had plans to meet someone who lived right there among the pigs and the dead and change his life--for his good and God's glory.

Who was this someone? The only name we have for him is "The Demoniac:" This poor, miserable man from Gadara, had come under the grip of Satan's power. The demons made the man stronger than a regular human. They urged him to hurt himself and hurt others. Many times he would yell out in terrible shrieks. People tried strong chains and

kept him under guard. But nothing worked. He broke the chains, escaped his guards and snuck away to lonely places, like this cemetery.

Many people from the Decapolis hired magic workers to chant magic spells over demon possessed people. If this man's family had done this, it hadn't worked. So they left him to live out among the tombs and to suffer by himself. While living out there, he got He had become so violent that no one could pass safely through the cemetery anymore.

It was right there, on the shores below the cemetery, where Jesus had his disciples put to shore. Full of God's power and love, He had come to change this man's terrible life for his own good and for God's glory, as all were soon to see.

Neither Jesus nor this man had ever met each other before, yet they both knew who the other was. Jesus knew by the Spirit of God; but the man, by the demons. Even from a distance, they knew it was the mighty Son of God who was on that shore—and they were terrified. The man immediately ran out of the tombs and fell down at Jesus' feet.

"Come out of this man, evil spirits!" Jesus ordered.

"What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won't torture me!" they shrieked back through the man.

Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"

"Legion," he replied. What a name! A legion was the largest single unit in the Roman army—up to 6000 soldiers! What a lot of demons troubled this poor man!

"Please, Jesus, don't send us out of this area! Don't send us to the Abyss," the demons pleaded with Jesus. They did not want to return to that holding place for Satan and his demons. "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them," the demons begged Him.

Jesus gave them permission. There would be a day of final judgment when they--would be bound in the Abyss forever, but it had not come yet. Right now Jesus would use these demons to bring glory to God. He would show God's complete power over evil, rescue this poor man and encourage many to believe He was God's Son.

At Jesus' command, the demons left the man and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the Sea of Galilee and were drowned.

Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. [Sure enough. Everything was just as they said: There were the bodies of the 2000 pigs, scattered along the shore, and bobbing up and down in the surf of the Sea. There was the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind. And there was Jesus, the mighty One who had done with just His words what no chain or magic spell or anything else could do.

"Tell us again what happened," the crowd of people who gathered asked.

Once more the pig herders told what they had seen. The crowd saw what Jesus had done and they should have worshiped Him. Here was a man no one could help! Here was a man dangerous to himself and to others! Here was a man whose life was ruined under the mighty grip of Satan! Yet here came Jesus, the Son of God. Full of God's power to save; full of His love! He changed this man's terrible life for his own good and for the God's glory, as all could see.

The people could see the great thing that Jesus had done, but they didn't want to believe. They were scared of Jesus and His great power. They could not believe He used it for their good and God's glory. "Please, Jesus, leave us. Go away from our lands," they pleaded with Him.

How relieved the people of Gadara were as Jesus and the others turned back to the shore to sail home! Only one of them followed Jesus down to the boat: the man who had been freed of the demons.

"Jesus, please, take me with You. I want to be Your disciple, too," he begged.

But Jesus said no. He had other plans for this man. Good plans; plans that would bring great glory to God. "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you," Jesus told him.

The man obeyed. As Jesus and the others set off across the Sea of Galilee for their home in Capernaum, the man set off across the hills to his home.

What a homecoming it must have been as neighbors, family and friends recognized him. "What happened to you? Who healed you?" they exclaimed.

"Jesus did this!" he replied. Then he told them the wonderful story: "I was a man no one could help. I was a man dangerous to myself and to others. I was a man whose life was ruined under the mighty grip of Satan. Yet here

came Jesus, the Son of God. Full of God's power to save; full of His love. He changed my terrible life for my own good and for God's glory," he told them.

That man's family, neighbors and friends may have been the first to hear, but they certainly were not the last. The Bible tells us that the man traveled all over the Decapolis telling how much Jesus had done for him. And all men marveled at God's goodness shown to this man and the glory and power of Jesus' name.

Our Bible Truth is: God Uses Everything in His People's Lives for Their Good and His Glory

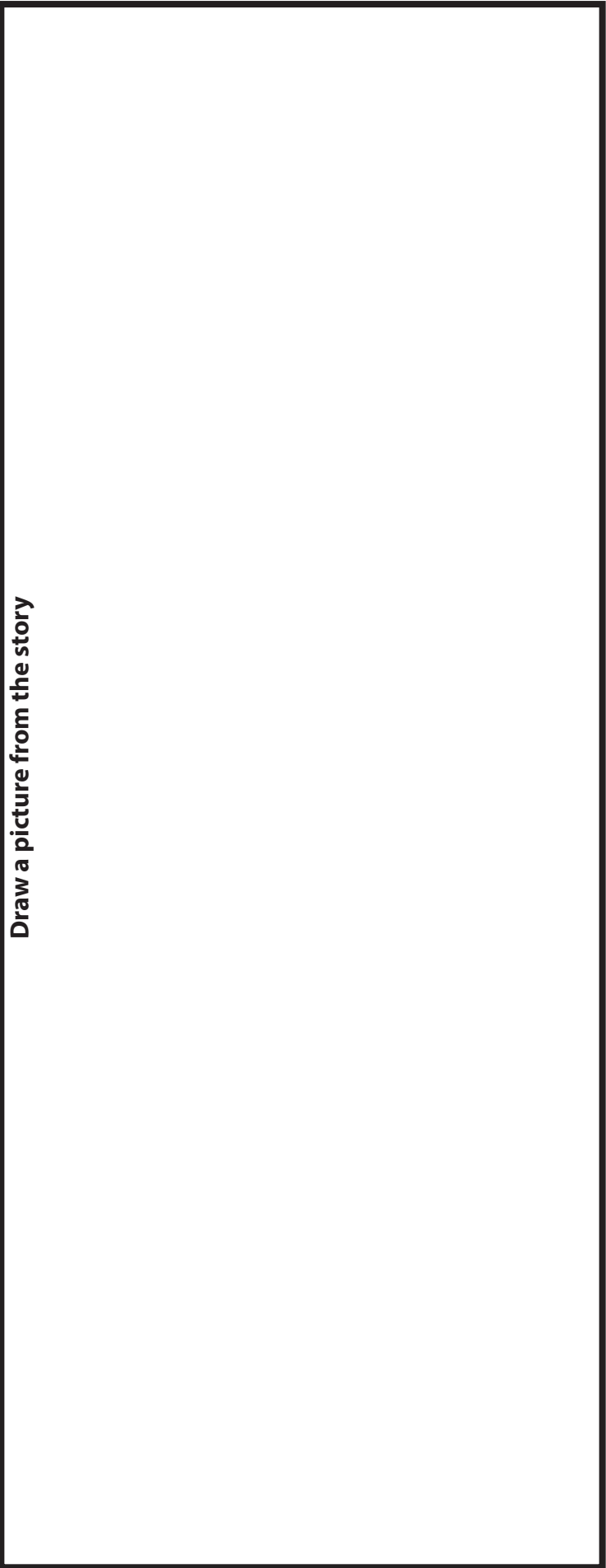
Our Bible Verse is: Romans 8:28-30

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."

How great is our God! He truly uses all things for the good. Look how He even used the terrible work of demons for this man's good and God's glory!

But what about you and me? If Jesus could work this kind of good in this man's life and brought such great glory to God through it, could He work powerfully in our lives, too? Yes, He can! He can work in our hearts, helping us to turn away from our sins and trust in Him as our own Savior, just as He worked in this man's life. Then we will be His people! But that is just the beginning! When we are His people, there is nothing in our lives that He will not use for our good and for His glory!

Let's praise God for being able to use absolutely everything in His people's lives for their good and His glory. Let's ask Him to make us His people. Let's ask Him to bring great glory to His name through everything in our lives.



Draw a picture from the story

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

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

When we turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior, God becomes our Heavenly Father and we become His adopted children.

Answer: True!

2. Crack the Case Questions

a. What was wrong with man? How did this cause the pigs to dive?

Answer: The man was troubled by many demons. When Jesus healed the man, he let the demons go into the pigs and that made them dive over the edge of the cliff.

b. How did Jesus use this man's struggles for God's glory and for the good of this man and many more?

Answer: Jesus showed that He was God's Son, powerful enough to make all the powers of evil obey. Nothing or no one is too strong for Him! This poor man's struggle was over. He came to believe in Jesus and be saved. Many others heard what Jesus did for him and they also put their faith in Jesus.

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

Romans 8:28-30

"And we ___ that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his ____. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the ___ of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he ___ he also glorified."

Answers: know; purpose; image; justified.

AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY

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

A God, we praise You for being more powerful than anyone or anything else—even Satan.

C God, we confess that many times we are fearful of evil, forgetting that Jesus has broken the power of sin and death. Oh, how we need a Savior!

T God, we thank You for using even the very worse and very hardest things in Your people's lives for their good and Your glory.

S God, break the power of sin and death in our lives. Work in our hearts, helping us to turn away from our sins and trust Jesus as our own Savior.

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN

How Firm a Foundation

PFI ESV Songs 8, Tracks 19,20

Verse 3

"When thro' fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.

Verse 4

"The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, tho' all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake!"

Words: John Rippon's Selection of Hymns

Music: Joseph Funk's Genuine Church Music

God's people know all God has an unbreakable plan to use all things in their lives for their good. He has planned that even their "fiery trials"—the hardest things that happen to them—that God will use them all to make them like Jesus. They do not have to like the fiery trials, but they can praise God for how He will use them for their good and His glory.

BIBLE VERSE SONG

And We Know

PFI NIV Songs 8, Track 21

And we know that for those who love God
all things work together for good,
And we know that for those who love God
All things work together for good,
For those who are called, according to his purpose,
For those who are called, according to his purpose,

Refrain:

All things work together for good,
All things work together for good,
All things, all things, all things, Work together for good.

For those he foreknew, he also predestined,
For those he foreknew, he also predestined,
To be conformed to the image of his Son,
That he might be the firstborn among many.
To be conformed to the image of his Son,
That he might be the firstborn among many. Refrain
Romans Eight, twenty-eight and nine.

Words: Romans 8:28,29 ESV Music: Constance Dever ©2015

God's people are those who love Him. In His great love, He has called them to turn away from their sins and trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. This is what it means to be justified. But being justified in just the beginning of God's good forever plans for His people. He also planned for all things in their lives—both enjoyable things and hard things—for the good purpose of making them more like Jesus. Yes, He would use all of them to prepare them for life with Him in heaven, where they would be glorified: forever freed from sin and a pure reflection of God's glory. This is God's wonderful plan for making everything in His people's lives for their good and His glory.