

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 NIV Songs 8, Tracks 3,4

Unit 8 Bible Verse and Song:

1 Chronicles 16:34 NIV 1984
"Give thanks to the LORD for He is good. His love endures forever."

PFI NIV Songs 8, Track 5

BIBLE TRUTH

We're learning... Bible Truth 6:

God Will Never Stop Loving His People

Our love for others often changes. Sometimes it is strong; sometimes it is weak. Sometimes it fades away completely. God's love for His people never changes. The Bible calls God's love "hesed:" steady love and kindness, flowing out to sinful people who don't deserve it.

God loved His people before they were created. He kept on loving them when they rebelled against Him. And He chose to send His dear Son, Jesus to save them from their sins. God will go on loving them forever and ever.

Why does God's love for His people never change? It's not because His people are so good and lovable. It's because God loves His people through Jesus, the perfect Son of God, who died for their sins. With His blood, shed on the cross, Jesus made a covenant—a forever promise—with God, His Father. His blood would be the perfect payment for the sins of God's people. He took God's punishment for their sins so they didn't have to bear it themselves.

Because of Jesus, God would forgive them and love them forever. Praise God for sending Jesus! He is why God will never stop loving His people.

BIBLE VERSE

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

Bible Truth 6 Bible Verse:

Romans 8:31-21,35,37-39

"If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any power, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

CASE STORY

The Book of Hosea

Our story is called:

The Case of the Willful Wife.

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

1. Who married the willful wife? Why? What did she do that was so bad?
2. Who was the willful a picture of? Who was her faithful husband a picture of?

This story takes place in Old Testament times, about 750 years before Jesus lived on earth.

Long ago in Israel there lived a man named Hosea. Unlike many of the people of his day, Hosea didn't burn incense to the Baals on the high places; or sacrifice to the golden bull Egeliah at Bethel; or even make offerings to Ashtoreth under the oak trees. Hosea loved the LORD and lived to please Him, not the fake gods that others served.

The LORD called Hosea to be one of His prophets. Now when we think of prophets we usually think of them listening to God, then going to God's people and telling them God's message. But did you know that many times the LORD also had prophets do something, as a picture of what He wanted His people to know? Well, the LORD had Hosea do just this.

What did the LORD have Hosea do as a picture for Israel? Get married! And not just married to any girl of his choosing. No! The LORD told Hosea to marry the daughter of Diblaim. A woman named Gomer.

Now there was something about Gomer that made her not exactly a man's dream wife (and it's not her weird name!). Something so bad that it really made her a nightmare of a wife. You see, Gomer was unfaithful. That is, she was the kind of girl who didn't stay only with her husband, but made money by being with other men and treating them like they were her husband, too.

Gomer's unfaithfulness would make Hosea's marriage to Gomer painfully unhappy. So why would the LORD want Hosea to marry a woman like this? Because Gomer's unfaithfulness to Hosea was a picture how unfaithful the people of Israel were to the LORD.

"Marry that unfaithful woman Gomer and have children with her," the LORD told Hosea. "Name your first son, Jezreel, your daughter, Lo-Ru-ham-ah, and your second son, Lo-ammi. Your unfaithful wife and the names of your children are to be messages to Israel."

"Then give the people of Israel this message from Me," the LORD told Hosea. "Say to them: 'You people of Israel are just like Gomer. You have been like a unfaithful wife to Me. Remember how I loved you and rescued you from Egypt? Remember how at Mount Sinai we made covenant promises to each other? I promised to always love and protect you. I called you My Treasured Possession. You promised to love and worship Me alone. You would keep all of my commandments,'" the LORD said.

"We celebrated our promises and love with a great feast that day," the LORD continued. "It was like a wedding. All these years, I have always kept the promises made to you that day. I have loved you patiently and tenderly, but you have broken your promises to me over and over again. You split off from the other two tribes of Judah and began to worship the false gods, the Baals. You fellowshipped with them by eating the raisin cakes dedicated to them at their altars. You have bowed down to the golden bull, Egeliah. You have made offerings to Asherah."

"But that is not, all," the LORD told the people of Israel. "You kill and steal. You depend on the kings of faraway countries to take care of you, when you know I promised to take care of you! You have forgotten Me! You have rejected Me! I have kept loving you and been patient with you; and for 700 years you have been unfaithful to Me," the LORD said.

"Are you shocked and disgusted at how Gomer treats Hosea?" the LORD asked the Israelites. "You should be more shocked and disgusted with how you have treated Me! You deserve My forever punishment right now, for the way you've behaved!"

The people of Israel had treated the LORD terribly, but amazingly, still He loved them: "You don't deserve to be my people; yet I still love you so much!" He said. "I will have punish you soon, but because of my love for you, I will give you another chance to turn away from your unfaithfulness to Me," the LORD told them.

"Think about the meaning of the names of Hosea's children," the LORD said. "They are my final warning to you. One son is named 'Jezreel' to remind you of the many people you wrongly killed in the Valley of Jezreel. You will be punished for this if you don't turn away from your sins. His daughter is named 'Lo-Ru-ham-ah.' It means 'not pitied.' Soon I will show you no pity if you do not turn from your sins. His other son is named 'Lo-ammi.' It means 'Not

my people.'" "Soon you will not be my people and I will not be your God anymore, if you do not repent," the LORD warned them. "I have been faithful to you, but you have rejected Me. Please, listen to Me! Turn away from your sinful ways and your fake gods. Turn back to My and My love," the LORD urged the people through Hosea.

How patient and kind the LORD was to these rebellious people! But still they refused to repent. They would keep on worshipping the Baals, eating the raisin cakes, and trusting in kings to protect them.

The Israelites weren't the only ones continuing to stray from the one who faithfully loved them. Gomer, too, strayed away and rejected her loving husband. She fell in love with another man, left Hosea's house and went to live with her new love instead. And if this wasn't bad enough, she got in trouble and needed money to pay her way out of it. She had no money and her lover wouldn't help her. What could she do?

News of his Gomer's problems reached Hosea. How terribly his wife had treated him when he had done nothing but love her! What should he do now? By law, Homer had the right not just to divorce her, but even to stone her to death. At the very least, Hosea surely should just forget about her and let her suffer the consequences of her sins. But that wasn't the LORD's plan.

"Hosea, I want you to love Gomer again, though she is loved by another and has been unfaithful to you. Love her as I love My people, though they have been unfaithful to me. Your faithful love to her will be a picture of My never-ending faithful love for them."

Hosea obeyed the LORD. He bought Gomer for fifteen shekels of silver and about 10 bushels of barley, the price commonly paid for a slave. "Live faithfully to me. I alone am to be your husband, and I will live with you," he told her.

Then Hosea went to all the people of Israel with this message from God: "You have been unfaithful to Me, just like Gomer has been to Hosea. Your love is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears as soon as the sun gets hot. I've been patient with you, but I'm going to send your enemies to destroy you soon, if you do not repent and turn to Me. Say to Me: 'Forgive all our sins and receive us. Never will we call an idol we made with our hands 'our God.' Then I will heal your rebelliousness and love you freely, just like Hosea has taken Gomer back to be his wife."

These words were incredibly merciful, but God's love is

so great for His people that He had even more love to lavish on them: "Yet even if you do not turn back to Me, I will still love you," the LORD told them. "Yes, your enemies will come to take you away as their slaves, but when your punishment is finished, I, Myself, will save you and bring you back home, without using soldiers or weapons. Best of all, the day will come when I will save My people not just from enemy kings and armies, but from the greatest enemy of all: death, itself."

"Hosea paid the price to free Gomer and brought her back home to live with him the rest of her life," the LORD told them. "This is a picture of what I will do for My people. I will pay the price for My people's sins so they can live with Me forever! Then all of My people will seek Me and the Messiah, the Forever King, Jesus. They will know My blessings forever. I will make a new covenant with them. They will no longer love the fake gods, but love Me as a good wife loves only her husband. And I will betroth Myself to them—promising to love them forever and ever. Your sin and unfaithfulness will not come between us anymore. It will be like we are married and perfectly happy, living in love and compassion, justice and righteousness forever," the LORD promised them.

"You have been so unfaithful, yet see how I love you even now! Repent and turn back to Me so I can forgive you and not have to punish you!" the LORD urged.

What a loving God, yet what an unfaithful people! They still refused to turn back to Him. So the LORD punished them just as He promised. First, the Assyrians, then the Babylonians came, destroying the country and carrying away the people into slavery.

Yes, the LORD punished them as promised, but He also kept on loving them. But the LORD also kept on loving them, just as He said He would. When their time of punishment was over, the people went back home and rebuilt their country.

But best of all, at just the right time, the LORD sent the Messiah Jesus to give His life as the payment for His people's sins when He suffered and died on the cross. On the third day Jesus rose from the dead in victory. He sent the Holy Spirit to live in His people's hearts, filling them with love and joy in Him. They looked forward to the day when the rest of God's promises to them would come true. The day when He would betroth Himself to them forever and they would live with Him in heaven to delight in Him

and enjoy His love forever and ever.

Our Bible Truth is:

God Will Never Stop Loving His People

Our Bible Verse is: Romans 8:31-32,35, 37-39:

"If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any power, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Isn't it amazing how God loved those people of Israel! How good and patient He was with them; yet how hard-hearted they were towards Him. But what about you and me? You know, we are not so very different from those Israelites. We have the same sinful hearts as they did. We often find other things besides Him to love and trust in. All too quickly we forget His love that He offers us through Jesus. Yet even to this day, the LORD offers us forgiveness of our sins when we turn from our sins and trust Jesus as our own Savior. We, too, can be filled with His Holy Spirit. We, too, can rest in knowing that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ. We can look forward to the day when He will betroth Himself to us so that we can live with Him in heaven, delighting in Him and enjoying His love forever.

Let's praise God for His faithful, forever love for His people. Let's ask Him to send His Spirit into our hearts, helping us to turn from our sins and trust in Him. Let's ask Him to fill our hearts with more and more love for Him.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

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

God's love for His people is just like our love.. Sometimes it's strong, sometimes it's weak. It changes.

Answer: False. God's love is always steadfast.

2. Crack the Case Questions

a. Who married the willful wife? Why? What did she do that was so bad?

Answer: The prophet Hosea married Gomer because the LORD told him to. She left her husband for other men.

b. Who was the willful a picture of? Who was her faithful husband a picture of?

Answer: Gomer was a picture of Israel, the LORD's unfaithful people who worshiped other gods, even though they had made a covenant to worship Him. Hosea was a picture of the LORD, who kept forgiving and loving His people, even though they didn't deserve it.

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

Romans 8:31-32,35,37-39

"If God is for us, who can be ___ us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who shall ___ us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine o___ through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any power, neither height nor depth, nor ___ in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Answers: against; separate; conquerors; anything else.

AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY

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

A God, we praise You for Your eternal love for Your people.

C God, we confess that many times, like the people of Israel and Judah, we choose to disobey You. We do not deserve Your love. We need a Savior!

T God, we thank You for promising to send a Savior to save all those who turn from their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior. Thank You for being so patient with Your people.

S God, work in our hearts! Help us to turn away from our sins and trust Jesus as our own Savior. Send the Holy Spirit to live in our hearts, that we would know You, love You and obey You.

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN

The King of Love

PFI NIV Songs 8, Track 18

Verse 6

And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never.

Good shepherd may I sing Thy praise

Within Thy house forever.

Words: Henry Baker, Psalm 23 Music:Traditional Irish Melody

God's people praise God for being the King of love. They delight in having Him as their king because all that He does comes from His heart of love for them that will never end or fail. God takes care of His people like a good shepherd cares for his sheep. Sheep are very stupid and need someone to take care all of their needs or else they will die. God promises to always be with His people, taking care of them throughout their whole length of days--their whole lives. And He will go on caring for them even after they die. He will take them to live with Him in heaven forever. How wonderful that will be! No wonder God's people want to sing His praise forever! We can become God's people when we turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior.

BIBLE VERSE SONG

Who Shall Separate Us?

PFI NIV Songs 8, Track 19

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall trouble? No! Shall Hardship? No!

Persecution, famine, nakedness? No!

Danger or sword? No!

In all these things we are conquerors

Through Him who loved us.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life,

Nor anything else in all creation,

Will be able to separate us from God's love

In Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans Eight, thirty-five, eight and nine.

Words adapted from Romans 8:35,38,39

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God's people may have to go through some very hard things in this life, but they know that none of these things will ever separate them from God. He has always loved them and will always love them. He will be with them, helping them through them all, to the very end. And one day, God will bring them into heaven where they will enjoy His love and the delight of His presence forever.