



Ark Encounter in Williamstown, Kentucky

Noah: The Man and His Mission

**Six Bible studies on Genesis 5-9
To help you understand Noah, God, and the Flood**

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Bible Studies in this series

<p>Creation and Fall – 6 studies to look at the creation and fall of mankind. We will look at the perfection and plan of God’s creation and how man tarnished the creation with sin.</p>	<p>Jesus’ Miracles in John’s Gospel – 7 studies on the miracles of Jesus in the gospel of John. Each miracle has a meaning that tells us something important about Jesus’ person and ministry.</p>
<p>Noah: Man and Mission – 6 studies on the Flood. We will see the grace of God and the obedience and trust of Noah. God makes a new beginning in a fallen world.</p>	<p>Jesus’ parables in Luke – 6 studies on the parables of Jesus in Luke. We will look at the meaning behind some of these familiar parables and see patterns for our lives.</p>
<p>Storm Shelter Psalms – 6 studies on some of the psalms to turn to when life hits you hard. Wrestle with the psalmist as he learns to trust the Lord in difficult times.</p>	<p>Upper Room Conversations – 6 studies on the conversation that Jesus had with the disciples around the last supper table. Learn what was so important to Jesus that He just had to share it with the disciples.</p>
<p>Revival in Nehemiah – 6 studies on the second half of Nehemiah. The walls were rebuilt. Now it was time to rebuild a people who was down and distant from the Lord.</p>	<p>Galatians: Rules versus Grace – 6 studies with Paul in the heart of the gospel. In an age when people want to force us to follow their rules, Paul wants us to see the power of grace.</p>
<p>Daniel: Godly Living in a Pagan World – 6 studies to encourage us as we live in a world that has become harsh to God. It will make all the difference to keep our faith in tough times.</p>	<p>Paul’s first missionary journey – 6 studies on the conversion and first journey of Paul. See Paul as he grows and learn what the life of the Christian was meant to be.</p>
<p>Power of Prayer – 6 studies on the power and help that we receive in prayer. Follow the saints in their prayers and learn from them how valuable prayer can be for you.</p>	

Introduction

It is the stuff of cartoons and children's toys and is usually pictured as a squat boat with a giraffe sticking out a skylight, happy animals peering through windows and an old man standing on the deck. Who is Noah and what was the ark like? Who is this man who never speaks a recorded word until years after the flood and yet is center stage for six chapters of the Bible? This study will try to help you peel off the myth and see the man. We will walk with him as he obediently builds an ark for decades and is shut in the ark by God so that he and his family alone were saved out of all of humanity. We will examine what it must have been like as forty days and nights of rain stretch into more than a claustrophobic year in the ark. We will also look at how the world had changed when Noah and his family stepped out of the ark. Finally, we will consider what we may learn for our lives from this saint. How do we live as obedient and patient children of God?

When we start looking at Noah as a person, there is so much to learn for our journey here on Earth. Noah is a great example of faith. God tells him to build this enormous boat on dry land and he does so. He trusts the Lord and never argues with the Lord or has hesitation about what God tells him. He is an example of obedience for us all. Most of all, he is someone who does the ordinary things and trusts God to do the extraordinary. He doesn't sit back on a pile of pillows and expect God to feed him and the animals. He builds an ark trusting that God will gather the wood. He weathers a storm feeding the animals and cleaning the stalls trusting that the Lord will care for him and his family. When it is all over, he gives thanks to God. If you strip away the myth, you see a saint who can teach you and me a lot about how to live as a child of God.

Noah is only part of the story. The main character is God who speaks loudly with words and actions throughout the story of the flood. We will present the flood as an act of grace as well as a punishment for sin. We will see how the Lord does extraordinary things through the ordinary actions of faithful saints. We will see the gracious hand of God who calls us to do amazing things and provides so that miracles can happen. The flood is God's story even more than it is the story of Noah. It is his hand that chooses Noah and works the miracles that save mankind and allow the promise of the Savior made to Adam and Eve to not die in a wicked world. Come and see an intimate portrait of God as He brings salvation to the world through water and a wooden box. Touch the heart of God in these chapters of the Bible so that you may have a greater trust of your God throughout your own life.

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How to use this Bible study

Each of the six chapters contains an introduction to help you get the big picture and is followed by thirteen questions to help you dig into the truth. The questions will help you understand what is going on and apply it to your own lives. The leader's guide provides answers for the questions that can be used in a Sunday Bible class or a small group. In a small group setting, you may find it helpful to copy the four-page leader's guide for each person. There are also student guides provided in the back of the book. In a large setting, it may be easier to copy those guides so that each of the members of the class has a student guide for personal use. Notice that there are also three questions at the end of each lesson that can either be discussed as you meet together or assigned for people to think about in the coming week.

My prayer is that you and the members of your group or class can grow through these studies. The answers in the leader's guide may challenge you to find deeper meaning and application for your lives. Often we try to overcome problems in life by ourselves. The goal of this study is to help you picture what the flood was like and decide what God is calling you to do in your own life. Noah doesn't say much in the Bible but his actions speak loudly about trusting God and obedience. Often we want to tell God how to help us. He often has a better way if we will just listen to Him. As you study, realize that many of the questions have no single answer but are meant to help people find God's help in your trials. If you need to take more than one week per lesson, do so and enjoy the discussion and the learning. The narrative of the flood is seldom studied but has so much to teach us.

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May the Lord bless you as you learn and grow in His grace.

1. Grace

Genesis 5:28-6:8

The flood was an opportunity for God to save the world.

One of Satan's most successful devices is a compromise. The sons of Seth who believed in God married the evil sons of Cain, and faith was compromised. The godly married the ungodly, and soon everyone was wicked. Everyone was following their desires and forgetting God. Sin spread as family by family was compromised. The evil ways of Cain took people away from Godly living and the worship of the Lord. It was like a virus that spread until fewer and fewer families worshipped God. Instead, they became like the world.

The flood was God's way of saving humanity. Doctors sometimes amputate a limb so that they can save the body. God had to amputate humanity with a flood so that good might survive. It was a tragic thing to do just as an amputation would be today. Mankind seems to be one family away from being so evil that there would be no good at all. The flood was terrible, but it was an act of salvation for the human race. God had to protect Noah so that He could keep the promise of sending Jesus to save the world from sin. If all mankind were evil, how would God bring salvation through a Messiah?

God still has to protect us from evil. I shudder to think of what the world would look like if Hitler had won World War II or if terrorists around the globe gained control. Our God is a God of love. The flood and the Lord's actions today are the hands of God protecting His people so that evil does not destroy them. The flood of yesterday and God's actions of today are the punishment of the wicked, but they are also acts of mercy defending the good so that they do not become evil. As we look at this first chapter of the flood, let us see how the Lord loves His people and will do anything to keep mankind from destroying itself.

1. When have you had to throw away something valuable because it was spoiled or was no longer useful? Why can't you keep it?

My wife regularly cleans out the refrigerator and throws out vegetables that have turned colors and meals that we thought we would eat but never got around to. It is an exercise in keeping us healthy. Spoiled food is a poison that smells terrible and will spread its poison to the healthy food that surrounds it in the refrigerator. Let your group discuss the things that they throw away perhaps because they have gone old or they clutter up their lives. Be sure to consider the effect of keeping such things and the harm that they can do.

Read Genesis 5:28-6:8

2. 5:29 What was life like at the time of the flood? What is Lamech's hope?

Lamech has probably heard the stories of the Garden of Eden and the curse. If you add up the years in chapter 5, Lamech is over 55 years old when Adam dies so that he may have heard about the garden from Adam himself. The life they live would have seemed cursed by comparison. The ground didn't yield its fruit, and the evil had become very evil indeed. In contrast, the Lamech of the line of Cain boasts of killing a man and dares God to punish him (Genesis 4:23-24). To live in such a challenging world where work was hard, and men thought nothing of killing each other would be hard. The godly Lamech's prayer was that Noah would somehow bring rest and comfort to the world. Perhaps, he remembered God's promise to send a savior to crush Satan and his evil. (Genesis 3:15)

3. 6:2, 4 How did sin spread and take over the whole world?

Satan is not mentioned in these verses, but he has been very busy. One of his most potent devices is compromise. He convinced the godly descendants of Seth to marry the ungodly children of Cain. The result was that the children of Seth gave up their devotion to God and slowly became as evil as the

children of Cain. The same problem plagued the people of God in the days of the Judges and Kings as they compromised their faith and began to worship false Gods along with the true God. When God's people give up their faith, they soon become like the world around them. It would seem that by the time of Noah, there was only one family that had not given in to evil.

4. How does compromise hurt the church? What happens when the culture confronts the church and the church “softens” the Bible’s message to fit into the culture? What has been your experience when a Christian marries a non-Christian?

Compromise is destroying the church today. We change or soften our beliefs so that they do not anger or turn away weaker Christians. Soon abortion or homosexuality is tolerated and then promoted. Soon couples living together are seen as normal instead of harmful to themselves and others. The Bible soon appears too harsh or rigid, and many passages are seen as being appropriate in Bible times but too old-fashioned for the wise people of today. We also see compromise when a Christian marries a non-Christian. In such marriages, it is the non-Christian who often prevails, and the couple does not go to church. They lead lives that are more in tune with the world than with the Bible. We can't be rude about our beliefs, but we need to stick up for them so that we are not pulled away from the Lord.

5. 6:3 How does God show patience with humanity? What does this time frame allow God to do through Noah?

God says that He will not ignore man's sin forever. He will wait 120 years before sending judgment. God is patient but the time will come when judgment must occur. One hundred twenty years gave God time to prepare Noah and for Noah to build the ark. Even with help, building an ark that was 450 feet long and 45 feet high would have taken years to create with hand tools. An angry god like many of the Roman or Greek gods would have destroyed man immediately. The true God is patient and has a plan to save the human race.

6. 6:4-5 What is the state of man before the flood? How evil had man become?

Every thought of his heart was evil. Romans 1:18-32 gives a good description of what this time may have looked like. God was known to them (Gen. 4:23-24) and so they were without excuse. Sadly, this was an evil time where these fallen ones were seen as the great men and heroes of their day. They were admired instead of being detested for the evil things that they did. It was a nearly hopeless situation that threatened the promise of a savior given in Gen. 3:15. How could the Lord send the messiah if there were no believing families into which He could have been born? In Matthew 24:37-39, Jesus compares the days before the last day to these days before the flood. He speaks of the suddenness of the flood and the last day. He may also be speaking of the godlessness of both eras as well.

7. As you read the text, how would you compare the evil of Noah's day with the evil you see around you today? What do you think are the causes of widespread sin today?

We would tend to say that we are just as bad. That there was only one family worth saving in Noah's day and that there are millions of practicing Christians would seem to make our day a little better. God's grief is that the heart is not right (v.5). It causes the same symptoms today that we see in the text. Both eras deal with sexual perversion (v.2), glorifying evil heroes (v.4), evil inclinations (v.5) and widespread corruption (v.11). Man is quickly moving in the direction of what the Lord says the last days will be like (Matt. 24:37). The condemnations of Romans 1 are already a reality in our culture.

8. 6:7 How does God feel about the world He has created?

The grief in God's heart is striking. God could see what the future would bring if He did nothing. He had created a perfect world and a perfect couple who walked and talked with Him in the garden. The man had turned against God and hardened his heart. The corruption of humankind pained God. The only solution

seemed to be to wipe man off the earth and save a remnant with which God could rebuild humanity and provide the savior. This verse shows the deep feelings and love that God has for mankind. It shows the need for the flood and the pain that it must have brought to God to see what man had become.

9: God had great sadness when he saw the evil in the days before the flood. How does sin around the world today affect God?

Let the class discuss the effect of our sin on God. We separate God from our lives and make Him very abstract. The Old Testament has many places where God's feelings are shown. I think of Romans 1:18f where we see how sin had developed in Paul's day and ours. Sin begins as people substitute the truth about God with lies. They know the truth (Rom. 1:19) but suppress it. That was never truer than in Noah's day when the length of their lives meant that some of the elders would have known Shem and maybe even Adam. Claiming to be wise, they became fools (Rom. 1:22). How that must have hurt God to see the people He loved pretend as if he didn't exist and ruin their lives. I picture the same feelings from our God today. Sin hurts Him because He loves us.

10: What do you think would have happened to the few good people if God had not cleansed the world with the flood?

The human condition had deteriorated, and God seems to find only one family that is true to the faith. It is hard not to believe that faith was in the last generation. If Noah was allowed to die, one wonders if his sons would have kept the faith. We often see the flood as a law event, but there is an element of grace here as well. God brought the flood to save the one family that still had faith. God also was doing what was necessary to keep His promise of sending a Savior. If all the world did not believe in God, who would be left to give birth to the Messiah? We see the same happening in societies in the world. North Africa was once a Christian region, but there are few Christians there after centuries of Muslim influence. Europe is becoming less and less Christian as people give up the faith. Fortunately, there are still regions of the world with strong Christians to share their faith and bring these areas back to God.

11. Why would it be cruel of God to ignore sin? Why must God be patient and punish sin in the proper time?

Sin doesn't just affect the people who are sinning. It affects those who live around such sin. Children who live in broken or abusive homes will struggle to improve their lives. The home environment is toxic and can prevent them from learning in school as well as give them no good examples of what to do with their lives. Living in a violent part of town with gangs and high crime can affect families who often have to live in fear and find that stores and safe parks are nowhere near where they live. We might want God to bring punishment swiftly on poor parents or upon the criminal on our streets, but God will bring punishment at just the right time to bring the greatest help. He will not rush discipline and destroy the good mixed in with the evil. It will come at the appropriate time and way.

12. 6:8 Who was the one hope of humankind? What do you think made him stand out to God?

Noah found favor in God's eyes. As we will see, he is a man of faith and obedience whom God could use to save humanity. He is praised in Hebrews 11:7 as a man who had godly fear and great faith. God warned him of the judgment to come, and he responded with obedience to God's plan. That doesn't mean that he was sinless. Noah was just someone who believed in God enough to listen and to build an ark on dry land just because God commanded him to do so. Noah did not earn favor. He found favor in God's eyes. His selection was one of grace, and because of God's grace, he and his family are the only ones who will survive the flood and be used to rebuild the world that man's sin had destroyed.

13. How do we fight sin in our world? What tool can we use since God has promised never to send a flood again?

Let the class wrestle with this one before you give them the obvious answer: The Bible. We have a tool that Noah didn't have. Psalm 119:105 says "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." The path in life is often dark, but the scripture gives us light so that we can find our way. Each time we listen to the scripture, we take another step, and the light shows us a bit more of the path. Scripture will guide us, and it is the tool that can fight Satan because it is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). The world becomes eviler when the people of God do not spend time in the word. They don't have the truth that can guide them, and they cannot protect themselves or others from Satan's attacks. If we want to save our world, we have to be in the word and share it with others.

For now or later - taking the next step

1. As you examine your life, what are the ways that you are tempted to compromise your faith? What would it look like to have a life like Noah that the text calls blameless?
2. As you think of world history, what are some other times that God has intervened to keep evil from taking over the world? Why must God keep purifying His world?
3. As you think about God's actions in sending a flood, why is God's punishment often another form of grace?

2. Obedience

Gen. 6:9-22

Obedience is necessary if God is to help us

He was all alone. He was God's last chance. The world was corrupt and full of violence. God was ready to wipe out humanity, but he had a promise to keep. He had promised a savior. How could God do that if all the world were sinful and evil? It seemed like the world was doomed. Noah found favor in God's eyes, and so God used Noah. He used a man who could stand the ridicule and who would have faith and obedience to work for years building the boat that would save him and his family. Noah stands out for his obedience. The text says that "Noah did everything just as God commanded him." It was not 80% obedience like we so often want to give. It was full obedience that took him through the years necessary to build the ark on dry land.

It all came down to faith. This text is the first time that the word covenant is used in the Bible. It was a covenant with no conditions, only promises. God tells Noah about the flood and promises to save Noah and his family. Like other men of faith, Noah believes God and sets out on the task that God has given him. Sometimes, we want to give up. What God asks is too hard or isn't the way we would do something. We grumble. We drag our feet. We give up. Without faith that God knows what He is doing and that God will provide for us and protect us so that we can complete His will, we will never obey. Faith is the power behind obedience. We have to believe in God before we will accept the task that He has given us and be able to offer our lives for it. Faith will evaporate the fears that keep us from obedience.

Noah never complained about the task. He just obeyed and did what seems impossible for us even today. I can hear the ridicule of the people around him. I can feel Noah's questions of "where do I get that much wood or pitch?" I can see him exhausted after years of building a 450-foot boat on dry land. He did it because God said to do so. The church and its members are not so good at obeying. We want to bend the truth of the Bible to fit our culture. We want to make religion more comfortable and give reasons that we can't witness our faith or support our church. Our lukewarm obedience is one of the reasons that the church is sick today. Obedience is the key if we want to impact our families and our communities for Jesus. Obedience to the Lord is our way to save ourselves and our world from the sin that surrounds us all.

1. When have you believed in God or in yourself enough to do something that others thought was impossible?

Encourage the class to share stories of times when they did something that they thought that they were unable to do. It may be going to college or completing a difficult ministry. The point is to see what God was able to do through Noah and what He can do through us.

Read Genesis 6:9-22

2. Verses 8-9. How does the Bible describe Noah's character? Describe someone you know who has these qualities.

Noah is described as righteous and blameless. Like Abraham, Noah believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness (Heb. 11:7). He trusted in the Lord to save him in such a terrible time. It must have been something that he learned from his father Lamech and grandfather Methuselah. Methuselah is also described as blameless. That doesn't mean that he is sinless for we all sin. It conveys that he had integrity. People would find it hard to fault his life before others. Finally, he is someone who walked with God. He lived in fellowship with the Lord (faith) and walked in obedience to the Lord each step of his life. Let the group discuss several people that they know who have some of the qualities. Let them tell of what they have learned from such people and what they would like to emulate.

3. What is God’s favor and is it something that we earn or is it something God gives that creates the right attributes in people who are open to God’s leading?

God’s favor is always an act of grace. It is grace that comes to us when we are not worthy of the love of God. It is something that transforms us. While Noah was alone in his worship of the one true God, it was God who made Noah what he was. God’s grace gave Noah the faith that he would need to stand up to the ridicule and to complete the ark as God commanded. It would be God who would protect Noah and provide the materials that he needed for the task. God always begins the relationship that we have with Him. Our obedience and faith are in response to the love and devotion that the Lord gives to us.

4. Verses 11-12. How does God describe the world in Noah’s day? What are the consequences of this behavior? Why must God punish man and his world?

The people saw little wrong with what was happening in their day. Jesus describes them as “eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage” (Matt. 24:38). The Lord condemns them in Genesis 6 for doing so with corrupt minds and a great deal of violence. This era seems to be a time when people were giving in to their desires. “Anything goes” was surely their motto. God has decided that He must end this behavior to save the world. With only one family that has found favor in God’s eyes, allowing this kind of behavior will corrupt the final family and make it impossible to send a savior for there will be no believers left.

5. Verses 14-16. How detailed is God’s plan for the ark that is expressed in these few verses?

Only three verses describe the details of God’s plan for building an ark. In those three verses, however, we know the overall dimensions as well as that the ship had three decks, one door and a series of small windows under the roof to provide light and ventilation. The decks would be divided into compartments and would provide enough space for about 125,000 animals and the food to feed them. There is no motor or sail provided for the ark. It is built for floating and not for taking Noah to a destination. Finally, the text says that it is to be made out of Gopher wood and pitch to make it watertight. Evidently, Noah received more detailed plans and may have been given insights as he was building the ark. These verses, however, give us more than enough detail to see the size and complexity of the ark that God had envisioned.

6. What is the hardest thing that God has called on you to do? Why do Christians attempt the impossible?

Let the class share their own stories. Most of us can think of a time where God asked us to do something very hard. Faith is why we will attempt the impossible. We often think of someone like Mary, the mother of Jesus who believed the angel when he told her that God was going to do something biologically impossible. Throughout the years, God has parted the waters of the red sea for Moses, raised the dead, and fed thousands with bread and a few fish. Our impossible is often not as severe as any of those things. If God wants it; it will happen.

7. Verses 17-18. What does the Lord share with Noah about the future of the world? What is the covenant that He makes with Noah?

God shares two things with Noah. He lets Noah know that the world is going to be destroyed. He also lets Noah know that God will use the ark that Noah is building to save Noah and his family. God had made a covenant with Eve (Gen. 3:15) to crush the head of the serpent. The salvation of Noah was how God was going to keep that covenant. How that must have weighed on Noah’s heart. All the people that he knew outside the ark including some of his immediate family would be destroyed in the flood. Cousins and uncles would surely be in that number. It must have comforted Noah that God had a plan to save his family and that Noah would be given enough time to save His family and pairs of the animals that lived around him.

8. What are the conditions of the covenant mentioned in these verses? How do you think that Noah felt when God made this covenant with him?

One might argue that obediently building the boat is a condition for the covenant since Noah will drown if the ship is not built. The covenant is otherwise unconditional. Noah has God's favor and is God's choice to save the world. God makes this covenant so that Noah and his family have the peace and confidence that they need over the next couple of years. They know that the flood will not come before they finish the ark and that God will use this big box to bring them and all the animals through the disaster. Let the class discuss how they would feel if they received the news that the world was going to be destroyed and then God followed the news up with the promise of their salvation. I guess that the covenant gave Noah peace amid the grief for his world.

9. Verses 19-20. Who else is to be saved by this ark? What does this say about the scope of the flood?

Not only humans were to be saved, but pairs of unclean animals (and seven animals from among those that were clean – Genesis 7:2-3) so that the earth could be repopulated. The flood would be universal, and so there would be no place where man or animal could hide for the duration of the flood. The ark would be the only safe place for land animals that did not live in the water. How God would bring the animals to Noah would be explained later. The impact of these words shows Noah and the reader why the ark had to be so big.

10. Verse 22. What is Noah's response to God's commands? Why is obedience without grumbling or complaining necessary for God's plan to succeed?

Verse 22 says that Noah obeyed completely. Over the years that it took to build the ark, Noah followed God's plan just as it was given to him without any grumbling or complaining. He just kept going, and I am sure the Lord kept providing. The ark got finished and the time came, and so Noah, his family, and the animals got into the ark, and the rains came. God's plan of redeeming His world was complete. Salvation for the world was fulfilled as Noah obeyed. We have lots of instructions in the bible about how to live like God's people, but we often grumble or take shortcuts. When we do, we often find that things don't go as well. If we want to thrive, we will completely follow God's plans for our lives.

11. What do you think is the hardest thing that Noah faced in building the ark?

Allow the class to discuss this and don't jump in too quickly with your answer. Some may say it is the animals. The text seems to tell us that God sent them to Noah (7:8-9). I also have a feeling that God provided the wood or that it was abundant in these years after the garden. My opinion is that patience was the hardest thing for Noah. Some think that it took 25 or more years to build the ark. During that time, he would have to endure the ridicule of others and days where he was just tired of constructing a boat on dry land. We don't even know if he had to earn a living in some trade during that time. God will provide, but the ministry still can tax our patience.

12. What would be the consequences for a lack of obedience for Noah or us? What has a lack of obedience to God cost you in your life?

I see no plan "B" in this story. Everyone else in the world is evil. It was Noah alone that found favor in God's eyes. God had promised a savior. Noah was the man that God groomed from birth (Gen. 5:28) to be the hope of the world. If Noah failed, then humankind was lost. He was God's last chance. We often feel like there are plenty of people to do God's work. The truth is that we may be the only one who can reach someone with the gospel or who has the skills in our church to do a particular task. When God's people don't obey, opportunities are lost, and the ministry doesn't get done. One person doesn't typically have to do it all, but they should do what God calls them to do.

13. How does our faith relationship allow us to have such obedience? What does it take to build such a strong faith that you obey God when He asks the seemingly impossible?

It is trust in God and a strong relationship of faith that give us the confidence to obey God and allow Him to do miracles through us. We know what God can do, and we believe that God can do it in our lives and through us. Hebrews 11 lists what Noah and others were able to do because they were confident of God's power and ability. You are confident because you are sure that God will not let you down. To have such faith, all of the people in the Bible came to know God deeply. They spent lots of time in Bible study and prayer and through that came to know God. Just as you become certain what your spouse will do in a specific situation or have confidence that they have the skills to do a particular task, those who know God know what He can and will do. "Nothing is impossible for God" becomes your creed and your motto.

For now or later - taking the next step

1. Obedience is an essential theme in scripture. What would the cost of disobedience have been for Abraham (Gen. 22:1-19), David (1 Sam. 24: 1-22), or Jesus (Matthew 26:36-46)?
2. What opportunities has obedience to God's commands given you? What has been the cost when you disobeyed?
3. What commands of God are you wrestling with right now? How do the examples of Noah, Abraham, and David encourage you?

3. Trust Gen. 7:1-24

Do the ordinary so God can do the extraordinary

Oh no, turn back, we forgot something! You have made lists and tried to think of everything, but there is often one thing left unprepared. Preparing for a two-week vacation is one thing. How do you prepare for a journey on a 450-foot ark? Once the rains come, there is no turning back. You have to have everything that you need in the ark for yourself and all the animals. You have to have everything that you will need when the flood is over. Here is a man of faith who trusts the Lord. Noah does the ordinary things and trusts God to do the extraordinary. God is in charge throughout the whole process. Noah does simple tasks like gathering food or building rooms. He trusts God to do what man is unable to do.

I find that I panic again and again in life whether it is doing a ministry for the Lord or just taking care of the details of my life. There would have been a hundred questions that crossed my mind if I had been Noah. How would I gather all those animals? Where would I get the food? How long is this trip going to last? It is incredible that in the text, he never asks any of those questions. He listens to what the Lord expects him to do, and he trusts the Lord with the rest of the details. God will bring the animals. God will feed them and care for my family. God will care for us when the flood is over. God expects nothing less of us. He wants us to believe Him when we have all kinds of unanswered questions about the future. He wants us to trust that He will take care of the big things that we can't handle and can't change.

We must do the ordinary so that God can do the extraordinary. Noah will spend months feeding the animals and cleaning the stalls. It does no good to worry about the details that are not in his control. I often worry about things that I have no power over and forget to do what God has commanded. God never promises that the journey of life will be easy. He promises to bring us through life and to work miracles through His people. If the miracles are to happen, we must have faith and obedience. We need to be patient and trust Him to handle the big things in life. God saved humanity because Noah believed. God can do great things through us if we are willing to do the ordinary things that He asks of us and trust Him to work miracles. Noah is an example of how God does amazing things through the simple service of His people.

1. What are a few things you need to pack for a one week vacation? What items have you forgotten in the past?

Let the class list things that they need for a one week vacation. It may include clothes, specialized gear, and money. Let them also think of things that they have forgotten on holiday and how they overcame the loss. You might even ask them what one item you would want to make sure you had if you were Noah entering the ark.

Read Genesis 7:1-24

2. Verse 1. How does God prepare His people for the coming of the flood? How does He calm Noah's fears?

Noah must have guessed that the flood was coming soon. The ark was built, and it had not stirred up repentance among his neighbors. He may have been asking himself what was next. Like a tender father, God calls him to come into the ark and again reminds Noah that God has found him righteous. Noah hadn't gone into the ark before God told him to do so. The call subtly lets Noah know that God will go with him. It was as if God was telling Noah that the time had come and that things would be Ok. God had promised that He would save Noah and his family. He could go forward with confidence.

3. What kind of preparations do you think Noah had to make in that final week?

The ark is built, but there must have been a final checklist. I picture him loading all the food and living supplies that he has been gathering. They probably made the last check of every seam in the ark to make sure that the boat would not leak. As the animals start coming, he assigns them each a section of the ark as their own. I also picture Noah telling family and friends that the flood is coming and having all of them laugh at him and ignore his last minute warning. It would be a busy time on a week with hardly a cloud in the sky. Take some time and picture what you would want to make sure got packed on the ark for the trip.

4. What are the simple things that you are doing now so that God can work through you?

God uses the simple things that we do to do extraordinary things. Noah built the ark and kept the animals through the long ordeal. He had to trust God to provide what he needed, to bring the animals, and to keep them safe through the difficult trial. Noah never sat on a pillow and expected God to serve him drinks with little umbrellas while it was all happening. Everyone in the group should look at the spiritual gifts that the Lord has given them and find a place of service that the Lord can use our simple work to do great things. Life is complicated, and there are times that we worry over details that we have no control over while we forget to do the everyday things that God can use as part of His plan.

5. Verse 7. How did Noah collect all the animals? What kind of animals did he take?

God had promised in Gen. 6:20 that the animals would come to Noah. He didn't need to collect them. Animals seem to have a sixth sense about danger. They know when the weather is changing and start moving when a fire is coming across the prairie or dry forest. God created that instinct and harnessed it here so that the animals come just as God said that they would. Noah took a male and a female animal of the unclean variety so the species would be preserved. Clean animals which could be sacrificed and eaten after the flood were taken in sevens so that they would breed more quickly and provide for man's nourishment and his worship of the true God (8:20). God saw all the animals as valuable and worth saving. The clean ones were more valuable than the unclean since they would provide for the survival of man in the new world.

6. Verse 11. How is the beginning of the flood described? Do you think this is a worldwide flood or a local flood?

The rain seems to have come up in fountains and down in torrential downpours. Some have imagined geysers bursting forth from the earth to supplement the great rains coming down from the heavens. Others have imagined the ocean floors rising so that the water of the great deep spilled onto the land. How God did it doesn't matter. The words here are superlative and express something that must have surprised all the people inside and outside the ark. The sheer terror of the event is revealed in flood stories around the world. This flood destroyed every living thing on land (v.21) and covered all the mountains underwater (v.20) to a depth of fifteen cubits or twenty feet. The flood is a worldwide flood of terrible magnitude. God promised that such a flood would never happen again (9:11). Local floods occur all the time, but a flood like this has never been repeated.

7. What do you think it was like for Noah and his family inside the ark? What might their prayers have been through those days?

The door closes, and there must have been a sigh of relief and a shudder of distress. Noah's family is safe inside the ark as the rain comes. They can hear the pounding of people's fists demanding to get into the ark but can do little about it. God shut them in. They can feel the ship sway as the water lifts it and they begin to float. All the while, they are settling into their "cabins" in the boat and caring for the animals. The chores would help pass the time, but it would still be a long time on the ark. I picture the family praying to the Lord in those first moments as the rain came down. They might have thanked the Lord for their deliverance and prayed for the souls that they left behind. Maybe a few of them might repent and plead to the Lord for forgiveness as the world was washed away from beneath them. Each day would have

been a time of prayer asking the Lord for help with the day's tasks and asking when the flood would be over. Take time to picture what it would have been like if you were one of Noah's family on the ark. What would your day be like as the rains came down?

8. Verse 16. How does God show that He will keep Noah's family safe? What is God guarding against in the last moments?

The text says "then the Lord shut him in." God shut them in so that they could be confident that the door wouldn't leak and they would be safe. He shut them in to keep those who were about to die in the flood out. There were probably many outside the ark whom Noah loved and hoped would somehow be spared. God spared Noah from having to shut those people out or from keeping the door open too long so that he endangered his family. There had been a time during the seven days when Noah probably told others about the coming flood. No one had listened to God and entered the ark with Noah. Now that the flood was coming, God didn't want desperate people endangering faithful Noah and His family. It was time to cut ties to the world. That would be hard to do, and so God did it for them.

9. Verse 21. What is happening outside the ark? Why did all the animals outside the ark have to die?

As Noah and his family are safe in the ark, the waters continue to rise for about five months (Gen. 7:24). The mountains are covered, and every land animal and man that is on the earth dies. Jesus tells the disciples that people were eating and drinking as well as marrying and being given in marriage up till the moment that the flood came (Luke 17:26-27). Life is normal, and then there is chaos. People may have clung to the outside of the ark hoping to get in. Others climbed to the highest ground that they could find, only to see that nothing was high enough. Since the flood lasted 150 days before it started to recede, people either drowned or died of starvation on the tops of mountains before they were covered as well. The animals which had been given to man (Gen 1:28) shared man's fate. Some have surmised that since man and animals will eat meat after the flood (Gen. 9:3), the animals might become a threat to mankind if they were to be in higher numbers than the man.

10. How high does it say that the water got? Where did all the water come from?

The text says that the mountains were covered to a depth of 15 cubits (20 feet or so). That would be a lot of water. We have to remember that the topography of the world may have been different. If the oceans of today flattened out, there would be plenty of water. It is said that if the earth were a perfect sphere, the oceans would cover the ground to a depth of two and a half miles. It is places like the Marianna Trench in the Pacific Ocean which is 36,000 feet deep and 1580 miles long by 43 miles wide that hold a lot of the water on the earth today.

In comparison, the Marianna trench is deeper than Mt. Everest (29029 ft.) is tall. Flatter earth and flatter oceans would have had plenty of water to cover all the land. Let the class wrap these figures around in their head and try and picture how the earth before the flood might have appeared.

11. We often think of the flood as lasting 40 days and 40 nights. How long does the Bible say that the flood lasted?

The rain lasted forty days and forty nights. The time that Noah was in the ark was over a year (371 days). He spent 7 days waiting for the flood to come (7:10), 40 days of rain (7:12), 150 days with the waters flooding the earth (7:24), 40 days for the water to recede (8:6), 7 more days to send out the first dove (8:10), and 7 more days before he sent out the second dove who did not return (8:12). Only then could Noah and his family come out on dry land. Noah and his family were in the ark over a year no matter how you count the Biblical numbers above. Some have surmised that some of the animals hibernated during part of the journey so that the food could last longer. The Bible doesn't say that, but it could fit with animal behavior we see today.

12. How long do you think Noah expected to be in the ark? How did this trip require patience? How does trust in God bring about such patience?

We do not know if God told Noah how long the journey would end. Have the group imagine that Noah and the family expected the journey would end soon after the rains stopped only to find that there were 200 more days (Gen. 7:24, 8:6, 8:10, and 8:12) before they came out of the ark. What would you have felt like on your 100th, 200th, or 300th day in the ark? Discuss the patience that is required on a week-long car trip and a yearlong trip on the ark. How does trust in God help when things take longer than we want them to take? Forty days seems like a long time to wait. A year would have looked like an eternity.

13. How long do you wait before giving up on God? As you look at the flood, why might patience be required for miracles to be completed?

We live in a microwave generation that expects everything to come yesterday. We would grumble if God said it was going to take 40 days for the ministry to come to fruition. A year or more would seem like an eternity. Noah experienced both of those time frames. He probably had to watch a year or two as the earth regenerated after the flood. Trees don't grow overnight. One of the things I admire most about Noah is patience. In reality, he had no choice, but you never hear him complain either. We need to trust the Lord to take care of the big things as we do the best at our job and take care of our family and ministry. Sometimes, God can do miracles with things that we didn't think were that special. The journey may be long, but as we continue to serve, God can work wonders.

For now or later - taking the next step

1. What are some simple acts of service that you could do today which God can use to do extraordinary things? Pray now that God would lead you to such acts of service.
2. What miracles have you been praying that God would do in your life or the life of others? What ordinary things might God be asking you to do so that the miracle can happen?
3. What have you learned about your part in God's extraordinary work?

4. Hope Genesis 8

Hope believes that God remembers us and we are safe in His hands.

Janet laid in a hospital bed with tubes strung from her body and a monitor beeping over her head. Her children popped in when they could, but they were busy. She felt forgotten. The heart attack had passed, and she was still alive, but now what? Locked in an ark for over a year, Noah and his family must have had some of the same thoughts. They alone had survived the flood, but what would life look like in the aftermath? Would the earth even yield crops as it had? This chapter is about renewal and hope after the crisis. God remembered Noah and his family and rebuilt the world so that this new first family would have a home. When the storms of life happen, take courage in what the Lord will do for you and be ready to celebrate His mercy.

We forget how long it had been for Noah and his family. The flood had receded after 150 days, and soon the ark came to rest on the mountain. Forty more days passed before Noah sent out the raven first and later a dove. The dove came back empty-handed the first time. Only on the second time, did he bring an olive leaf. Recovery in the hospital or a long search for a new job are just two crises that never seem to end. Finally, we get a doctor's report that things are getting better or a call for an interview. The light is shining in the distance. The crisis is not over. There may be months yet to wait as there were for Noah, but God is working. These are days to ponder and pray. God is preparing us as much as the world.

Real hope comes from the Lord. It is not wishful thinking. It knows that God remembers us and that we are safe in His hands. We need to remember Noah when we are in our deepest crisis. We need to believe that God is working to save us in those gloomy days. From the beginning, God had a plan. The plan took over a year to accomplish, but when it was done Noah and his world were alive with a new future. God has such a plan for you. Trust in Him and be patient. Realize that the world you will gain may look different, but it will be beautiful. Don't be upset at what you have lost. Look at what you have gained. God brings renewal and rebirth to shattered lives who trust in Him. He does not forget His people. He gives them hope.

1. What is the difference between hope and wishful thinking?

Let them grapple with this difference. Noah had hope, and we often have wishful thinking. Hope always has an object for the confidence and for Christians that hope is God. We have hope and faith because we believe God will take us to be with Him in heaven. We believe in someone or something to come through. Wishful thinking is just a desire to have something come true when nothing guarantees that it will work as in "I hope that it will not rain today" or "I hope that I get a chance to see you later." Wishful thinking is often our desire and not reality. Hope is based on the promises of God and thus is confident and real.

Read Genesis 8

2. Verse 1 How is hope initiated by God at the beginning of this chapter?

It was God who remembered Noah, his family, and the animals. Throughout the flood, Noah and the others had been safe in God's hands. Others had perished but those in the ark were alive and unhurt. God had not forgotten them. God "remembered" in that He paid attention to Noah and acted on his behalf. The wind would evaporate water and might have pushed the water back into the trenches of the oceans. Noah was helpless in the ark. God set in motion the actions that would bring deliverance for Noah and rebirth for the world.

3. Verse 1. Why must hope begin with God? Why can we have hope if we are thinking of God and His path?

Noah could do nothing. One might argue that Noah had worked to build the ark, but inside the ark with the rain coming down and the earth under a sea of water, there was little he could do to bring about the new world. Our temptation is to try to make things work in times of crisis. If we truly believe that God loves us and that God cares about us, why don't we trust Him? Real hope lies in God. Our resources are so small compared to our Lord's gifts. Our vision of the future is imaginary while He knows everything. We have to believe that God has a plan just as He did for Noah. Hope comes when we trust Him and believe He is working on our behalf.

4. Verse 4. What is the first sign of hope for Noah and his family?

They hit land after almost eight months in the ark (v.4). After drifting aimlessly for months, there had to have been some pleasure for Noah and his family to feel the ark scrape the bottom and finally come to a stop. It wasn't Noah's doing since the ark had no steering but rather was God's doing. The modern Ararat region has two peaks. The greater Ararat rises to almost 16,945 feet and the lesser Ararat to 12,877 feet above sea level. The text says that they would not see the tops of the mountains until the first day of the tenth month over two months later. There still was nowhere to go, but it must have brought joy to their hearts that the ark had a resting place and firm ground below them. God was working, and now they had something substantial to show for His work.

5. Verse 11. What is the second sign of hope that is given to Noah? Why is this so important?

In the eleventh month (v.6), Noah opens a window. He first sends a raven. The raven probably felt at home among the floating carcasses. The text says that it kept flying back and forth. It could feed on the floating carcasses and return to the ark to land and rest for the night. The dove found no place to land the first time since it did not eat carrion. When Noah sent it the second time, it returned with an olive leaf showing that the earth was beginning to be reborn. The plants had survived the flood, and there would be food for Noah and the animals. Each week things were getting better, and the land was starting to heal and be productive. God was working and preparing the world for them. It would be months before the earth was ready for them, but there was hope for the future.

6. Verse 11. What kind of signs brings you hope when you are ill or when trouble comes into your life?

Let the class reflect on what would give them hope if they were in the hospital or lost on a trip without any idea of which direction is the way home. Often there are little bits of information or signs that let us know that things are getting better. It might be a doctor's report or the ability to move our toes in the hospital. It might be a familiar stretch of highway or directions from a stranger that gets us heading in the right direction. The crisis is not over. We are still not cured or not at home, but we have a reason for confidence. Sometimes, it is the Lord who puts these little signs along our way to help us to keep up the faith. Let us look for His signs and even ask for them in prayer.

7. Verse 14. What is the key to having patience? Where can you find the strength to be patient when God's answer takes longer than you may have wished?

Hope is the key to being patient. We believe that God is working on our behalf and that there is a reason for what seems like a delay. There is no doubt that Noah and his family yearned to get back on dry land, but he trusted God would let him know when it was safe to leave the ship. Hope comes when you believe that a loving God would not leave you hanging. You begin your prayers with a list of all the times that God has helped you before in crisis. You look at all the stories in scripture of God helping Old and New Testament Saints. You look at the character of God and the deep love of God for His people. A crisis can be like being in the ark with the rain pelting the roof. You feel helpless, and you wonder if it will ever end, yet you wait because you believe in God. Only God can save you, and you know that He will.

8. Verses 16-17. What signals the end of the flood?

The flood wasn't over till God said it was over. In verse 13, Noah opens the covering of the ark and sees that the ground is dry. He will wait one month and 27 days (v.14) before God says for Noah to come out of the ark with his family and the animals. The ground may have looked solid, but God knew that it was not fit for habitation. Noah is wise to wait for God's timing. We often get tired of waiting and move forward before all the pieces are ready. We cause ourselves a lot of hardship and pain. One wonders if there was adequate food for the animals in the new world or if the ground was too mushy for them even to stand. God had His reasons for them to wait. When God called, He called Noah to a new world and a new life. Everything was finally in place.

9. Verse 17. Why is patience so crucial in times of trouble? Why must Noah wait for God to tell him that it is alright to come out of the ark?

Ask the class for stories of impatience. Our temptation is to jump out of bed and want to go home after surgery. Sometimes, that only leads to us falling on the floor and hurting ourselves. Patience is letting God get everything ready for us. We have to be bold enough to move forward when God calls us and wise enough to wait when God has given us signs but not the full answer. One wonders if there was adequate food for the animals in the new world or if the ground was too mushy for them even to stand. The world needed time (almost two months from verse 13 to verse 14) before things were fully ready. We have to keep believing that God will get us to the final answer. We know halfway help doesn't do it. God brings full solutions, and the wise will wait for them.

10. Verse 20. How does Noah celebrate hope fulfilled? Why is this a natural response when God keeps His promises?

Noah was so filled with gratitude that his first act after leaving the ark was to lead the family in worship. He built an altar and gave his family and himself to the lord with an expensive sacrifice. With only seven of the clean animals in the ark, he sacrificed one of each of them. That says something about his trust of the Lord. He gives back some of the animals that the Lord had saved to repopulate the earth. It should be a natural response for when God has kept you from the crisis, give thanks. Give in proportion to what God has done. If He has saved your life like He did Noah, give a great gift. If it is a smaller thing, give it accordingly. Let the world know that you credit God for your deliverance and your future. Too often we barely say thanks in prayer. We act as if the work of God had little to do with it. Gratitude in this crisis prepares us to have hope and deliverance in the next.

11. Verse 22. What is God's promise for the future? Who is God speaking to in this passage?

God promises to give a new normal. The flood had been a terrible interruption of the regular cycles of life. We know what a hurricane can do in a few days or what floods can do over a few months. Imagine over a year of a flood across the whole world. There was no real day for 40 days of storm and no real seasons for a year of the flood. In these verses, God reaffirmed the future. Seasons would be renewed, and the earth would yield its harvest at the right times. Life would be different than it was before the flood, but it would have routines that would never cease. The Garden of Eden was gone, but the world was renewed and would flourish in its new way. Notice that verse 21 says that God spoke these in His heart. If Noah heard it, he heard God talking to Himself. The promise to Noah comes in 9:15 and uses a rainbow as a sign of the covenant. This verse is recorded in scripture to give us all confidence that God will never again destroy the seasons of the whole world before the end of time.

12. Verse 22. Does God promise that the future will be the same as the past? What does scripture promise us when we are in crisis?

Have the class look again at the words in verse 22. Is this the way that you picture the world from the Garden of Eden to the flood? The promise is not that life will be like it was before the flood, but that it

will have a new normal. I think it is essential that we realize that there is no promise from God that life will be just the same after a crisis as it was before the crisis. Certainly, someone who has a heart attack will need to eat and live differently than they did before they went to the hospital. The promise is that God often gives a good life even if it is different. Life will have a God-given rhythm if you let it. Leaning on the promises of God, you will find hope and courage for an unknown future. God doesn't just have a plan for us to survive, but one in which we can thrive.

13. Summarize what you have learned about hope. Where does it come from and who do you look to for real hope?

Let the group talk about some of the things they have learned. For me, hope comes from the Lord. It knows that God remembers us and that we are safe in His hands. We need to believe that God is working to save us in those dark times. From the beginning, God had a plan for Noah. God has such a plan for you. Trust in Him and be patient. Know that He will never forsake you. Realize that the world you will gain may look different, but it will be beautiful. Finally, when God has saved you from the crisis be sure to give thanks. God works miracles for you, and you need to recognize these miracles and show them to others. It is how we learn to hope in the troubles that still lie ahead in life. God does not forget His people. He gives them hope.

For now or later - taking the next step

1. What challenges are you facing now? What about the character of God gives you hope?
2. How long are you willing to wait for answers? What in this story could help you if you need to wait longer than you want?
3. What happens when people give up hope? Where can desperation lead?

5. New Beginnings

Genesis 9:1-17

The future may not always be the same, but God will bless it.

Martin stared at the oil painting above the fireplace and did a double-take. It was Renoir's painting of the two sisters which he knew was in an art museum in Chicago. Admittedly, it was a copy. When he asked the owner, the owner admitted that it was a copy painted by an art student he knew. Martin took a second look at the painting and saw that the young man had talent. He knew, however, that something didn't feel right. He wasn't sure if it was that the dress was too blue or that the brushstrokes of the leaves were too short. It was good, just not as good as the original. Martin was impressed by the young man's abilities but knew that the master had done it better. There are times that you can't copy perfection.

After the flood, God was recreating the world, and Noah was the new Adam. Some things were the same. Noah and his children would be masters of the universe and were commanded by God to reproduce and fill the earth. Some things were different. Animals had become food and not pets. The weather would change, and plants would struggle to survive. God was remaking the world, but it would not be as good as Adam's original. Sin had entered the world and messed up the master's touch. Man would have a place to live, but this world would not be the same as Adam's or as the world that Noah left when he entered the ark.

We still live in a tarnished creation. Fall colors are beautiful, but the forest can be marred by fire or by disease. A waterfall can be breathtaking but can slow to a trickle in drought or be a rushing torrent of brown water and broken limbs when a storm hits. God has created a marvelous place for humanity to live. We can see the brushstrokes of the master around us in nature mixed with the disfigurement of sin. In the flood, God created a new world for His children. He started over His plan for man, but sin was not washed away by the flood. Man must deal with those who kill even as he has children and replenishes the earth. He can enjoy the beauty that is in the world but must lean on the Lord as he travels through this sinful world. We can trust the Lord who brought the flood to help us in life.

1. Name something you bought as a replacement that was not as good as the original.

We have all bought something new as a replacement for something that was worn out or just out of date. It might just be an item of clothing, or it might be something as big as a new car or a new home. Let the class discuss their experiences. Did they not like the new item because they missed the familiarity of the old item? Did they not want the new item because it did not work as well as the old item? Our experience teaches us that new is not always better.

Read Genesis 9:1-17

2. Verse 1 In what ways is Noah the second Adam? How is he different than the Adam?

Noah came out of the ark with his family as the only humans on the face of the earth. Like Adam, they were to be fruitful and multiply the earth (Gen 1:28 and 9:1). They also had dominion over the world that they were given (Gen. 1:28 and 9:2). There were differences. Adam and Eve were sinless. Noah like all of us was a sinner. Adam had green plants for food, Noah was given both plants and animals to eat. The animals were friendly to Adam (Gen. 2:20-21). The animals would fear Noah (Gen. 9:2). God was starting over with, but it was a different world, and Noah would face challenges that Adam did not.

3. How does the Bible see children? How are children seen today?

The bible always sees children as a blessing and not a curse. Be fruitful and multiply is a command given to both Adam and Noah. God wants man to fill the earth so that God might have children on every continent. In the Old Testament, children were seen as a blessing to Abraham, Ruth, Hannah and many others. Sons are a man's heritage, and children are a reward from God according to Psalm 127. Discuss

how you think our society sees children today. Do we honor children in the same way or are we tempted to see them as a bother? What challenges will couples who never have children face as they grow old?

4. Verses 2-3 How does man's relationship with the animals change?

Animals that had been "pets" and came willingly to Adam so he could name them (Gen. 2:20-21) were now food for Noah and his family. The harmony in nature that Adam and Eve had enjoyed was gone. Animals would try to escape man. The fear that God put in the animals may have been to protect the new family of man. The animals would reproduce more quickly than a man does so that the beasts could easily overrun the human population. The fear of humans would be a protection for Noah's family as they began again. The eating of animals would provide a new food source for man in a world where plants would not grow as easily as they had done at creation. (Think of American deserts and other harsh lands.)

5. Verse 4 What is the one restriction that God put on eating animals? Why do you think that restriction was made?

God requires that the meat that is eaten must be free of blood. God would later tell Moses that the life of an animal is in the blood (Lev. 17:10-12) and that blood would be used for the atonement of sin. God shows how sacred life is to Him and wants every man to respect the life that he takes to provide substance for himself. Animals should be treated with honor and not slaughtered carelessly. Also, blood would become connected with sacrifices at the altar and with the worship of God. Blood was the sign at the Passover and made atonement for God's people. It was to become unique in worship and be a sign of life in the Lord. Even the early church decreed that gentiles should not eat meat that was strangled or blood (Acts 15:20).

6. Verses 5-6 Noah had been born in a violent age (Gen. 4:23-24). What value does God put on the life of each man?

God elevates man above the animals. A man may kill the animals for food, but the life of every human is sacred to God. God may be speaking against the violence that preceded the flood where Lamech boasted about killing a man and dared God to punish him (Gen. 4:23-24). God had spared Cain (Gen. 4:15) but here commands man to hold each other accountable (Gen. 9:6) when they kill one another. Murderers should receive death when they take the life of another. The Levitical code would formalize the penalty for death and would also create cities of refuge where someone might flee who had committed a capital offense. In these verses are thus formed the beginnings of a judiciary that could decide guilt and innocence.

7. What does this verse say about our responsibility to deal with those who kill? How does this verse speak to capital punishment?

These verses are not just permission for a man to execute justice but are an imperative for man to uphold the law. The years before the flood showed a world that was out of control and violent. While God is the only one who has the right to take a life, here God delegates this authority to man. Many see this verse as God's command for capital punishment. Let the class discuss their views on capital punishment. Let them consider what a proper penalty for murder is and if they feel that leniency could bring a return of the violence of the pre-flood era. God in this passage is concerned about the sanctity of human life and calls man to be as concerned when another is murdered as He is.

8. What do verses 5-6 teach us about how God views human life? What is our responsibility to others?

These verses show how vital each human is to God. We often hear statistics of big city crime and shrug it off because it wasn't that many of the millions that live in our large cities. God grieves for each person that He created whose life is cut off. God would codify that in the fifth commandment, "Thou shalt not

kill.” Luther expands the commandment as he says, “We should fear and love God so that we may not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and befriend him in every bodily need.” Talk about how you might show that you care about others as much as God does. What are the ways that you can help others in a world that often ignores them in life and death?

9. Verse 11 What promise does God make to Noah? What is to be a constant reminder to God and man of this covenant?

God’s promise is unconditional. He will never cut off life with a worldly flood. There may be local floods caused because of an imperfect earth, but the whole world will never flood again. This promise is not just for Noah but for “all generations to come” (Gen. 9:12) and even for the animals as well. God makes the promise several times (verses 11 and 15) as if to make it emphatic that He will never deal with sin by sending a flood. God also makes it clear that the promise is unconditional and is entirely unattached to the state of man. Man may become evil again, but the floods will not return. The sign of this covenant is a rainbow. As God looks on the rainbow, it reminds Him of the promise. As man looks at the rainbow, it reminds us of what God said and gives us confidence that a universal flood will never come again.

10. What comfort would it give Noah that God promised never to bring a flood again?

Having survived the first flood, Noah may have wondered for himself or his children if there could be another flood that would cause such destruction. That would be a real fear. If you have ever lived in a tornado or hurricane zone, the fear of another storm coming and destroying life and property is very real. God’s promise here would calm those fears. Just as God had kept the first promise of Gen. 6 and saved Noah, Noah could take comfort and believe in God’s promise that there would never be another flood. Take time as a group to examine how you would have felt coming out of the ark and receiving this second promise.

11. How does God’s covenant with Noah affect us today? Why is this covenant vital to you?

In the storms of life, we need to always look for God’s rainbows. God’s covenant reminds us that our world will not be destroyed until the coming of the last day. We can live in comfort knowing that there will be seasons each year and that the storms of life will come and will go. God wants us to not live in fear but rather to live in faith. He has all things in his hand, and He will use them for our benefit. I think of Rom. 8:28 where God says “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.” Every storm in life has hope because our God is near. Let the class discuss when God has given them hope in a difficult situation.

12. In Gen. 6:18, God made a promise to Noah. How is that promise fulfilled here and how much time has passed before the promise is fully fulfilled?

The promise of Genesis 6:18 is a promise that the ark would save Noah and his family. Here the promise is fully fulfilled. Noah and his family have been saved, and God promises that they will never need to build an ark again. In a sense, God is expanding His original promise and showing the full scope of His plan. The time frame depends on how long it took Noah to build the ark. If he took twenty-five years to build the ark and then was in the ark a little over a year, the time between the two promises is 26 years. The promise is kept, but it is not instantaneous.

13. The fulfillment of God’s promise to Noah in Gen. 6 took years to come. Why can we be confident that all the promises that God makes to us in scripture will all come true?

As Noah trusted in the character of God, so must we. We can look through the Old Testament and find that not one of God’s promises ever failed. Most of the promises came true in a way that was more spectacular than one could have imagined at the time that they were given. Noah was promised that his family would survive. God not only saved Noah but promised after the flood that no one would ever need

an ark again. It is God's faithfulness to all His promises that gives us the confidence to believe even if the answer to our prayers takes longer than we want. Let the class talk about the promises of God that they had to wait for or are still waiting for them to be kept. End the discussion with a prayer affirming God's faithfulness and our willingness to wait for His answers instead of trying to take control of the situation.

For now or later - taking the next step

1. Where do you see the beauty of God's creation around you?
2. What comfort does it give you that the Lord is faithful and that you can count on God to keep His promises?
3. What promise of God do you lean on when life gets rough?

6. Legacy **Gen 9:18-29**

Who you are will determine the path of generations to come.

In one verse, the text goes from rainbows to disgrace. One would think that the flood had wiped sin from the face of the earth. Sadly, we see three generations disgraced by sin in the span of just a dozen verses. The story picks up several years after the flood is over. Noah has planted a vineyard and reaped a harvest. Ham has several children including Canaan who is his youngest (Gen. 10:6). Noah who has been nothing short of a saint before he manages to disgrace himself with wine. Ham shows disrespect to his father and makes sure others know of his father's weakness. Finally, Ham's son Canaan is old enough that Noah knows what the boy's future exactly will be. He has seen it before. Three generations all show that sin has not disappeared. It will be part of man's legacy for generations to come.

Satan attacks us at the beginning, middle and end of life. Noah had saved his whole family from death and had found favor with God, yet had lost self-control. His prediction for Canaan's life shows that his grandson was already out of control. God would order the Israelites to destroy the Canaanites along with the other nations as they entered the Promised Land (Deut. 20:16-17). They were a nation of immoral sexual practices and the sacrifice of their children. The three generations of humanity show that no one is safe from Satan. Sin is part of our legacy from the fall of man. It is something that we always have to battle in our lives. It is something that we only defeat with the power of the cross.

Our prayer should be that we end our lives well. The legacy of all three sons of Noah is described. In opposition to Ham and his descendants, the descendants of Shem and Japheth are blessed. The people of Shem will include Abraham and the Israelites. The true God will be known as the God of this family (verse 26), and the Messiah will be born in their family. What matters is not how we are in the moment, but our legacy in life. Many Christians start strong, but they do not finish. They get too busy, or they go through a rough patch, and they forget about God. Like Noah, we have been saved by the Lord so that we might live for Him and others. We must continue in faith. How we live will determine the ending of our life and the lives of our children. Generations today will suffer for the sin of the parents. The journey of faith is lifelong, and those who get sidetracked in the middle will not finish well and not lead their families in worship.

1. When have you seen a team start a game well only to lose in the final quarter of the game? What is the lesson for all the sports teams?

Let the group share important games where a basketball or football team was winning handily at the half only to lose in the final quarter. The point here is that what matters is how the game ends. You might have brilliant scores early in the game, but if you let up your guard or play poorly, later on, you will lose. A game must be played hard in all four quarters. Life, as we shall see for Noah and his sons, must be played hard in our life as well.

Read Genesis 9:18-29

2. Verses 20-21. What did Noah do in the years after getting off the ark? How did it lead this man of God into a foolish sin?

Noah plants a vineyard and proceeds to make wine. It would seem that wine had been made before the flood since Noah knows how to grow the grapes, crush them and ferment the juice. Drinking wine is not condemned in the Old Testament. It is considered a blessing (Psalm 104:14-15) while only drunkenness is condemned (Prov. 23:19-21). Unfortunately, Noah lets the wine get the better of him and shows his weakness causing the scene in the text where the reactions of the sons show their real character. After all that we have seen of the faith of Noah, this sin seems even more disgusting than it might with others.

3. Why is it significant that the author of Genesis includes the account of Noah getting drunk? What does it tell us about the future of humanity after they get off the ark?

One probably would wonder what happens to all the children of Noah in the years after the flood. This story is a short glimpse into the future. From these three sons would come forth all the people of the world. Their reactions to their father's sin would show the course of each of their families. The family of Ham and specifically his son Canaan would be evil and would be cursed by God for their sins. Shem's family would become the focus of the rest of the Old Testament as the story follows his descendant Abraham and the nation that his family becomes. In the New Testament, we see the ministry of Paul going to the people of Japheth in Europe so that they may live "in the tents of Shem" and know the Messiah as their own.

4. Verse 22 How does Ham show disrespect for his father? How does he make the sin even worse?

Noah lay uncovered inside his tent. His drunkenness was not in public but in private. One wonders why Ham entered his father's tent without invitation and if he knew that his father had been drinking. If he walked in by mistake, he had several options. He could have quietly walked right out and ignored what he had seen. He could have covered up his father and again kept the knowledge that his father was naked to himself. Instead, he went out and told his brothers what he had seen in what would seem a disrespectful manner. Noah's reaction when he recovers from his drunken stupor and curses Ham's family, but praises the family of Shem and Japheth shows how badly Noah had been mocked in the encounter.

5. Verse 23 How do Shem and Japheth react when they hear that their father is naked? What extra precaution do they take when remedying the situation?

Instead of laughing with Ham at their father's weakness, they instead covered up their father's nakedness with a garment taking care to walk backward so that they would not see Noah as they covered him up. They go the extra mile to restore their father's dignity by making sure that they not only cover up his nudity but do so in a way that gives him the most privacy that they possibly can. They don't condone the sin, but they also don't spread the gossip about their father. They work to mediate the situation giving honor to their father in his weakness.

6. Compare the actions of Ham to those of his two brothers. What do we learn about dealing with those who are caught in sin?

It is all a matter of respect. Ham, the youngest has no respect for his father and immediately goes and tells of his father's weakness to his brothers. The text doesn't elaborate, but one has the feeling that he revealed in mocking his father or making light of his circumstances. The older two brothers treat their father with respect. Noah has been caught in an awkward place, and they cover up his nakedness to give their father back his dignity. As we look at the older brothers, they don't ignore the situation which is the natural thing to do. They find a way to help their father and give him back his self-respect. They do so quietly and even avert their eyes so that they do not add to his embarrassment. Like them, we are a true friend when we do not ignore another's sins but seek to help them set life back to normal as quietly and respectfully as possible.

7. When is it best to cover up mistakes and when is it wise to share them?

Let the class discuss this question. The best guidance for this may be Matthew 18:15-20. Jesus tells us that if a brother sins against us that we need to go and talk to them alone. Confronting others takes courage for you are speaking directly to the person who has wronged you or others. Jesus tells us that such conversations can win the brother over and help them get off the path of sin. His directions after that widen the scope of the helpers so that we use others first and then the whole church to help the brother caught in terrible sin. The goal of the discussions is always to help the person so that sin doesn't bring him or her down. Even the sharing of the situation is only for their benefit.

8. Verse 24-25 When waking up from his stupor, Noah condemns Canaan, the son of Ham. What does He say will happen to this youngest son of Ham in the future?

Looking down the centuries, Noah predicted the time when Canaan would be the servant of his brothers. This prediction assumes that Canaan is born making it many years after the flood since Canaan is the youngest son of Ham and would have been born years after they left the ark. It also shows that Noah saw something in the boy that showed that he and his descendants would be less than godly in their behavior. The Canaanite people in the time of Joshua had built great cities but are described as being very immoral in their life. Leviticus 18 is filled with warnings for the Israelites not to live like the people of Canaan. Noah's prediction comes true in that the Israelites will conquer the Canaanites and that those who survive will become their slaves.

9. How do our actions impact our family and our friends? Do little sins matter or are we just talking about the big sins in life?

The cursing of Canaan demonstrates that the disposition of sin in Ham carried into his children. We forget how the behavior and life of parents influence their children. Children who grow up in violent homes or broken homes do not have the same advantages that children have who grow up in godly two-parent homes. Children of abusive parents or parents with overt sins have a skewed version of right and wrong. They do not have the same opportunities for education or success. Such problems are often passed down for several generations so that the sin of the parents affects grandchildren and great-grandchildren as well (Gen 20:4-6)

10. Verse 26. Why is God called the God of Shem and not the God of all peoples? Why is Noah thanking God for Shem's future after cursing the children of Ham?

Noah doesn't bless Shem but blesses God because of what God will do with the children of Shem. It is from Shem that Abraham and the Israelite nation will be descended. It is from Shem that the Messiah will come. Shem was the second son of Noah (Gen. 10:21) but usually listed first among the sons because his family will be primary among the descendants of man. God will make a great nation of Abraham and will bless that nation and guide that nation throughout the years. Noah somehow has knowledge of God's intent for this son and his descendants and praises the Lord for all that He will do.

11. The greatest blessing is reserved for Shem because the Lord would be known as the God of Shem. What difference does it make if your family and others perceive your home as a place where God dwells?

Everything changes when the Lord is at the center of our home. Our children are raised with values so that they live in a manner that makes them a blessing to themselves and others. You pass on God and his gifts from generation to generation instead of passing on evil as Ham did with Canaan. You also have an opportunity to impact others just as Shem would influence Japheth by bringing God to Europe in the days of Paul. One might say that Japheth as his children spread out to Europe and Turkey created cities, art, and commerce in a more significant way than the other families. It was Shem through Israel who dwelt with God and gave everyone the gift of the Messiah Jesus Christ. Those who have the Lord in their home will change the world with His love and His gifts.

12. Verse 27. What is the wish of Noah concerning his son Japheth? Why is it important that they live in the tents of Shem?

Japheth's family spread out into the areas that we know as Asia Minor and Europe. They would multiply greatly be a great people conquering more territory than his brothers. They would be dependent, however, on Shem for faith. The Old Testament is the story of Abraham and his family. The prophets and the message of salvation came to the descendants of Shem. Even the Messiah would be born of the line of

Shem and Abraham. Salvation would come through this family to the gentiles like Japheth (Isaiah 42:6). In the years after the New Testament, the early church would eventually be centered in Rome which would be of the house of Japheth. Noah's wish would come true as Japheth's family would be part of God's church as well.

13. What are some lessons that you learned from this short story of Noah and his family?

Let the class discuss what they found important. Several possibilities include the fact that Satan attacks us in the beginning, the middle and the end of life. All three generations failed in this story. The story also shows us how gossip destroys, and decency and respect help those who fall into sin. The story of Canaan shows how generations will suffer because of a single person's wickedness. Finally, we notice in Noah that it isn't just big sins that caused him to fall but little ones as well. He had a few too many drinks and caused a scandal for the whole family. His drinking gave rise to the sin of his son Ham as well who didn't know how to handle the situation.

For now or later - taking the next step

1. What is the legacy that you want to leave with your children and your children's children? What do you think it will take for that legacy to happen?
2. How does God dwell in your tents (verses 26-27)? How does the Lord touch people as they are affected by your life?
3. How will you help others who are caught in sin? What did you learn from Shem and Japheth?

1. Grace

Genesis 5:28-6:8

The flood was an opportunity for God to save the world.

One of Satan's most successful devices is a compromise. The sons of Seth who believed in God married the evil sons of Cain, and faith was compromised. The godly married the ungodly, and soon everyone was wicked. Everyone was following their desires and forgetting God. Sin spread as family by family was compromised. The evil ways of Cain took people away from Godly living and the worship of the Lord. It was like a virus that spread until fewer and fewer families worshipped God. Instead, they became like the world.

The flood was God's way of saving humanity. Doctors sometimes amputate a limb so that they can save the body. God had to amputate humanity with a flood so that good might survive. It was a tragic thing to do just as an amputation would be today. Mankind seems to be one family away from being so evil that there would be no good at all. The flood was terrible, but it was an act of salvation for the human race. God had to protect Noah so that He could keep the promise of sending Jesus to save the world from sin. If all mankind were evil, how would God bring salvation through a Messiah?

God still has to protect us from evil. I shudder to think of what the world would look like if Hitler had won World War II or if terrorists around the globe gained control. Our God is a God of love. The flood and the Lord's actions today are the hands of God protecting His people so that evil does not destroy them. The flood of yesterday and God's actions of today are the punishment of the wicked, but they are also acts of mercy defending the good so that they do not become evil. As we look at this first chapter of the flood, let us see how the Lord loves His people and will do anything to keep mankind from destroying itself.

1. When have you had to throw away something valuable because it was spoiled or was no longer useful? Why can't you keep it?

Read Genesis 5:28-6:8

2. 5:29 What was life like at the time of the flood? What is Lamech's hope?

3. 6:2, 4 How did sin spread and take over the whole world?

4. How does compromise hurt the church? What happens when the culture confronts the church and the church "softens" the Bible's message to fit into the culture? What has been your experience when a Christian marries a non-Christian?

5. 6:3 How does God show patience with humanity? What does this time frame allow God to do through Noah?

6. 6:4-5 What is the state of man before the flood? How evil had man become?

7. As you read the text, how would you compare the evil of Noah's day with the evil you see around you today? What do you think are the causes of widespread sin today?

8. 6:7 How does God feel about the world He has created?

9: God had great sadness when he saw the evil in the days before the flood. How does sin around the world today affect God?

10: What do you think would have happened to the few good people if God had not cleansed the world with the flood?

11. Why would it be cruel of God to ignore sin? Why must God be patient and punish sin in the proper time?

12. 6:8 Who was the one hope of humankind? What do you think made him stand out to God?

13. How do we fight sin in our world? What tool can we use since God has promised never to send a flood again?

For now or later - taking the next step

1. As you examine your life, what are the ways that you are tempted to compromise your faith? What would it look like to have a life like Noah that the text calls blameless?
2. As you think of world history, what are some other times that God has intervened to keep evil from taking over the world? Why must God keep purifying His world?
3. As you think about God's actions in sending a flood, why is God's punishment often another form of grace?

2. Obedience

Gen. 6:9-22

Obedience is necessary if God is to help us

He was all alone. He was God's last chance. The world was corrupt and full of violence. God was ready to wipe out humanity, but he had a promise to keep. He had promised a savior. How could God do that if all the world were sinful and evil? It seemed like the world was doomed. Noah found favor in God's eyes, and so God used Noah. He used a man who could stand the ridicule and who would have faith and obedience to work for years building the boat that would save him and his family. Noah stands out for his obedience. The text says that "Noah did everything just as God commanded him." It was not 80% obedience like we so often want to give. It was full obedience that took him through the years necessary to build the ark on dry land.

It all came down to faith. This text is the first time that the word covenant is used in the Bible. It was a covenant with no conditions, only promises. God tells Noah about the flood and promises to save Noah and his family. Like other men of faith, Noah believes God and sets out on the task that God has given him. Sometimes, we want to give up. What God asks is too hard or isn't the way we would do something. We grumble. We drag our feet. We give up. Without faith that God knows what He is doing and that God will provide for us and protect us so that we can complete His will, we will never obey. Faith is the power behind obedience. We have to believe in God before we will accept the task that He has given us and be able to offer our lives for it. Faith will evaporate the fears that keep us from obedience.

Noah never complained about the task. He just obeyed and did what seems impossible for us even today. I can hear the ridicule of the people around him. I can feel Noah's questions of "where do I get that much wood or pitch?" I can see him exhausted after years of building a 450-foot boat on dry land. He did it because God said to do so. The church and its members are not so good at obeying. We want to bend the truth of the Bible to fit our culture. We want to make religion more comfortable and give reasons that we can't witness our faith or support our church. Our lukewarm obedience is one of the reasons that the church is sick today. Obedience is the key if we want to impact our families and our communities for Jesus. Obedience to the Lord is our way to save ourselves and our world from the sin that surrounds us all.

1. When have you believed in God or in yourself enough to do something that others thought was impossible?

Read Genesis 6:9-22

2. Verses 8-9. How does the Bible describe Noah's character? Describe someone you know who has these qualities.

3. What is God's favor and is it something that we earn or is it something God gives that creates the right attributes in people who are open to God's leading?

4. Verses 11-12. How does God describe the world in Noah's day? What are the consequences of this behavior? Why must God punish man and his world?

5. Verses 14-16. How detailed is God's plan for the ark that is expressed in these few verses?

6. What is the hardest thing that God has called on you to do? Why do Christians attempt the impossible?

7. Verses 17-18. What does the Lord share with Noah about the future of the world? What is the covenant that He makes with Noah?

8. What are the conditions of the covenant mentioned in these verses? How do you think that Noah felt when God made this covenant with him?

9. Verses 19-20. Who else is to be saved by this ark? What does this say about the scope of the flood?

10. Verse 22. What is Noah's response to God's commands? Why is obedience without grumbling or complaining necessary for God's plan to succeed?

11. What do you think is the hardest thing that Noah faced in building the ark?

12. What would be the consequences for a lack of obedience for Noah or us? What has a lack of obedience to God cost you in your life?

13. How does our faith relationship allow us to have such obedience? What does it take to build such a strong faith that you obey God when He asks the seemingly impossible?

For now or later - taking the next step

1. Obedience is an essential theme in scripture. What would the cost of disobedience have been for Abraham (Gen. 22:1-19), David (1 Sam. 24: 1-22), or Jesus (Matthew 26:36-46)?

2. What opportunities has obedience to God's commands given you? What has been the cost when you disobeyed?

3. What commands of God are you wrestling with right now? How do the examples of Noah, Abraham, and David encourage you?

3. Trust Gen. 7:1-24

Do the ordinary so God can do the extraordinary

Oh no, turn back, we forgot something! You have made lists and tried to think of everything, but there is often one thing left unprepared. Preparing for a two-week vacation is one thing. How do you prepare for a journey on a 450-foot ark? Once the rains come, there is no turning back. You have to have everything that you need in the ark for yourself and all the animals. You have to have everything that you will need when the flood is over. Here is a man of faith who trusts the Lord. Noah does the ordinary things and trusts God to do the extraordinary. God is in charge throughout the whole process. Noah does simple tasks like gathering food or building rooms. He trusts God to do what man is unable to do.

I find that I panic again and again in life whether it is doing a ministry for the Lord or just taking care of the details of my life. There would have been a hundred questions that crossed my mind if I had been Noah. How would I gather all those animals? Where would I get the food? How long is this trip going to last? It is incredible that in the text, he never asks any of those questions. He listens to what the Lord expects him to do, and he trusts the Lord with the rest of the details. God will bring the animals. God will feed them and care for my family. God will care for us when the flood is over. God expects nothing less of us. He wants us to believe Him when we have all kinds of unanswered questions about the future. He wants us to trust that He will take care of the big things that we can't handle and can't change.

We must do the ordinary so that God can do the extraordinary. Noah will spend months feeding the animals and cleaning the stalls. It does no good to worry about the details that are not in his control. I often worry about things that I have no power over and forget to do what God has commanded. God never promises that the journey of life will be easy. He promises to bring us through life and to work miracles through His people. If the miracles are to happen, we must have faith and obedience. We need to be patient and trust Him to handle the big things in life. God saved humanity because Noah believed. God can do great things through us if we are willing to do the ordinary things that He asks of us and trust Him to work miracles. Noah is an example of how God does amazing things through the simple service of His people.

1. What are a few things you need to pack for a one week vacation? What items have you forgotten in the past?

Read Genesis 7:1-24

2. Verse 1. How does God prepare His people for the coming of the flood? How does He calm Noah's fears?

3. What kind of preparations do you think Noah had to make in that final week?

4. What are the simple things that you are doing now so that God can work through you?

5. Verse 7. How did Noah collect all the animals? What kind of animals did he take?

6. Verse 11. How is the beginning of the flood described? Do you think this is a worldwide flood or a local flood?

7. What do you think it was like for Noah and his family inside the ark? What might their prayers have been through those days?

8. Verse 16. How does God show that He will keep Noah's family safe? What is God guarding against in the last moments?

9. Verse 21. What is happening outside the ark? Why did all the animals outside the ark have to die?

10. How high does it say that the water got? Where did all the water come from?

11. We often think of the flood as lasting 40 days and 40 nights. How long does the Bible say that the flood lasted?

12. How long do you think Noah expected to be in the ark? How did this trip require patience? How does trust in God bring about such patience?

13. How long do you wait before giving up on God? As you look at the flood, why might patience be required for miracles to be completed?

For now or later - taking the next step

1. What are some simple acts of service that you could do today which God can use to do extraordinary things? Pray now that God would lead you to such acts of service.
2. What miracles have you been praying that God would do in your life or the life of others? What ordinary things might God be asking you to do so that the miracle can happen?
3. What have you learned about your part in God's extraordinary work?

4. Hope

Genesis 8

Hope believes that God remembers us and we are safe in His hands.

Janet laid in a hospital bed with tubes strung from her body and a monitor beeping over her head. Her children popped in when they could, but they were busy. She felt forgotten. The heart attack had passed, and she was still alive, but now what? Locked in an ark for over a year, Noah and his family must have had some of the same thoughts. They alone had survived the flood, but what would life look like in the aftermath? Would the earth even yield crops as it had? This chapter is about renewal and hope after the crisis. God remembered Noah and his family and rebuilt the world so that this new first family would have a home. When the storms of life happen, take courage in what the Lord will do for you and be ready to celebrate His mercy.

We forget how long it had been for Noah and his family. The flood had receded after 150 days, and soon the ark came to rest on the mountain. Forty more days passed before Noah sent out the raven first and later a dove. The dove came back empty-handed the first time. Only on the second time, did he bring an olive leaf. Recovery in the hospital or a long search for a new job are just two crises that never seem to end. Finally, we get a doctor's report that things are getting better or a call for an interview. The light is shining in the distance. The crisis is not over. There may be months yet to wait as there were for Noah, but God is working. These are days to ponder and pray. God is preparing us as much as the world.

Real hope comes from the Lord. It is not wishful thinking. It knows that God remembers us and that we are safe in His hands. We need to remember Noah when we are in our deepest crisis. We need to believe that God is working to save us in those gloomy days. From the beginning, God had a plan. The plan took over a year to accomplish, but when it was done Noah, and his world were alive with a new future. God has such a plan for you. Trust in Him and be patient. Realize that the world you will gain may look different, but it will be beautiful. Don't be upset at what you have lost. Look at what you have gained. God brings renewal and rebirth to shattered lives who trust in Him. He does not forget His people. He gives them hope.

1. What is the difference between hope and wishful thinking?

Read Genesis 8

2. Verse 1 How is hope initiated by God at the beginning of this chapter?

3. Verse 1. Why must hope begin with God? Why can we have hope if we are thinking of God and His path?

4. Verse 4. What is the first sign of hope for Noah and his family?

5. Verse 11. What is the second sign of hope that is given to Noah? Why is this so important?

6. Verse 11. What kind of signs brings you hope when you are ill or when trouble comes into your life?

7. Verse 14. What is the key to having patience? Where can you find the strength to be patient when God's answer takes longer than you may have wished?

8. Verses 16-17. What signals the end of the flood?

9. Verse 17. Why is patience so crucial in times of trouble? Why must Noah wait for God to tell him that it is alright to come out of the ark?

10. Verse 20. How does Noah celebrate hope fulfilled? Why is this a natural response when God keeps His promises?

11. Verse 22. What is God's promise for the future? Who is God speaking to in this passage?

12. Verse 22. Does God promise that the future will be the same as the past? What does scripture promise us when we are in crisis?

13. Summarize what you have learned about hope. Where does it come from and who do you look to for real hope?

For now or later - taking the next step

1. What challenges are you facing now? What about the character of God gives you hope?
2. How long are you willing to wait for answers? What in this story could help you if you need to wait longer than you want?
3. What happens when people give up hope? Where can desperation lead?

5. New Beginnings

Genesis 9:1-17

The future may not always be the same, but God will bless it.

Martin stared at the oil painting above the fireplace and did a double take. It was Renoir's painting of the two sisters which he knew was in an art museum in Chicago. Admittedly, it was a copy. When he asked the owner, the owner admitted that it was a copy painted by an art student he knew. Martin took a second look at the painting and saw that the young man had talent. He knew, however, that something didn't feel right. He wasn't sure if it was that the dress was too blue or that the brushstrokes of the leaves were too short. It was good, just not as good as the original. Martin was impressed by the young man's abilities but knew that the master had done it better. There are times that you can't copy perfection.

After the flood, God was recreating the world, and Noah was the new Adam. Some things were the same. Noah and his children would be masters of the universe and were commanded by God to reproduce and fill the earth. Some things were different. Animals had become food and not pets. The weather would change, and plants would struggle to survive. God was remaking the world, but it would not be as good as Adam's original. Sin had entered the world and messed up the master's touch. Man would have a place to live, but this world would not be the same as Adam's or as the world that Noah left when he entered the ark.

We still live in a tarnished creation. Fall colors are beautiful, but the forest can be marred by fire or by disease. A waterfall can be breathtaking but can slow to a trickle in drought or be a rushing torrent of brown water and broken limbs when a storm hits. God has created a marvelous place for humanity to live. We can see the brushstrokes of the master around us in nature mixed with the disfigurement of sin. In the flood, God created a new world for His children. He started over His plan for man, but sin was not washed away by the flood. Man must deal with those who kill even as he has children and replenishes the earth. He can enjoy the beauty that is in the world but must lean on the Lord as he travels through this sinful world. We can trust the Lord who brought the flood to help us in life.

1. Name something you bought as a replacement that was not as good as the original.

Read Genesis 9:1-17

2. Verse 1 In what ways is Noah the second Adam? How is he different than the Adam?

3. How does the Bible see children? How are children seen today?

4. Verses 2-3 How does man's relationship with the animals change?

5. Verse 4 What is the one restriction that God put on eating animals? Why do you think that restriction was made?

6. Verses 5-6 Noah had been born in a violent age (Gen. 4:23-24). What value does God put on the life of each man?

7. What does this verse say about our responsibility to deal with those who kill? How does this verse speak to capital punishment?

8. What do verses 5-6 teach us about how God views human life? What is our responsibility to others?

9. Verse 11 What promise does God make to Noah? What is to be a constant reminder to God and man of this covenant?

10. What comfort would it give Noah that God promised never to bring a flood again?

11. How does God's covenant with Noah affect us today? Why is this covenant vital to you?

12. In Gen. 6:18, God made a promise to Noah. How is that promise fulfilled here and how much time has passed before the promise is fully fulfilled?

13. The fulfillment of God's promise to Noah in Gen. 6 took years to come. Why can we be confident that all the promises that God makes to us in scripture will all come true?

For now or later - taking the next step

1. Where do you see the beauty of God's creation around you?

2. What comfort does it give you that the Lord is faithful and that you can count on God to keep His promises?

3. What promise of God do you lean on when life gets rough?

6. Legacy **Gen 9:18-29**

Who you are will determine the path of generations to come.

In one verse, the text goes from rainbows to disgrace. One would think that the flood had wiped sin from the face of the earth. Sadly, we see three generations disgraced by sin in the span of just a dozen verses. The story picks up several years after the flood is over. Noah has planted a vineyard and reaped a harvest. Ham has several children including Canaan who is his youngest (Gen. 10:6). Noah who has been nothing short of a saint before he manages to disgrace himself with wine. Ham shows disrespect to his father and makes sure others know of his father's weakness. Finally, Ham's son Canaan is old enough that Noah knows what the boy's future exactly will be. He has seen it before. Three generations all show that sin has not disappeared. It will be part of man's legacy for generations to come.

Satan attacks us at the beginning, middle and end of life. Noah had saved his whole family from death and had found favor with God, yet had lost self-control. His prediction for Canaan's life shows that his grandson was already out of control. God would order the Israelites to destroy the Canaanites along with the other nations as they entered the Promised Land (Deut. 20:16-17). They were a nation of immoral sexual practices and the sacrifice of their children. The three generations of humanity show that no one is safe from Satan. Sin is part of our legacy from the fall of man. It is something that we always have to battle in our lives. It is something that we only defeat with the power of the cross.

Our prayer should be that we end our lives well. The legacy of all three sons of Noah is described. In opposition to Ham and his descendants, the descendants of Shem and Japheth are blessed. The people of Shem will include Abraham and the Israelites. The true God will be known as the God of this family (verse 26), and the Messiah will be born in their family. What matters is not how we are in the moment, but our legacy in life. Many Christians start strong, but they do not finish. They get too busy, or they go through a rough patch, and they forget about God. Like Noah, we have been saved by the Lord so that we might live for Him and others. We must continue in faith. How we live will determine the ending of our life and the lives of our children. Generations today will suffer for the sin of the parents. The journey of faith is lifelong, and those who get sidetracked in the middle will not finish well and not lead their families in worship.

1. When have you seen a team start a game well only to lose in the final quarter of the game? What is the lesson for all sports teams?

Read Genesis 9:18-29

2. Verses 20-21. What did Noah do in the years after getting off the ark? How did it lead this man of God into a foolish sin?

3. Why is it significant that the author of Genesis includes the account of Noah getting drunk? What does it tell us about the future of humanity after they get off the ark?

4. Verse 22 How does Ham show disrespect for his father? How does he make the sin even worse?

5. Verse 23 How do Shem and Japheth react when they hear that their father is naked? What extra precaution do they take when remedying the situation?

6. Compare the actions of Ham to those of his two brothers. What do we learn about dealing with those who are caught in sin?

7. When is it best to cover up mistakes and when is it wise to share them?

8. Verse 24-25 When waking up from his stupor, Noah condemns Canaan, the son of Ham. What does He say will happen to this youngest son of Ham in the future?

9. How do our actions impact our family and our friends? Do little sins matter or are we just talking about the big sins in life?

10. Verse 26. Why is God called the God of Shem and not the God of all peoples? Why is Noah thanking God for Shem's future after cursing the children of Ham?

11. The greatest blessing is reserved for Shem because the Lord would be known as the God of Shem. What difference does it make if your family and others perceive your home as a place where God dwells?

12. Verse 27. What is the wish of Noah concerning his son Japheth? Why is it important that they live in the tents of Shem?

13. What are some lessons that you learned from this short story of Noah and his family?

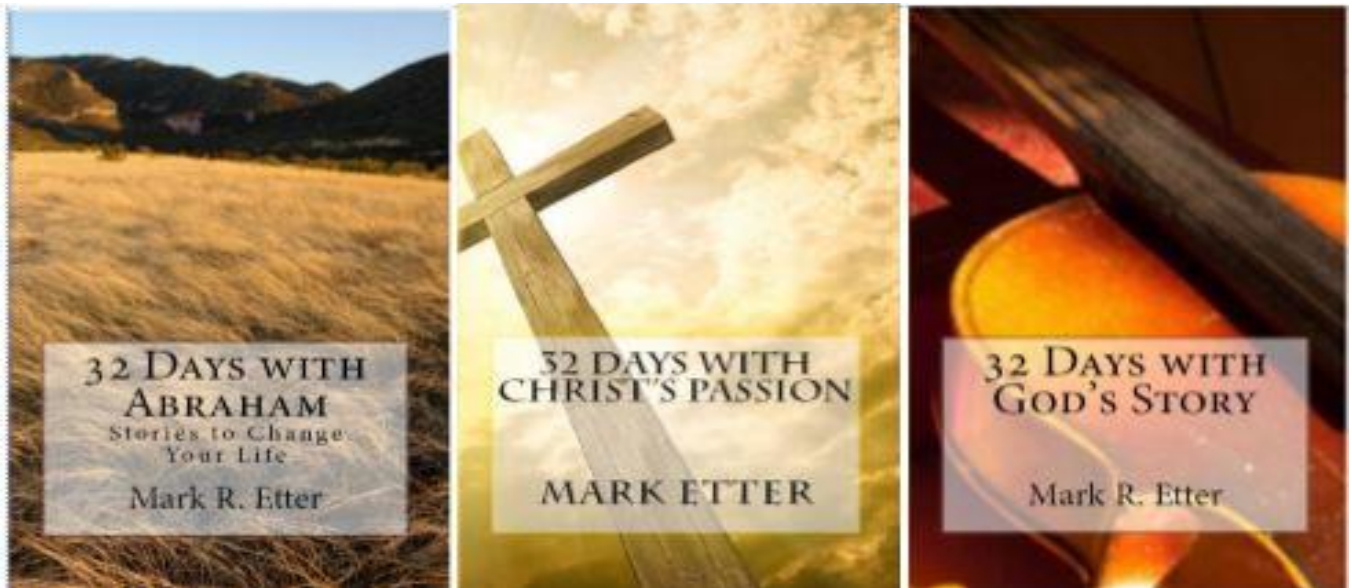
For now or later - taking the next step

1. What is the legacy that you want to leave with your children and your children's children? What do you think it will take for that legacy to happen?

2. How does God dwell in your tents (verses 26-27)? How does the Lord touch people as they are affected by your life?

3. How will you help others who are caught in sin? What did you learn from Shem and Japheth?

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About the author

Rev. Mark Etter has been a pastor for over thirty-five years and is currently the pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church in Erlanger, KY. Rev. Etter has published several books of Adult Bible studies and numerous devotions and youth studies with Concordia Publishing House in St. Louis. He has been active in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod as an LWML counselor, evangelism chairman, coach for pastors and circuit counselor. He and his wife, Joan, have three grown children and two grandchildren.

Did you know?

How well do you know the story of the flood? Here are seven questions that are answered in this study. The page and question number in this study are given after each question.

1. What was life like before the flood? (Page 2, Question 2)
2. What do we know about the ark beside its size? (Page 9, Question 5)
3. How could water cover the whole earth and where did it go after the flood (Page 14, Question 10)
4. How long was Noah in the ark besides the 40 days of rain? (Page 14, Question 11)
5. How did Noah celebrate after the flood? (Page 18, Question 18)
6. How does man's relationship with the animals change after the flood (Page 21, Question 4)
7. What sin of Noah after the flood is mentioned in the Bible? (Page 24, Question 2)

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