



Group Session

Small Group Study

Overview

Banished from the Garden, humanity gives in to evil at every turn. This pattern demonstrates that apart from God and left to our own devices, we are completely lost. However, there was one man whose life stood out from the rest. Noah's willingness to obey God thrust him into the forefront of God's plan to destroy the wicked and save a remnant.

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Engage

QUESTION

Have you ever had to confront a friend or family member over something they did that was wrong? Why are those conversations often so difficult?

“Love me, but don’t judge me.” That’s what many of us think we would like in a friend—someone who accepts us without ever questioning us. But as comforting and socially acceptable as that may be, is that really what we want in a friend? What about friends who love us enough to actually tell us the painful truth when they know it will help us? Or friends who believe in us enough that they are willing to call us to a higher standard when it would be easier to just leave us alone and not judge us? Is that the kind of friend you want to be?

QUESTION

When thinking about the person that you had to confront, what was your motivation? Why did you think that it was important enough to risk the confrontation?

Watch

As we watch this video, consider this question:

QUESTION

How can we be a part of God’s redemption story?



Consider

Imagine someone breaking into your home, vandalizing your property, and perhaps even harming a family member. If caught, that person would need to stand before a judge. If the judge said, "I'm a nice person. I only want to love people and accept them as they are, so you can go free," would that judge be considered good? Absolutely not! Neither would the God of the Bible be a good God if He turned a blind eye to evil and did not hold us accountable for our sin. In fact, God's love cannot be separated from His justice. (See Psalm 89:14.)

QUESTION

Think about our relationship with God. Why do believers seem to want a "love-me-but-don't-judge-me" God rather than obeying Him?

As the consequences of human fallenness began to work themselves out in the early chapters of Genesis, things went from bad to worse. In Genesis 4, Abel, one of Adam and Eve's sons, was murdered by his brother Cain. It is here that we encounter the first hint of God's justice in the Bible, as God told Cain that Abel's blood was crying out to Him from the ground (Genesis 4:10).

Within several generations of Abel's death, horrendous violence, injustice, and debauchery had engulfed the human race (Genesis 6:5). There was, however, a righteous man on the earth. His name was Noah (Genesis 6:9). Comparing how God dealt with this godly man versus the wicked culture all around him, we see the true working out of both God's saving love and His righteous judgment. If we focus only on God's judgment in this Bible story, we miss God's passion for His creation.

What the Bible Says

Let's look at what we know God says in His Word, the Bible.

A Righteous Man

Read Genesis 6:9–14.

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God's judgment was about to come upon the evil corrupting the human race of Noah's time. Yet God made provision for saving of Noah, his family, and the animals through the construction of a massive boat. The God of judgment was first the God of salvation. That boat, called an ark, became a vivid picture of Jesus' saving work on our behalf. Jesus even drew a parallel between the world as it was in the time of Noah and the way it will be prior to His own second coming (Matthew 24:37–39).

QUESTION

What parallels do you see between the world that Noah lived in and the world that we live in?

Exactly as God Commanded

Read Genesis 7:1–10.

Noah and his family entered the boat he had constructed, along with male-female pairs of land animals and birds. Then water came up from inside the earth (Genesis 7:11) and the rain began to fall. For forty days the deluge of God's judgment was poured out against humanity, which had sold out to evil and had broken the Creator's heart (Genesis 6:5–6). The heights of God's judgments can only be understood in proportion to the depths of His love for His creation and His passionate anger against the evil that corrupts it.

QUESTION

What specific thoughts and feelings do you have as you read this account of God's judgment?

QUESTION

How does this influence your understanding of who God is?

The Sign of the Covenant

Read Genesis 9:1–17.

After the waters dried up, God gave Noah instructions to fill the earth. His words are an echo of the directive that God had given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28. God's judgment would not be the last word over what He had made. Then God established a covenant with Noah.

Ancient covenants were relational agreements, often accompanied by a covenantal sign, like the ring in marriage covenants today. God's sign would be the rainbow. Never again would God bring mass judgment by means of floodwaters. We will see God make covenants with His people throughout the Old Testament. All of these covenants are pointing us to the ultimate covenant made through the sacrifice of Jesus, the Son of God.

QUESTION

Think about the difference between a covenant made by two people with one another and a covenant made by God toward humanity. Based on what you've learned so far about the nature of God, in what ways would these differ?

Reflect

The story of Noah and the ark is one of the most well-known of all the Bible's stories. The animals and the dramatic flooding and the amazing courage of one righteous, faith-filled man can't help but capture our imagination. But above all, the Noah story is a prophetic picture of God's ultimate means of salvation for humanity. Before sending judgment on humanity, God had Noah build an ark as a means of escape. For us today, that "ark" is Jesus. One day our world will again be judged by God. He is too good to be indifferent to evil and all its horrors. But *first* He provided a way of escape through His own Son. God desires eternal life, not death, for everyone. (John 3:16)

Listen to God

The goal of *Listen* is not only to gain an understanding of God's Word, but also to pause and listen to what God our Creator might want to say to us about what we have read and shared. Be silent for a few moments and reflect on the following questions. Choose the one that most resonates with what God is saying to you now. Then complete the others during Day 1 of your devotion time this week.

Personal Reflection Question

Record your answer to the following question in the space provided or in your personal journal.

QUESTION

How would you describe your personal view of God's love?

QUESTION

How would you describe your personal view of God's judgment?

QUESTION

Have you ever struggled with reconciling God's judgments with His love? If so, how did this session affect your point of view?

QUESTION

How would you describe your attitude toward the sin and evil around you—anger, denial, apathy, helplessness, compassion, or something else?

QUESTION

Choose a worship song from your favorite music or video app and worship the Lord right now in response to all that He is. (Suggestion: “Reckless Love” by Cory Asbury)

Prayer Requests

Note any requests from the group and remember to pray for them during the week.

Before next time, continue to listen with the personal devotions.

Did You Know?

Ancient accounts of a catastrophic flood event have been discovered around the world. These are stories from deep within the collective memory of numerous and varied cultures. Interestingly, they tend to have some similarities to the biblical account of Noah, like an escape by boat with animals onboard and a resting place on high ground.

The flood story with the most similarities to the biblical account would likely be the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh, Tablet 11. The God of the Genesis account, however, is not like the fickle Babylonian gods who drown people indiscriminately just to make life easier for themselves. Instead, the Noah story exemplifies an intentional, loving Creator who is profoundly averse to evil and deeply grieved by the human victimization that evil brings with it. This is consistent with the character of God as revealed all the way through the Bible.

Personal Devotion

Listening to God is something we need to do every day. Before you begin each devotion, pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word. Record your answer to the following question in the space provided or in your personal journal.

Day 1

Read Genesis 6:9 to 9:17 (if time allows).

Look back over the Group Session and complete your responses to the Personal Reflection Question.

QUESTION

What do you sense that God is saying to you?

Personal Devotion

Day 2

Read Matthew 24:37–44.

The second coming of Christ will be preceded by the same kind of spiritual blindness that marked the wicked culture of Noah's time. In the account of Noah, God's judgment overtook them unexpectedly. Suddenly they were swept away. These are sobering warnings as we wait for Jesus' second coming.

QUESTION

What is Jesus teaching us here about how worldly lifestyles affect us?

QUESTION

Matthew 24:42 contains the applicational point of Jesus' teaching regarding Noah's flood. How would you paraphrase that application for your life?

QUESTION

How would you describe the importance of world evangelism in light of this passage of Scripture?

Personal Devotion

Day 3

Read Hebrews 11:1–7.

Faith is not rooted in what we see or already have (Hebrews 11:1), but in the conviction that God is both real and responsive (Hebrews 11:6). In other words, faith is confidence in the character of God, not a formula or a fantasy. To illustrate, the writer of Hebrews describes Noah’s faith life in Hebrews 11:7.

QUESTION

How is Noah’s faith described?

QUESTION

What part did obedience play in the expression of his faith?

QUESTION

Where might the Lord be asking you to step out in obedience as an act of faith?

Personal Devotion

Day 4

Read 1 Peter 3:18–22.

In this fascinating passage of Scripture, Peter points to the victory of the cross of Christ by, in part, drawing a parallel between the waters of Noah’s flood and the waters of Christian baptism. Jesus, in what He did for us, is our “ark” of salvation.

QUESTION

On a sheet of paper, outline the sequence of events detailed by Peter, starting with verse 18 and going all the way through verse 22. How does Peter describe water baptism? Have you been baptized in water?

Personal Devotion

Day 5

Read Romans 2:1–11.

This passage describes both God’s gracious kindness and His severe judgment. Many have trouble reconciling these two dimensions of God’s nature, yet Romans 11:22 tells us that both exist. Both of these should bring us to fearing the Lord in a biblical way. (See Proverbs 9:10; Philippians 2:12.)

QUESTION

What is the intended outcome of God’s kindness? (Romans 2:4)

QUESTION

What is it that makes us refuse God’s kindness? (Romans 2:5)

QUESTION

In what ways does the “fear of the Lord” as found in Proverbs 9:10 work itself out in your life?