



## #2: *Flood and Promise: A Covenant for Life*

**Bible Readings:** **Genesis 6 - 9**

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### **INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES: *Faithful God, Covenant People***

This series takes us on a journey through the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, looking at God's purposes in calling human beings into a **covenant relationship**. Our journey leads us from Creation, through the Old Covenant with Israel, to the New Covenant in Jesus Christ, and on to the New Creation. We will explore different covenants and perspectives as we think about our relationships with God, consider what God is calling us to be, and how we should live as Covenant people. Throughout, we will hold in mind key aspects of Christian faith: that God is faithful, loving and forgiving. It is best used in small groups, but can also be helpful for personal study. Each topic may stand alone, but should also be seen as part of a much larger biblical story.

### **PREPARATION FOR GROUP LEADERS**

As you prepare to lead this session, pray for your group and reflect on what went well last time, or anything that could be improved upon. If any had difficult questions, where could you find help to answer them? You might like to remind the members of the group when and where you are meeting, and especially talk to any new members to make sure they are getting on well. We are focussing on the story of Noah, and it would be very useful to read Genesis chapters 2-9 to remind you of the story so far, and the notes below.

### **PREPARATION FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS – before the session**

The story of Noah's Ark is a popular one on the cover of children's bibles! It makes for a colourful picture full of variety and life. *Do you remember the story from when you were a child? Have you read it recently? Do you ever think of it on a rainy day?* Take some time to read it in full, in a grown-up bible! **Genesis chapters 6 to 9.** *What questions or concerns does it leave you with? Where is the good news?*

### **STARTING THE SESSION: A PRAYER**

God of steadfast love and faithfulness,  
You desire for this world to reflect your glory;  
You long to find justice on the earth, and you sustain the world by your loving mercy.  
Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you;  
Our lives are limited, and yet they find completion when we put our trust in your faithful love.  
As we read these ancient scriptures together, may you inspire us by your Holy Spirit  
to find hope in your grace, and to trust in your promises . **Amen.**

### **FINDING OUR ROOTS**

In your group, or in smaller groups of two or three, consider the following questions:

*What are your thoughts on the story of Noah and the flood (Genesis 6-9)? What complications or complexities does it raise in our minds? Does anything surprise you about God in these chapters?*

## READING THE SCRIPTURES – with background information

### Read together the first Bible passage: **Genesis chapter 6**

Since the early days of creation, ‘sin’ seems to have entered the world like an infection. The first act of disobedience comes in **Genesis 3**, with a crawling serpent. By the next generation, sin has become something larger “lurking at the door” (**4:7**), and we get the first murder. Several generations pass (with long-living patriarchs), but humankind only gets worse. **Genesis 6** starts with a strange story about ‘divine beings’ forcibly mating with human girls; and, in summary: **‘the earth was corrupt... and filled with violence’ (v.11)**. God grieved over the state of the world, and regretted having made humankind in the first place (**v.6**). God’s initial reaction was to want to ‘blot out’ the entire human and animal kingdom (the way an author might delete a mistake, or how the Psalms speak of God ‘blotting out’ our iniquities – **Psalms 51:9**). But, thankfully, there was a slight reprieve, an act of grace: **‘Noah found favour in the sight of the Lord’ (v.8)**. We might say that *God’s grace found Noah*. One man, one hope, and the project could be renewed; *reseeded* (rather than destroyed). The first **covenant** is mentioned in **verse 18** – for the salvation of Noah and his family, as they followed God’s orders. Then there’s the flood, and you might remember the story and songs from your childhood... (*The animals went in two by two; Hurrah!*)

### Now read together: **Genesis chapter 9**

The flood is over, and the ark has carried the chosen ones safely through the waters of death. A new start for the earth is possible. Genesis tells us that God, who holds life and death in his hands, decided, once, to submerge almost-all animal and human life, to bring an end to the violence, abuse, and sin which had covered the earth. As the waters begin to subside and the sun comes out, a rainbow becomes **the sign of the covenant**. And now, this **covenant** is not just for Noah and his family, it is for all creation henceforth: God will never again resort to such widespread destruction (**Genesis 9:9-13**); committing to sustaining life on earth. God will find another way, and a slower journey, to transform the world in God’s image.

This ancient story claims to know God’s inner emotions – including pain and regret. There is a ‘mythical’ feel to it, similar to the creation stories. Like parables, these chapters give us insights into God’s purposes, but should always be handled prayerfully (and respectfully), together in the community of faith.

## DIGGING DEEPER – some questions for you to consider in your group:

*What is significant about the words ‘be fruitful and multiply’ (**9:1**)? What is God saying at this moment?*

*How can we make sense of the story, thinking in terms of God being loving, gracious and just?*

For all the violence and sin, there must surely have been many sinned-against victims among the drowned (and children and animals). It is true that death comes to us all, yet, *how can we explain the widespread and indiscriminate nature of this act of destruction? Is God trying to wash away the pain?*

There is the implication in this story that God learns, reflects, and adapts his plans. God also seems, in the end, to accept humankind *despite* our tendency to sin. *How does all this affect your view of God?*

*Can you see any connections between this story and the Christian gospel? Where is the good news?*

*What do **rainbows** mean to you? Do you ever think of God’s covenant promise when you see one?*

*Does this story give us any hope when it comes to the climate emergency gripping the earth at present?*

The rainbow is used now as a symbol of inclusivity and diversity. *Does this enhance or distract from the message of this story – and this all-embracing covenant for the world?*

## PRAYING TOGETHER

In a time of open prayer, pray for any people or situations in need of healing or peace, and **pray for the victims of the world’s violence and destruction today**. Bring to God also any questions or doubts this story may have awoken in your group. Conclude by saying **The Lord’s Prayer** together.

## COVENANT LIVING: PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE – to think about afterwards

The ark gave a sanctuary to Noah’s family and the animals. Where and how can we offer sanctuary to people or animals today? How can the church help to provide a place of safety, and a community of love?

## Junior Good Soil, issue #2

### NOAH AND THE FLOOD: A New Start for the World

Written by Andy Murphy.

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Junior Good Soil is designed for children's and young people's groups in churches. It can be easily adapted and you can add your own ideas! We would always value feedback ...

Please do contact Andy at [geordie\\_smurf@hotmail.com](mailto:geordie_smurf@hotmail.com) with your comments.



#### PLANTING THE SEED – what are we thinking about today?

Today, we are looking at the story of Noah's Ark. It is a story not just about animals and rainbows, but about a disaster brought about when humans ignored God: they did not care for each other, and acted with violence all over the world. God needed to find a way to start again, but he did not completely give up on the world: he chose Noah and his family to be saved, and to be like seeds for a new world.

#### QUIET TIME – a prayer

Dear God, we thank you that you made this world, and gave us life, but sometimes we see bad things happening that make the world a sadder place. Sometimes we can even play our part in the wrong, and fail to bring your love and peace. Forgive us, we pray, and help us to forgive others when they are sorry for what they've done. Today we will learn about your promise to keep life going, even though there will be pain and suffering. Help us to listen for your voice, and follow your way, just like Noah. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

#### TELLING THE STORY – reading the Bible... [Genesis chapters 6 - 9](#)

Because this is a long story, it is advisable to read this from a children's Bible, like the **Usborne Children's Bible** (2009, pages 12-16). Or try **this video**: [youtube.com/watch?v=qzYjy6lhRag](https://youtube.com/watch?v=qzYjy6lhRag)  
If you have older children or teenagers, encourage them to also read the full story in their own Bibles.

#### WATERING AND GERMINATING – what can we learn? / what does it tell us?

This story can raise many questions (about God choosing to send such destruction, or why God doesn't intervene like this today!) but we can't assume we know what the children will make of it, so *ask them FIRST what questions they have. Does anything concern them? How do they make sense of it?*

**You could explain it like this, or our own words:** In a world where everything had gone wrong, Noah was the only one God could find who was in tune with God and listening to God. The instructions to build a massive boat might have seemed strange, but Noah still did as God said. God's plan was to wash clean the whole world, and to rescue human and animal life, through Noah and his family and the animals on the ark. Afterwards, God made a COVENANT with the world – a PROMISE to never again flood the world in the same way. God keeps the earth going, every day, and life goes on.

#### LETTING IT GROW – ideas for activities and discussion

In a large bowl of water, try different containers to see which ones float or sink! *Talk about how we are safe in the love of God, even when we go through difficult times.* Make a rainbow banner, perhaps listing some of God's promises, or saying 'everyone is welcome'. Draw a picture or write a poem about Noah!

#### PRAISE AND WORSHIP – hymns and songs (can be used at the start or end, or whenever!)

Faithful one, so unchanging (Singing the Faith **628**) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqK-UnsRTFI>  
My Jesus, my Saviour (Singing the Faith **363**) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dr78ff70XKQ>  
Or, try some of the old Sunday School songs... 'Who built the ark?' or 'The animals went in two by two'!