

Lesson 6: October 7, 2018
Noah's Steadfast Faith
Bible Background • GENESIS 6; 8:19
Printed Text • GENESIS 6:9b-22 | Devotional Reading • MATTHEW 24:36-44

Faithfulness is a needed quality of life, but it is difficult to achieve. How can persons be faithful in difficult situations? Noah is an empowering example of someone who remained faithful to what God asked him to do regardless of the opposing circumstances and consequences.

Words You Should Know

- A. Perfect tamim (Heb.)—Whole, blameless.
- B. Covenant berit (Heb.)—An agreement between two individuals that forms a relationship, in this case an unconditional agreement between God and humankind.

Say It Correctly

- Noah. NO-uh.
- Jepheth. JEY-fith.

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will: RECALL Noah's faithful obedience to God in building the ark; REPENT of the times we failed to follow God's instructions; and RESOLVE to do what God commands regardless of the challenges.

In Focus

Jocelyn had been preparing for three weeks to teach her class on media and ministry at the church. She had spent hours after work making sure her slideshow presentation was beautiful and her notecards were brief. She walked into the church on Saturday morning and was shocked. Instead of being set up for her presentation, there were teenagers playing board games all around the room. She confronted the youth pastor immediately.

"Excuse me, but I'm supposed to be teaching a class on media and ministry in this room. Why are you here?" Jocelyn demanded.

"Today is our youth fellowship day," the youth pastor responded. "Did you remember to reserve the room and let the church secretary know about your class? I didn't see anything in the reservation book before I scheduled this activity with the teens."

It hit Jocelyn all at once. She had gotten so excited about her class that she had forgotten to follow through on the instructions the senior pastor had given her to set up for the class. She felt embarrassed and disappointed. She would have to follow up about her class the next week.

Not following instructions of leadership can have embarrassing and disappointing consequences. Not following the instructions of God can be even more devastating. What are some reasons people don't follow the directions of leadership? Why do people sometimes disobey the commands of God?

Keep in Mind

"Thus did Noah; according to all that God had commanded him, so did he" (Genesis 6:22, KJV).

Focal Verses

KJV

Genesis 6:9 These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

10 And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

12 And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

15 And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.

16 A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it.

17 And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.

18 But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

19 And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female.

20 Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive.

21 And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them.

22 Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

NLT

Genesis 6:9 This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God.

10 Noah was the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

11 Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence.

12 God observed all this corruption in the world, for everyone on earth was corrupt.

13 So God said to Noah, "I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for they have filled the earth with violence. Yes, I will wipe them all out along with the earth!

14 Build a large boat from cypress wood and waterproof it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior.

15 Make the boat 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high.

16 Leave an 18-inch opening below the roof all the way around the boat. Put the door on the side, and build three decks inside the boat—lower, middle, and upper.

17 Look! I am about to cover the earth with a flood that will destroy every living thing that breathes. Everything on earth will die.

18 But I will confirm my covenant with you. So enter the boat—you and your wife and your sons and their wives.

19 Bring a pair of every kind of animal—a male and a female—into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood.

20 Pairs of every kind of bird, and every kind of animal, and every kind of small animal that scurries along the ground, will come to you to be kept alive.

21 And be sure to take on board enough food for your family and for all the animals.”

22 So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.

People, Places, and Times and Background

Noah. The son of Lamech, Noah was born into a world that had become completely corrupted. However, because Noah found favor with God, he was declared righteous. Through Noah and his family, God preserved humanity and gave to the world a new beginning. Noah can be viewed, therefore, as the second father of humankind. Many generations separated Noah and the earth’s first couple.

Background

Most people are familiar with Noah as someone who built a huge boat to house his family and every species of animal during the worldwide flood. That moment in history may seem like the most memorable slice of his life, but what Noah did before this famous voyage is especially worth paying attention to. Despite being as imperfect as anyone, the Bible describes Noah as “blameless” in comparison to others in his era who lived wicked lives (Genesis 6:9). His part of God’s story is primarily found in Genesis 5–9, making him one of the patriarchs of our faith—individuals with whom God established a foundational covenant in order to re-create hope for everyone else, from generation to generation.

In this case, God had to address the growing sin in the world as well as a specific evil that had infected the overall bloodline of humanity. In his grief over this corruption yet commitment to redemption, the Lord sent a devastating flood to wash away everyone but Noah and his family. We may never fully understand the thoughts or heartache everyone who survived experienced during this time, especially since humanity was given years to turn away from its sin. What we can more practically recognize is how one household who followed God was used to redeem even the most evil of situations.

How might Noah be a very real example to us of what it means to be an imperfect person who chooses to walk with God when no one else is?

At a Glance and In Depth

At-A-Glance

1. Righteousness Creates Faithfulness (Genesis 6:9)
2. Faithfulness Creates Trust (vv. 10–22)

In Depth

1. Righteousness Creates Faithfulness (Genesis 6:9)

Every relationship is fueled by one of two motives: “I have to know this person” or “I get to know this person.” The same thing applies to how we view God, for some people believe we “have to” treat Him with respect or else He will make us feel guilty (if not curse us). This actually tracks back to how we struggle to predict the consequences of our own behavior, so we just end up pinning all of the worst things in our lives on Him. Noah saw things the other way: By living a righteous life he felt the pleasure of faithfulness (6:9). It’s what happens when we do what God has asked and help re-create this world back into what He originally intended. We experience the joy He hardwired into how things were meant to be experienced. We move from “have to” to “get to” when we will faithfully protect and preserve the things we care about.

When have you experienced pleasure by doing something the way God intended for you to do versus the way others might? How did that motivate you to want to do it again the same way?

2. Faithfulness Creates Trust (vv. 10–22)

When we truly know someone, we do things more out of trust than out of the person explaining all the details. Noah was a father to three boys (v. 10), so he knew something about trying to keep them safe in a world of violence (v. 11). They had to trust his perspective as their father despite not knowing all he knew, just as Noah had to trust God’s perspective and instructions. Like a father and son relationship, God and Noah had built a special kind of intimacy and trust over time as Noah lived righteously. It allowed them to form a covenant in the midst of it all (v. 18)—even if Noah didn’t understand the purpose of every detail, he did it all (v. 22).

We tend to struggle with this most after experiencing great uncertainty and loss. If it feels like God has let us down in protecting our loved ones, we might let the crisis overtake our trust. Faithfulness is key for us to re-create our confidence in the Lord out of truth instead of emotion. At some point in your faith journey, you see the harder things as a pathway to embrace the greater things.

In what ways has God demonstrated His faithfulness to you, and in what ways have you demonstrated your faithfulness to Him?

Search the Scriptures and Discuss the Meaning

Search the Scriptures

1. Who are some people you know or have heard about whom you would describe as “righteous” and “blameless in [our] generation” (6:9)?
2. How do you feel about knowing that God wanted to destroy humanity (6:13)? How would you describe how God felt about it?
3. How did Noah’s relationship with God affect his family and the future of mankind? What if Noah would have been a sinful man instead?

Discuss the Meaning

1. People can often be skeptical about the consequences of their actions or warnings of God punishing them in the future. What advice would you give the world if you could somehow get everyone to listen to you for a few moments?
2. When have you felt it to be difficult to embrace what God has called you to do despite knowing it was the right thing to do?

Lesson in Our Society and Make it Happen

Liberating Lesson

Think back to a time when you made something important to you, be it a project around the house or something creative. What if you knew you had to destroy it? God knew creation would be tainted by sin yet still put His all into it. In contrast, we live in a world that makes no promises yet demands guarantees. People are generally reluctant to do even important things unless they know for sure it will be “worth it” or that something will be in it for them. God instead demonstrates what it means to give His all to what matters, just as Noah shows us how to be steadfast for God even if sometimes we stand alone. The New Testament uses salvation language to refer to Noah’s experience (1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5), suggesting the account here should be seen more as God’s saving humanity from sinful self-destruction than merely as punishment for sin. We take part in this every time we stand up for the Lord, not just by saying important things before others but in right living that shows we know what’s important.

Application for Activation

Missionaries, anthropologists, and ethnologists have all discovered stories about a global flood told by multiple cultures throughout history. Not all of these cultures have recognized the actual details of what happened, though. We have a habit as people of only reading the “headline” and thinking like we know the whole “story.”

Gather a group together to meet with someone in authority, be it a pastor, city official, employer, teacher, or anyone else appropriate. Spend at least 10 minutes with this person asking him or her to share any current situations where a misunderstanding is having a big impact because people are only reading the “headline,” not the whole “story.” Perhaps people are complaining about local construction without realizing why that project is happening, or maybe a person has a great idea that has yet to be developed because others don’t understand its importance. Come up with several good ways you can have a hand in helping something righteous happen by taking part in some honorable choices or communication to help sort things out. Thank God for His sovereignty in how no matter what anyone in history has done or been confused by, no one has ever been able to overtake Him or His larger plans.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light On The Text

Genesis 6:9–10

9 These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. 10 And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

At Noah's birth his father Lamech gave him his name, which means comfort (Heb. noach, no-AKH). Noah is the tenth generation from Adam. He is a bridge between two worlds, the former destroyed by water and the current awaiting a destruction by fire (2 Peter 3:6–7). Noah stands out completely from his contemporaries.

Noah is described by three qualities: "just," "perfect," and "walked with God." The Hebrew word for just or righteous (tsaddiq, tsad- DEEK) portrays someone who keeps the moral law and is obedient to the will of God. The word translated "perfect" is tamim (tah- MEEM), an adjective that conveys the meaning of wholeness, perfection, and blamelessness. It was used for the sacrificial animals that should have been without defect or blemish to be accepted by the Lord. The word does not convey the meaning of sinlessness but characterizes a person who abstains from iniquity or intentional gross wickedness. Lastly, Noah walked with God. This sentence places Noah on a high pedestal in the biblical record with Enoch. They are the only two people who were presented as walking with God in their time (Genesis 5:24). For all the other instances, the expression is "to walk before the Lord" (Genesis 17:1; Psalm 116:9).

The two uses of the word "generations" in this verse are actually two different Hebrew words: toledot (toe-leh-DOTE) and dor (DOOR). The toledot formula ("these are the generations of...") is used to introduce each of the eleven sections of the book of Genesis. "Among his generations" signifies "among his contemporaries." The generation in which Noah lived was a wicked and godless one. God depicts how the generation was so wicked that people's hearts were continually full of evil thoughts (6:5).

The uprightness of Noah shines even more in light of the conduct of his contemporaries. Living in obedience to God in such an environment was not an easy task. His generation is called "the world of the ungodly" (2 Peter 2:5). Jesus presents them as not evil in themselves, but one lacking concern for spiritual matters while too involved in temporal matters (Matthew 24:38–39).

Noah's three sons are the people the Lord used to repopulate the earth after the Flood. Shem, Ham and Japheth are therefore the ancestors of all human beings now living on earth. This suggests that irrespective of race, the post-flood population comes from the same origin. Therefore it cannot be stated that one race is superior to another. The table of nations indicates that Semitic people are descendants of Shem and Indo-European are descendants of Japheth. Africans are descendants of Ham. Some important nations of antiquity such as Egypt, a world power at one time, are African. Some are tempted to link the curse on Canaan, the son of Ham, to Africa, but this is not a responsible use of the text. The Canaanites were largely destroyed by the Israelites who inherited their land.

Genesis 6:11–22

11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. 12 And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

The generation of Noah was marked by corruption and violence. The Hebrew word shachath (shah-KHATH) translated "corrupt" is also translated as "destroy" (v. 13), and indicates that humanity had essentially already destroyed itself before God destroyed it.

In many instances in the Bible, God decided to follow suit with the course taken by people (Romans 1:24). The Lord allows a strong delusion to those who delight in lies and unrighteousness (2 Thessalonians 2:11–12). The scale of the corruption was high and the extent was wide. The word here for violence (Heb. *chamac*, *khah-MAHK*) refers to a violence based in lawlessness. It is often a physical violence meant to disrupt society's rules, but the word is also used of non-physical oppression of the powerful over the needy.

With sorrow, God takes a look at the earth in this state. The first time God saw the earth, everything was perfect (Genesis 1:31), but then sin entered the world. This current assessment of the earth's condition is the saddest one. Corruption has overtaken its inhabitants to such an extent that nothing could be done to stop its destruction. But in the midst of this darkness, God saw a tiny light in Noah and his family who would repopulate the world after the destruction. The biblical record testifies that God is constantly involved in the condition of His creation contrary to the conception of deism. God is ever assessing the moral state of the earth both globally and individually. In search of people of integrity, the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth (2 Chronicles 16:9; Zechariah 4:10).

Commentators have discussed whether the word flesh (Heb. *basar*, *bah-SAR*) concerns only human beings in this verse or if it includes animals as well. The issue is that the animal did not have moral decisions to make. Some find it difficult therefore to involve the animal kingdom in the corruption of the ways of all flesh. However, all throughout the Flood narrative, most often the phrase "all flesh" applies to both humankind and animals (v. 13). It could be an indication also of the scale and intensity of the corruption.

Genesis 6:13

13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

Noah was privy to the confidence of God because of his right standing with the Lord. The Lord God will do nothing without revealing it to His faithful servants, the prophets, who are privileged to speak in His name (Amos 3:7). For example, Abraham got the information of the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:17–21). The righteous privilege to be in the confidence of the Lord is also a responsibility, one either to plead for God's mercy or to proclaim His righteousness by calling people to repentance. Therefore, Abraham pleaded for mercy (Genesis 18:23–33) and Noah preached to his contemporaries (2 Peter 2:5). The faithful servants are also faithful witnesses.

The word rendered "end" (Heb. *qets*, *KAY-ts*) is most often used for the end of life or a limit in a temporal sense and rarely for spatial boundaries. It is mostly encountered in the situation of divine judgment. As the world was going through a process of self-destruction, God decreed a limit to the process. All living creatures apart from those in the ark would perish because they had filled the world with violence. The expression "with the earth" does not mean the earth was to be completely destroyed as predicted for the current earth (Revelation 21:1). But the earth certainly sustained damages.

Genesis 6:14

14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

After briefing Noah on the earth's moral condition and the decision to destroy it, God now gives clear instructions to Noah for building a ship. In English the word is translated ark (which comes from the Latin *arca*, meaning box) because of the box-like shape of the vessel. The Hebrew word for this vessel is *tebah* (*tay-BAH*), found twenty-eight times in the Old Testament, only in the Flood narrative and in the Exodus. It designates the vessel Noah constructed for the Flood and the box container Moses' mother made of reeds to float him down

the Nile River. These should not be confused with the ark of covenant in which the Hebrew word is 'aron (aw-RONE), meaning chest or box.

The wood for the construction was gopher (Heb. gopher, go-FER), the only occurrence of it in the Bible. Its meaning is unknown, therefore three translations of the word are found in the various versions of the Bible. Some maintain "gopher" wood, others translate specifically "cypress," and still others say "resinous" wood. In any case, it describes a quality wood, probably very resilient. The ark needed to be waterproof because it would float on water. So it had to be smeared with a pitch, a black, sticky tar-like substance used to waterproof roofs and boats.

The Hebrew word qen (KANE), translated "rooms," means nest, but in this context scholars suggest room or compartment. These rooms were necessary due to the various kinds of animals on board.

Genesis 6:15-16

15 And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. 16 A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it.

After the instruction to build the ark, now the details about its features are given. The dimensions of Noah's vessel are completely logical. Some scholars suggest the ark was about 95,000 square feet, yielding enough space to accommodate all the animals. The interior of the boat had to be divided into three levels and provide one entrance door. The Hebrew word for cubit (ammah, am-MAH) is a unit of measurement referring to the distance between the elbow and the tip of the middle finger of an average-sized man. It is about 18 inches. In the New Living Translation, the measurements are given as 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high.

The Hebrew word translated as window is tsohar (tso-HAR). It only occurs here in the Old Testament. Its meaning is not obvious, therefore scholars give two possible meanings. First, compared to words of the same root in other Semitic languages, which are rendered back or top, some scholars choose "roof" as the meaning of tsohar. Second, as the word is close to tsoharaim, which means noonday, many understood it as window. Both meanings are valid, but the first one seems likely because of the phrase that follows it. The roof of the ark could not be flat as usual, but needed to be slanted slightly down to allow the rain to drain off. In this case, the phrase "in a cubit shall thou finish it above" indicates that the middle of the roof should be raised by one cubit above the other two sides of the roof. In the case of it referring to a window, this cubit may suggest a gap of 18 inches all around the ark just below the roof, probably for airing.

The ark should have the entrance door in one of the long sides. It also should be constructed with three different levels.

Genesis 6:17

17 And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and everything that is in the earth shall die.

After Noah received instructions about what to do, God informs him about the impending destruction awaiting the earth's inhabitants by flood. The Flood narrative is encountered in various cultures all around the world. There is also a scientific debate over the scale of the biblical flood. Some suggest it was local and not global. The phrases "under heaven" and "everything that is on earth" can indicate a global scale for Noah's flood.

The Hebrew word for flood is mabbul (mab- BOOL). The term occurs only once outside the Flood narrative (Psalm 29:10). Similarly in the New Testament, only one Greek word is used to refer to Noah's flood (kataklysmos, ka-taclus- MOSE). In both testaments other words are used to refer to other floods. This was a one-of-a-kind event.

Genesis 6:18

18 But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

While God decided to wipe off every living being on earth, He however chose to show His grace to Noah by establishing a covenant with him. The word for covenant in Hebrew is berit (beh-REET). This is the very first occurrence of the word in the Bible, and it is notably linked to salvation. It is a formal agreement between at least two people or between God and one or more people. There are two types of covenants. An unconditional covenant is one in which the fulfillment of God's promises is kept irrespective of the other party's involvement. A conditional covenant is one in which the fulfillment is dependent upon the involvement of the parties to the covenant. In the current case the fulfillment relies solely on God's side, therefore this is an unconditional covenant. The full content of the covenant will be revealed later after the Flood (Genesis 9:9). For now, through the covenant, Noah has the assurance of making it to a next generation with his entire family.

Genesis 6:19-20

19 And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. 20 Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive.

For the new beginning, God's will is to preserve every species that was created in Genesis 1. One couple of every land animal had to be kept alive to maintain the survival of the species. There would be no spontaneous regeneration after the Flood, but a repopulation of the earth by every living land animal according to their kind. As the previous verse mentioned the human beings, "every living thing" here concerns only the animals.

Verse 19 states that Noah has the responsibility to bring the animals into the ark, and the last part of verse 20 states that the animals would come to Noah. The best explanation of these varying statements is that the animals on their own would come close to the ark and Noah's task would be to take them on board. This explanation shows how the Lord holds absolute control over the animals. He would send them to Noah.

Genesis 6:21-22

21 And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them. 22 Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

The last command to Noah concerns the gathering of enough food for him and his family and the animals on board for the duration of the Flood. At this stage, only plants and their fruits were food for human beings and animals (Genesis 1:29–30). Noah was to gather a sufficient provision for all the animals in the ark, plus himself and his family. The Flood would start the second month of Noah's six hundredth year (Genesis 7:11), and they would come out of the ark in the second month of Noah's six hundred and first year (Genesis 8:13–14).

Noah was indeed a faithful servant. We see this in light of his integrity among his contemporaries, but even more so by his obedience to the smallest detail of God's instruction related to the building of the ark, the sampling of animals to enter the ark, and the gathering of the food for their journey. With all these, Peter mentions Noah's ministry of preaching in the years preceding the Flood to an unconcerned and unbelieving

world doomed for utter destruction (2 Peter 2:5). He is therefore rightly listed among the heroes of faith in the eloquent and magnificent record of faith (Hebrews 11:7).