



Parkway Fellowship

PEAK ENCOUNTERS • MT. ARARAT • GENESIS 8:20-9:17 • 9/6/2020

MAIN POINT

God's love is unconditional, for all people, and He gives us signs so we won't forget.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What do you do when you are afraid you are going to forget something important, like waking up on time, going to an appointment, or someone's birthday?

What is a memory you don't ever want to forget? Why do you want to remember it? Do you have pictures or have you journaled details to help you remember? Why or why not?

While on the ark, Noah and his family had been in quarantine, so to speak, for about a year. They'd likely learned many life lessons, as they'd been stripped of many normal day-to-day activities and freedoms. It might have been something they wanted to forget, but God wanted them to remember—not to bring them down, but to remind them of His faithfulness and love. So when they were released from their “quarantine,” they received the gift of a special remembrance to mark their new beginning so they would never forget the presence and promise of God.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ GENESIS 6:9-16.

In a world that had turned its back on God, Noah's commitment to God stood out. From the very beginning of his story, we read about Noah's exceptional life as someone who exhibited

righteousness, blamelessness, and who walked with God in sharp contrast to the people of his generation. Noah's desire to follow God did not mean he was perfect. Noah sinned like all people, but he refused to involve himself in the horrible sin of those around him.

When have you seen someone refuse to get caught up in the inappropriate behavior of others? What do you have to believe about God to actively set yourself apart from the world around you?

Think about the lives of great Christians you know. What distinguishes their walks with God?

Surrounded by people willingly trapped in sin, Noah followed God's leadership and sought to live for Him. This choice requires a close, personal walk with God. Our relationship with Him involves spending time with Him, listening to Him, learning about His love and perspective, following His leadership, and depending on Him.

How do you think Noah felt as God revealed His plan of destruction?

What do verses 11-13 teach us about the seriousness of sin? How would your life look different if you took your sin as seriously as God does?

How do you see evidence of both God's judgment and His mercy in these verses?

Noah undoubtedly had noticed the disintegration of the world. Though Noah maintained a personal relationship with God, obeyed Him, and lived for Him, humanity continued to move further away from Him. God exhibits His grace by providing many opportunities to repent before He punishes, but punishment does come. God does not tolerate rebellion and disobedience forever (see 2 Pet. 3:8-9). God's grace and call to repentance does not mean God will not punish sin.

| ASK A COUPLE OF VOLUNTEERS TO READ GENESIS 7:1,11-12 AND 8:3-19

In a difficult situation, have you ever felt like God has forgotten about you? What does God's remembrance of Noah in 8:1 teach you about that?

Why do you think God didn't dry up the earth more quickly so Noah and his family could go ahead and leave the ark? What does this tell you about God's purpose in the flood? Was it just about starting over or was there something more to it than that?

When storms come, they often advance swiftly but retreat slowly. How have you experienced this truth in your own life? What has God taught you (or what is He

teaching you) through that process?

Where do you see God's grace in this passage?

We are not given all of the answers to why God acted as He did during the time of the flood. God did not give specific reasons for the duration of the flood or other insights that Noah and his family may have desired. Yet, the reality was that God showed great grace to Noah and his family as He preserved their lives in the midst of the flood. Many are currently asking what God's purpose could be in the midst of a world pandemic. While we may never know the reason for everything that is happening, we can trust that God is showing us grace in this time and He will be faithful to His character and promises.

We see in verses 6-12 that in Noah's waiting, he took some acts that showed personal responsibility in stepping out into the new life God intended for him. How do you relate this to your current circumstance?

For what purpose did God call Noah and his family out of the ark?

Noah and his family were called to be fruitful and multiply. They were to repopulate the earth for God's glory. As we wait for the time we can re-emerge into the world, we can prepare for the way God will use us to further the advance of His kingdom in the world. Undoubtedly, life will be different following the current storm of the world. But this difference is certain to provide new opportunities for people to hear and receive the gospel message.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ GENESIS 9:1-17.

In verses 1-3, the creation mandate was reissued, and God gave Noah's family "everything". Read Genesis 1:28-30 and 2:15. What was different now? What was the same?

From verses 4-7, what new understanding did God want humankind to have about sin? What new or renewed understanding about sin do you believe God is teaching humankind right now?

From verses 8-17, how would you describe the nature of God's covenant with Noah? What are the graces that we can see in this covenant with Noah and his descendants?

God's choice to be gracious to Noah meant many benefits for mankind. We would be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. We can count on the seasons being consistent. We can rest assured of God's patience toward us even when we are wicked. Ultimately, God's grace towards Noah meant that Jesus would come and save us from our sins. Not only do we not have to worry about the

world being destroyed by flood, we have the happy hope that someday the world will be remade without sin because of Christ!

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

When have you experienced God's unconditional love?

When you see a rainbow, what will you think of from now on?

Name three people you can invite to the start of "6 Truths You Can Count On"

PRAYER

Thank the Father for His gift of unconditional love, made most clear to us in the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. Ask Him to help you remember His works throughout history and in your life to give you courage and strength for today.

COMMENTARY

| GENESIS 6:9-16

6:9-10. In a world of increasing sin, God found a person named Noah whose commitment to Him stood out. Noah was righteous, a description given to no other person up to this point in the Bible. Noah and his wife had three sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The list of Noah's sons provides a link between the end of the list of Seth's descendants (Gen. 5:32) and the Table of Nations (10:1). After the flood, humanity had another opportunity to begin again through Noah's sons. Before the flood ever arrived, God in His mercy had determined to provide this opportunity.

6:11-13. God's world had become the complete opposite of what He created and intended. God intended the earth to be filled with people and animals (Gen. 1:24,28). Instead, corruption and violence filled the earth. God told Noah of His plans to destroy the earth and its inhabitants. God also explained to Noah why the earth was about to face destruction. Sin had corrupted the world, perverting humanity and causing nature to suffer. The world no longer existed as God intended, so God would destroy the earth and its inhabitants and undo His creation. Since humanity insisted on corrupting itself through disobedience to Him, God would make the corruption complete by destroying the earth and its living creatures.

6:14-16. God had decided to destroy the world due to its sin. He instructed Noah to construct an ark, indicating He intended to deliver Noah and provide a new beginning for the world. Unlike

most ships through the ages, the ark had no curved bow or rudder. God did not intend Noah to sail the vessel. He intended the boat only to be a container in which Noah, his family, and animals could survive the flood.

| GENESIS 8:3-19

8:3–5 “Little by little” (NJB) the diminishing waters safely “receded” (šûb, v. 3), unlike the torrent of water that “returned” (šûb), drowning the Egyptian armies (Exod 14:26–28). This idea of “returned” is continued in the subsequent paragraph by reference to the “returning” (šûb) of birds to the ark (vv. 7, 9, 12).

Significant time periods and dates are often cited in chap. 8, acting like milestones in tracing the water’s steady regression. The flood’s inversion of mounting waters to receding waters is perfectly paralleled by the number “a hundred and fifty days.” The ark at last comes to rest on the “seventeenth day of the seventh month” (v. 4), giving a five-month period from first rains (7:11) to the ark’s grounding. The same five-month period extends from the first sighting of the mountains (8:5) to the completely dried earth (v. 14). The seventh month in the religious calendar of the Hebrews was Tishri, the most important month of the sacred convocations; it included the Day of Atonement as well as the Feasts of Trumpets, Tabernacles, and Sacred Assembly (Lev 23:23–36). It was appropriate, therefore, that the ark should find refuge in the cultic month celebrating atonement and God’s provision.

Some seventy-two or seventy-three days (counting the first day) after the vessel landed, the waters had sufficiently retreated so that the peaks of the Ararat mountains became “visible” to Noah (v. 5). It was the first sign of land, no doubt a solace for the weary sailor. Whereas it took but forty days for the rains to submerge the earth, it would be five lingering months before the waters would completely subside. So Noah befriended patience and “waited” (vv. 10, 12). When troubles come, they advance swiftly but retreat slowly. Our verse alludes to creation’s gathering of waters on the third day when the “dry land appeared” for the first time (1:9–10). Both verses have the verb “appeared/ visible” (r’h), and creation’s “dry land” (yabbāšâ) is echoed later in our narrative by its verbal forms “dried up” (v. 7) and “was dry” (v. 14, yābaš). The emerging “earth” would once again support life as it had at the beginning. With each new stage of its drying, the heart of the captive inmates could leap with the hope that their deliverance was nearing.

8:6–12 Following the first appearance of land, the drying of the earth continues, taking five more months to complete (vv. 5, 14). A raven and a dove, the latter three times, are released by Noah to measure the water’s retreat, apparently in intervals of seven days. Forty days following the disclosure of the mountain peaks, Noah releases first a “raven.” “At the end (qēṣ) of forty days”

echoes God's intent to put an "end" (qēṣ) to all peoples (6:13) by "forty days" of rains (7:4, 11, 17). 72 This the Lord had accomplished, and the period of vengeance had come to its "end" with the release of first life from the ark. The allusion to "forty" was also the period of Israel's captivity in the wilderness until God's wrath was satisfied (e.g., Num 14:33–34; see 7:4 discussion).

The foremost significance of the raven is its symbolic value as an "unclean" bird, unfit for consumption (Lev 11:15; Deut 14:14). According to rabbinic tradition, the raven was released first as expendable since it was neither good for food nor sacrifice. Also Isaiah, in predicting Edom's desolation, drew on the symbolic raven and on the creation language of 1:2, tōhû ("wasteland") and bōhû ("empty"), to depict its demise (34:11). Its departure from the ark signified that the impurities of the past had been removed and the creation of the new world had a fresh start.

Second, a "dove" is released, probably seven days later, but it cannot find a place to alight (vv. 8–9). Noah commissions the dove to "see" as the eyes of the patriarch in order to discover if the water "had receded" further (v. 8). Noah is imprisoned in the ark and must depend on his animal shipmates until later he "saw" the dry land firsthand (v. 13). The bird conveys for the ark's inhabitants the opposite meaning to the raven. It was commonly found in the sacrificial legislation for rites of purification (e.g., Lev 12:6, 8; cf. Num 6:10; Luke 2:24) and was appropriated for the "burnt offering" and "sin offering" among the poor (e.g., Lev 1:14; 5:7; 14:22).

After waiting another seven days, the second release of the dove proves promising because it returns with the first testimony to life, "a freshly plucked olive leaf" (8:10–11). As a fresh leaf, it was newly born and thus was confirmation that the earth again was yielding its herbage (as 1:11–1230). The detail of an "olive" leaf too may have caused early readers to reflect on connections with the tabernacle, where olive oil fueled the menorah in the tabernacle (Exod 27:20; Lev 24:2–4) and was added to the mixture of perfumed oil for anointing tabernacle and furnishings (Exod 30:24–29). It was obviously something that pleased God.

By this sign Noah "knew" that the waters had receded; this emblem of life and prosperity gave this second Adam reassurance of continued life and safety. Both anointing oil and dove had symbolic value in Israel for the empowering presence of the Spirit, especially the ministry of the messianic figure (e.g., 1 Sam 16:13; Ps 89:20; Isa 61:1). Jesus of Nazareth took up that ministry (Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38), and at his public baptism all four Evangelists note that the Spirit came upon him in the form of a descending "dove" (Matt 3:16 pars.). After yet another seven days, the bird is released a third time, and at last the dove does not return (v. 12). "By not returning it proclaims this freedom to those who are still shut up in the ark." 77

8:13–14 One year and eleven days since the initial outpouring (7:11), the last vestiges of the waters disappeared. Again the narration ties the flood deliverance to the worship activity of Israel by drawing on tabernacle jargon for the “cover” (mikseh) of the ark (v. 13). It was not the side “door” noted in 6:16 but another opening. With the exception of Noah’s ark, the term designates exclusively the “covering” (tanned animal hides) for the “tent of meeting” (e.g., Exod 26:14; 36:19; Num 3:25). Even as God was with Israel in the wilderness sojourn, he was with Noah in the midst of his watery voyage.

8:15–17 The third divine speech instructs Noah to disembark from the ark. It parallels the command to enter the ark (7:1), except the configuration of the family is cited specifically here. These eight are the new humanity, and the future of the blessing remains with them. Those who entered the ark successfully rode out the storms and were delivered intact by the mercies of God. For the long year of rising and receding waters, Noah received no word from the Lord. He had waited and waited yet did not anxiously exit until given the heavenly word to disembark. As the second creation, God instructs Noah to bring out the animals so that they might “multiply,” “be fruitful,” and “increase” on the earth.

8:18–19 These may be taken by the Western reader as tedious repetition, but the report style of Hebrew narrative shows Noah’s obedience, a feature repeatedly ascribed to him throughout the flood account. In contrast to his generation, Noah as a “righteous man” believed God and obeyed his command both in entering the ark (7:1) and in departing.

| GENESIS 9:1-17

9:1-2 This blessing fortifies the parallels between Noah and Adam (1:28), as both blessings began with the command to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. However, in Noah’s day the blessing is altered. Mankind is still to take dominion over creation (1:28), but due to the presence of sin, the harmony that existed in the garden of Eden had ended; now animals were filled with the fear and terror of humans. Terrorized animals can be dangerous; even so, God placed the animals under people’s authority, ensuring that humans would prevail over the animal kingdom.

9:3 The original dietary regulations given to Adam and Eve (1:29) were now expanded. Animal proteins would join green plants within the human diet. The phrase referring to animal food sources can be translated literally as “every creeping/gliding animal” and would normally be understood to refer to smaller animals on land or sea, but it is usually understood here to mean every creature that moves. Israelites would later be limited to eating only clean animals (Lv 11).

9:4 Though meat would be permissible as food, blood would not. God required Noah and his offspring to drain the lifeblood from any animal before eating it. This guideline would be expanded and clarified in Israel's Sinai law code (Lv 7:26-27; 17:10-14; 19:26; Dt 12:16,24; 15:23). To avoid offending Jewish Christians, first-century Gentile Christians were also encouraged not to eat blood (Ac 15:20,29).

9:5-6 Because God made humans in his image, the taking of a human life by either an animal or another person was not treated like the death of an animal. Any animal and any human who killed a human was to have its own blood . . . shed . . . by humans as a just punishment. This verse establishes that unauthorized taking of a human life is a capital offense and implicitly authorizes properly credentialed authorities to execute murderers. Other verses in the law of Moses reinforced this concept (Ex 20:13; 21:23; Dt 19:21). No such law exists for the killing of animals; the Bible consistently teaches that humans are of superior worth to animals.

9:7 God's blessing of humanity in Noah's day begins (v. 1) and ends with the command to be fruitful and multiply. This repetition underscores the sacredness and desirability of human reproduction within God's plan.

9:8-11 These verses are the formal conclusion of the covenant first mentioned in 6:18. The initial expression of the covenant unconditionally offered safety in the ark to Noah's family and many classes of animals. In the style of a royal grant or unilateral agreement, this portion of the Noahic covenant unconditionally promises that there will never again be a flood of the same destructive scale as Noah's flood.

9:12-17 Accompanying the covenant was a visible confirmation of the agreement between God and the earth that would continue for all future generations: God's bow in the clouds represented his promise that he would never again send a flood to destroy every creature. From this point forward the rainbow would have profound significance as an affirmation of God's grace and peace. Elsewhere in the Bible the rainbow is associated with the presence of God or his angelic representative (Ezk 1:28; Rv 4:3; 10:1). This covenant is one of three in the Bible that were accompanied by a sign; the other signs were circumcision (Gn 17:11) and the Sabbath (Ex 31:16-17).