

Promises of Prayer

January 12, 2025

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Genesis 6:9-22; 9:12-17

Session Outline

1. Corruption (Genesis 6:9-13)
2. New Beginning (Genesis 6:14-22)
3. Promise of God (Genesis 9:12-17)

Theological Theme

In a world living in rebellion against God, Noah stood out because of his faithfulness to God. God used a flood to destroy the world but used Noah and his family to keep His promise.

Call to Action

Who are the lost and searching around you who need a new beginning? Make a list of specific people who need to know Christ and His promises.



Leader Guide

Promises of Prayer

Introduction

We live in a world where promises are not worth much. Political candidates promise certain things and often fail to follow through. Advertisers promise that different products will change your life or your look, and they often fail to live up to the guarantee.

We have been conditioned to believe promises don't carry much weight and are used as tools of persuasion without much effort to follow through. Think about the difference it would make if people kept promises like the Lord keeps His promises. Today, we are studying a man who stood out among the people of the earth. Noah found favor with the Lord and God used Noah and his family to keep God's promise for redemption. This promise was ultimately fulfilled in the coming of Jesus.

- ❓ How do you feel when you experience a broken promise from someone or something?
- ❓ How likely are you to keep the promises you make to others? Why is this the case?
- ❓ What are some ways we are to stand out in our culture as Noah did in his day?

Session Summary


Today's study focuses on the flood God used to destroy the world when evil was rampant among the people. It was a time when all were ungodly except for one man who remained faithful to the Lord. Yet, it is important to recognize that Noah was faithful to God because God had first been faithful to Noah. The world today is similar as many pursue things outside of the will of God. Our culture celebrates ungodliness, and faithful Christians stand out. Like Noah, we can trust that when difficulty comes, God will be with us through it.

We can also trust God's promises every time. Jesus has come as the fulfillment of every promise of God. The account of Noah and the ark has parallels to God's plan for the redemption of man through Jesus who has acted as our refuge from God's wrath and is renewing the world completely. Our prayers can be fueled by this truth: God is just and always keeps His promises.


1. Corruption (Genesis 6:9-13)

Noah stood out from the world. The reference to Noah being perfect does not mean sinless but means he alone sought to live God's way. We are also introduced to Noah's three sons, whom God used to repopulate the world.


Where sin abounds, corruption and wickedness follow. That was the situation in Noah's day. God, who is just and holy, acted to stop humanity's rebellion. God's interaction with Noah reminds us sin and wickedness carry consequences but God is also gracious to sinners, which included Noah. Instead of eliminating the whole human race, God preserved a remnant.

-  How do you see evidence of God's grace today even though sin still abounds in our world?

Sometimes God's people struggle to pray and don't even know what to ask for when facing the corruption of this world. We can take heart from this account, knowing God is watching and is moved by the depravity He sees. We also can be encouraged that the Lord takes note when His people make godly choices and seek to live in a God-honoring way, regardless of how others live.

-  How do accounts of God's faithfulness to His people in hardship encourage you to endure in prayer and faithfulness to Him?

Throughout the Bible, we are reminded that the wicked never prosper forever and today's passage is another reminder of this. We can trust that the Lord knows what is best and He alone has the right to judge. He will do so in His perfect timing. Because of His great mercy, we also know He allows time for more people to accept Christ as Savior.

-  Application: How have you benefitted from the fact that God remains patient and long-suffering with people, even when we are unfaithful to Him?

Corruption

God, who alone can observe both people's outward actions and their thoughts (1 Samuel 16:7; Job 34:21), saw what was visible—that human wickedness was widespread—and what was invisible—that every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time. The word translated "mind" is literally "heart," reflecting the ancient conception that this organ was the seat of the intellect, emotion, and will.

2. New Beginning (Genesis 6:14-22)

In these verses, God focused on Noah and gave him some unusual instructions. Instead of questioning why he should build a boat in a desert, Noah did all the Lord commanded Him. That's the kind of obedience we should strive to display in our own lives. Following God by faith and with uncertainty is better than following the world with clarity.

God did not give Noah every detail of His plan, but He gave Noah each next step he needed. God instructed Noah to build the ark and gave him exact specifications for each part. God did not share the specific purpose of the ark except that it would be used as part of the plan of judgment and preservation. Noah obeyed God and acted on the given task. Imagine how others might have reacted when Noah and his family started building a boat in the desert in a place it had never rained. Sometimes God's instructions can seem crazy to the world, we must be okay with not being understood by those who are far from God. It is better to follow God than be understood by the world.

- ❓ What are some things all Christ followers are called to that don't make sense to the world? What makes it hard to be faithful in these areas?

Any time you choose God over the world, you can expect opposition. This opposition can come in various forms, but it will come. Noah obeyed God even though he was surrounded by corrupt and wicked people. Thankfully, God doesn't call us to do this alone. He has made us part of His family in the church and has given us brothers and sisters to encourage us to stand firm, even when the world doesn't understand or agree.

- ❓ How have you been encouraged toward faithfulness by brothers and sisters in the church? How is prayer for one another instrumental in this?


Instead of questioning and demanding answers about things he had no prior experience with, Noah obeyed God. So many times, we get caught up in asking questions and demanding answers or details that we can miss being used by God in powerful ways. We can also follow like Noah, trusting God even when we don't understand exactly what He is doing.

- ❓ Application: Where is God calling you to obey now? How do you need to respond?

3. Promise of God (Genesis 9:12-17)

These verses follow the events of the flood. Once the flood was over, it was time for rebuilding. God gave instructions on how that was to happen, and He blessed Noah for his obedience. God also established a covenant with mankind and promised to never flood the earth again. The Lord knew Noah and subsequent generations would need a reminder of His covenant, so He placed the rainbow in the sky as a sign. In God's grace, this sign would remind and encourage Noah and those who followed God later that God was faithful in the past and would be in the future.

It is important to recognize the "hero" of this story is not Noah but God. You can't stand firm and unshakable until your foundation is firm and secure. The truth of God is solid and unshakeable, and we can stand firm in obedience when we fully trust in Him. The world offers many options to base your life and choices on, but these will never stand the test of time or the storms that come your way. Only Scripture can give the firm foundation needed to build a life of ongoing trust in and faithfulness to God.

 What are some types of shaky ground that people stand on today? How are Christians also tempted to place their hope in these things?

Acknowledging the activity and nature of God are vital in strengthening our prayers. We can look to Scripture for encouragement to pray with confidence that God not only hears our prayers, but He will answer them. Today's account is one of many reminders that God always keeps His promises. Just as the rains will come, you can also stand firm on the faithfulness of God that the rainbow represents. God's promises move us toward prayer as an active means of seeking to trust Him more each day.

 How does God's ongoing faithfulness give us reason to repeatedly come to Him in prayer?

Consider that a rainbow is seen by everyone who looks to the heavens. Even those who reject the faith and turn away from the Lord can see this sign of the covenant. This is a reminder of God's grace to all people on the earth. He made us all in His own likeness and desires for all to be restored from their sin. Every Christ follower receives a new beginning and becomes a new creation in Jesus. And we are called to share that opportunity with those around us. Too many fail to share their faith for fear that it will make them look different or stand out from the rest of the world. But this is what we are called to do.

Noah's obedience changed the course of history and ours can too as we follow Jesus in faith. Just as Noah did not know what exactly was coming, you may not have the whole picture either. But we can follow Noah's example and simply take the next step of obedience. It is not enough to only hear the Lord speak; we must be willing to respond in obedience. Noah did and the world was changed. There's no limit to what God can do through our obedience.

- ❓ Application: Where is God calling you to be bold in standing out for Him? What steps can you take toward that?

Conclusion

Noah lived a righteous life in a wicked world. He was not sinless, but he sought God's ways over the ways of the world. He didn't bow down or give in to the influence of the world around him. In the face of likely persecution and ridicule, he obeyed. A life of obedience will be rewarded by the Lord. Although it took time, Noah's faithfulness and obedience were rewarded when the ark was completed, and God told him and his family to enter the ark so they would be spared. No matter what our circumstances look like, God always keeps His promises, and we can always trust Him.

- ❓ How will you be obedient in an area you have been questioning God's instructions instead of obeying them?
- ❓ How can we encourage one another toward faith in God's promises?
- ❓ Who are the lost and searching around you who need a new beginning? How can you share the hope of Christ through the story of Noah?

Prayer of Response

Thank God for always keeping His promises and hearing your prayers as you seek faith in Him. Ask for opportunities to share with those around you who need to know about Him.

Memory Verse

"I have placed my bow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth." —Genesis 9:13

Additional Resources

- *Be Basic* by Warren Wiersbe
- *Exalting Jesus in Genesis* by Phillip Bethancourt
- *Genesis Chapter 1–15* by J. Vernon McGee

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



Historical Context of Genesis

Purpose

Genesis lays the groundwork for everything else we read and experience in Scripture. Through Genesis we understand where we came from, how we got in the fallen state we are in, and the beginnings of God's gracious work on our behalf. Genesis unfolds God's original purpose for humanity.

Genesis provides the foundation from which we understand God's covenant with Israel that was established with the giving of the law. For the Israelite community, the stories of the origins of humanity, sin, and the covenant relationship with God helped them understand why God gave them the law.

Author

Since pre-Christian times authorship of the Torah, the five books that include the book of Genesis, has been attributed to Moses, an enormously influential Israelite leader from the second millennium BC with an aristocratic Egyptian background. Even though Genesis is technically anonymous, both the Old and New Testaments unanimously recognize Moses as the Torah's author (Jos 8:35; 23:6; 1Kg 2:3; 8:9; 2Kg 14:6; 23:25; 2Ch 23:18; 25:4; 30:16; 34:14; 35:12; Ezr 3:2; 6:18; Neh 8:1; 9:14; Dn 9:11, 13; Mal 4:4; Mk 12:19, 26; Lk 2:22; 20:28; 24:44; Jn 1:17, 45; 7:19; Ac 13:39; 15:21; 28:23; Rm 10:5; 1Co 9:9; Heb 10:28). At the same time, evidence in Genesis suggests that minor editorial changes dating to ancient times have been inserted into the text. Examples include the mention of "Dan" (14:14), a city that was not named until the days of the judges (Jdg 18:29), and the use of a phrase that assumed the existence of Israelite kings (Gn 36:31).

Setting

The Torah (a Hebrew term for "law" or "instruction") was seen as one unit until at least the second century BC. Sometime prior to the birth of Christ, the Torah was divided into five separate books, later referred to as the Pentateuch (literally, five vessels). Genesis, the first book of the Torah, provides both the universal history of humankind and the patriarchal history of the nation of Israel. The first section (chaps. 1–11) is a general history commonly called the "primeval history," showing how all humanity descended from one couple and became sinners. The second section (chaps. 12–50) is a more specific history commonly referred to as the "patriarchal history," focusing on the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants: Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's twelve sons. Genesis unfolds God's plan to bless and redeem humanity through Abraham's descendants. The book concludes with the events that led to the Israelites being in the land of Egypt.

Special Features

The book of Genesis is the great book of beginnings in the Bible. True to the meanings of its Hebrew and Greek names (Hb *bereshith*, "In Beginning" [based on 1:1]; Gk *Geneseos*, "Of Birth" [based on 2:4]), Genesis permits us to view the beginning of a multitude of realities that shape our daily existence: the creation of the universe and the planet earth; the origins of plant and animal life; and the origins of human beings, marriage, families, nations, industry, artistic expression, religious ritual, prophecy, sin, law, crime, conflict, punishment, and death.

Extended Commentary

Genesis 6-9

With the passing of time it became increasingly clear that humanity was unwilling and unable to live out the responsibilities of stewardship. Humans again violated their proper place within God's order by overstepping the limits God had placed on them. As a result of the improper intermingling of the "sons of God" (understood as either the angels or the rulers on the earth) and "the daughters of men," God again saw the need to reassert His lordship and make a fresh beginning that could give the human race another chance at obedience.

The consequence of sin was the great flood, a catastrophe so enormous that all life and institutions perished from the earth. God's grace was still active in preserving a remnant on the ark. In response to the worship of His people, God promised never again to destroy the earth so long as history ran its course. God's pledge to Noah reaffirmed the creation promises of blessing and dominion. Though differing in detail from the original statement of Genesis 1:26–28, the central mandate is identical. The new humanity springing from Noah and his sons was called on to exercise dominion over all the earth as the image of God. The sign of the permanence of that arrangement was the rainbow.

Once more, as though to underline the effects of the fall on human faithfulness, Noah fell victim to his environment. Adam had sinned by partaking of a forbidden fruit; Noah sinned by perverting the use of a permitted fruit. Both cases illustrate that unaided humans can never rise to the level of God-ordained responsibility.

When Noah learned of the abuse he had suffered at the hand of his son Ham, he cursed the offspring of Ham—the Canaanites. He blessed those of his other two sons. This set in motion the relationships among the threefold division of the human race that would forever after determine the course of history. God would enlarge Japheth (the Gentiles), but in time Japheth would find refuge in the preserving and protecting tents of Shem (Israel). The Shemites (or Semites) thus would be the channel of redemptive grace.¹

References

1. David S. Dockery, ed., *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 9.