



FIRST LIGHT CHURCH

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Date: 9/3/23

Series: Genesis: 5-11

Text: Genesis 8:20-9:17

BIG IDEA: God's covenant promises hope!

ICEBREAKER: Have you ever seen or experienced something that you felt was a "sign" telling you something?

CONTEXT: The last several chapters in Genesis have shown a world full of violence, evil, and wickedness. God sends a flood as an act of divine judgment to destroy all living creatures. Yet in the midst of this judgment, God shows grace to a man named Noah and his family. Noah walked with God, and as the flood waters receded, God made some very big promises, as we will read.

PASSAGE: Have volunteers read Genesis 8:20-9:17.

DISCUSSION:

1. What does Noah do upon leaving the ark? What does that teach us?
2. What do we learn about God from His response to Noah in verses 21-22?
3. How have you seen faithfulness in your life recently?
4. How is God's blessing of Noah and his sons similar to His previous blessings (Gen.1:22,28; 8:17)? What is different about it?
5. What is the consequence that God gives for murder in verses 5-6? Does this still apply today? Why or why not?
6. How do verses 5-6 contradict God's blessing in verse 7? What does that teach us?
7. A covenant is a special relationship between two parties who make binding promises to each other. What do we learn about God that He would enter into covenants with His people?
8. What binding promises does God make in this covenant, and what do we learn from them?
9. Why would God's covenant give hope to Noah and all future generations?

APPLICATION:

10. How are you doing at being fruitful in your walk with God?
11. Where are you needing hope today?

K4 CONNECTION: God has been faithful to His Word all through Genesis. In a world that is hurting and full of brokenness, there is a God who offers hope to those hurting and broken people. As believers, we are a people marked by hope who are anchored in the very promises of God. Who is God calling you to engage with the hope of the Gospel, and how can you take steps this week to connect with them?

CARE AND PRAY:

- Thank God that He always remembers His people and is faithful to them!
- Share any prayer requests.

COMMENTARY

[v.20-22] Noah's first recorded act on emerging from the ark is to build an altar to the LORD (v. 20). On it he presents whole-burnt offerings, using some of the clean animals and birds. While this is undoubtedly intended to express gratitude for divine deliverance, it is also an act of atonement. This is a normal aspect of burnt offerings (see Lev. 1:3–17, esp. v. 4) and is supported by the mention of the pleasing aroma (Gen. 8:21; cf. Lev. 1:9, 13, 17). The Hebrew term for “pleasing,” *nikhoakh*, conveys the idea of rest and tranquility. It is related to the name “Noah” (Hb. *noakh*) and is probably used here in order to remind the reader of Lamech's remarks in Gen. 5:29. It also has the sense of “soothing.” The burnt offering soothes God's anger at human sin, so although human nature has not been changed by the flood, God's relationship with man has. Notice how 8:21 (for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth) echoes very closely 6:5 (“every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”). In spite of the human propensity to sin, atonement through sacrifice is possible, securing a peaceful relationship between the Lord and humanity. I will never again curse the ground (8:21). The clear force of the Hebrew text is that God will not send another flood; he is not revoking the curse pronounced in 3:17, which continues to be in place (the words for “curse” are different; see ESV footnote). This short comment about the effect of sacrifice underlines the importance of sacrifice in the Bible's plan of salvation.

[v.1-4] While God's speech here closely parallels 1:28–30, two important changes are introduced. First, the positive instruction to exercise dominion over the living creatures is replaced by the negative comment that they will fear and dread human beings. Second, whereas the emphasis was previously on people's eating from plants, humans are now given permission to be carnivorous. While God now permits the taking of animal life for food, the animal's blood remains sacred and is not to be consumed, as an acknowledgment that all life is from God (see Lev. 17:12–14).

[v.5-6] Following His comments about the killing of animals, God addresses the issue of homicide. Violence by “all flesh” (v. 11), i.e., by man and animals, prompted God to send the flood (6:11, 13). If human nature has not improved after the flood (6:5; 8:21), how is violence to be prevented in the future? This legal enactment is the answer: From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man. This means that any animal or person that takes a human life will be held accountable by God, working through human representatives (e.g., Ex. 20:13; 21:28). Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed. Here the principle of talion, a life for a life, is applied (see Ex. 21:23). This measured response is preferable to Lamech's seventy-sevenfold vengeance (Gen. 4:24). Human life is to be valued so highly that it is protected by this system of punishment because God made man in His own image, and so to murder another human being is to murder what is most like God, and is thus implicitly an attack on God himself. Many would see this statement as establishing the moral principle permitting the death penalty in cases of murder—with the understanding that the person charged would have been justly tried and his guilt established beyond any reasonable doubt (cf. the OT requirement of two or three witnesses, Deut. 19:15; repeated in the NT, e.g., Matt. 18:16; Heb. 10:28). A further requirement is that such a death-penalty verdict must always be carried out under the jurisdiction of the established authorities (cf. Deut. 19:15–21; Rom. 13:1–5). The difficulty of establishing guilt beyond any reasonable doubt and the difficulty of ensuring justice in a modern, complex urban society (as compared to an ancient village-based society) underscore the great care and caution that must be taken in applying this principle today.

[v.7] God's speech ends as it began in v. 1, repeating what was said in 8:17 and echoing 1:28. God wants humanity to flourish and not to be destroyed by violence or another flood. This positive view of population growth (cf. note on 1:28) stands in sharp contrast to the Babylonian flood story, which ends with the gods taking measures to inhibit mankind from filling the earth.

[v.9-11] God outlines the covenant He is now establishing with all living creatures, having mentioned it briefly before the flood in 6:18. This is the first covenant explicitly named in Genesis (see note on 2:17); a similar covenant is later established with Abraham and his descendants in ch. 17. A covenant formally binds two parties together in a relationship, on the basis of mutual personal commitment, with consequences for keeping or breaking the commitment. God makes this kind of covenant with a group of people by covenanting with one who represents them: everyone else then experiences the covenant by virtue of being included "in" the representative (see note on 12:3); here, the animals are included as well as Noah's descendants, showing Noah to be a kind of new Adam. Emphasizing that the covenant is for all living creatures, God states that there will never again be a flood to destroy the earth (9:11).

[v.12-17] Different covenants have appropriate signs or symbols linked to them. Circumcision is the sign of the covenant with Abraham (ch. 17), and the Sabbath is the sign of the covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai (Ex. 31:12-17). On this occasion God's designated sign is the rainbow (Gen. 9:13). Its presence, when rain clouds are in the sky, will be a visible reminder of God's everlasting covenant (v. 16). It is not necessary to think that rainbows first began to exist at this time; in any case, God says that he will now use rainbows as a sign of this covenant. This sign should not be interpreted as symbolizing that God has hung up His warrior's bow, since there is no hint of that meaning in the text.

Commentary taken from the ESV Study Bible Genesis 8:20-9:17

WHERE'S THE GOSPEL

The Noahic covenant is God's gracious commitment to preserve creation till the final judgment. Amid the flood of judgment, God preserved humans and animals, but all this did not change the nature of humans. Noah took his sin nature with him into the ark, and he and his sons passed that sin nature on to their descendants, just as they had received it from Adam (see 9:20-25).

Nevertheless, God used this judgment as a gracious blessing for all humanity by restating the blessing of life and offspring originally given to Adam and Eve (9:1, 7). He formally expanded the dietary restrictions by allowing the consumption of animal meat (9:3-4). He also upheld the sanctity of life by reminding humans that they are created in the divine image (9:6). All of life, human and animal, belongs to God (cf. Lev. 17:11). Disregard for human life provokes divine judgment and demands human judgment as well (Gen. 9:5).

The Bible describes both God's common grace and His special covenant grace (9:9, 11; etc.). God's common grace is the grace that He as King gives to His human creatures, whether they are regenerate or not. They receive His blessings of general sustenance and restraint of the full potential of evil for their earthly existence. God's special covenant grace is His gift solely to His spiritual children, as He commits Himself to be present with them in provision and in protection for their eternal welfare (see 12:1-3). The sign of the covenant with Noah is the rainbow. Every rainbow is a reminder of God's ongoing common-grace mercy, down through the generations since Noah,

indicating that He will never flood the earth again (9:13–15). The rainbow should also remind us that God was providing special grace through Noah, preserving through him the promised Seed of eternal deliverance for sinful people.

Commentary taken from the ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible