

October 7

Lesson 6 (NIV)

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF NOAH

DEVOTIONAL READING: [Matthew 24:36–44](#)

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: [Genesis 6](#); [8:19](#)

[GENESIS 6:9B–22](#)

[9b](#) Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God. [10](#) Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth.

[11](#) Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence. [12](#) God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. [13](#) So God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. [14](#) So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. [15](#) This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high. [16](#) Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit high all around. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. [17](#) I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. [18](#) But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you. [19](#) You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. [20](#) Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. [21](#) You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them.”

[22](#) Noah did everything just as God commanded him.



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KEY VERSE

Noah did everything just as God commanded him.—[Genesis 6:22](#)

GOD'S WORLD AND GOD'S PEOPLE

Unit 2: God Destroys and Re-creates

LESSONS [6–9](#)

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Describe the situation that led God to destroy human society.
2. Explain why Noah and his family were protected from the flood.
3. Identify a personal characteristic to develop or strengthen for the glory of God and make a plan to do so.

LESSON OUTLINE

[Introduction](#)

- [A. Control-Alt-Delete](#)
- [B. Lesson Context: History](#)
- [C. Lesson Context: Legends](#)
- [I. Faithful Man \(GENESIS 6:9b–12\)](#)
 - [A. Noah Described \(vv. 9b, 10\)](#)

[B. Humanity Decried \(vv. 11, 12\)](#)

[II. Divine Plan \(GENESIS 6:13–21\)](#)

[A. For the Wicked \(v. 13\)](#)

[B. For an Ark \(vv. 14–16\)](#)

[*In Need of a Master Builder*](#)

[C. For a Covenant \(vv. 17, 18\)](#)

[D. For Creatures \(vv. 19, 20\)](#)

[E. For Sustenance \(v. 21\)](#)

[III. Obedient Man \(GENESIS 6:22\)](#)

[*Water as an Instrument of Life*](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[A. Starting Over](#)

[B. Prayer](#)

[C. Thought to Remember](#)

HOW TO SAY IT

Atrahasis *A-truh-**hay**-sis.*

Babylonians *Bab-ih-**low**-nee-unz.*

Gilgamesh ***Gill**-guh-**mesh**.*

hygriscence *hi-grih-sense.*

Japheth *Jay-feth.*

Mesopotamia *Mes-uh-puh-**tay**-me-uh.*

Noahic *No-ay-ik.*

SeptuagintSep-*too*-ih-jent.

serotinyuh-*rot*-nee.

Introduction

A. Control-Alt-Delete

Many of us have become familiar with a term that would have seemed nonsensical before 1981: Control-Alt-Delete. When a Windows-based computer freezes up and you can't do anything or just can't stand to wait, the keystroke combination Control-Alt-Delete will bring up the Task Manager. That feature allows the user to shut down a frozen program or reboot the operating system; for Mac users, the equivalent is Command-Option-Esc.

In a perfect world, computers would always run without a hitch. But since we don't live in a perfect world, we sometimes have to stop and start over when a system doesn't do what it's supposed to.

Our lesson today involves a "Control-Alt-Delete" scenario from early history. God had created a perfect world, and he created humans to share it sinlessly with him. But Adam and Eve spoiled the system by eating the forbidden fruit. That started history's downward spiral. God realized the only way forward was a reboot, a fresh start with a renewed creation.

B. Lesson Context: History

The first four lessons of this quarter considered the biblical account of creation. Because all things were made by God and were consistent with his purposes, they all were inherently "good" ([Genesis 1:12, 18, 21, 25, 31](#)). The situation changed, however, when sin entered the picture. The period described in [Genesis 4:1–6:7](#), between expulsion from the garden and Noah's lifetime, was characterized by a dramatic population expansion and a corresponding increase in evil. Over time, God's hopeful plans for a perfect world were so spoiled by wickedness that only one option remained: to destroy humans and animals ([6:5–7](#)).

C. Lesson Context: Legends

Legends of a great flood were widespread in the ancient world. The two most commonly cited as parallels to [Genesis 6–9](#) are the Babylonian epics *Gilgamesh* (composed over 2,000 years ago) and *Atrahasis* (a late version of which was written about 1700 BC). Similar to Genesis, both works attribute the flood to a divine cause, show the gods warning a select human being of the destruction to come, and advise him to build a boat. These works portray the hero rescuing animal life by bringing animals onto the boat and include the hero offering sacrifices to the gods after the boat settles on dry land (compare [Genesis 8:20, 21](#)).

In *Gilgamesh*, as in [Genesis 8:6–12](#), the hero tests the receding of the waters by releasing several birds from the boat. Noting these similarities, some scholars have suggested that the biblical story of Noah is based on these pagan legends.

Yet while the Genesis flood story is like other ancient accounts of a great flood in certain respects, there are key differences. The Babylonian epics locate the flood within a larger narrative about a running conflict between the many pagan gods of early Mesopotamia. They portray humans as servile pawns to capricious deities. The Genesis account, by contrast, portrays the flood as a consequence of human sin and connects it with God's larger creation and re-creation of the world. The differences are telling!

I. Faithful Man

([GENESIS 6:9b–12](#))

A. Noah Described (vv. [9b](#), [10](#))

[9b](#). Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God.

This characterization of Noah creates a sharp contrast with the description of the world at large in [Genesis 6:5](#). Of course, Noah sinned like every other human being (compare [9:21](#)). But clearly he did not participate in the general moral decay into which the society around him had fallen. Noah was a follower of the Lord rather than idols. But the language and context here distinguish him from other people more on the basis of his character than on the object of his worship. While others are violent, abusive, and self-centered, Noah acts with justice toward others.

The word *blameless* emphasizes his outstanding reputation for doing good. Noah's faithfulness explains God's selecting him to play a part in the renewal of the earth (see [Genesis 6:8](#)).

What Do You Think?

What top three character traits should unbelievers see in you as you walk with God?

Digging Deeper

Consider the general principles in [Matthew 5:14–16](#); [Colossians 4:5, 6](#); and [1 Peter 2:12, 21](#) as you decide on specific traits.

[10](#). Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth.

Noah's *three sons* are significant for the role they will play in repopulating the earth after the great flood. As survivors of the catastrophe, they will become the forefathers of all ethnic groups ([Genesis 10](#)). Presumably, they follow their father's moral example and avoid the sins of the culture around them. Ham's later involvement in an incident that was deeply embarrassing to Noah led his father to curse him ([Genesis 9:20–25](#)).

B. Humanity Decried (vv. [11](#), [12](#))

11. Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence.

This verse summarizes the more detailed description of society in [Genesis 6:4–7](#). As seen earlier, God intends for humans to manage the earth and all living things responsibly by following his instructions. While God had commanded Adam and Eve to produce new life ([1:28](#)), the darker human capacity to murder was introduced in the second generation of the human race ([4:8](#)). The tendency now seems to be to take life rather than multiply it.

12. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways.

The breadth of the problem is stressed in that the phrase *all the people* includes all descendants of Adam and Eve. Everyone except Noah has become corrupt. (Regarding Noah’s immediate family, see on [Genesis 6:18](#) below.) This implies many self-centered sins: violent struggles for power, no regard for the common stewardship of the earth’s resources as God originally commanded ([1:16–28](#); [2:15](#)), etc. People have come to realize that control of the world at the expense of others can produce great material wealth.

What Do You Think?

If we viewed our world the way God does, in what ways should our prayer lives, priorities, and behavior change?

Digging Deeper

How does your answer change, if at all, after comparing and contrasting [John 3:16](#) with [1 John 2:15](#)?

II. Divine Plan

([GENESIS 6:13–21](#))

A. For the Wicked (v. [13](#))

13. So God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth.

By the time Noah comes on the scene, the situation has become so bad that God sees no other solution than to *destroy* what he has made. Theoretically, [Genesis 6:7](#) could signal a return to the timelessness that existed before [Genesis 1](#) after God destroys the universe and all humans with it. Then he could start over. Or God could keep all the inanimate elements of creation intact, then bring new humans into existence.

But since Noah is an exception to the rule of wickedness, God decides to work with him and his family rather than starting from scratch. God’s decision to reveal his plan to Noah further stresses the quality of Noah’s character.

To what extent Noah shares this dire warning with others outside his family is unknown. Noah is characterized as “a preacher of righteousness” in [2 Peter 2:5](#), but it is unclear whether that means Noah actually speaks to his contemporaries about the coming judgment and the need to repent.

What Do You Think?

What would you say to someone who believes that a loving God would never judge sin so harshly?

Digging Deeper

What Old Testament passages (only) would you use in that response?

B. For an Ark (vv. [14–16](#))

[14](#). “So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out.

Having warned Noah of the impending flood, God now tells him how to survive it. Notably, God’s instructions require Noah to demonstrate faith. While God could miraculously protect Noah and his household inside a magic underwater bubble, he instead requires Noah to create his own means of survival at his own expense long before the first drop of rain falls.

Noah’s salvation is to take the form of a boat—*an ark*. The Hebrew word used to describe the vessel is somewhat unusual, appearing in the Bible only here in the story of Noah and at [Exodus 2:3–5](#). In the latter, it refers to the container in which Moses’ mother set him afloat on the Nile River. Some commentators think the word, deriving from an Egyptian term, means “chest” or “box”; others think it means “palace.” In Noah’s context, it perhaps implies the special role the ark will play as a container of the precious life within.

Although the text says *cypress wood*, the precise kind of wood is uncertain, since this is the only place in the Old Testament where the underlying Hebrew word is used. The word *gopher* instead of *cypress* in other Bible versions is a transliteration.

[15](#). “This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high.

The dimensions of the ark are impressive, even by modern standards: conversion of 18-inch cubits to feet yields a length of 450 feet, a breadth of 75 feet, and a height of 45 feet. At first glance, the 33,750 square feet of floor space is impressive enough, but [Genesis 6:16b](#) (below) has more to add to this.

The total volume computes to more than 1.5 million cubic feet. This equates to the capacity of about 375 modern tractor trailers! Note that Noah’s ark is conceived as a free-floating barge, not as a steerable ship. Therefore none of its capacity will be occupied by any kind of propulsion system.

[16a](#). “Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit high all around.

The Hebrew word translated *roof* occurs only here in the Old Testament, so the problem of exact meaning is similar to that of “cypress” in verse [14](#), above. The translators of the old Greek version known as the Septuagint, who lived two centuries before Christ, seem to have been just as perplexed in their translation: “By an assembling, you shall make the ark; and by a cubit you shall complete it from above.”

Presumably, the ark is to have many openings below an overhanging roof for light and ventilation (see [Genesis 8:6](#)).

16b. “Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks.

The *door in the side of the ark* will allow the loading of cargo and animals. It is likely sealed with pitch before the journey. Because the ark is to include three habitable *decks*, its floor space will exceed 100,000 square feet.

IN NEED OF A MASTER BUILDER

One of the high school courses I enjoyed most was mechanical drawing. While it wasn’t a drawing class in the artistic sense, mechanical drawing definitely is an art. The course started me on a lifetime of doodling with geometric shapes. And it gave me the skill to draw, 25 years later, the plans for our family’s first home of our own after living in several church parsonages.

Our contractor graciously complimented my drawing. He told me, however, that we would still need an architect to draw a set of plans that reflected a professional’s knowledge of engineering principles and county building codes.



Visual for Lesson [6](#). Point to this visual as you ask, “What part of God’s monologue would a person of lesser faith have found hardest to accept? Why?”

Noah was undoubtedly capable of building a boat. But he had never built one that could carry such a massive and unique cargo as the ark would be required to accommodate.

Most of us who have a few decades of life experience believe we can manage whatever problems life presents to us. This is our pride talking, though. Like my attempt at drawing house plans, the plans we have for our lives often do not mesh with the realities we face. That’s when we need our master builder’s instructions. The question is, however, whether we will be wise enough to recognize the need and be humble enough to set our plans aside and follow his!

—C. R. B.

C. For a Covenant (vv. [17](#), [18](#))

17. “I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish.

Having provided instructions for the ark, God now identifies its purpose: the judgment he has decreed ([Genesis 6:13](#)) will take the form of a devastating flood. The scale of the destruction parallels the scale of the sin: [6:5](#), [13](#) indicate that violence and evil had become universal, and the verse at hand prescribes universal *floodwaters* as the remedy.

Scholars debate whether the term *all life* should be taken to mean that the flood was to be global (covering the entire earth) or regional (confined to one specific part of the world). The latter interpretation emphasizes the fact that judgment is pronounced on and targeted at humanity. And at this point, humans seem confined to a specific area of the world, signifying that all human life can be destroyed by a flood that affects only that region.

In either case, the scope of the devastation to come is clear: God intends to wipe out the entire human race, with just a few exceptions (next verse).

18. “But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you.

The term *covenant*, appearing here for the first time in the Bible, is used in a way that specifically distinguishes faithful Noah and his family from the rest of the human race that will be destroyed. *Covenant* means “contract.” This covenant implies that obedience to a sovereign ruler (in this case God) will result in protection and provision.

The terms of the agreement presuppose that Noah, as a servant of God, must follow the command to build and *enter the ark*; the implied reward is protection from the deluge, which Noah receives as a result of his obedience. The explicit terms of the Noahic covenant are listed in [Genesis 8:20–9:17](#).

What Do You Think?

How will the Bible’s concept of covenant affect how you live this week?

Digging Deeper

Moving from abstract concept to concrete details, how does [Hebrews 8](#) cause you to modify your conclusion, if at all?

D. For Creatures (vv. [19](#), [20](#))

[19](#), [20](#). “You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive.

The terms of Noah’s obedience to God’s covenant continue, now regarding the plan for preserving animal life. These instructions cover the full range of creatures.

It will be physically impossible for Noah to capture a mating pair of each and every species. The fact will leave room for another miraculous display of God's power as he will compel healthy representatives to come into the ark. The note that the animals will come in pairs of *male and female* reflects their purpose of repopulation. These instructions are further clarified in [Genesis 7:1-3](#).

Skeptics who doubt the truth of the biblical narrative question the ark's ability to accommodate eight humans ([1 Peter 3:20](#)) and representatives of all animal species of land and air. They generally approach the question by noting the number of species extant today and arguing that Noah's ark was not big enough to hold them all. The biblical account, however, takes the opposite approach: only those animals who travel on the ark will survive the flood.

E. For Sustenance (v. 21)

21. "You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them."

As a final instruction, Noah is commanded to stock the ark with supplies for his family and the animals. Comparing [Genesis 7:11](#) with [8:3-14](#) indicates that they were in the ark for more than a year.

III. Obedient Man

([GENESIS 6:22](#))

22. Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

Now aware of the forthcoming reality of the annihilation of the human race, Noah proceeds with God's intricate instructions. The action God intends to take is unprecedented, and we wonder if this quickens the pace of construction. We don't know. This part of the story merely concludes with a simple statement of Noah's obedience. Just as he has distinguished himself throughout his life by his righteous conduct, he now distinguishes himself by his full and unquestioning obedience to God's commands. This aspect of Noah's story is highlighted in [Hebrews 11:7](#), part of a listing known as the Faith Hall of Fame:

By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.

What Do You Think?

What is one thing you can do in the week ahead to prepare yourself to be responsive to God's promptings?

Digging Deeper

How do you guard against the possibility of confusing your own desires with God's will?

On January 15, 2009, US Airways Flight 1549 ended up in the Hudson River a few minutes after takeoff from LaGuardia Airport. Pilot Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger had decided to ditch the plane in the river after simultaneous bird strikes in both engines caused them to fail.

The relatively soft landing surface of the water, compared with the surrounding terrain, served as an instrument of life. Such a landing also helped ensure no fire, and all 155 passengers and crew survived as the damaged airliner stayed afloat long enough to be something of an “ark.” The incident has come to be called the Miracle on the Hudson.

Commenting on the great flood, the apostle Peter says that “in the days of Noah ... only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water” ([1 Peter 3:20](#)). But wait—with the word *through* correctly understood as meaning “by means of” (instrumentality), shouldn’t Peter have written that eight people “were saved by the ark”?

The fact that Peter does *not* say that may indicate that something vital in the bigger picture must not be overlooked: the fact that in addition to escaping physical death, the eight people also escaped spiritual death.

Think about the wholesale wickedness of the surrounding culture in Noah’s day. If that wickedness had not been extinguished, would it not just have been a matter of time before some, most, or all of those eight people succumbed to the temptation to join the party? The death of the wicked by water meant removal of that temptation so righteousness could flourish unfettered. The ark allowed the saving of the physical; the flood waters allowed the saving of the spiritual.

Don’t leave the analysis there, however, because what the apostle says about the flood in [1 Peter 3:20](#) serves as an analogy or parallel with the significance of Christian baptism in [3:21](#). You should read that now.

—C. R. B.

Conclusion

A. Starting Over

While we normally think of floods, forest fires, and hurricanes as “natural disasters,” these events can also serve positive purposes in the larger picture. Many plants and trees, for example, exhibit an adaptation called *serotiny*. That means that they release seeds only in reaction to an environmental trigger. One such tree is the giant sequoia, which produces seed cones that open only under great heat. This allows these trees to take advantage of the ground opened up by a forest fire.

Other forms of plant life evidence *hygriscence*. That means that they release their seeds only after a heavy rain, thus allowing survival in a desert. Fire and flood in these cases become contexts for the generation of new life.

Noah’s flood, terrible as it was, served a similar purpose. It was humanity’s first, but not last, “Control-Alt-Delete.” The last one is noted in [2 Peter 3:10–13](#).

B. Prayer

Lord, give us the strength to be faithful when the world around us is crumbling. Protect us from evil, even when everyone around us turns away from you. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

God protects the righteous at all times.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

Enhance your lesson with NIV Bible Student

Into the Lesson

As class starts, do your best imitation of someone using lingo from the 1980s as you say this: "So who like remembers, like, phrases of the '80s? Totally. Like rad. Let's take, like, a few minutes and see how many '80s words and phrases we can list." (*Possible responses among many: awesome, bad, da bomb, chill, even/not even, gag me with a spoon, gnarly, psych, radical, righteous.*)

Next, invite the class to come up with as many sentences as they can, using the popular '80s word *righteous* as used to indicate something that was genuine or excellent. Use this discussion to compare and contrast culture's use of the word *righteous* with its use in the Bible, particularly with regard to Noah. Emphasize his blameless reputation and faithfulness in walking with God.

Into the Word

Say, "God determined that Noah was a righteous, blameless man living in a violent, corrupt world. Noah continued to obey God even when all those outside of Noah's immediate family turned their backs on God. Let's look at what it means to be faithful in following God."

Have students pair up, and give each a copy of a handout (you prepare) that has the warning-sign messages below (but leave off the answer verses). Ask learners to work "two by two" to find verses in [Genesis 6:9–22](#) that match the sign phrases on the handout.

Slow! Animal Crossing

v. [20](#)

Beware! Deep Water

v. [17](#)

Wash Hands! Food Storage Area

v. [21](#)

Caution! Construction Zone

vv. [15](#), [16](#)

Warning! Violence Ahead

v. [11](#)

No Lone Zone! Proceed 2 by 2

vv. [19](#), [20](#)

Danger! Don't Touch Wet Pitch

v. [14](#)

No Entrance! Use Side Door

v. [16](#)

Option. For some competitive fun, the first pair to finish wins either two boxes of animal crackers (to represent animals saved) or bottles of water (to symbolize the flood).

Make a transition as you say, “Staying obedient to God regardless of what the world around is doing is not always easy. But as Noah models, careful attention to God’s Word is how Christians maintain a right relationship with him.”

Into Life

Discuss ways it is tempting to go along with the crowd. Talk about ways that God warns us to steer clear of troublesome thoughts, actions, places, and people.

Give each student an index card and pen. Instruct: “In 60 seconds, jot down as many character attributes as you can that reveal faithfulness in following God—no matter what others are saying or doing.” Discuss results; explore Scripture passages that support the proposals (example: the fruit of the Spirit in [Galatians 5:22, 23](#)). Invite students to take their cards home and reflect this coming week on the qualities that they would most like God to develop in their hearts and lives.

Alternative. Distribute copies of the “Warning Signs for Today” activity from the reproducible page, which you can download, for learners to complete as indicated in small groups. If groups are slow getting started, give an example. Call time after eight minutes. Use a method that is appropriate for your class of rotating among groups and through the eight signs in discussing possibilities.

Close the lesson with prayer. Share, “Lord, thank you for understanding our weaknesses and the things that can trip us up in following wholeheartedly after you. Right now, I want to give you this area of my life where I am I tempted to ignore your warning signs. *[Pause to allow students to name silently the area where they struggle most.]* Thank you for giving me your Word to help me, like Noah, stand strong and obedient. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.”

