



## YEAR 3—The God Who Pursues Relationship: A Story of God's People

### Module 1—Genesis Part 1

#### Lesson 4: God Spares Only One Family—Genesis 6

### BIBLICAL REFLECTION

*(A theological and biblical reflection on today's Scripture passage.)*

### INTRODUCTION

God loves people with absolute certainty. Because God is love, God cannot do anything but love you and me. However, at various points in our lives and throughout various points in history, humankind has chosen to not love God in return. The story of Noah and his family exemplify this love that God has for humankind. God chooses to spare Noah and his family out of a complete love.

The scriptural narratives in Genesis 6:5, 11-13 make it very certain that what led to the destruction of humankind by way of a massive flood was the iniquity of the human heart. In Genesis 6:5 it states that every thought on humankind's heart was evil all the time. Genesis 6:6 states, "The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled." In this time of pain, God chooses to wipe various forms of creation from the earth. Humans, animals, and birds were destroyed. What was this iniquity or wickedness that led God to grieve and regret God's creation?

In verses 11-13 of Genesis 6, as God is revealing to Noah as to why the earth will be destroyed, God uses two words to explain God's decision. The first word is "corrupt." This word, as you might assume, means immoral, depraved, and contaminated. The disease of sin has contaminated the wholeness in which God created the earth. The second word is violence. This word, as used in the narrative, can refer to a variety of meanings ranging from murder (see Genesis 5, the story of Cain and Abel) to other social injustices. Through God's use of these two words, it is clear that sin as a force has taken hold of God's creation and a supernatural response is inescapable.

Why was Noah's family the only family to be spared? First, it is important to note God's goodness and grace to choose to spare even one family. This is how God loves, with mercy and grace and a hope that humankind will return the love by their actions and entire being. Secondly, Noah is spared because God considers Noah righteous and blameless. What does this exactly mean? It is safe to believe that God looked upon the earth and saw humankind's wickedness, but found favor with Noah because he "walked faithfully with God." The point of the story is that God saves. God rescues humanity from their wickedness, not Noah. God, out of His infinite love, choose Noah and his family to save from the waters of the flood. Noah does not choose to allow God to do this; God holds the influence on this matter.

## *GOD'S STORY*

Many people read this narrative differently. And, as with most parts of Scripture, there is debate surrounding what it meant for God to be “grieved” over humankind’s violence and corruption. For many, the term is taken literally and used to show God’s ability to relate to the natural emotion of humans. Others use this word to somehow suggest that God was angry and that out of anger God destroyed the earth in cosmic proportions. Still, others imagine the use of this word “grieved” to mean that God was merely seeking to balance the force of evil with good. This view demands that God is enforcing some kind of system of checks and balances in order to maintain some kind of evenness in the cosmos.

For me, I imagine that God was literally grieved; meaning that what the world had become was not God’s original intent. God created the world to live into the wholeness that God desired for all and because God is a God of justice, God chooses to recreate the earth and all that is in it. God desires a just world. God desires that relationships be whole, as the world was intended to be. God recreates the world through its destruction brought about by a flood to make right relationships or peace with God, self, others, and the world. God’s mission is to restore the world to its intended wholeness.

## *OUR STORY*

As mentioned above in the lesson introduction, Noah was righteous and blameless compared to other humans, Noah stood above the rest. He most likely was not without sin but matched to those around him, he was considered righteous.

Righteousness, however, is the call for all of humanity. God calls humans to wholeness, completeness. To be righteous, therefore, is to be made whole. How are we to be made whole? We are made whole through the process of sanctification. We are made whole, or completely righteous, through the atoning work of Jesus on the cross, the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, and through the ongoing pursuit of Christian perfection. We are to be perfected in love. We are to be holy people in which one love (for God and humankind) unifies our inner life with our outer life declaring the reign of Christ in all of our life. A perfected life is not a life free from error or mistake. A perfect life is a life in which pure love reigns in heart. Keep in mind; the heart is not a location in the body but rather a disposition of the soul.

## *OTHERS' STORY*

According to the narrative, it is through Noah and his family that life on earth should continue. All other peoples, we are to conclude, then, were drowned. Noah’s family was all that remained. Through God’s destruction, restoration was delivered and it was delivered through Noah’s obedience. One might say that Noah’s obedience to God is what led to the opportunity for humans to once again discover a right relationship with God and with other humans.

We know full well the symbolism of the rainbow. The rainbow, this beautiful arc of colors that shows itself after a storm when the sun once again reveals itself through the clouds, symbolizes hope. This hope is the very reason why we live. We live knowing that one day all things will be made new (Revelation 21). The rainbow is a symbol to remind us that God does not desire to act to destroy life. It is also, however, a reminder of God’s peace.

God desires that we make peace with all people. We cannot be righteous people on our way toward Christian perfection if we do not long for and take action for a more peaceful world. How do you make peace with all people? How do we “make every effort to live in peace with everyone” as charged to do so in Hebrews 12:14? Here are several ways you can choose to make peace with all people. (By the way, to develop peace, you must seek it—most likely it will not come to you.) Five ways to develop peace are:

1. *Seek love, not control*
2. *Seek to show respect of other's opinions*
3. *Seek forgiveness, not revenge*
4. *Seek godly joy*
5. *Seek out time for self-reflection*

### **THE WORLD'S STORY**

The flood is to depict God's desire for humanity to have a right relationship with God, self, others and the world. Although the flood caused destruction, we must remember what God desires from us and for us. The flood was instituted by God to recreate the world toward God's intended wholeness at the time of original creation. This destruction was so that restoration could occur. This flood, however large, was to bring people back to God. God pursues humans and desires a right relationship with all humankind.