





5 Rain and Rainbows

Scripture

[Genesis 6:5-9:17](#)

Focus

God destroyed the sinful world, but saved Noah and his family.

Faith Nurture Goals

- Tell why God sent the flood but saved Noah.
- Recall God's rainbow promises.
- Thank and praise God for saving the world.



Leader Reflection

Preparing to Tell God's Story

The tidal wave of sin and violence continues to wash over God's creation after the Fall and the murder of Abel. "And God saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time." Though God is still present to creation, even merciful, as he was to Cain, the onrush of sin threatens to overwhelm everything.

But notice God's response. This passage does not paint God as a cold, indifferent, heavenly Judge. Rather it says that God "regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled." Like a painter whose precious work of art has been defaced, or like a parent whose beloved child has gotten into shameful trouble, the Lord refuses to shrug off human sin. God's beautiful creation has been spoiled and made ugly by the very ones created to be its crown.

"But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord." The creation is not entirely corrupt; some bit of goodness remains even in this slough of sin and violence. God could have acted without Noah, but God always seeks to work out his will with a human partner. So, God enlists Noah to build an ark, by which God will save a remnant of the creation by which the world can start over.

Note that God isn't just interested in saving his human creatures. Noah is to build a vessel big enough to house two of every creature. In doing so, Noah is also fulfilling the mandate of creation to be a tender of God's garden and a caretaker of God's menagerie. God loves all he has made, and this gruesome act of judgment is not meant to destroy creation but to save it.

The heavens open up, and the waters flow out from the deep. This is uncreation. Just as God had walled off the waters in the ground and held them back from the firmament in Genesis, now in this terrible judgment God releases them. But the saving ark, with Noah and his family and all the wildlife, floats above the waters of judgment. Over the centuries, the ark has become a symbol for the church, the community of salvation.

Finally the ark comes to rest on a mountain and Noah's family and the animals set foot on dry land once again. Noah builds an altar and offers a sacrifice to the Lord who saved. But God has something to offer to Noah and to us as well. He places the rainbow in the sky as a sign of his commitment to graciously save his creation. Never again will God send a flood to destroy the whole world. "Look at the rainbow," God says. "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant with all generations to come."

In this covenant, God promises that no matter what, no matter how wicked humans become, God will not abandon creation. As he did with Adam and Eve and with Cain, God's judgment contains mercy. God will restore creation.

In the New Testament, Peter points to the water of the flood as a sign that points the way to another watery sign, the sacrament of baptism. "[T]his [flood] water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also---not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God . . ." (1 Pet. 3:21).

Steps

Step 1 Breathe

Use this time to focus your attention on God.

Do this with me: calm your head, heart, and hands as you slowly breathe in . . . and out. *(Demonstrate a few deep "in and out breaths" with eyes closed.)*

Step 2 Tell and Wonder

Files: [Story Symbols \(full unit\): Year 2 Unit 1](#)

Let's enter God's story together. Here's the story symbol for the part of God's story that we'll be spending time in today. I wonder what clues it gives us about the story we're about to hear? *(Show the story symbol. Accept any answers without giving away whether or not the kids have guessed correctly.)*

Listen closely as we read the story together to see which story our symbol represents.

Re★formed

For children, the central message of this session should be one of comfort—God controls our world. We know that “the future is safe, because our world belongs to God” (Q&A 23, Q&A: A Summary of Biblical Teachings).

Read "Rain and Rainbows" aloud, pausing throughout to allow children to answer the wondering questions. NOTE: It's always a good idea to read through the story beforehand so you'll be able to tell it well.

You can also read the story from a children's Bible or a simplified translation of Scripture like the New International Reader's Version (NIRV). Remember to pause throughout to allow time to wonder.

Story: Rain and Rainbows Genesis 6:5-9:17

Open the Bible to Genesis 6; point out where today's part of God's big story begins. Then continue with the story as follows:

After creating the world, God said that it was very good. God looked at the world and was pleased with it because it was very, very good. It was perfect! But not for long. When Adam and Eve ate the fruit and disobeyed God, they ruined God's good creation.

After a while, Adam and Eve had two sons. After that, Adam and Eve had other children. And their children had children. Pretty soon there were lots of people in God's world. But almost all of them forgot about God. They thought only of themselves. They fought each other. They killed each other. They lied to each other. They stole from each other.

What do you think God thought about what was happening? *(Pause for responses.)*

Yes, the sin in the world made God sad—and angry too. God was so upset by their sin that God said, "I will wipe every living thing off the earth—the people and the animals too, for I am sorry that I made them!"

But there was one man who received God's kindness. This man followed God faithfully. The man's name was Noah.

"Noah," God said sadly, "this world of mine is so wicked I'm going to destroy everything in it. I want you to build a huge boat—an ark made of wood."

Noah was surprised. Noah knew there was no water anywhere near where he lived. So he couldn't figure out what to do with a giant boat.

God knew what was in Noah's mind. "Noah, I will tell you my plan. There is going to be a terrible flood. Everything will die except you and your family and two of every living creature that I created."

Noah listened carefully as God told him exactly how to build the boat—how long to make it, how tall to make it, how wide to make it, and much, much more. When God was finished, Noah went to tell his wife and three sons and their wives about God's plan.

Imagine the faces of Noah's family when Noah told them about God's plans. I wonder what they did and what they said. *(Pause for responses.)*

Noah and his family did exactly what God told Noah to do—they built the giant boat. Think about it—it had to be big enough to hold two of every animal God created, big enough to hold enough food for all the animals and Noah's family to eat for several months.

The big job of building the boat took a very long time. When it was finally done, it was longer than a football field and taller than a house. Noah coated it with tar inside and out to be sure it didn't leak.

Imagine that you were alive then and heard about this boat. So you go to see it. You are standing next to it. There's no water. What questions would be going through your mind? (Pause for responses.)

God had a plan—God always does! God went over the plan with Noah again. Listen to what God said: "In seven days I am going to make it rain very hard. It's going to rain for forty days and forty nights without stopping. Get the ark ready for all the creatures I'm going to save from the flood!"

Imagine how hard Noah and his family had to work to get the ark ready for the animals. Imagine finding enough food for all the animals and for themselves. Carrying it into the ark. Stashing it away. Then getting ready for what came next. Close your eyes and see it in your imagination while I describe it.

One morning Noah noticed that there were several animals in the yard. Some oxen had already stomped right up into the ark; two camels were making their way through the door as the goats and sheep approached. A couple of snakes came slithering in, just ahead of a donkey. Bears came wandering in right behind them. The birds—well, they just flew right in and perched on the sides of the ark, making themselves at home.

Can you imagine all the sounds? Describe the sights you saw and the sounds you imagine hearing. (Pause for responses.)

When everyone was inside the ark, God shut the door. Just as Noah and his family were helping the animals get settled in their stalls and getting food for them, they stopped. They listened. The rain started.

It rained and it rained and it rained some more—without ever stopping! The boat floated up off the ground, higher and higher and higher. When Noah and his family looked outside the window, they could see nothing but water and rain and rain and rain!

It rained for 40 days, and the waters flooded the earth for 150 days in all. But then, God kept his promise to Noah and his family and all the animals that were on the earth. God caused a wind to blow over the water. Slowly the water began to disappear. One day Noah and his family felt a thud; the boat had come to rest on the top of a mountain.

Noah sent out birds to see if they could find a place to build a nest—first a raven, then a dove. But both came back. A little later, Noah sent out the dove again. This time it came back with a leaf in its beak. Noah waited a week and tried again. This time the dove Noah sent out didn't come back. The dove had found a place to build a nest.

Noah waited. God had shut the door, so they waited for God to tell them when it was safe to leave the ark. After a few weeks, God told them it was time to leave the ark and fill the earth again with people and animals and plants and trees.

Tip

Though we often think of two of each animal entering the ark, it's important to remember that extra clean animals and birds were taken along, as we read in Genesis 7:2-3 "You are to take with you seven pairs, a male and its female, of all the clean animals, and two of the animals that are not clean, a male and its female, and seven pairs, male and female, of the birds of the sky—in order to keep offspring alive on the face of the whole earth." (NIV)

Imagine this. You are part of the Noah family. You have just stepped off the boat after living on it for weeks and months. Describe your feelings and thoughts. *(Pause for responses.)*

The animals were happy too. They came out—flying, stomping, galloping, jumping, crawling, slithering, and hopping. Imagine how noisy their exit was!

Noah built an altar to thank God for saving his family and the animals. They praised God together. Then God made a wonderful promise to Noah and to us, too. God said, “No matter how wicked people become, I will never again destroy the whole world with a flood—not ever! Never! As long as my world lasts there will always be summer and winter, spring and fall. There will always be day and night.”

Noah looked up at the sky and—WOW! There were bands of the most beautiful colors stretched across the sky as far as he could see. A rainbow—the most beautiful rainbow!

God said, “Whenever I see my rainbow, I will remember my promise to you and to all living creatures on the whole earth.”

For the rest of your lives, when you see rainbows, what will you remember? *(Pause for responses.)*

Read Genesis 9:17 to the group. Point out that it is God who will keep the promise—and that God never, ever breaks promises.

Step **3** Pray

Close with an echo prayer. Have your group echo each line after you.

**Dear God, thank you for summer.
Thank you for fall.
Thank you for winter.
Thank you for spring.
Thank you for day and for night.
Thank you for your promise.
Thank you for being a promise-keeping God.
Amen.**

See [5 Ways to Pray with Kids](#) for other ways to pray.

Step **4** Respond

Select and do one or more of the response activities from God's Big Story card #11 or check out [5 Ways to Retell a Bible Story with Kids](#) for some fun ways to retell this story. Include older kids in the retelling by having them read the story aloud while the younger children act it out.

**God's Big Story cards can be ordered from FaithAliveResources.org.*

Easy Extras

1. Arrival Activity: Rainbows

Materials: crepe paper streamers in several colors • scissors • stapler

Cut streamers into 36-40" (or 1 m) lengths. Have kids take one of each color. Staple them together at one end. With that end, make a loop just large enough for the kids to slip their hands into. Staple the loop. Kids will use the loop to hold the rainbow and wave it as they praise God. Kids can use the streamers to celebrate when Noah and his family leave the ark, and when Noah sees the rainbow in the clouds. They can also wave them during the echo prayer.



2. Age-Specific Activities

Click below to access the full age-specific *Dwell* session for this story:

- Preschool: [Noah Obeys God](#)
 - Kindergarten-1st Grade: [Noah Obeys God](#)
 - Kindergarten-1st Grade: [God Saves Noah](#)
 - 2nd-3rd Grade: [Rain and Rainbows](#)
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