

NOAH

THE OBEDIENT ECCENTRIC

re:form

ANCESTORS

PREPARE

KEY PASSAGES

Genesis 6:5-8, 11-22 | Noah Finds Favor

Genesis 7:11—8:4 | The Flood

Genesis 8:20—9:1, 8-17 | God's Covenant with Noah

Genesis 9:20-23, 28 | Noah after the Flood

WHAT'S BEHIND ALL THIS?

Noah's ark is one of the most well-known stories in all of the Hebrew Scriptures. Noah and his animals can be found in both Christian and secular arenas, from children's Sunday school to television shows, movies, kids' toys, and even stand-up comedy routines.

Despite the popularity of his story, very little is known about Noah. The Bible depicts him as obedient, even in the face of a seemingly impossible task. He is described as a "righteous" and "blameless" man who "walked with God." Yet, he comes across as a distant, quiet, and eccentric man, almost aloof or anti-social.

Buried deep in the Noah story are concrete parallels to the creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2 that expose Noah as a kind of second Adam. Both Noah's eccentricity and righteousness come through as he and his family take responsibility for saving "clean" and "unclean" animals and repopulating the human race following the flood according to God's plan. And yet—despite the great lengths God uses to blot out humanity's evil and corruption—sin manages to survive the Great Flood. Nevertheless, the rainbow covenant assures all creation of their Creator's continual and sustaining care.



CONSIDER THIS

"When [Noah] appears, we know nothing about him. But God and the narrator know enough. Noah is righteous and blameless. He walks with God. In this dismal story of pain, there is one who embodies a new possibility."

Walter Brueggemann, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, Genesis, 79

DEFINITION

ec-cen-tric
a person with an unusual, peculiar, or odd personality, set of beliefs, or behavior pattern

WHERE ARE TEENS AT?

- Youth are beginning to ask questions about stories and lessons they've been told since childhood. When it comes to familiar Bible stories, teens are looking for deeper significance, and they're asking lots of questions. Noah's ark is a story most youth will be familiar with. It's also a story most youth will have questions about: *Why did God kill all those people? Why was Noah chosen to live? Did the flood even really happen?* Help teens move past the rainbow and animals that they're familiar with by encouraging questions and exploration.
- High school youth are faced with tough assignments at school, rigorous workouts at sports practices, and high expectations from parents, teachers, and coaches. God asked Noah to take on a seemingly impossible task, and Noah said yes. Youth can relate to how Noah must have felt with such a large workload and high expectations.

ENCOUNTER

15 MINUTES

Make sure you've got the obvious stuff for this session—re:form Ancestors video (DVD or download), Anti-Workbooks, Bibles, pens or pencils, paper, tape, etc.

VIDEO

1. SET UP

Ask youth to share something they know about the story of Noah. Then have a volunteer or team of volunteers perform a retelling of Noah's story as they remember it. After the performance, have the rest of the group fill in any missing details that they remember. If youth are struggling, share a few fun Noah facts you remember. Take a few moments for youth to share any questions they have about Noah.

2. WATCH

"Noah: The Obedient Eccentric," Chapter 2

3. UNPACK

- What are some things you learned about Noah that you didn't know before the video?
- How would you react if God told you to do something completely outrageous and caused people to mock you?
- Do you think Noah deserves to be considered a hero of the Old Testament? Why or why not?

WHAT ABOUT THE BIBLE?

Form 4 groups and assign 1 Key Passage to each group.

Have each group make a list of specific characteristics that describe Noah. Encourage teens to draw conclusions based on the narrator's description of Noah, his actions, his words, and his encounters with God. Create a master list of their answers. If no one notices, point out that in all these verses Noah never speaks to God. What do they think this means about his character? If time permits, have youth dig deeper into the story to defend their findings.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- Which of these characteristics is most surprising to you? Why?
- What parts of Noah's personality do you relate to?
- Why do you think Noah agreed to build the ark?

GET THIS STUFF

Mock stage. Chart paper.
Marker.

HERE'S A TIP

This is a great activity for youth who love attention, but don't let only the vivacious teens steal the show. Be sure to have some tasks such as building the set, lighting, or sound effects ready for the quieter teens in your group.

CAPTURE IT

Snap some photos of teens' dramatic retelling of the Noah story. Post them to the re:form Gallery!

ENGAGE

25-30 MINUTES

Choose 1, 2, or all 3 activities from pages 8-9 of the Anti-Workbook for your Engage time together.

1. ONE RULE

Where's this going? Youth explore how challenging God's task for Noah was by trying to measure out a life-sized ark.

Take youth to the largest space you can find, such as a sanctuary, social hall, or parking lot. Using their AWs as a measuring tool (an open AW is about 18" long), have youth plot out the actual size of the ark using God's instructions in Genesis 6:15. The sides should measure 300 x 50 x 30 cubits, or 450 x 75 x 45 feet. That's 1.5 football fields long, a quarter football field wide, and as tall as a 4-story building. If there isn't a big open space available, encourage teens to use local landmarks, such as "from here to that blue house" to help them grasp the area covered by the ark.

After marking the area, form 4 groups and have each group figure out how they'd take care of 1 of these tasks: organize the animals, manage waste, store food, house people.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- What was it like having to measure out such a large space?
- When is a time where you took on a task that seemed impossible?
- Imagine trying to build this ark in your neighborhood. In a climate that doesn't receive much rain, how would you explain your project to skeptical neighbors?

2. BEYOND THE RAINBOW

Where's this going? Youth create a timeline to help them consider what life was like for Noah during the 350 years after the flood.

Genesis 9:28 says that Noah lived 350 years after the flood was over (950 years altogether). Form groups of 3-5 youths. Have them read Genesis 8:20-9:23, 28 and use that information to make some educated guesses about how Noah spent his "retirement." Have them chart the major events on the timeline in their AW. Ask groups to share their timelines with the rest of the group.

HERE'S A TIP

A *cubit* is a unit of measurement from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger, or about 18". An open AW is about 1 cubit long.

CONSIDER THIS

"Right . . . What's a cubit?"

Bill Cosby, comedian, as Noah in 1963

In Genesis 6:14, God instructs Noah to cover the ark with pitch—a sticky, waterproof substance with a viscosity about 230 times greater than water. Search online for "pitch drop experiment" to learn more about the world's longest-running experiment.

BACK IT UP

"God then put a rainbow in the sky to signify this new arrangement."

re:form Ancestors DVD

CONSIDER THIS

"You know, it's very strange—I have been in the revenge business so long, now that it's over, I don't know what to do with the rest of my life."

Inigo Montoya in *The Princess Bride*

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- When is a time you've worked on a really big project? How did you feel when it was all over?
- What do you think life was like for Noah after the flood?
- If you had been in Noah's shoes, what would you have done after the flood?

3. WRITE A EULOGY

Where's this going? Youth imagine the experiences of Noah and his family as they write a eulogy for those lost in the flood.

Distribute paper and writing utensils, and set out sample eulogies if you have them. Have a volunteer read Genesis 7:21—8:4. Youth may not have thought about how it might not have been easy for Noah to stand by and lose all of the people he knew in the flood. The Bible is clear that the flood was God's judgment for the corruption and violence that filled the world, but Noah must have lost some friends and acquaintances. Instruct youth to assume the role of Noah or a member of his family and write a eulogy for a friend, neighbor, classmate, distant relative, or another person lost in the flood. Have youth tape their eulogy inside their AW, and ask a couple of volunteers to share their eulogy with the group.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- What would it be like to step off the ark after 5 months and realize that you and your family were completely alone?
- Do you think Noah felt proud that his was the only family to survive, or do you think he mourned the loss of all the other people? Why?
- How might you have felt after all the other people in the world had died?
- What would it be like to be the only person whose family was spared by God?

GET THIS STUFF

Sample eulogies (optional).

DEFINITION

eu-lo-gy
a speech or writing in praise of a person or thing, especially a set oration in honor of a deceased person

HERE'S A TIP

Be aware of any youth in your group who have experienced the death of a friend or loved one. Encourage anyone who may feel sensitive about this issue to write a eulogy for a made-up person, animal, or even an object, or no eulogy at all.

CAPTURE IT

Record a video of teens reading their eulogies and post them to the re:form Gallery.

RESPOND

15-20 MINUTES

REGROUP

Gather youth into 1 large group and ask them to share 1 detail they remember about how the story of Noah ends. Then ask a volunteer to read Genesis 9:20-23.

SHARE

Close the session with an opportunity for youth to share what they have learned about the character and how that connects with their life. Identify aspects of their work and recall points of discussion that can serve to recap the session for youth.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

- At the beginning of the story, why did God decide to destroy creation? Why did God choose Noah to build the ark?
- How is Genesis 9:20-23 different from how you remember the story ending?
- How does the drunken, naked Noah differ from the Noah you thought you knew?
- Even though you know that sin survived the flood, what parts of the story remind you that God's actions were right and there's still hope in the world?

SEND

Pass around a bowl of small, multicolored candy and invite everyone to take a few pieces to hold but not eat. For every color candy they're holding, have teens share 1 thing in creation they are thankful for. Close with a prayer asking God to give each person the courage to be obedient to God's will and thanking God for the covenant symbol of the rainbow. Allow teens to eat their candy and dismiss the group.

GET THIS STUFF

Multicolored candy. Bowl. Ask youth about food allergies!

CONSIDER THIS

"The flood did not rid the world of sin. In this text, sin manifests itself in the effects of drunkenness, disrespect of parents, and familial conflict. The narrator offers no explicit judgment of Noah's drunkenness; yet, it ... provides the occasion for all the suffering and conflict that follow."

Terence E. Fretheim, *The New Interpreter's Bible: Vol. 1, 403-4*

CAPTURE IT

Use a digital camera, camcorder, scanner, web cam, or audio recorder to capture group conversation and individual pieces of work. Upload them to the re:form Gallery or ask teens to do so.