

Genesis 6:5-22

Aim of lesson

To show Noah's great faith, demonstrated in obeying God in a world filled with wickedness.

Background study

Genesis 5:28-32; Matthew 24:37-39 and 42; Hebrew 11:7; 2 Peter 2:5 and 9. Consult recommended books for factual details.

Suggested outline of lesson

This lesson will probably be very familiar to the children, and they will be eager to contribute to the telling of the story. This should be encouraged, because it will enliven the lesson and give opportunity for correcting any misunderstandings. However, the facts and details of the narrative are of less importance than the message of salvation. The important thing is to explain the purpose of the ark - to save people who believed and trusted God absolutely - and to demonstrate that God stands for goodness and will not tolerate evil. This is a lesson that provides you with the opportunity to show the children how God reacts to the behaviour of people. Show how God was distressed to see the wickedness of the world and the misuse of his creation.

Explain to the children that many years had elapsed since God had created the world. People had become richer, more civilized, and had built cities; but in so doing had ignored God and pleased only themselves. Their selfishness had led to quarrelling and violence, and this grieved God. Sin had spread like a terrible disease and the people had become so wicked that God decided to destroy them all. Make clear that this was not a bad-tempered God getting some sort of revenge; God wanted to cleanse the earth by making a new start,

Noah walked with God

There was one man, however, who pleased God, and whom God chose to save. Try to impress upon the children the strength of character of Noah who, although all his neighbours behaved immorally, remained good and steadfast in his obedience to God. In fact his relationship with God was such a close one that it is said "Noah walked with God" (Genesis 6:9). This made him different from those around him, and over the years he had learned to ignore the temptations and the jibes of his contemporaries. Because Noah loved God, he was also distressed by the corrupt state of the world and when God revealed to him his plan of destruction Noah did not argue. He listened carefully to the detailed instructions, and without doubt or hesitation, set himself the task of carrying them out.

A preacher of righteousness

Emphasize the strength of Noah's faith and courage in the face of continuous ridicule from many people over many years. How the people must have laughed and mocked when they saw him building a huge boat miles from the sea. Patiently he would have tried to warn people of the judgements that were to come, but no one believed him. In order to bring the characters to life, suggest the exchanges which might have taken place. He was described as a "preacher of righteousness", but nobody really listened. It seems that the only people who shared his confidence in the coming flood were his wife, his three sons and their wives.

Building the ark

Paint a verbal picture of the immense preparation and continuous hard work that was involved in felling the timber, allowing it to season, cutting it to size, assembling and waterproofing it. There were to be three decks with a large number of compartments or small rooms, and a (no doubt large) door. Gradually the huge vessel began to take shape. As it grew daily there was evidence that Noah surely believed what he was preaching. He openly demonstrated his faith in God.

You should talk a little about the dimensions of the ark. Try to relate its size to something within the children's experience, e.g. one-and-a-half times the length of a football pitch, and one third as wide, and twice the height of an average two-storey house. The enormity both of the vessel and of the task of building it will impress the children. The latter included not only the construction of the ark but the organization of accommodation for themselves and the animals, with adequate supplies of food which were to sustain them for more than a year. The important thing, however, is that Noah witnessed and obeyed.

This lesson is suitable for dramatization, and this can be used as a means of reinforcing the lesson.

Worksheets

These should be self-explanatory.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, thank you for the example of Noah. Help us to show our faith so that we will be known as people who believe in you. Help us not to be upset when people tease us unkindly. Amen.

Memory verse

Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. (Genesis 6:9)

Relevance to the children's lives

Noah had learned not to be upset by people who mocked him for being different. They were being cruel, but he did not allow their cruelty to hurt him. He knew for certain that he was doing the right thing, so what foolish people said did not matter to him, and he probably felt sorry for them. Can we learn a lesson from this?