

Year 2: *Session 2* – Stories About Chaos

Class 6: Genesis 6:5-21; 7:5-10, 17-22– Noah and the flood

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Read the story of Noah and the flood
- Highlight the idea of corruption and not paying attention to God leading to the chaos of creation falling apart
- Then, focus on idea of how just one person paying attention to God can change the outcome of the chaotic situation.

Materials needed:

1. **NOTE:** This lesson makes a number of references to the stories and lessons from the previous session (Session 1: God and Communication)
2. Movie clip (available on rfour.org) from *Evan Almighty*
3. Electronics that show the video clip
4. One game of Jenga for every four students (for larger classes, the dollar store where I live has mini-Jenga knock-off sets for \$1 a set – maybe one near you will have the same. Otherwise, consider putting out a call to families to see if they can bring them in)

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- One of the things we do every class is ask and answer the opening question at the beginning of class – because it helps us 1. Learn more about each other and 2. Helps “warm us up” for some of the ideas in the upcoming lesson. So we’re going to do that now.
- So here’s the opening question for today’s class. I [the teacher] will ask the question and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we’ll go around the circle and each of us will answer.
- When it’s your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- **Here’s this week’s question:** What is something that you had (preferably something that you liked) that then broke?

REVIEW / TRANSITION TO ACTIVITY

- In our previous session, we read 3 stories in which we saw demonstrations of the power of language.
- In our current session, we’ve been looking at stories which all have a chaotic situation in them.
- Just as a quick reminder, chaos is when

- Things that were ordered become disordered
- When random, unexpected things happen, like luck
- And just like luck, chaos can be good or bad (good luck vs bad luck)
- But, overall, to *always* be in a chaotic situation creates stress in us that wears us down.
- Eventually, the chaos overwhelms us
- At that point, we start to make mistakes from distraction and overload and weariness
- So how are we to respond to chaotic situations?
- That's the question that we are looking to answer in each of the stories that we're reading this session.
- We've also seen how language (the theme from last session) plays an important role in the the stories in this current session.
- In the first story we read, we saw Jesus calm the storm by speaking words into the chaotic situation and transforming that chaotic situation into a calm situation.
- In our previous lesson, we saw Jesus change water into wine. And, he was able to do that (partly) because other people listened to his instructions.
- In today's story, we'll see how words play a role in our last story this session with chaos in it
- Unlike the other two stories, though, we'll see how there's no calming or transformation in this situation.
- But before we get to the story, let's do an opening activity that is meant to help us start thinking about how an ordered thing begins to fall apart once you weaken / undo the structure

EXPLAIN ACTIVITY

- We're going to play the board game: JENGA
 - We will get into groups of 4 and each group gets their own game of JENGA
 - First player takes one block from any level of the tower (except for the top level or the level below the top incomplete level)
 - Player then places the removed block on the topmost level of the tower in order to complete their turn
 - All of this must happen without knocking over the tower during your turn
 - Player may tap a block to find a loose one. Any blocks moved but not played need to be returned to their previous position.
 - Player may use only one hand at a time; either hand may be used, but only one hand may touch the tower at any time.
 - The turn ends when the next player touches the tower, or ten seconds after the player successfully places their block on the top of the tower, whichever occurs first.
 - If the tower falls during your turn, you lose.

DO ACTIVITY

ASK / TELL

- When was the tower least likely to fall? (at the very beginning)
- Why was that? (because all the pieces were in the best places)
- As the game progressed, did the tower become less stable? (Yes)
- Why? (because important blocks were being removed from the foundation and were then placed up top – making the foundation weaker and the top heavier)

- When the tower fell, did it fall pretty quickly? (usually, yes)
- Were there clues, though, that the tower would probably fall soon? (usually it wobbled, yes)
- Today's scripture story is of Noah and the ark – or Noah and the flood
- In it, I think, is a lot of similarity to our opening activity of JENGA – there once was a strong foundation known as Creation, but as the people got further and further away from the original design, moving things around on their own, creation eventually collapsed on them.
- But there were hints that suggested the collapse wasn't far away
- Let's read the story and we'll see what you think about that idea

READ Genesis 6:5-21; 7:5-10, 17-22 (*recommendation: Have class read it aloud; one person per verse*)

5The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually.

6And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. 7So the Lord said, "I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created—people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them."

8But Noah found favor in the sight of the Lord. 9These are the descendants of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God. 10And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

11Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. 12And God saw that the earth was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its ways upon the earth.

13And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; now I am going to destroy them along with the earth. 14Make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. 15This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. 16Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above; and put the door of the ark in its side; make it with lower, second, and third decks. 17For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. 18But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your

sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. 19And of every living thing, of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. 20Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind, two of every kind shall come in to you, to keep them alive. 21Also take with you every kind of food that is eaten, and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them."

5And Noah did all that the Lord had commanded him. 6Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came on the earth. 7And Noah with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood. 8Of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground, 9two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah. 10And after seven days the waters of the flood came on the earth.

17The flood continued forty days on the earth; and the waters increased, and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. 18The waters swelled and increased greatly on the earth; and the ark floated on the face of the waters. 19The waters swelled so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered; 20the waters swelled above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep.

21And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, domestic animals, wild animals, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all human beings; 22everything on dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life died.

ASK

- In verse 5, what does God see? (wickedness and evil)
- Still verse 5, where does God see this wickedness and evil? (in the earth and in the people's thoughts and hearts)
- Verse 6 – what does God think about what God sees? (God is sorry to have made humankind and decides to destroy it)
- What do you think about God's decision, here?
- Verse 8 – what does God decide to not destroy? (humankind in the form of Noah and his family)
- What do you think about *that* decision?
- Verse 11 – what does God see? (violence and corrupted creation)
- Verse 14 – what does God tell Noah to do? (build an ark)
- Verse 15 and 16: Does God tell Noah how to build the ark? (yes)
- Verse 18-21: What else will be on the ark? (Noah's family, animals, and every kind of food)
- Verse 7:17: How long did the waters increase? (40 days)
- Verse 7:20: How high did the water rise? (above the highest mountain)
- Verse 7:21-22: What died? (everything that breathed air)
- What didn't die? (Noah, his family, and two of every animal ... and fish)

TELL

- This is probably a story you've heard before – probably when you were younger.
- But because you heard it when you were younger, it's possible that the horrific details weren't mentioned or, at the very least, noticed.
- And, if we were to think about this story like you would as a child, then it's very easy to read it as: God punished bad people and saved the good people.
- But, if we pay attention to the other stories we've been talking about in these two sessions about language and chaos, then we start to see another understanding of the story emerge...
- **First**, we're told that God sees what the people are thinking and feeling – and that the focus of the people is on evil and wicked things.
- In other words, the people are not paying attention to God whatsoever.
- And we've already seen what happens in the Tower of Babel story when people don't invite God into their plans – communication breaks down and tasks go unfinished, right?
- So there's a hint that things might not go well and that it might have something to do with what people are choosing to pay attention to
- **Second**, in the story, the violence and corruption, the direct results of the people not paying attention to God, can be easily observed.
- That "corruption" word is interesting because that's what we saw in our opening activity
- As something corrupts, it functions less and less like it should (just like our JENGA buildings)
- So the foundational thing that's being corrupted in today's story is creation.
- And, we know from the creation story that creation worked very well. When God saw what God had made God had said, "It is good."

- But now, in today’s story, we hear that that good thing is corrupted – to the point that it is breaking, falling apart, and eventually it dissolves into an unordered mess, into chaos.
- So, even though there is lots of language in the story about God destroying the people (the simple understanding of the story), we can also see how the people are destroying creation by themselves (a more complicated understanding of the story) – by not paying attention to God whatsoever.

TRANSITION TO MOVIE CLIP

- There was a movie made called “Evan Almighty” where the main character, Evan, goes through a Noah-like experience.
- In the clip, we’re going to see two scenes from Evan Almighty that, together, I think, helps summarize the ideas we’ve been discussing about today’s story.
- In the movie clip, we’re going to see Evan finally give in and agree to build the ark that God keeps telling him to build despite all the problems it is going to cause him (we will see Evan agree to building the ark by talking to his wife)
- And then, we’ll also see the end result of Evan’s decision to build an ark.
- Let’s see what happens.

WATCH MOVIE CLIP

ASK

- Is Evan’s wife thrilled about Evan’s decision? (Nope, not at all, really)
- On the day of the flood, was it rain that caused the flood? (No)
- Did you catch why the dam collapsed? (Because corners were cut in building the dam; in other words, people caused the flood)
- Did Evan’s decision to listen to God – a decision that caused a lot of trouble for him – end up being the right choice for him? (Yes)
- Was it a choice that also benefited other people? (Yes)
- Did those people want to get on the ark at first? (no)
- What changed their minds? (things falling apart; the dam collapsing; water rushing at them)

TELL

- I like the ending of this movie clip because it clearly shows how the people were complicit in creating a chaotic and dangerous situation
- And, in the face of that chaotic and dangerous situation, there was one person who was prepared to help the people
- That person was prepared to help because he and his spouse had agreed to listen to and act on God’s words
- Acting on God’s words made a very chaotic and dangerous situation survivable which is the **third thing** I want us to notice about this story.
- Despite the incredible amount of damage, the story lets us know that not ALL hope is lost even when things look pretty hopeless.
- And the reason not all things are lost is because it only takes one person who was paying attention to God to keep all life from being lost.

- Also, because Noah listened to and acted upon God’s words, then *other* people and animals (Noah’s family AND a pair of every type of animal) were also spared from the worst of the chaos – just like Jesus’ disciples were spared from the storm.
- And, that, how just one person can transform a chaotic situation is what we’ve seen in all of our stories about chaos in this session
- Jesus, who prayed often, was able to calm the storm by speaking into the storm
- Jesus was also able to change water into wine
- Today’s story was a little bit different because the actual situation (the flood) wasn’t changed, but for those who listened, it was far less destructive.
- It’s a chaotic world we live in
- I hope these three stories are a helpful reminder that it only takes just one person who is listening for and acting on God’s words in a seemingly hopeless situation can provide a way forward.
- That one person could be you
- But just think what could happen if more than one person listened?
- If a community listened?
- That means you – me – *we* can be those people.
- And God knows – the world could use some more God-listeners to bring God’s peace and transformation to this chaotic world.
- And that’s the good news for today

CLOSING PRAYER