

New Cluster Series

Heroes of the Faith

Noah

Building Big for God

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Noah: Building big for God

This is the format that we will be following:

- First, we have provided references to all the **key scriptures relating to Noah** for you to adapt and use as you wish.
- Then come the **overviews of the big themes** we are keen to get across, together with key Scriptural verses. You will obviously want to select which ones to highlight – but they are all interesting, so we will be providing a number of ‘hard’ copies of this document for people who may like to follow these up in their own times.
- The material in the boxes provide **follow up topics** for people who would like to follow up particular themes.
- Finally there is a **link for further resources**.

Key Scripture References to Noah in Scripture:

Read Genesis 6:5-9:29

Overview 1: How do you handle living in a fallen culture?

Overview 2: Walking with God by faith

Overview 3: Obedience precedes Understanding

Overview 4: Perspective, process, promise, provision, perseverance

Overview 5: Are the promises of God always "positive?"

Overview 6: To build big you need to persevere through the waiting periods

Overview 7: The Reality of Judgement

Overview 8: How you start is important – but how you finish is even more important.

Overview 9: Covering Love

Overview 10: Many Nations – one God

Overview I: How do you handle living in a fallen culture?

Noah's story is about two floods: a literal one and a spiritual one. We all know about the devastating literal one and we are inclined to read this story as though it were 'one for the Sunday School.' In fact it is extremely serious stuff! *Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. (Genesis 6: 11-12)*

Noah was the only one left on Earth who could be described as 'righteous.' God's response to this desperate situation was to give people one prolonged last chance to respond to His warning. But when His patience finally ran out and the floods came, Noah was left as the second 'father' of the human race.

The background is important because it is hard to thrive when the 'climate' in our culture is set against God. Although there is a spiritual hunger in people that we need to awaken and tap into, society itself is firmly antichristian in its ethos and morality. Such conditions can paralyse us, and cause us to hunker down into survival mode. God wants us to function freely in what is effectively an alien culture.

No society in the New Testament receives such a bad press as Crete: (See Titus 1:12 and 1:16) Cretans' love of gain and unscrupulousness was a byword in the ancient world – but Paul nowhere says back off from it and leave it to its fate. Rather he says in effect, 'Go out and convert it and bring these people to a living faith in Me.' That way we neither risk becoming *like* the world (and compromising), or giving up because we feel that there is nothing we can do against such overwhelming odds. Where society is darkest, God loves to build His finest churches!

Noah must have experienced what I call 'Lot's syndrome' feeling terrible about the state of the world around him just as Lot did (2 Peter 2:7-8) How do you feel living in a 'fallen' culture?

You could bring along newspaper and magazine articles that show the extent of the fallenness of the world marked with a red cross to indicate the need of prayer and the Lord's application.

Overview 2: Walking with God by faith

Cluster theory is full of 'up' 'in' 'out' language: upwards in worship, inwards in integrity, and outwards to reach and serve others. Noah fulfilled all of those criteria.

Noah walked with God . . . and did everything just as God commanded him. (Genesis 6:9-22)

In *Christianity for Dummies* Richard Wagner writes,

When you're walking in faith, you shouldn't be like a kid on a car trip, always saying, 'Are we nearly there yet?' God calls Christians to keep on walking whether they see Him working or not. (p. 253)

To walk with God is richer than believing all the right things: it is all about establishing an intimate daily relationship with Him, sharing *His* heart even as He shares ours. It means developing a 'habit' of consulting the Lord before acting.

Noah honoured the Lord's remarkable command to build an ark in the middle of dry land: a project that lasted longer than most people's entire life span.

How good are you at being single-minded when you are being mocked and taunted? And when the powers of darkness are sending hassle after hassle your way?

Pray to be able to discerning what God is saying to you, and then having the perseverance to see it become a reality.

Overview 3: Obedience precedes Understanding

By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. (Hebrews 11:7)

Covenant. *Noah was not given the particulars of God's covenant with him until **after** the floodwaters had dried up.*

Like Job, who knew nothing of the supernatural prologue that alone makes sense of the sufferings he went through, Noah only discovered the purpose for all he was doing later on.

There is an importance principle: obedience precedes understanding.

I did not know when the Lord sent us to Shetland that He intended me to lead an international prayer conference there that had been prophesied about for years throughout Scandinavia.

But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark, you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you.

Genesis 9:12-17 And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth." So God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth."

Read more about God's covenant with Noah in Genesis 8:21-22.

Every time people look at a rainbow, we can lay hold by faith of the promise God specifically 'built in' to this sign in the skies. Noah had set up an altar, and the rainbow is God's way of saying, "As I look on the rainbow, I'll remember and fulfill My word to you."

Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

Overview 4: Perspective, Process, Promise, Provision, Perseverance and Perspective

To build something big for God you need **Perspective:**

What needs doing, when and why? (An ark needs to be built because

judgment is coming). To build for God you need a process, just as we at SMB have one in place for the building project.

This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. Make a roof for it and finish the ark to within 18 inches of the top. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks.
Genesis 6:14-16

See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.
Hebrews 8:5

Specific instructions were given for how to build the ark as well as its overall dimensions – which makes it roughly equivalent to a First World War battleship. His dimensions gave the ark perfect strength, stability and comfort. When God gives specific instructions it is important to obey them fully. Pray to build all that you do in life in such a way that it reflects God’s plan and purpose, and is in line with the promises that He has given. But remember: there is no point in God giving promises unless we are prepared to believe and act on them.

Overview 5: Are the promises of God always “positive?”

I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark – you and your sons and your wife and your sons’ wives with you.
Genesis 6:17

Some people are so passionate about the love of God that they are loathe to accept any word that in any way sounds ‘unloving.’ This makes it hard for them to receive prophecies that warn of trouble and difficulties ahead. To quote just two New Testament examples, the prophet Agabus warns of a forthcoming famine that can not be averted, and that the one who wears (Paul’s) belt will experience imprisonment. See Acts 11:28, 21:10-14

When God told Noah to build an ark He knew how difficult the task would prove to be. There were sure to be many temptations to break off the work, discouragement, mockery and perhaps the opposition of others, as in Nehemiah’s day. That is why it was so important that God gave the

clearest of promises to His servant to get him building. What the Lord asks of us often appears humanly impossible – and very odd looking into the bargain – but He will always send His provision to match His promise.

The Lord told Noah to build an ark in the middle of dry land. What oddities has He called you to do?

How often do you allow your way of thinking, and your regular routine, to stop you attempting what the Lord has actually told you to do?

Remember, when one door of happiness closes, another opens – but we can spend so much time looking at the closed door that we fail to see the one which has been opened for us. (Helen Keller).

Overview 6: To build big you need to persevere through the waiting periods

“You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them.”

Noah did everything just as God commanded him. Then the Lord shut him in.
Genesis 6:19-21, 7:16

The ark would have contained an incredibly large number of species. God could have made just one of every kind of creature and insect, but He surpassed himself in creativity! (See also Genesis 7:2-3)

We cannot build for God, however, without provision. When He calls He also enables and provides for us. There are questions to ask here: do you wait for resources to come in, or do you just start building anyway? Are there people you can reach out to to draw into the project? Visions require both both leaders and followers in order to be fulfilled.

We need leaders who not only create change but who manage transition. (William Bridges)

Noah waited seven more days and again sent out the dove from the ark
Genesis 8:10

None of us find waiting periods easy. While we are waiting for God to fulfil some long-standing vision, it is good to *remember* [zakar] what God has said – and God will remember you. (Gen. 8:1)

Don't doubt in the darkness what you have heard in the light! (i.e. turn away from following the course God directed you to take, unless He makes it clear that there has been a shift of plan).

If you have had to stand on your own, as Noah had to do for so long, the time will come when God will end the isolation and intervene. After the waiting comes refreshment: the ark landed safely on the mountains of Ararat (Genesis 8:4).

After all the confusion we go through while we wonder what God is saying, and if He really is leading at all, come moments of insight and clarity. This is the time to step out of the 'ark' and into whatever it is that He is leading you into. It is time for action. (See Genesis 8:15-17)

After barrenness comes blessing; after restriction comes release [yatza] Noah knew when the flood was starting but he didn't know when it would finish or how. If God had told him earlier how long it would be, it might have made it easier to wait, (most things are easier to bear if we know their end date) but this is rarely the way the Lord works. He works rather to develop our faith and patience. Noah wisely did not attempt to stir out of the ark until God told him to go.)

By perseverance, the snail reached the ark (Spurgeon).

!e can't afford to get touchy or offended when things don't work out as we had hoped.

Do you remember Henry the Green Engine in the Thomas the Tank Engine stories? He was so proud of his green paint, and so afraid that the rain would spoil it, that he "went into a tunnel and squeaked through his funnel and never came out again."

It is easy to settle for less when God has more in store for you – like the person who takes a chocolate at the start of a meeting, but if they had waited could have picked up a whole bar for free. It's like praying for an extra person to join our cluster group – but God could have sent more than that – and we could have handled more.

God sent a wind [ruach] over the earth, and the waters receded
Genesis 8:1

*He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he
delighted in me*
Psalm 18:19

Overview 7: The Reality of Judgement

I will surely demand an accounting
Genesis 9:5

Ours is not a generation that pays much attention to the concept of judgement, yet it lies at the heart of the Word of God. Freedom and accountability are built into the way God has designed the world. Never doubt the reality of God's judgement – God did judge the earth in exactly the way He said that He would do. (See also 2 Peter 2:5)

It also illustrates His care and protectiveness in God's judgement. In other words, when God judges there are always serious consequences. But there is mercy rather than devastation woven into the way God judges. Nothing of eternal value is lost. This is illustrated in the fact that every species survived. In a purely 'natural' disaster brought about by human neglect or selfishness you would have expected some species to be wiped out). The story shows the CARE God takes in His judgement.

It also shows the fact that judgement is measured (i.e. exactly 40 days and forty nights). This shows that God won't test the earth beyond limits in his dealing with evil – any more than He allows us to be tested beyond our ability to endure. (Corinthians verse#)

Judgement is always according to opportunity . . . and the Lord always gives an opportunity for people to respond to his sentence (His judgement) before the actual disaster comes.

How do you understand judgement as a concept?

- It is for our eternal destination: It is appointed for all men to die and after that to face judgement. Hebrews 9:27
- Scripture teaches us that all we do will be tested by the fire of God to see what it was made of (1 Cor. 3:12-15).
- Look at Matthew 11:20-24 and you will see that judgement is always according to opportunity.

- The next worldwide judgment will be with fire, not water (2 Pet. 3:1–12).
- Never think that God is too sentimental or squeamish to pass judgement on anyone or anything. (eg Deut., 32:15-23 but in a hundred other places)

The wrath of God (Genesis 7:11–24). In His patience God gave the world at least 120 years of opportunity to be saved (Gen. 6:3; 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 2:5). The world refused to heed Noah’s witness however and rejected God’s grace up to the very day Noah and his family went into the ark. God waited another week (how the neighbors must have laughed at Noah!), but then the judgment came. Do a word study on ‘wrath’ and ‘anger’ from Scripture. What other examples are there in Scripture?

Overview 8: How you start is important – but how you finish is even more important.

*“In the race for success, speed is less important than stamina.
The sticker outlasts the sprinter.”* *B. Forbes*

I’m told that 500 leaders are mentioned in the Bible. We know the details of 100 of them. We know how 49 of them finished up., we know of only 13 who ended well.

99.99% of our life lies ahead of us. How can live our lives, therefore, as a preparation for eternity?

It would have been easy to conceal these failures, but the Bible tells it as it is: warts and all. One fall can have serious long term consequences – but God delights to restore those who are repentant and who are serious about living in His presence. Lord, help us to finish well!

Genesis 9:18-19 At that time there was only one language spoken on the earth. What came out of the ark would spread right across the world.

Teetotallers may have a problem with this: God entrusts a most important work to a cultivator of vines! Unfortunately he got drunk 9:21 (the Bible does not condemn the cultivation of vines or the drinking of wine).

We can never afford to become complacent. Pride and temptation can cause us to fall quicker than we can read this page.

In Genesis 9:20-23 we see Noah getting drunk from the vineyards he had planted. Ham saw his father's nakedness and told the others. The only thing worse than committing a specific sin is the devilish delight in finding out and revelling in the sins of others. (J. M. Boice). As Proverbs 18:8 remind us, 'The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down deep to a man's inmost parts.'

But Shem and Japheth covered their faith and turned away from his nakedness. Shem was blessed because of what he did and because the father of the Israelites, Ham was cursed and became the father of the Canaanites.

Overview 9: May the Lord develop a spirit that covers each other in love

These are important verses to ponder before we tell people their faults and try to 'set them straight.'

Love covers over all wrongs.

Proverbs 10:12

From the fruit of his lips a man is filled with good things, as surely as the work of his hands rewards him. A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult. The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.

Proverbs 12:14-16

He who covers over an offence promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.'

Proverbs 17:9

Overview 10: Many Nations one God

"The peoples and nations listed in Genesis 10, if traced forward in time and named with modern names, might read like a directory of the United Nations today. The listing presents the world as it was in ancient times.

But it also reminds us that just as the flood spread the judgment of God throughout the earth, so the blessings of God on Noah have spread through his descendants, through these nations, to the ends of the earth. The outcome of God's charge to Noah (Gen. 9:1) is that God made "from one blood every nation" of the world (Acts 17:26), Reference#

Although many of these nations followed policies that are hostile to God's ways, this passage reminds us that God is concerned about the *whole* world and that He loves *all* peoples. Likewise, as we survey the many nations of the world today, it is nice to keep in the back of one's mind that we are all part of the same family – and all descended from the same righteous father: Noah (Gen. 10:32).

Interesting Asides

Have you ever wondered why God made fleas. (Did they go in the ark?) God can use anything. It was the presence of fleas in one of the dormitories in a concentration camp that enabled Corrie Ten Boom to lead Bible study groups without the guards interrupting.

At the end of the book of Job, when the Lord dramatically intervenes, He gave no answer to Job's repeated questions, but spoke instead about animals that are of no direct use to mankind – animals that can't be tamed to give rides for foot-weary travellers, or trained to work on farms, but which are often dangerous to mankind. It is as though God is saying, 'I created these too, and though you have no way of understanding their role in creation, they have their place too.'

Further Resources

We started the cluster series course teaching by using Mark Stibbe's acronym MOSAIC Mobile Orbital (as opposed to top down pyramidal leadership) Spirit-led, adventurous, integrated and Creative. Many of the starting themes for this opening issue in the series draws on another Mark Stibbe diagram, which he shared both in his own church and at a recent conference for Salt and Light leaders. His three part talk there can be downloaded from <http://resource.saltlight.org/conferences/elc08>

Psst! You might like to devise a pairing games, for adults or children!