

There is a well-known book titled, Everything I Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten. Let me suggest another: Everything I Needed to Know I Learned from Noah. Here are just some of the lessons we learn from Noah:

1. Don't miss the boat.
2. We are all in the same boat.
3. Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the Ark.
4. Stay fit. When you're 600 years old, someone may ask you to do something big.
5. For safety's sake, always travel in pairs.
6. Speed isn't always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs.
7. Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic by professionals.
8. No matter the storm, when you are with God, there's always a rainbow waiting.

Now we can learn those things from the story of Noah. In fact Noah and his ark is one of the all time favourite stories, isn't it? But when you look at the details in the Bible its not a very nice story is it? In fact its an R rated story. There's too much violence, and evil and death to be able to tell it properly to children.

But the kids have gone off to kids church so we can have a closer look at the story of Noah. And when we do we see this story starts off with the statement. *"The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth--"*

There is not just something rotten in the state of Denmark, there is something rotten with the whole world. In fact there is something rotten with the whole human race. Mankind's wickedness has grown to epidemic, no, pandemic proportions. So much so that every inclination of every thought was evil all the time.

Wow! It was only 8 generations ago that Adam and Eve were God's people in God's place living under God's rule. Now God is so grieved, so angry, *so hurt* that he says I am sorry I made them! I am grieved that I made them. Mankind in just a few short years has broken God's heart.

Have you ever tried to imagine God with a broken heart? Have you ever wondered, "How God's heart could be broken?" If you're a parent you probably know how. For if you've ever watched your son or daughter make bad choices & then suffer the consequences, there's no better way to explain what you feel except your heart is broken.

And here we see God looking down on His children make bad choice after bad choice & His heart is broken too. Can God feel pain? Can we hurt him? Is he affected by our sin, our betrayal, our self sufficiency? Yes, yes, YES! For He made us, he placed his image inside of us, he commits himself to us and all of mankind has just slapped God in the face. They have turned their back on their Creator and gone their own way.

And here we see a God who is vulnerable. Here we see the pain of creative love. Here is the wounded spirit of the artist whose work is rejected, the broken heart of a lover whose love is not returned. God is vulnerable. But if mankind wants to live without God, if mankind wants the snowball of sin to continue down the mountain, if he wants sin to flood the world, then the consequences are that water will flood the world as well.

But before God sends the flood, God's tears give them one more chance. For there is one who was righteousness, a descendent of Seth called Noah. So God asks him to build an ark and so for 120 years Noah builds and preaches, builds and preaches. Noah warns his fellow human beings of God's righteous judgement that is about to come.

And the response of 120 years of building and preaching? Zero conversions outside his immediate family. Zero. Nothing. Naught. So God's washes the world clean. God sends torrential rain for 40 days and 40 nights. God sends his judgement until all are dead apart from those within the ark.

Did this happen? Did it really happen? Apparently, the geological record is over whelming in its testimony to this truth: there was a world wide flood. In addition to this more than 230 cultures and civilizations have world wide flood stories as part of their heritage and background. Besides the Bible says it happened, even giving its own dates and time frames. And Jesus says it happens. So to deny the flood itself is very difficult to do.

But if that isn't bad enough, that God would judge the world by sending a worldwide calamity, the apostle Peter says that the judgement of the world by flood in Noah's time is a pointer to the judgement to come. For is our world any better than Noah's? Haven't we turned our back on God and His ways. Isn't there many, many people whose lives are currently grieving God. Whose inclination is to do evil? Who have forgotten that one day they too will be judged?

Two hundred years ago Thomas Jefferson wrote in regards to the United States "*I tremble for our country when I reflect that God is just.*" (Repeat) Two hundred years later when we look at what is happening around us we understand what was meant by the man who said "*God will either have to bring judgement on our country or dig up Sodom and Gomorrah and apologize.*"

2. For God grieves, but God also smiles For in the midst of the gloom is a ray of sunshine, one ray of sunshine. A guy called Noah. A righteous man, blameless amongst the people of his time, one who walked with God. A man who found favour with God. A man who made God smile.

For although the world was corrupt, he was pure. Though it sought to do evil, he aimed at being good. So looking down at Noah was the one bright spot in God's day, so to speak!

So God speaks to Noah and says; "Noah, I need for you to build a boat." Now, that seems simple enough doesn't it? But wait a minute, this boat had to be constructed according to some very particular specifications..... Noah listened attentively as God said; "Let's make it 140m long (1-1/2 times longer than a regulation football field), 25m wide and 15m high! Now, in my mind, I'm seeing Noah's jaw drop to the ground at this point!

I can imagine God looking at the other boats in the world and saying, *that's not a boat, this is a boat!* But Noah is righteous, he listens and he obeys. It sounds like a daunting task especially since God has even instructed Noah to fill the Ark with enough food to feed everyone. But we see in verse 22 that "Noah did everything just as God commanded him."

And the Bible says it took about 100 years for Noah to build the Ark, and he built it in a desert. But can you imagine what Noah's neighbours must have thought and said? Can you imagine what an outcaste Noah had to become in order to do what God had commanded? Can you imagine the ridicule, the laughs, the jeers? Can you imagine yourself ploughing forward in the face of so much adversity?

Well Noah obeys God's instructions. And without power tools makes the biggest boat that was built up until the 1800's! And at the same time he also preaches and warns those around him to join him on this crazy journey that God has placed before him. And over time he may have been successful in building an ark but he is an abject failure in converting the people around him.

US Senator Mark Hatfield tells of touring Calcutta with Mother Teresa and visiting the so-called "House of Dying," where sick children are cared for in their last days, and the dispensary, where the poor line up by the hundreds to receive medical attention. Watching Mother Teresa minister to these people, feeding and nursing those left by others to die, Hatfield was overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the suffering she and her co-workers face daily. "How can you bear the load without being crushed by it?" he asked. Mother Teresa replied, "My dear Senator, I am not called to be successful, I am called to be faithful."

Noah was faithful. He builds the boat, he collects the animals, he goes into the ark and then he waits patiently while God does everything. For God to save Him. And then when the floodwaters recede Noah sacrifices a burnt offering on an altar. And the result is God's heart is pleased. Here we see God's heart again exposed. Yes sin grieves him but obedience pleases him. And here we see that Noah's actions put a smile on God's dial. For faith pleases God. Trust leads to God's being overjoyed. Our actions and our character not only lead to blessings or punishment but in some way they affect God's emotions as well.

So even though he must at times look at me and you, and shake his head. At times, he must be so disappointed with my actions and my thoughts and my ways. But despite that, my simple action of faith, or obedience, of patiently waiting for Him can please Him, can glorify Him, can fill him with joy.

3. Yes God grieves, yes He smiles but lastly He promises. You see God does not abandon his creation at the first whiff of rebellion. God doesn't throw his hands up and say that its all too hard. God remembers Noah. The floodwaters recede. They leave the ark and God gives them a new start.

Be fruitful and multiply he says, echoing the words he gave to Adam and Eve. Enjoy the plants and the animals, I give them to you for food. But be careful about shedding blood, because one day I will demand an accounting. One day I will open the books to see what you have done and why you have done it.

A few days ago I was on my computer when suddenly a message flashed onto my screen.. It said "the operating system has experienced a serious error." But after rebooting - the system returned itself to normal and on I went. In a sense, the earth experienced a "serious error" that caused God to "reboot" and recover with the flood. The account in Genesis 8 & 9 begins this "rebooting" of the creation. We now will see if Noah and his family will make a better fist of things than Adam and Eve and their family.

But in chapter 9 there is not just a new start but there is a new pledge. God makes a covenant with Noah, he signs a contract with mankind, in fact with all the earth. From now on I will never destroy the whole world by flood waters. I will never wipe everyone and everything of the face of the earth by flood.

And the sign of that pledge? Is the rainbow. God hangs up his bow, his weapon of war in the

heavens. God lays it aside. The hostility is over. The war has finished. So now the weapon of destruction is transformed into an object of wonder, of delight.

God is now committing himself again to his creation. Sure it is stained, used goods. But our God is a faithful God. His love is a love that will not let us go. His mercies, his compassions are new every morning. God pledges himself again to us and his sign is the rainbow.

Oh, and one more thing about a rainbow! Have you ever seen one on a bright sunny picture perfect day? No? You haven't and you won't either. Do you know why? It's because a rainbow appears in the sky at the end of a storm. It's after the thunder and the lightning are all over and the rain is beginning to subside and the sun comes out. That's when you see a rainbow. You have to weather the storm first. But when you do, you look back at what happens and see that God was there. And I think that is true of the storms of life as well.

A new start, a new pledge and a new grace. God shows his grace to Noah in saving him from the flood and then blessing him and his family despite his drunkardness, despite his shame. Noah is not perfect, none of the characters in the Bible are. God doesn't demand perfection, just trust. Not 100% purity, just repentance and faith. God's grace is truly amazing. He forgives Noah and he forgives us, if only we would walk with Him

So in this story for adults we see God's grief, his joy and his promises. But what are we going to do with this story as adults? I read recently about twin sisters who had an alcoholic mother. One of them became an alcoholic, & the other a total abstainer. When the alcoholic one was asked why, she said, "Well, my mother was an alcoholic, so what can you expect?" When the other was asked why she became a total abstainer she said, "Well, my mother was an alcoholic, so what can you expect?"

You see, the choice is ours. We all live in the same sort of world that Noah lived in. So we can choose to be like everyone or we can choose to be like Noah. Now if you're a lettuce seed, you really have no choice. They'll plant you in the ground, water you, & you'll become a lettuce plant. You don't have any choice.

But if you are a child made in God's image, you do have a choice. So do you want to grieve God or make Him smile? Well it all depends on whether you trust in His promises. Whether you turn from your sins. And whether you seek to daily walk with your God. So tomorrow, by your actions and faith will you grieve God or please Him?