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## Introduction

A couple of years ago there was a best selling book entitled, Everything I Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten, suggesting that the most important lessons in life are learnt early on life. Another preacher has suggest a second title: Everything I Need to Know I Learned from Noah. Why? Because in his eyes these 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. Don't listen to critics; just do the job that needs to be done.
6. Build your future on high ground.
7. For safety's sake, travel in pairs.
8. Speed isn't always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs.
9. Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic by professionals.
10. 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 Bible 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 way too much violence, and evil and death to be able to tell it properly to children.

But the kids aren't with us now, so we can have a closer look at the story of Noah. And when we do we see this story starts off in verse 5, 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 embraced 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, "Why would God's heart be broken?" If you're a parent you probably know why. 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 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 grieved. But if mankind wants to live without God, if mankind wants the snowball of sin to continue down the mountain, if mankind 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. There is one who was righteous, 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 overwhelmingly testifies 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 these things. *"First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." 5 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. "*

Peter says that the flood 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." Two hundred years down the road 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 two of every animal and all the food that they would need for the trip. But we see in v 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.

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 him to be saved, he has to go into the ark but really it is God who worries about the waters and the currents and the storms and mountain tops and everything really. It is God who saves Him completely.

And then when the floodwaters recede Noah sacrifices a burnt offer 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 his dial. They please God. 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.

For God may send forth judgement, but the possibility of salvation through judgement is always there. For God knows, he always knows, how to save his people. For isn't that what the Apostle Peter says in his second letter, chapter 2, verse 5?

*"For if God did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)-- if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment"*

God knows how to save his people. It wasn't that Noah was perfect, he was far from perfect, and we see that straight after the flood with his drunken exhibition. But despite his imperfections Noah was a man of faith. And God is in the business of saving his people by grace through faith. He indeed knows how to save his people.

Which is a great encouragement to us isn't it? For we find ourselves in the midst of trials and difficulties and stresses and strains. Sometimes we think the opposition, the circumstances, the evil all around us are overwhelming. But God knows how to save his people. God knows how to lead us toward the place of safety. God is able to rescue us no matter what sort of hole we find ourselves in.

Even though he must at times look at me, 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 God promises.**

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 while back 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 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 off 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.

Psalm 103 puts it this way, *“The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbour his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children-- with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.”*

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 lightening 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. The rainbow is not a promise that there will be no storms, no difficulties. it's a promise that God will be there right through the difficulties of life.

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 several years ago 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 world as 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 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 God. What we do not only affects our lives, our families lives, our communities life but affects God. So let us want to please him rather than grieve him!