



WHEN GOD
DOESN'T
MAKE SENSE

The Story of Noah

*Noah was a righteous man,
blameless among the people of his time,
and he walked faithfully with God.*

(Genesis 6:9b)

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ENGAGE SCRIPTURE

PAPER BIBLE

If you do not have a Bible, please feel free to take one as you enter or leave the Mountaintop Church Auditorium. It is our gift to you.

DIGITAL BIBLE

You can take the Bible with you wherever you go with these websites and free apps for your phone or tablet.



Bible.com
BibleGateway.com



You'll find the Kid's Bible available at:
BibleAppForKids.com



BlueLetterBible.org
For a more in-depth study where you can search commentaries and translations.



Olive Tree Bible Software
OliveTree.com

SUNDAY MESSAGES

Every Sunday morning message is archived on the Mountaintop website. If you miss a message or want to share a message with a friend, go to mountaintopchurch.com/watch to view on-demand.

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever looked up to the heavens, maybe even lying on your back in bed, and asked, "God, what in the world are you doing?"

Like, you know God is up to something, but it doesn't make sense. You can't see what direction He's going. You don't understand how He's moving or, even, IF He's moving. Just...none of it makes sense.

And (perhaps this is worse), the parts you do understand, the ways you do know He's leading you are ludicrous.

You'd never do that.

No sane person would do that.

You'll be a laughingstock at best. People will think you're a fool. Some of your family won't even get it. Who are you kidding? You don't even get it.

Nevertheless, something tells you that you need to obey. You need to trust Him. You need to do what doesn't make sense now believing that it will all make perfect sense in the end. You need to have faith in His Word.

Okay, let me start here with some disclaimers. A lot of stupid things have been done in the name of God. Even some evil and wicked things have been done and blamed on God.

Obviously, when we look back on those events, we know that God had NOT, in fact, told them to do something that didn't make sense. God hadn't told them anything at all. That's why all of this gets kind of tricky.

In this series and study, we're going to look at the story of Noah.

A few things are different from Noah than they are for you and me. God seemed to literally speak to Noah. That would make things much clearer.

Still, that doesn't mean that it all made sense.

God had a way of asking His people and even prophets to do things that didn't exactly make sense at the time. We still 'hear' from God today, but it's usually not an audible voice.

God uses all kinds of things to speak to us: other people, music, nature, and solitude. The primary way God seems to speak to us is through His Word – the Bible.

And this would be a helpful reminder in some of those situations for which God seems to get blamed. God is not going to tell us to do something that is contrary to His Word.

We should always test our thoughts against His Word, and sometimes trusted mentors can help point us to what the Bible actually says about what we're feeling or experiencing.

The thing is, there is much about following Jesus that already doesn't make sense. God's Word instructs us to do many things that work contrary to our instincts.

- Love your neighbor as yourself.
- Love your enemies.
- Go the extra mile.
- Turn the other cheek.
- Be generous and willing to share.

It's a lot. However, the hardest thing seems to be navigating those moments in life that the Bible says nothing about.

Life decisions like what career path to choose or where to invest your money. For instance, taking a job with a lower salary makes no sense, but maybe you feel God telling you to.

And the list goes on.

Moving to another city.
Asking her out.
Applying for that position.
Starting that business.

Trustworthy, spiritually mature friends are so important in situations like that.

So this is the space where we're going to stay.

We're going to see God ask Noah to do something that made zero sense. He'd look like a fool. He'd seem crazy to his friends. Perhaps even his family didn't understand.

But God used Noah's faith to write a new beginning in humanity. You never know what God is up to until you trust Him, even when it doesn't make sense.

Buckle up – your life vest, that is. You're gonna need it.





THERE'S MORE TO THE STORY

NOAH IN A NEW LIGHT

The story of Noah and the Ark is one of the most famous in the Bible. It's right up there with Adam and Eve and David and Goliath. Perhaps, when you hear the name Noah— familiar images fill your head of animals walking two-by-two from flannel graphs and illustrated Bibles. But the actual story in Genesis 6–9 is more nuanced than that.

*To be honest, it can be complicated and confusing. It can challenge our notions of a loving God and leave us with more questions than actual answers. However, **When God doesn't make sense** it's usually an opportunity for us to learn something new.*

*Let me invite you to read the story of Noah this time with fresh eyes. What we discover over these next few weeks with each other just might surprise you. You might even find that when a story **doesn't make sense**, it's because you've been looking at it all wrong.*



BACKGROUND

Genesis 1-5 is part of the creation narrative of Genesis. It tells the story of a Creator who formed the world with a purpose – culminating with humans. We are God’s masterpiece made in His image and given the responsibility of ruling over the world.

Chapters 2-3 tell of the individual story of God’s relationship to one man and one woman, Adam and Eve. It tells how we ended up in this broken world. Though made without blemish, Adam and Eve broke trust with God and did what He commanded them not to do.

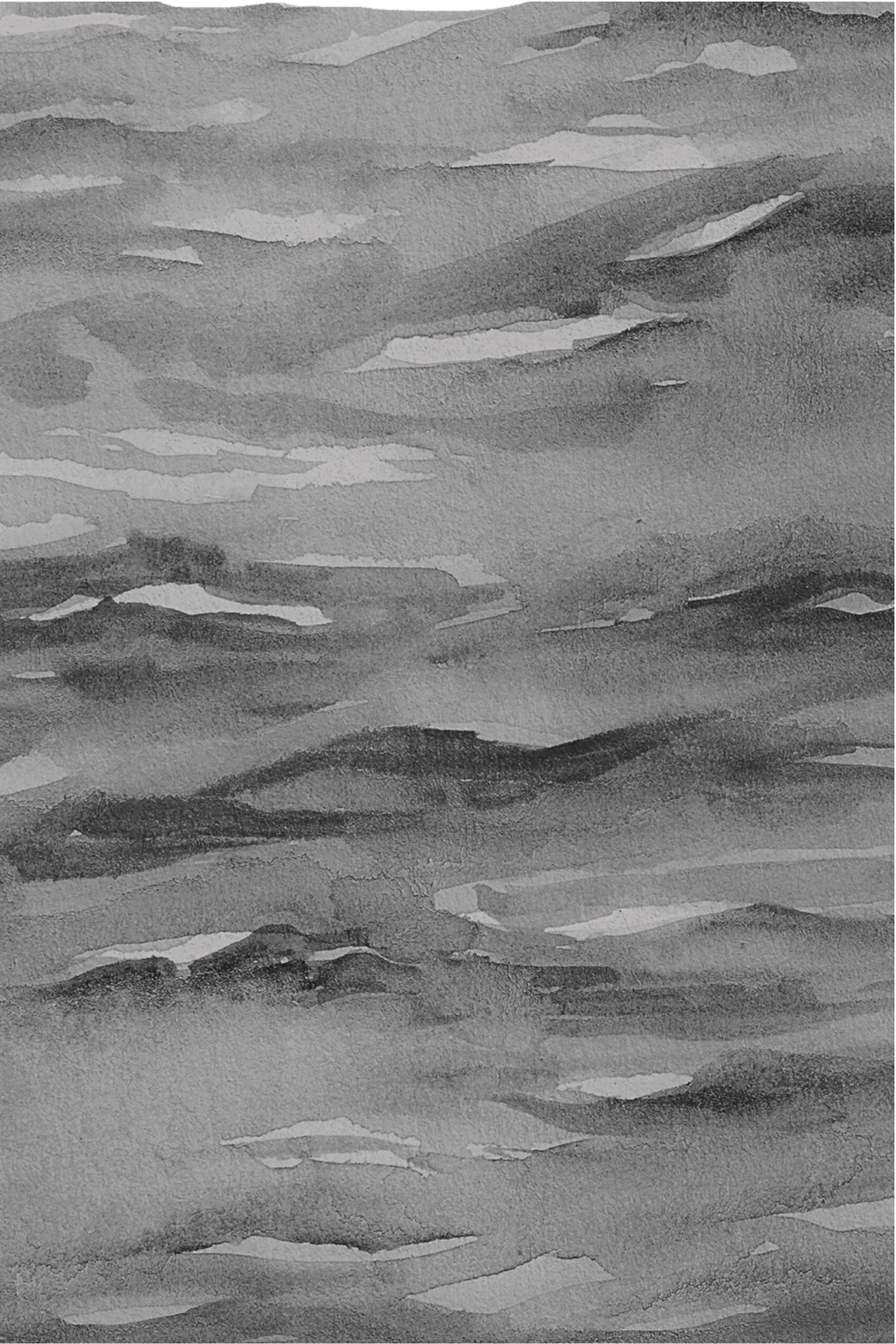
As a result, sin and death came into the world because things were no longer right between God and His image bearers. It didn’t take long for death to show up on their own door.

Chapter 4 tells the story of Cain and Abel, Adam and Eve’s sons. In a fit of jealousy, Cain kills Abel. It’s a tragic scene of the animosity still so present in our world. One thing is clear in the story of Cain and Abel, Cain has a choice. His fate is not sealed by the folly of his parents. His violent action against his brother is his own doing.

The story of Genesis continues with this theme at its center. Humans have a choice between the way of God and their own desires. Sadly, generation after generation makes the wrong choice.

Chapter 5 lists a genealogy from Adam to Noah. It’s nine generations. So, the world is still pretty fresh. Fresh, but already so off course.

That’s where we pick up the story in Genesis 6-9, the chapters that tell the story of Noah. And things have not gone well on planet earth.



WEEK 1

GENESIS 6

The Wickedness on Earth and God's First Call to Noah

Chapter 6 sets the scene for the story.

We have our main characters Noah, his family, a wicked world, and a disappointed God. There's a problem, God's good creation has turned, not only on Him, but also on each other.

Just like the blood of Abel that cried out to God, the violence and wickedness of the people have soiled the land. It is the corruption of the people that has destroyed the earth. God simply gives them over to what has already consumed them.

The flood is not a destruction, it is a cleansing. God desires a fresh start, a chance to wash it clean.

Enter Noah.

Actually, we are introduced to him in the previous chapter and told that his name means that *"He will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the Lord has cursed."* A sort of foreshadowing to his role in the story.

Noah hears the voice of God and it must have sounded crazy. Certainly he had questions...

"A worldwide flood, one surviving family, all those animals- on one boat? How big is that thing going to be?"

"Any plans for ventilation?"

"Wait, you want me to build it?"

"God, how do I even know it's going to float?"

Noah is given very little schematic detail. Think about it, have you ever seen a boat with no sails, rudders, or oars?

The narrative is clear, this is not your normal boat, and Noah is no captain. If Noah is going to make it out alive, God will have to deliver him.

It didn't make sense.

But Noah did it anyway.

Why? Because he trusted God.

Not only that, we are told Noah "walked with God." A skill he must have learned from his great grandfather Enoch (Gen. 5:24). Surely, he taught Noah that the best way to know that you can trust God is to walk with him long enough to know His voice.

After all, the only person crazy enough to get on a "boat" with no captain, is one who trusts that the Creator of the oceans was in control all along.

WEEK 1 REFLECTION QUESTIONS

*Spend time reading Genesis 6 and then answer these questions.
If you are in a Group, you will use these to help guide your conversation.*

Share about a time in your life that you felt God telling you to do something that didn't make sense. How did you respond? What was the outcome?

In your experience of reading the flood story, what elements of the story make the least sense to you? What about the narrative challenges you the most?

Genesis 6:5 states that "the LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth." What specific examples of wickedness are implied or mentioned in this chapter?

Compare **Genesis 6:6-7** with **Genesis 1:31**. Consider the contrast of God's words in these two passages - How might that change your thoughts about his motivation for the flood?

What sticks out to you about the description of Noah's character in **verse 9**?

Read **Genesis 6:13** in the NASB translation. How does this rendering of God's words paint a different picture of God's character than other translations?

Read the instructions for the Ark in **verses 14-16**. Then read **Exodus 25:10-11, 17**. What do you notice? How might this alter your understanding of the design of Noah's ark?

In **Genesis 6:18**, God establishes a covenant with Noah. What is the nature of this covenant, and how does it foreshadow later covenants in the Bible?

PRAYER

Ask God for the kind of obedience that Noah has in the midst of a ridiculous ask. Pray that you would be found blameless in character so that God can use you to do whatever He needs you to do.



WEEK 2

GENESIS 7

The Rains Come and the Earth Floods

Chapter 7 begins with a word from God about what He has observed about Noah.

In the midst of a corrupt world, God had found Noah righteous. In the previous chapter, the narrator wrote of Noah's righteous standing. Though, God had chosen him to be the vessel of salvation for humanity, He makes no final statement about Noah's righteousness until He has tested Noah's faithfulness.

It is clear that righteousness is shown through obedience. Noah is declared righteous because he trusts God, even when it doesn't make sense. If God were to observe our lives, what would He say of us?

As readers of the story, we should see in Noah a precursor to another who would be a deliverer for the people. Another character who would be shut into a vessel to shelter him from the chaotic waters and pushed down a river to safety.

Noah and Moses are both chosen by God, trust in God's word despite their doubts, and go on to play a crucial role in God's plan of deliverance.

For the people of Israel, water was a symbol of chaos and confusion. Their God, however, is the Creator of order. In Genesis 1, we see that separating the waters is a crucial part of His ordering of the cosmos.

So, throughout the Old Testament we see God time and again work to deliver His people through the waters of chaos. The purposes of God will not be stopped, not by flood, not by the Red Sea, not even by the storms of our lives.

In fact, Noah points us even further forward in human history to another vessel of salvation. Another story of one who thousands of years later would rest through a storm on a boat.

In this story, Jesus awakes from His slumber and calms the storm. His disciples are terrified and ask, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

They are right to fear, because only God can bring order to the chaos of the waters. They've been sharing a ship with the Son of God.

When the waves break over our boats.

When the mighty waters keep rising.

When we are nearly swamped.

Will we place our trust in the God who controls the deep, splits the waters, and calms the storms? Will we find our salvation in the God of Noah and Moses? Will we choose faith over fear?

We can do so because the God of the universe wasn't satisfied just to send deliverers like Noah and Moses on His behalf.

He came down Himself to bring salvation once and for all in the person of Jesus - who, just like Noah would be shut in by God, but emerged holding the keys to victory over death.

Jesus reclaimed the authority over life and death that we forfeited and He is coming to restore it to us. Praise be to God!

WEEK 2

REFLECTION

QUESTIONS

*Spend time reading Genesis 7 and then answer these questions.
If you are in a Group, you will use these to help guide your conversation.*

What was the primary reason God decided to bring a flood upon the earth according to **Genesis 7**?

Read **Genesis 7:1** and then answer these questions about it:

- Why did God choose Noah to enter the ark?
- What did this mean for the fate of Noah's family?
- What does this teach us about the connection between righteousness and salvation?

What instructions did God give Noah about the animals in **verses 2** and **3**, and why were they significant?

Compare the animals in **verse 2** and **14**. Why do you think the narrator includes these separate lists of animals?

Read **Genesis 7:11-12** – Describe the onset of the flood as depicted here. Does this reinforce or challenge your previous understandings of the flood?

What does **Genesis 7** reveal about God's sovereignty and power over creation?

How does God's covenant with Noah in **Genesis 7** shape our understanding of His relationship with humanity?

Genesis 7:17-20 - How does the text describe the extent and power of the floodwaters?

What can we learn from the story of the flood about God's judgment and mercy?

PRAYER

The flood was a cleansing of earth from wickedness. Ask God to reveal in your heart what He needs to cleanse in you so that He can do something in your life that doesn't make sense. Confess that sin to Him and thank Him for sending Jesus to take the judgment we deserved.

WEEK 3

GENESIS 8

The Waters Subside and Noah Comes Out of the Ark

Have you ever had to wait on God?

It seems like waiting is most present in the seasons when life doesn't make sense. Patience can be painful and you can grow tired of waiting on God to move.

I love that this chapter begins with the statement that God remembered Noah. After more than a year of waiting to be back on dry land, I'm sure Noah was thrilled to hear that news as well.

From inside the ark, Noah's only option was to trust that God would remember His promise. It's a great reminder that even when we can't see what God is up to we can trust that His promises are good.

The ark comes to rest on the mountains of Ararat. This is significant because the Hebrew word for Ararat is very similar to its word for cursed.

Remember the meaning of Noah's name? "He will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the Lord has cursed."

Noah, whose very name means to comfort from labor and pain, comes to rest on the cursed mountain. There he raises an altar and burns an offering to God. We are told it is a restful and comforting scent to God. In response to Noah's sacrifice, God promises to never curse the land again.

And Noah fulfills his destiny.

This whole story is about God working with Noah to usher in a new creation. To restore what has been ruined.

Noah can rest in the fact that God is just getting started. His labor is complete but God's work has just begun.

For even though the flood is a new beginning, it doesn't solve the main problem. God declares that He won't curse the land again, "even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood."

The deliverance brought through Noah is incomplete. This is a fresh start, but God is clear that the heart of man is still evil.

We know that Noah isn't the end of the story.

In God's great story, He is always creating a way from death to life. One day from the line of Noah would come a man named Abraham whose descendants would be like stars in the sky.

From this family would come one who would deal with the problem once and for all. A man from Nazareth would fulfill the promise of redemption.

In the person of Jesus, God declared... The wait is over.

He has remembered us.

He has remembered His promise.

Our redeemer has come.

You can rest.

WEEK 3

REFLECTION

QUESTIONS

*Spend time reading Genesis 8 and then answer these questions.
If you are in a Group, you will use these to help guide your conversation.*

Genesis 8:1 – What does it mean that "God remembered Noah" and how does it reflect God's faithfulness?

Genesis 8:2-3 – How did the floodwaters begin to recede? What actions did God take to initiate this process?

Genesis 8:6-7 – What was the purpose of Noah sending out the raven and what did its behavior indicate? What did Noah learn?

Genesis 8:8-12 – Compare the actions of the dove in these verses. What did Noah understand from the dove's return with an olive leaf?

Analyze the symbolism of the dove and the olive leaf in the context of the flood.

Genesis 8:15-17 – Consider the instructions that God gave Noah after the floodwaters had receded. What was the significance of these commands?

Genesis 8:20-21 – What did Noah do after exiting the ark, and how did God respond to Noah's actions?

Genesis 8:22 – What does this verse teach us about God's covenant with creation after the flood?

PRAYER

Thank God for the ways He's brought you through things you didn't understand. Pray for those you know or for anyone in your group that are "in the Ark" right now and can't quite see what's happening. Ask God to help you trust what He's doing inside you even when you can't see what He's doing in your life.



WEEK 4

GENESIS 9

God's Covenant and the Ever-Present Brokenness

Throughout this study we have seen how the Noah story borrows imagery and language from the original creation story in Genesis 1 and 2.

Here at the conclusion of the Noah saga, the trend continues. Now with a retelling of Genesis 3 and 4.

Intermingled with the story of God's beautiful promise is a painful story of the ever-present brokenness that still exists beneath the shadow of the rainbow.

Noah plants a vineyard and takes and eats of its fruit. He becomes drunk from its fruit and this leads to his nakedness.

You can hear the echoes of original sin. Noah's vineyard is like a new Garden of Eden. His wine is the forbidden fruit. His nakedness mirrors the shame and embarrassment of the first couple. The cycle repeats itself.

It's a sad ending to a hopeful story that leaves you pining for the righteous Noah who trusts God when it doesn't make sense.

But it is important that we allow the narrative to play out.

Because, in the brokenness of Noah and his son Ham, we not only see the echoes of Adam, Eve, and Cain, we see a mirror to our very souls.

This is the human problem. The problem of sin. God is trying to make a way for us to be free, but something in us doesn't want to trust.

Left to our own devices we seem doomed to ruin it.

However, the story of Noah seeks to make one thing clear. Our fate is not sealed.

We, like our ancestors before us, have a choice. We were made for more. God created us to be rulers over His creation. And He is working to redeem His image in us.

Right in the middle of Noah's folly and Ham's abuse, is a sign of love from God. A marker of a covenant that reminds us of God's promise of life to us.

You can choose for yourself the way of death or the way of life.

And you and I, we don't have a rainbow as the marker of our covenant with God.

Our promise comes sealed in the blood of Jesus.

He welcomes us through death to experience a new way of life.

He invites us to join Him once again in the work of restoring this world.

We don't deserve it.

We haven't earned it.

But His grace is indeed amazing, even when it doesn't make sense.

WEEK 4

REFLECTION

QUESTIONS

*Spend time reading Genesis 9 and then answer these questions.
If you are in a Group, you will use these to help guide your conversation.*

Genesis 9:1 – What command does God give Noah and his sons after the flood, and how does this relate to the original creation mandate given to Adam and Eve? Compare the blessing to be fruitful and multiply in this verse with Genesis 1:28.

Genesis 9:2-3 – What changes does God make regarding humanity's relationship with animals, and what is the significance of these changes?

Genesis 9:5-6 – What does God establish about the value of human life and the consequence for taking a human life?

How do God's new laws about bloodshed influence your understanding of justice and the sanctity of human life?

Genesis 9:8-11 - What are the terms of the covenant that God establishes with Noah and all living creatures? What is the significance of God's promise never to destroy the earth with a flood again?

Genesis 9:12-17 - What is the sign of the covenant between God and the earth, and what does this sign represent?

Genesis 9:18-19 - How do these verses set the stage for the future development of humanity after the flood?

PRAYER

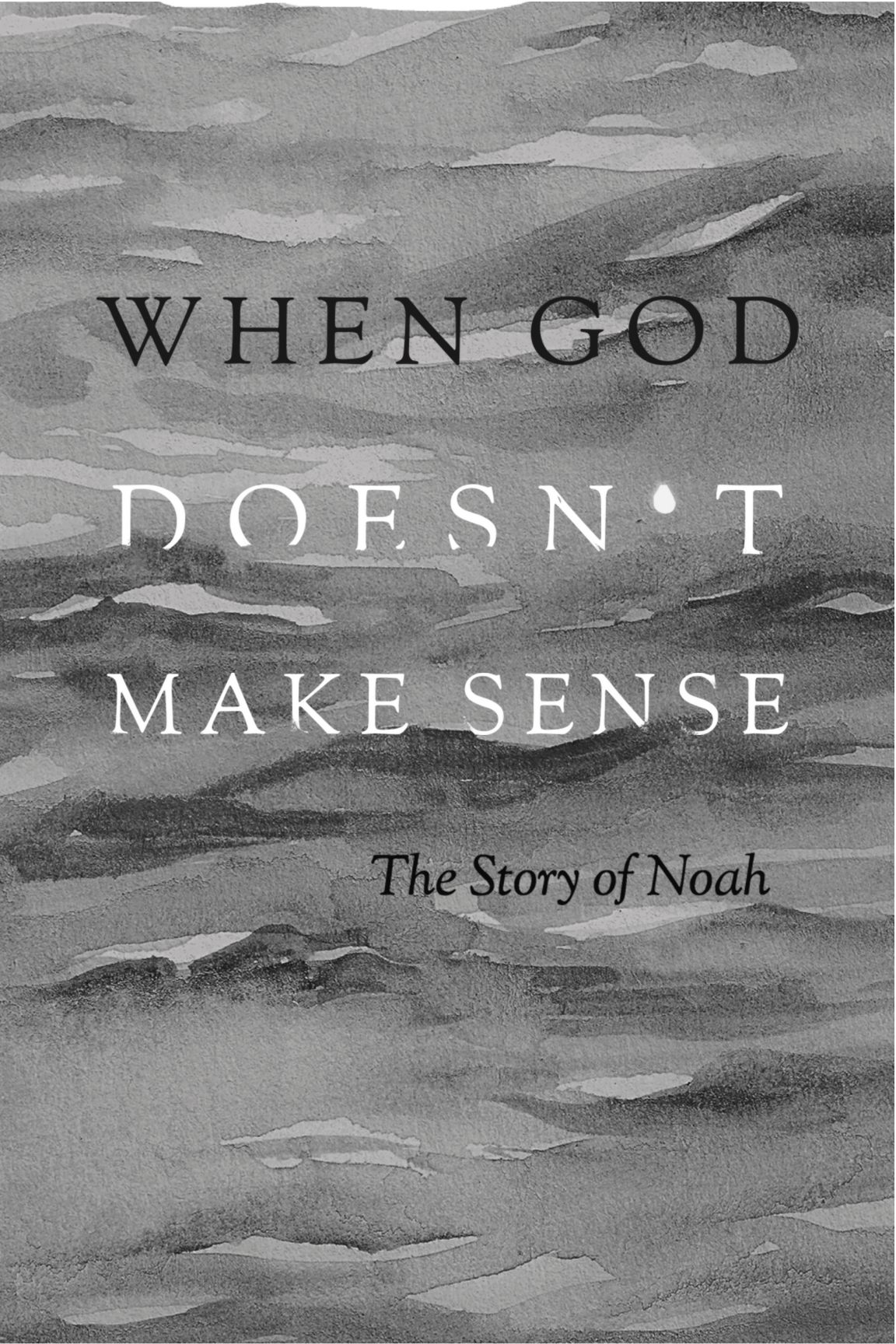
Thank God for Noah’s righteousness and obedience. Thank God that He works through people despite their flaws and shortcomings. Ask God to give you faith to obey Him now and in the future – even when it doesn’t make sense.

**FINAL REFLECTIONS
ON THE STORY OF NOAH:**

At what point in the story do you think it all made sense for Noah?

What does Noah’s story teach us about how God works in us, through us, and, sometimes, in spite of us?

How has your understanding of the flood narrative changed as a result of this study?

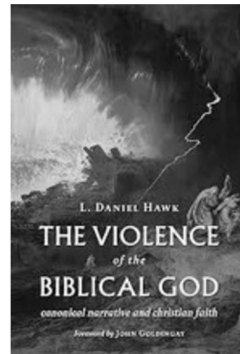
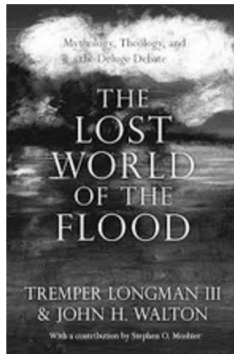


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RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY



Noah Classroom Sessions on the Bible Project





