



YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Summer 2018 Leader Commentary

Unit 1: The Truth Starts Here
Session 3: Thriving in the Midst of a Cultural Storm (see pp. 110-113)

The Question: How should I live in today's culture?

The Point: As a believer, I can't allow the culture to dictate how I live.

Background Passage: Genesis 6:1–7:24

Focal Passage: Genesis 6:5-9; 7:1,13-16

This commentary is designed to help you think about the question, "How should I live in today's culture?" and drive home this one truth: As a believer, I can't allow the culture to dictate how I live.

Focus on These Points

Recognize Culture's Corruption
(Gen. 6:5-7)

One of the best-known narratives, the flood story is discussed at length compared to other topics in Genesis 1-11. In those chapters we move through three narratives that deal with sin, punishment and grace: the garden failure, Cain's murder of his brother, and then, the flood. The flood is different because it serves as punishment for widespread sin. As a result, it was God's judgment on all animate life and even the ground itself. The people in Noah's generation were wicked, and their sin was widespread. "Every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time" (6:5). In reporting the far reach of humans' sin, the writer uses difficult language.

"Sons of God" (6:2) was a term that could refer to royal figures, angelic beings, or godly men from Seth's lineage. "Daughters of mankind" (6:2) could refer to lower-class women or ungodly descendants of Cain. Improper unions between "sons of God" and "daughters of mankind" were believed to have produced powerful men who were called the "Nephilim" (6:4) or "giants" (KJV).

The phrase "when the LORD saw that human wickedness was widespread" (v. 5) does not imply God suddenly became aware of man's sin. God knew they were totally depraved because He not only sees humans' actions, but He knows their thoughts.

Verse 6 reveals God's response to human's perversity was grief. We're not shown an angry God but a sorrowful One. The Hebrew word for the *regret* (v. 6, 7) He experienced is *nacham*. In the Old Testament, it typically refers to God's feelings, and not human emotions. Some translations of *nacham* show God relenting, changing His mind, or even repenting of some punishment He planned. (See Amos 7:3, 6.) It is uniquely used in Genesis and 1 Samuel 15:35 to describe God's regret over something initially good that turned sour. His creation was perfect, and then humankind made it bad. The writer even referred to what God felt as "deeply grieved" (v. 6). This is the same word used to describe the pain a woman felt during childbirth (Gen. 3:16) and a man's toilsome work (Gen. 3:17). God was hurting!

In verse 7, God speaks to Himself. His plans were to destroy all animate life with the exception of sea creatures. No reasoning was given for destroying the animals. A pattern had developed:

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Adam's sin caused him to be banned from the garden; Cain's sin distanced him from his livelihood (working the soil as a farmer); now humankind would lose the entire earth because of sin.

Resolve to Walk with God (Gen. 6:8-9; 7:1)

God gives us a message of hope in verse 8: "Noah . . . found favor with the LORD." The underlying Hebrew associated with *favor* is often translated "grace." God would extend grace to Noah.

Genesis 6:9 describes Noah as righteous and blameless and, like Enoch who lived before him, a man who "walked with God." He demonstrated moral uprightness. Others likely had the potential to nurture some level of communion with God but resolved to follow their own desires instead. Only Noah seized the opportunity.

Noah's actions proved he had saving faith. Still, his works didn't save him; they merely showed what was in his heart. And because of Noah's exceptional character, God singled him out to build an ark in which he and his family could safely dwell during the flood. This was God's survival plan for them—and them alone. Noah obeyed all of God's instructions during the building process.

Verse 1 seems to have occurred before the ark was complete; here God reminded Noah to go into the ark with his family (v. 1) based on the covenant He established with Noah beginning in Genesis 6:18. God additionally gave Noah instructions regarding the animals (7:2-3).

Realize the Impact of a Righteous Person (Gen. 7:13-16)

One week before the flood (v. 4), Noah, his family, and the animals entered the ark just as God directed (vv. 7-9). The men who entered the ark—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—were Noah's sons—the same ones in the genealogical line listed in Genesis 6:10. Noah's righteousness had affected his sons' safety.

"The LORD shut him in" (v. 16). This small statement provides great assurance to Noah. God Himself closed the door to show that only He could decide when the days of grace would be over. He had been patient with humanity. However, His Spirit would not "remain with" (6:3)—"contend with" (NIV) or "strive with" (KJV)—them forever because they were corrupt. They had rejected God and His way, but Noah would be saved. Similarly, Christ calls Himself "the gate" (John 10:7,9) or "the door" (KJV). He is the only way through which people today are saved and given entrance to the kingdom of God. He is the sole Provider of eternal life. Like Noah, we don't know when God will withdraw His provision of grace. Matthew 24:36-39 parallels the flood narrative with Christ's return. Matthew 24:36 warns: "That day and hour no one knows." It presents the urgency with which we should accept God's grace by faith, and then, live a life that demonstrates our loyalty and obedience to Him.

Noah's example provides hope and encouragement for modern-day believers whose families live in corrupted environments. It prompts us to ask ourselves, "How's my walk with God?"

Surely, one person's righteousness can spark blessings and protection for many. Noah's story is proof.