

To facilitate group discussion, Public Affairs Television, Inc. has created the 175 page *Talking About Genesis: A Resource Guide*. You can purchase a copy of the Resource Guide for \$5.95 wherever books are sold or by calling Doubleday at 1-800-323-9872. In Illinois, call 847-768-7000.

Below is an excerpt from the chapter "Apocalypse". In addition to the essay and activities found below, the full guide contains a discussion of the environmental themes of the story.

APOCALYPSE

THE STORY OF NOAH AND THE FLOOD: GENESIS 6-9

Now YHWH saw
that great was humankind's evil doing on earth . . .
Then YHWH was sorry
that he had made humankind on earth,
and it pained his heart.
YHWH said:
I will blot out humankind, whom I have created, from the face of the soil,
from man to beast, to crawling thing and to the fowl of the heavens,
for I am sorry that I made them.
But Noah found favor in the eyes of YHWH.
(Genesis 6:5-8, The Five Books of Moses, translated by Everett Fox)

Now read the story of Noah and the Flood in your Bible. As you do, consider the following questions:

- Was Noah a righteous man? Do you think he would be considered righteous in our day?
- In what ways is Noah a bystander? A victim? A survivor?
- If the world had become so thoroughly corrupt and full of evil and violence and if God was so pained by it, why did God spare Noah and the animals? Why not just wipe everything out and start over?
- If you had to write the headline about the Flood for tomorrow's newspaper, would it be **GOD DESTROYS THE WORLD** or **GOD GIVES HUMANKIND A SECOND CHANCE**?

ACTIVITIES FOR GROUPS AND FAMILIES

1) READING THE TEXT: GENESIS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Read aloud two verses in the creation story (Genesis 1:26 and 1:28) and ask: What does God say humankind's relationship to the rest of creation should be? Do you think that God's giving men and women "dominion over . . . all the earth" means we can develop the earth and use its resources in any way we want? Does God hold us responsible for the rest of creation? Then look at Genesis 9:1-7. After the Flood, have God's views changed in terms of the relationship between humans and the rest of creation?

Considering all of these passages in Genesis, do you think we have violated God's commands or simply carried them out? If we have just been carrying out God's commands, what do you think has given rise to the pressing environmental problems the world faces today, such as acid rain, water and air pollution, global warming, the endangerment and eradication of species?

2) MAKING NOAH'S STORY OURS

In her book *The Noah Paradox*, Carol Ochs recommends this exercise: Imagine that God comes to you, just as he did to Noah, and tells you that, even though God had promised not to, the evil in the earth has once again gotten out of hand, and God intends to destroy the entire world by Flood. Again. This time, however, you and your family are the ones who will be spared. God informs you that you can take as much with you as will fit on a large wooden Ark. In thinking about what to take with you, God says that you must take everything that will be necessary to recreate life after the Flood. You must not, however, take anything that led or might lead to evil on earth, and you should not simply strive to duplicate earth as it is now. Ask yourself: Why do you think your family was chosen? Assuming that you decide to go, what would you take and what would you leave behind?

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