

BIBLE STUDY OBJECTIVE

In this lesson, students will gain an understanding of “covenant” and specifically the Noahic Covenant.

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 9:8-17

MATERIALS

Flash cards of signs in shape and color alone (red octagon, thumbs up, green emoji face, etc.)
Lenten Journal (Remind students to bring their journals if they were at Ash Wednesday)

SUMMARY

In practice, many readers of the Bible approach Scripture as a series of individual stories that each have a moral, we should learn and apply. In doing so, we miss that the Bible is a complete unit telling the story of God. The concept of *covenant* ties the story together as God interacts with God’s Creation. The Old Testament covenants are God’s promises awaiting fulfillment. The New Testament reveals how Jesus fulfills the covenant promises and how we should live as people of the New Covenant living in light of Jesus’s death and resurrection. The covenant with Noah is the first covenant that God establishes in the story of Scripture.

CONNECT

Explain to students that you will show them a flash card. You will only reveal the flash card to the students for a couple seconds. They are to describe the object they see on the flash card and explain the meaning of the sign they see on the flash card.

Follow up the flash card activity by asking a few questions, like:

- How were you able to understand and interpret what you saw on the flash cards when there were no words?
- What are some other signs or symbols you see regularly and what do they mean?
- What is the purpose of signs and symbols in our culture?
- Are there any signs or symbols that take on a deeper, more personal meaning in your faith life?

TRANSITION: The Christian faith is filled with signs and symbols that bring meaning to our faith through recognition and remembrance. One such sign is revealed early in Scripture and will help us understand an important term during this season of Lent: *covenant*.



ENGAGE

Ask students as a group to share all that they can remember about the story of Noah. Fill in the gaps with this brief outline: (Do not get stuck in this part of the lesson, it is only background)

- “The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.” – Genesis 6:5
- God chooses to destroy all humanity, along with the animals, from the creation due to their wickedness and sin. – Genesis 6:7
- “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.” – Genesis 6:8
- God developed a plan to save Noah, his family, and the animals of creation from the flood that would destroy the rest of sinful humanity: Ark (large boat) built by Noah that safely housed him, his family, and the animals during the 40 days and nights of rain and the resulting flood.

Read Genesis 9:8-17

Ask, “When you hear the word *covenant* used in this passage, what thoughts or emotions come to mind?”

Ask, “Can you think of any modern uses of the word *covenant* in our culture?” (Some examples include: Marriage Covenant, some churches use a Membership Covenant or Baptismal Covenant, etc.)

Use Teaching Point #1 to explain the term *covenant* to students, focusing on God’s use of covenant to relate to humanity.

Have students read the passage (Genesis 9:8-17) again to themselves and ask, “What stands out to you as significant in this passage related to the covenant that God makes with Noah?”

Some elements that the students mention in response to your question will probably relate to Teaching Points #2-5. Use their answers and the Teaching Points to lead a conversation on and explain the significance of the Noahic Covenant.

Ask, “Why do you think God chose to seal the covenant with Noah with a sign?”

Ask, “What other signs do we have in the Christian faith that remind us of God’s work in our lives and our history?” (Ex: Ashes on Ash Wednesday, Cross, Empty Tomb, Palm Leaves on Palm Sunday, Christian Fish, Colors of Advent, etc.)

TRANSITION: We began Lent together on Wednesday with our Ash Wednesday Worship. During Lent, many Christians give up something as a part of their spiritual discipline. Another practice that can be just as significant is to add a spiritual practice to your life during Lent.

TEACHING POINTS

1. To understand the story of God through the Bible, one must understand the concept of “covenant.” God uses covenants as the framework for God’s redemptive plan for God’s creation. A covenant is similar to a contract in our modern understanding; however, a covenant is more relational than a contract. Each covenant God establishes in the Old Testament reflects basis of relationship, conditions of the covenant, and anticipated results of the covenant.
2. The first time the word “covenant” is used in the Bible is in God’s covenant with Noah after Noah exits the Ark. There are three distinct elements to the Noahic Covenant: Unconditional, Universal, and Sign Sealed.
3. God’s covenant with Noah is *unconditional*. In many covenants, both parties have conditions that they must fulfill; however, this first covenant does not depend on anything that is required of Noah, it is solely dependent on God’s faithfulness.
4. God’s covenant with Noah is *universal*. In a typical covenant, the ones affected were the specific parties who agreed to the covenant. This first covenant is not sealed between God and Noah, but between God and Noah - Noah’s descendants - Every living creature that came off the Ark.
5. God’s covenant with Noah is *sealed with a sign*. We might think of a contract being sealed with signatures, but here the covenant is sealed with a sign. Though human wickedness/sin deserves punishment (the flood is an example), God has created humans in the Image of God and covenants to preserve humanity until final redemption of creation. The sign and reminder of the covenant with Noah is the rainbow that naturally forms when storms gather over the earth. In a sense, the sign reminds God that the weapon of war (the bow) has been hung up permanently to preserve humanity until redemption.

RESPOND

Give each student a Lenten Journal, if they did not receive one at the Ash Wednesday Service. If students were at Ash Wednesday Service, they should have received a journal, *you probably should text them on Saturday a reminder to bring their Journal on Sunday.*

Explain: As we journey through Lent together, we will: 1.) Examine the Old Testament Covenants on Sundays, 2.) See how Jesus’s life fulfills the covenants on Wednesdays, 3.) Use Family Devotional Guides to enhance our conversations during the week, and 4.) Read Psalms as weekly devotionals.

Have students decorate the first page of their journal as a cover page. A great addition to their cover page would be writing a prayer to God about their goals or commitments for Lent.

Invite your group to covenant together to read the Psalm passage each week of Lent and journal their thoughts and reflections throughout the week for each session. *Note: As a leader, it might be helpful for you to text students each week and remind them to read and journal their Psalm as you do the same each week.*

Remember not to force anyone to participate but invite them to be a part of the covenant group. Lead the group in prayer.