

# Explore: God saves

September 11, 2015

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Sept. 27 focuses on Genesis 6:11-18; 7:11-14.*

When my son was in high school, two of his friends worked at a camp nearby. Often, they would take home large amounts of food left over from the camp kitchen. One night, they played a trick on our family. They left about 100 grilled cheese sandwiches on our front porch! Attached was a powerful note, dripping with blessed truth: “Cheeseus Saves!”

## **Corruption and violence**

From our Genesis study, we only get a few sentences away from the fall of man before Cain gruesomely kills Abel. A few chapters later, we find the whole earth is corrupt and full of violence (Genesis 6:11). Not just violent, but full of violence. In God’s observation and notation of the condition of people on earth, he makes a particularly striking claim in Genesis 6:12: “... all the people on earth had corrupted their way.” Have you ever noticed that, after the serpent appears in the garden, there is not another reference to the enemy in Scripture for a long time? Yet man is totally corrupt according to God. They corrupted their way. Acts of Satan not required. The downward spiral of sin increased in strength and velocity until God decided to destroy it all—not just humans, but livestock, vegetation and the whole earth.

God hates violence. Violent sin seems to be the major reason God decided to destroy the whole earth. Read Genesis 6:11-13 again. Evidently, God was willing to give man what he desired in his own heart—death and destruction. Yes, following in the footsteps of Cain, humans were killing and destroying each other—God’s creation—and God’s justice was to

destroy the destroyers. This is a good lesson for us to hear today. God will bring justice to violence in his own way.

### **We have heard the joyful sound**

The boys with the sandwiches were correct. Indeed, Jesus saves! The story doesn't end with God's justice poured out on mankind, but rather with a remnant of people, saved by God's grace. Tons of wood. Years of carpentry work. A boatload of animals, literally. A flood never seen before, nor again. Yet, a family. God goes back to his original creation, a family, with which to start over. And he offers a covenant only he can offer—a covenant of salvation.

We find a very Christ-centered foreshadowing of New Testament salvation in Noah's story. Several times it is proclaimed Noah did everything God commanded him. This is called faith. A covenant offered by God. A means of salvation offered. A response of faith. It sounds like the New Testament to me. God and God alone can judge. God and God alone can save.

### **Saved from corruption**

Pastor Anselmo is my close friend. He is the pastor of our partner church in El Salvador. Just six years ago, Pastor Anselmo was an alcoholic. Poverty in El Salvador is severe, especially in small villages like the one where he and his family live. There is no running water, so people simply use the river for everything. Yes, everything. When the only breadwinner is an alcoholic, in a country without any welfare, poverty is extreme. For more than a decade, Anselmo spent much of his small salary from odd jobs on alcohol. He was fired often. His family suffered greatly.

"For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). In many countries of poverty, sin, like alcoholism, literally leads to death. We don't think about it much in our culture, but people around the world die daily because of greed, stolen humanitarian goods and the intentional destruction of water

wells by gang members. This could have been the story of Anselmo and his family. However, the verse continues.

“But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord” (Romans 6:23). But. Were it not for the gift of God, every human God created would drown in the flood of our own sin and corruption. Anselmo noticed a church nearby had a soccer league. Tired of his alcoholic ways, he thought exercise might help him. Little did he know, in order to be on the team, he had to attend worship and Bible study once per week. So, the gospel message started to flood his heart and life. Within a few months, he gave his life to Christ and walked away from alcohol the same day. He hasn't touched a drop since.

God is so good, he invited everyone in Anselmo's family to “enter the boat” of salvation. And one by one, they entered and received the gift of a blessed life now and eternal life to come. They serve the Lord side by side, taking the gospel not only to gang members in their community, but also to gang leaders. In many ways, Anselmo is building a big boat! A boat only God can fill.

Let me join the high school boys in saying: “Cheeseus Saves!”

### **Application ideas for your Bible study group:**

1. Ask your group: “How does the story of Noah remind you of Jesus and the salvation he offers? How is the story of Noah different from Jesus and the salvation he offers?”
2. Recruit two people from your group to share their testimonies of salvation. You might be surprised how much your group will appreciate hearing about the changed lives of their friends.

3. Bring a picture of a boat of some sort to your Bible study. Ask your group:

“What kind of ‘other boats’ do people try to jump in to gain eternal life? Why?”