



Leader Tip: A fun icebreaker game that ties to the theme of this lesson is the “Will it Float?” game by Frank DiRenzo. You can find it at DYM here: <https://www.downloadyouthministry.com/p/will-it-float%3F/games-6170.html>

[Title Slide] [Leader tip: Either tell your own story or tell the following about your friend (me!) who has to occasionally do a full reset.]

Apparently, I’m the worst kind of computer user according to one of my friends in the computer repair business. Why? I know just enough to get myself into trouble. A lot of you have a healthy fear of technology. You’re not going to mess with settings, install risky software, take it apart – because you’re afraid you’ll ruin it. A few of you know how to design and build elaborate computer systems. I’m somewhere in the middle; I’m a little too confident and most of the time it works out, but occasionally, I have to do a full reset. Do you know what I mean? I have to take my messed-up computer, back up my important data, then wipe it and restore it back to its factory settings and start over from scratch with it.

It only took a handful of chapters in the Bible to get to the point where God felt the need to restore creation to its factory settings:

[Slide] *Genesis 6:5-7 (NIV) <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. <sup>7</sup> So the Lord said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them.”*

Can God have regret? Doesn’t that imply a mistake? Let’s talk about this word for a moment. This ancient Hebrew word shows up throughout the Old Testament and is translated in ten different ways in those different passages in our Bibles today, some of which are the opposite of each other. And this isn’t a new thing; even the ancients when they were translating the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek translated it ten

different ways in its different places in scripture.<sup>1</sup> Why? Because it is not a simple word with a simple definition; it has complexity.

We take the complexity of English words for granted because we're used to them and use them naturally, but our language can be difficult for others as well.

[Leader tip: Tell your own story of a word with many definitions or tell the following as an example shared with you by a friend.]

When I was in high school, I had a friend from South Korea ask me once to explain the word “even” to him; I was immediately stumped, so I said, “can’t you just look it up in your dictionary?” He was exasperated, pulled the dictionary open and showed me; “I did – look, the explanation is three pages long!”

Let’s go back to this word “regret.” John Walton, one of my favorite scholars on the book of Genesis and ancient cultures, suggests based on the different meanings we can identify for this word that it should be understood in accounting terms. In other words, the ledgers must be kept in balance and when they’re out of balance, something needs to be adjusted. With this understanding, God looked at creation and saw that creation was out of balance. Walton suggests another way to phrase this verse based on how this ancient word could be understood,

[Slide] ***“The LORD audited the accounts because He had made humankind in the earth and His heart tormented Him (i.e., He was distressed) over it. So the LORD says, ‘I will wipe humankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth ... because I have audited the accounts since I have made them.’”***<sup>2</sup>

This doesn’t mean that God was not grieved by this process, but it gives us a better understanding of His intent:

[Slide] It was a cosmic balancing of the scales needed because of the misuse of free will by humankind, not regret over a mistake by God. To be clear, we’re not talking about God weighing all our good deeds versus all our bad deeds to decide if we’re good enough, or in this case, humanity’s

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<sup>1</sup> John H. Walton, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 309.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 310.

good deeds vs its bad deeds; the scales have God's holiness on one side, all of humanity on the other. And they finally became so out of balance, the ledger was so far off, that it was time for a drastic reboot.

We tend to think of Genesis 6-9 as a story about Noah, the ark, and all the animals. The animals! They're just great. We love to tell the story of Noah to kids because of all the animals and the mass destruction of humanity. Okay, we water down that last part, pun intended. But it's really not about any of that; in fact, Noah doesn't utter a single line in the text until the end of chapter 9, after the flood, after the miracles, and only to deal with the sin of his son. So, Noah is not the main character.

[Slide] **God and His holiness** is the center of this account.

Genesis 6 records that Noah was a righteous man, faithful to God and blameless among the people.

[Slide] *Genesis 6:13-14 (NIV) <sup>13</sup> God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. <sup>14</sup> So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out.*

This was a standard way to make a boat back then, with wood, coated with pitch to make it waterproof. God goes on to describe the size of the ark; it was to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. That's massive.

[Slide] *Genesis 6:17-18 (NIV) <sup>17</sup> I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. <sup>18</sup> But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you.*

God then described how two of every bird and animal would come to Noah to be protected on the ark, and gave him instructions on the food to prepare and bring.

[Slide] *Genesis 6:22 (NIV) Noah did everything just as God commanded him.*

We have a lot of traditions around this story that over time have been accepted as part of Scripture. But the reality is, we don't have a lot of detail. We don't know that Noah's family was righteous, only that they were saved



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What stands out to you about the flood? What was something you heard today you hadn't thought about before?
- God's holiness is the center of the flood story; what is holiness? How would you explain it?
- Why is God the focus of the story and not Noah? What does that tell us?
- What do we learn about our need for a Savior from the flood? In what ways does God's holiness connect to our need?
- How does Jesus' death and resurrection balance the scales for us? How does His sacrifice make us holy in God's eyes?
- Read 2 Peter 3:10-13; what are the connections between this passage and the flood story?
- Why is it important to live with urgency? Who is someone you know who lives with urgency? How so?
- What does it mean to be called to be holy and Godly? What are some practical ways that we can live that out?
- What is something you can do this week to live with urgency? How can we help?



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