

Gen. 9:8–17

Ps. 25:1–10

1 Pet. 3:18–22

Mark 1:9–15

Fresh Start

**Goal for
the Session**

Third- and fourth-graders will embrace how God’s covenant with Noah gives all people hope for second chances.

■ P R E P A R I N G F O R T H E S E S S I O N

Focus on Genesis 9:8–17

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Dianne Bergant

Several important aspects of this covenant should be noted. First, it was made with all of creation. Second, it was multigenerational, made not only with Noah and those present, but with all who would come in the future as well. The biblical flood narrative contains a story of deliverance and of relationship with God. God directed Noah, the only one who found favor with the Lord, to build an ark so that he and his family and some of the animals might escape the punishing waters of the flood. From this small community God then fashioned a new human family and established a covenant with that family and with the world as a whole. This is a story of deliverance and new beginnings.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Wm. Loyd Allen

The God revealed here is adaptable, touched to the heart by creation, and willing to accept hurt to keep hope alive. The God of this covenant is unchanging only in refusing to give up on creation. God keeps the future open by self-limitation when humanity threatens to close off hope by unlimited repeat offenses. God takes this risk because God’s heart is touched by creation’s suffering. The God declaring this covenant is not an objective judge meting out a just sentence, but a lover grieved to the heart at the beloved’s violence, yet still seeking reconciliation. Readers will find divine regret throughout this covenant, but will look in vain for anger.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Jane Anne Ferguson

The creatures made in God’s image may always resist God. Yet God lays down God’s weapons against creation, against humankind. God puts the undrawn bow in the clouds as a personal reminder “never again” to destroy creation with a flood. In the light of that bow, the rainbow, humanity can see God as “One Who Remembers,” even in the midst of chaos, even in the midst of rebellion by creation and its creatures.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” David J. Lose

The self-limitation and willingness to sacrifice divine freedom that this passage describes reach their climax in the passion of Jesus Christ, for which Lent prepares us. This passage invites us to reconsider our relationships with each other and, indeed, all creation. If God, who alone has the right to despair, judge, or destroy, surrenders the divine prerogative from covenantal commitment, might not we who have tasted this mercy look upon all persons and all things as inherently worthwhile, that is, as those things that God has called worthy?

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Genesis 9:8–17

Focus on Your Teaching

Third- and fourth-graders know what it feels like to mess up and need a second chance. They will have suffered some consequences for the wrong things they have done. Hopefully, there are people in their lives who have let their mistakes be forgotten and have treated them with the confidence that comes with a fresh start. Our covenant-making God always brings hope to our fresh starts. God desires a relationship with us. Our failures do not void God's loving commitment to us. This tenet of our faith is important to cherish and believe at every age.

Merciful God, thank you for the gift of second chances in my life and in the lives of these children. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- purple cloth
- 6 battery-powered votive candles
- white battery-powered Christ candle
- Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast
- Resource Sheet 1
- Noah storybook
- Bibles
- copies of Resource Sheet 2
- Color Pack 1, 2, 3, 35, 36

For Responding

- option 1: white felt, white ribbon, ribbon in rainbow colors, fabric glue, permanent markers
- option 2: newsprint or mural paper, markers
- option 3: paper strips, pencils, box or basket
- option 4: pipe cleaners in rainbow colors, dowels, string, florist's wire

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, if you will be using option 1 in Responding, cut two cloud shapes, about 3" x 5", from white felt for each learner.

Greet learners by name as they arrive. Invite them to arrange the purple cloth in the middle of your meeting space and place the Christ candle and votive candles on it.

Gather the group and point out the purple cloth, which indicates that the church has moved into the season of Lent. Look together at Color Pack 1 and invite a volunteer to point out Lent, counting how many Sundays it will last. Read aloud the information about Lent from Resource Sheet 1 (Lenten Rituals), and arrange the votive candles as described.

Light all the candles and lead the Gathering Ritual from the resource sheet. Sing "Jesus Loves Me" (Color Pack 36, *Singing the Feast*).

Invite a conversation about second chances. Say that sometimes we realize we haven't done our best, or wish we had chosen differently.

✿ When have you really wanted or needed a "do-over" or a second chance? What happened?

Extinguish the candles.

Jesus Loves Me

Jesus loves me! This I know,
For the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to Him belong;
In his love we shall be
strong.

Refrain:

Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
The Bible tells me so.

Jesus loves me! This I know,
As he loved so long ago,
Taking children on His knee,
Saying, "Let them come to
me." (Refrain)

Jesus loves me, still today,
Walking with me on my
way,
Wanting as a friend to give
Light and love to all who
live. (Refrain)

Covenant: a formal and legally binding declaration of benefits to be given by one party to another, with or without conditions attached. This is different from a contract, where if either party fails, the other is released from the promise.

EXPLORING

Show Color Pack 2 and invite the children to describe it. Tell them this is a joyful picture of the end of today's story. Ask the children what they know about the beginning of this story of Noah and the flood. Gather the children and read the story of Noah from a Bible storybook or illustrated children's Bible. Ask:

✿ What is your favorite part of this story?

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Choral Reading) and form two groups to participate in a choral reading that tells this same story. Do the choral reading twice, switching groups. Ask:

✿ What does this choral reading help you remember about the story of Noah?

Give a Bible to each child and work together to find Genesis 9:8–17. Invite them to follow along in their Bibles as you read each section of verses, pausing for discussion as noted:

Read Genesis 9:8–11. Explain that a *covenant* is a special kind of promise that God makes. God will keep this covenant, or promise, even if people disappoint God or don't do their part.

Discuss:

✿ What is the covenant God makes?

✿ To whom does God make this promise?

Read Genesis 9:12–16. Discuss:

✿ What did God promise? Why do you think God decided to never destroy creation again?

✿ Did God ask Noah to promise anything? What does this say about God's promise?

Show Color Pack 3. Ask:

✿ Who do you think is holding the ark?

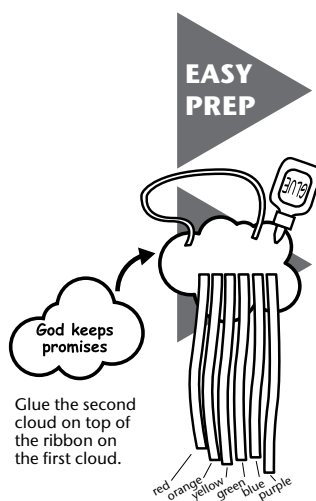
✿ What do you think this artist wants us to remember about the Bible story?

✿ How does the story of Noah give you hope for second chances in your life?

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

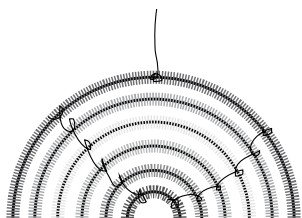
- 1. Rainbow Door Hanger** Create a reminder of God's faithfulness that children can dangle from their bedroom doorknobs. Give each learner two cloud shapes, about 3" x 5", cut from white felt. Glue a loop of white ribbon to the top of one cloud. Glue red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple ribbons to dangle from the bottom. Glue the second cloud shape on top of the first one. With permanent marker, write *God keeps promises* on the cloud. Review what you have learned about God's covenant with Noah. In John 3:16, Jesus promises forgiveness of sins and life forever with God. Discuss how this promise of forgiveness offers a lifetime of fresh starts.



2. **Colors of Hope** This activity encourages children to articulate ways to shape the world to be more like the one God intends. On a piece of newsprint, draw an outline of a rainbow with six bands. Outline the inside of each band with the appropriate color marker, starting from the outside: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. Recall how God flooded the earth because creation was going in the opposite direction from God’s plans. The rainbow represents God’s promise for a fresh start. Work together to fill each section of the rainbow with words to describe God’s hopes for the world. Add red words about how people will treat each other. Add orange words about how communities and countries will get along. Add yellow words about how people will care for animals. Add green words about how people will treat the earth. Add blue words about how people will treat water. Add purple words for how people will honor and obey God. Close with prayer, asking God’s Spirit to help you work for such a world.

3. **Fill the Ark Game** Create some action that leads to talking about God’s commitment to fresh starts. Form teams of three or four. Have each team gather across the room from a box or basket. Give each team a stack of paper strips and pencils. The object is for each team to fill its “ark” with as many different animals (names written on paper strips) as possible in five minutes. Tell them a duplicate animal in the ark will cost them a point. Only one person at a time can deliver an animal name to the box. After you call time, count the animals in each “ark” and announce the winning team. Gather and recall the story of the fresh start that God gave to all people through Noah. Wonder together how God’s people today benefit from this promise.

4. **Lenten Mobile** Help mark the weeks of Lent by having each child make a mobile. Each week, a different symbol will be added. These symbols serve as reminders of the focus scriptures, as well as what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Use dowel sticks or a coat hanger for the base of each mobile. Use string, yarn, or fishing line to hang the symbols from the mobile base. This week, the symbol is a rainbow, a reminder of how God gives new beginnings. Bend red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple pipe cleaners—in that order—into a rainbow shape, with red as the outside band. Use small pieces of florist’s wire at various points to hold the rainbow together. Hang the rainbow from the mobile base and save the children’s mobiles until the next session.



If your congregation has special worship services or events during Lent, give information about them to learners, encouraging them to participate with their families.

**I’m Gonna Live
So God Can Use Me**

*I’m gonna live so God can
use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
I’m gonna live so God can
use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!*

I’m gonna work . . .

I’m gonna share . . .

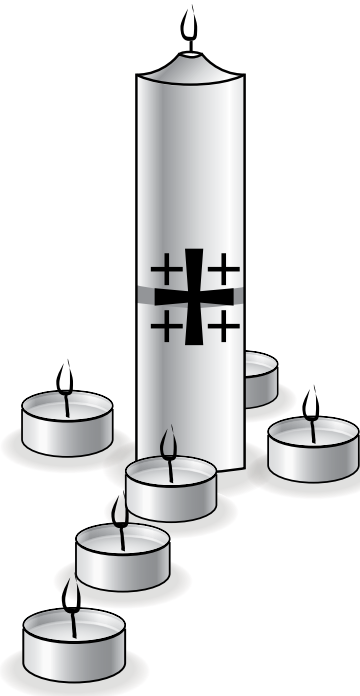
I’m gonna care . . .

CLOSING

Gather around the Christ candle and invite learners to tell what they will think of the next time they see a rainbow. Tell them that the season of Lent is about hope and fresh starts, too. Follow the instructions on Resource Sheet 1 to lead the Closing Ritual.

Sing “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me” (Color Pack 35, *Singing the Feast*), and offer a blessing, as described on the resource sheet.

Lenten Rituals



Setup

Place six battery-powered votive candles around the Christ candle to form a cross shape. Just as we add light to candles as we wait for the Christ child during Advent, during Lent we extinguish candles to show we are aware of the approaching death of Jesus.

What is Lent?

The season of Lent marks the forty days before Easter, but Sundays are not counted as part of the forty days. The Lenten journey is a time to recall Jesus' journey to the cross. Traditionally, Lent is a season of reflecting on God's relationship with us and how following God's Son, Jesus, might change the way we live each day. The color of Lent is purple, the color of repentance (turning toward God) and fresh beginnings.

Gathering Ritual

1. Light the Christ candle and the six votives, recalling that it is the season of Lent.
2. Sing the song given in the teacher materials. Pray aloud: Faithful God, open our minds to hear your word and let it change our hearts. Amen.
3. Extinguish the candle.

Closing Ritual

1. Light the Christ candle and the six votives. Then, extinguish the votive candles as a way of marking the Sundays of Lent. For example, on the First Sunday of Lent, extinguish one votive; on the Second Sunday of Lent, extinguish two votives; and so forth. On Palm Sunday, extinguish all six votive candles and the Christ candle as a symbol of Jesus' death on Good Friday.
2. Say: Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). We will follow Jesus (*complete statement with correct phrase for the date*).

Lent 1: By believing God gives us fresh starts.

Lent 2: By taking up the cross to follow Jesus.

Lent 3: By obeying God's Law.

Lent 4: By learning about God's grace.

Lent 5: By having the covenant of love in our hearts.

Palm Sunday: By following our King, Jesus.

3. Sing the song given in the Closing section.

Bless: **Leader:** May God bless us, and be with us this week as we follow Jesus.

All: Amen!

4. Extinguish the candle.

Save this sheet for use in upcoming sessions.

Choral Reading

Group 1: God looked down and saw the earth,
Group 2: No longer sure of what it was worth.

Group 1: People there were full of sin;
Group 2: They left no room for God to come in.

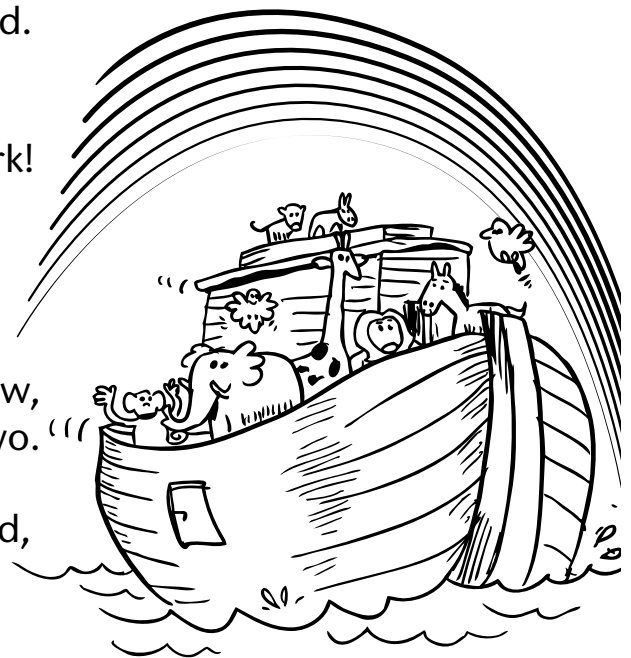
Group 1: But Noah liked to walk with God,
Group 2: And so God gave to him the nod.

Group 1: Noah, you must build an ark;
Group 2: Not sure where it's going to park!

Group 1: The neighbors giggled
Group 2: And the animals wiggled,

Group 1: But in went family to be the crew,
Group 2: And animals came in two-by-two. “

Group 1: For 40 days it rained and poured,
Group 2: Until they all cried,
 “Please, no more!”



Group 1: Noah sent the raven and then the dove,
Group 2: Always praying to God above.

Group 1: And when the ark did come to rest,
Group 2: Noah offered God his best.

Group 1: God put a rainbow in the sky
Group 2: And said, “You know I never lie;

Group 1: Never again will I send a flood
Group 2: That leaves the whole earth covered in mud!”