

**Conversations on
Genesis 9:8–17**

Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.

Idea! WALL-E (2008; G) chronicles the adventures of a small waste-collection robot after pollution made the earth uninhabitable. Watch the scene where WALL-E finds the plant and takes it with him (bit.ly/FOWWallePlant). What similarities do you see between the story of WALL-E and the flood story?

WHAT is important to know?

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. (*Dianne Bergant*)

- ✧ Often we think of covenant in terms of God's relationship with God's chosen people. How does this story broaden our understanding of the word *covenant*?
- ✧ In what ways does God seem different in this Scripture passage compared to the story of the flood?
- ✧ What does it mean that God makes this eternal promise to every living creature and to the earth itself?

WHERE is God in these words?

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. (*Wm. Loyd Allen*)

- ✧ The writer describes God as adaptable. What word would you use to describe God in this Scripture passage?
- ✧ In what ways is God "a lover grieved to the heart at the beloved's violence, yet still seeking reconciliation"?

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

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. (*Jane Anne Ferguson*)

- ✧ How has your image of God changed or expanded in any way by reflecting on this text?
- ✧ In what ways does God's covenant offer new beginnings?
- ✧ What kind of new beginnings is God offering you right now?

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

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? (*David J. Lose*)

- ✧ Why do some people choose to give up something during the season of Lent as a spiritual practice?
- ✧ How can abstaining from certain things or practices help us in our relationship with God and with one another?
- ✧ What are some other spiritual practices in which we can participate that will help us in our relationship with God and with one another?

Thank God for covenantal promises kept faithfully in Jesus Christ.