

connect 360

**BIBLE STUDY GUIDE
LARGE PRINT EDITION**

How Great Is Our God

PASSING THE FAITH ALONG

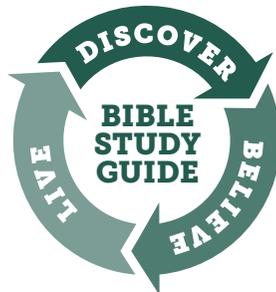
A STUDY OF BIG EVENTS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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Dallas, Texas

How Great Is Our God: Passing the Faith Along
Connect 360 Bible Study Guide

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How to Make the Best Use of This Issue

Whether you're the teacher or a student—

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. Overview the study. Review the table of contents and read the study introduction. Try to see how each lesson relates to the overall study.
3. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. (You'll see that each writer has chosen a favorite translation for the lessons in this issue. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translation chosen for that unit, of course.)
4. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the writer's comments. The comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible.
5. Read the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application.

6. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further thought and application, and they can also be used in the class session itself.

If you're the teacher—

Do all the things just mentioned, of course. As you begin the study with your class, be sure to find a way to help your class know the date on which each lesson will be studied. Here are some suggestions to guide your lesson preparation:

- A. In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying for your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents on pages 9-10 and on the first page of each lesson.
 - Make and post a chart that indicates the date each lesson will be studied.
 - If all your class has e-mail, send them an e-mail with the dates the lessons will be studied.
 - Provide a bookmark with the lesson dates. You may want to include information about your church and then use the bookmark as an outreach tool, too. A model for a bookmark can be downloaded from www.gc2press.org under the "Teacher Helps" menu.
 - Develop a sticker with the lesson dates and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.

- B. Get a copy of the *Teaching Guide*, a companion piece to this *Study Guide*. The *Teaching Guide* contains additional Bible comments plus two teaching plans. The teaching plans in the *Teaching Guide* are intended to provide practical, easy-to-use teaching suggestions that will work in your class.
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How Great Is Our God

PASSING THE FAITH ALONG

A Study of Big Events in the Old Testament

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Introducing

How Great Is Our God *Passing the Faith Along*

A STUDY OF BIG EVENTS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Understanding the Old Testament

Is Jesus found in the Old Testament?

Are there faith lessons, found in the Old Testament, that benefit Christians today?

Are there events, found in the Old Testament, that have great impact on Christians today?

Should Christians look to the Old Testament for guidance regarding their personal walk with God?

Yes.

There is a certain amount of confusion in the minds of Christians about the New Testament believer's relationship with the Old Testament. If we really want to appreciate the Old Testament, we must first read and understand the New Testament. It is then we will see how "the New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed and the Old Testament is

by the New Testament revealed” (quote attributed to Saint Augustine). Simply put, if we want to truly understand the Old Testament then we must realize it is revealed only by the New Testament. The New Testament is the key that unlocks the Old Testament.

Once we understand the New Testament, we will begin to understand and appreciate every Word in these great Old Testament stories ... and then, and only then, will we understand that these stories paint a beautiful picture of Jesus.

This book will highlight some of the big events found in the Old Testament. Hopefully, through this 13-lesson study, we will once again be reminded of ***How Great Is Our God***.

Lessons Learned From the Old Testament “Heroes of the Faith”

The Bible is full of “Big Event” stories. Many of God’s chosen servants were used by God in amazing ways. But can that still happen today? Can God use you to make a difference for Him? Can their faith be passed along to us? No doubt about it. He can and will use you. But there are some lessons learned from these heroes that we need to apply to our lives today.

Passing the Faith Along:

Lesson One: **God may put you in a special place for a special purpose for a special time.** These Old Testament heroes of the faith didn’t know why they were put in the

situations they were in. And today, God may have you in a special place, for a special purpose, for a special time, and you have no idea what's going on. So, what do you do? Your job is to be faithful, patient, and honor God. Who knows, but that you have come into your position for such a time as this. Bloom where you are planted because God could have you exactly where He wants you!

Lesson Two: **Your choices always affect those closest to you.** Your family and friends will confirm this. Both good and bad. Your family will be honored with your good choices, and they will be hurt by your bad choices. Choose well.

Lesson Three: **Forgiveness is the best choice.** In this life, you will always be hurt by others. So, what do you do? You forgive, because if you don't, the sin of hatred and animosity toward others will devastate your life. Hostility toward others will only backfire on you. I've heard it said many times that you will always end up being hanged on the gallows you build for someone else.

Lesson Four: **You can trust God even when He seems to be absent.** And He may seem absent, but you and I both know He is present. There are times it may seem like you can't see God or hear God. Trust that God is in control even if you cannot see Him. Because He is.

Lesson 1	The Way Through the Flood	Genesis 6:5-22
Lesson 2	The Results of Obedience	Genesis 22:1-18
Lesson 3	Bloom Where You're Planted	Genesis 50:15-20
Lesson 4	Being Available to God	Joshua 2:1-21

HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD: PASSING THE FAITH ALONG

Lesson 5	Holy Ground	Joshua 5:13-15; 6:1-5
Lesson 6	Sin in the Camp	Joshua 7:6-12, 20-21
Lesson 7	Samson's Spiritual Decline	Judges 16:15-21
Lesson 8	A Man After God's Own Heart	1 Samuel 16:5-13
Lesson 9	Overcoming Your Giants	1 Samuel 17:38-51
Lesson 10	A Tale of Three Kings	2 Samuel 18:6-11
Lesson 11	Fire From Heaven	1 Kings 18:30-39
Lesson 12	Running on Empty	1 Kings 19:3-8
Lesson 13	God's Chosen Queen	Esther 7:3-7
Easter	The Greatest Assignment	Matthew 28:16-20

Additional Resources for Studying

***How Great Is Our God: Passing the Faith Along*¹**

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NOTES

- ¹ Listing a book does not imply full agreement by the writers or GC2 Press with all its comments.

lesson 1

The Way Through the Flood

MAIN IDEA

Noah's faithfulness and righteous living saved humanity and preserved much of the animal life we have today.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

Is my faith in God strong?

STUDY AIM

To understand that anytime God sends judgment He always provides a way to escape it

QUICK READ

Jesus and the ark are similar. In Christ is the only safe place to be when judgment falls.

Introduction

Wickedness is on the rise in our world. The reality of God is being ignored by many, and people live with little awareness of the painful consequences of their own destructive living. A secular society rarely takes seriously the fact that immoral behavior negatively effects their own lives, and society in general. This was also the scenario in Noah's time.

As God saw the depraved and violent wickedness of humans, He was grieved at how destructive mankind had become. He decided to send a flood to cleanse sin's wickedness from human and animal life on the planet. It had become so bad, that a new beginning was needed.

But in the midst of all the wickedness, God's attention was drawn to Noah, whose life was one of walking with God. So, God decided to save Noah and his family, and provide a way though the flood so man and beast could have a new beginning. God is faithful, and He provides a way through the difficulties of life for those who love Him and live to please Him (see Romans 8:28).

What characterizes a person who pleases God and is therefore delivered from pending destruction? Noah's obedience exemplified faith, fellowship, and devoted faithfulness.

Genesis 6:5-22

⁵ Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶ The Lord was sorry that He had

made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. ⁷ The Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them." ⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

⁹These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God. ¹⁰Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹²God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.

¹³Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth. ¹⁴Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch. ¹⁵ This is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. ¹⁶You shall make a window for the ark, and finish it to a cubit from the top; and set the door of the ark in the side of it; you shall make it with lower, second, and third decks. ¹⁷Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish. ¹⁸But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. ²⁰Of the birds after their kind,

and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every kind will come to you to keep them alive. ²¹As for you, take for yourself some of all food which is edible, and gather it to yourself; and it shall be for food for you and for them." ²²Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.

Was the Flood Real?

While we do not have a specific date for the flood, there are acknowledgements in numerous ancient literary accounts of a great flood that affected much of the world. Some of the cultures or countries in which the story is addressed include Babylonian, Hebrew, Chinese, India, Mayan, numerous South Pacific Islands, Polynesia, Eskimo, American Indians, Peru, Chile, Greece, and other European countries.

Some people today find the story of the flood and Noah's Ark hard to believe, but it is in the Bible for a reason. The fact that Jesus confirmed the account of Noah, the Ark, and the Flood (see Matthew 24:37-39) settles the event as historical fact, and accurate. Other external evidence then collaborates its validity.

An Impending Judgment (6:5-7, 11-13, 17)

In Genesis 6:5-7, we see God's perspective on how truly wicked humans had become, the reason that violent wickedness so permeated life on Earth, and why that wickedness needed to be eradicated. Some criticize God for destroying so many people and animals. But as we read the text, we discover two things that counter such objections.

First, we see how pervasive violence and wickedness were. Notice the words used to describe life at that time: Peoples' outward behavior was full of unbridled evil and violence, and their inner lives were dominated by wickedness. In verse 6 the Lord saw that "every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continuously." Man's wickedness was not an occasional event, nor was his behavior sometimes good, and sometimes evil. They were continually evil in every thought, every plan, every encounter, every action, and violently destructive.

Since this evil was so total, God intervened. He was deeply saddened, and He grieved. Grief is a reaction to loss. Man had lost goodness, man's actions and imaginations were deceitful, destructive, and wicked. It grieved God that humans had turned away from Him. It grieved God so much, the world would need to be purged to restore life and goodness. The impending judgment hurt God but needed to happen.

Secondly, during the many years it took to build the Ark, humans had the chance to change their minds and behavior and turn to God for new life and salvation. But they did not.

As is often the case when God brings judgement upon people, He is allowing the defiant God-rejecters to experience the destructiveness they themselves have put in motion (cf. Romans 1:24, 26, 28). God protects those who believe in Him from themselves, from evil, and from destruction. But for those who purposely reject God, they are left to face the destructiveness they facilitated.

An Exceptional Person (6:8-10, 18-22)

The Flood account is not only about judgment, but also teaches us that God provides a way through the storm for those who receive God's grace, walk in His ways, and by faith carry out His will. In these verses, amid the gloom of the coming flood of judgment, the theme abruptly changes. It is as though God's eyes are scanning the evil in peoples' hearts and the coming pain of the pending flood. Then the story is suddenly interrupted, as God's eyes zero in on one lone figure. Notice the word "but." It is a word of contrast, of change, or of an alternative. There will be judgment of wickedness, "but" there is one who stands out who is not like the evil ones. Breaking in upon the despairing scene are the words of 6:8: "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord."

In the hopelessness of the wickedness that had corrupted everything and everyone, we read about one who had not been corrupted. As we read, we discover the one who had found favor with God, the one named Noah. In Hebrew, No-

ah's name sounds like the word "relief or comfort." As his father named him, he hoped Noah would bring relief or comfort from tireless work.

Three Saving Traits

Noah had three traits that are associated with salvation in both the Old and the New Testaments. The three characteristics of a person who pleases God, and thereby represents God's truth and reality in a wicked world, are: grace, faith, and right relationships, which are the outgrowth of walking with God (cf. Genesis 6:22). Noah found grace, believed God, and walked with God (lived in daily communion with God). Christians, in Ephesians 2:8-10, are saved by grace, through faith, to walk with God and do the good God created us to do.

Grace is the starting place of salvation, in both Old and New Testaments. The word "favor" or "grace" at its heart means "grace," gift," or "to give." The only way we can ever approach such a great God is that He gives us what is necessary to make it possible. Through grace He gives us the abilities to perceive Him, to believe Him, to approach Him, to be changed by Him, and the power to serve Him. Noah did not earn grace or favor, nor was he born with it. He received it. God gives us His favor and grace through Jesus (cf.

John.1:17) so we can please God. Everything Noah needed to know God, to become righteous and to serve God, were gifts given by God to him.

The next descriptor of Noah in Genesis 6:9 is “a righteous man.” It is God’s grace and favor that allows us to know Him. Righteousness means living in right relationships; being in right relationship with God and being in right relationship with others. God fills us with His truth and power, then empowers us to do the right thing in our relationships.

As a result of receiving God’s grace and favor, being filled with God’s truth and righteousness, and empowered to live in right relationships, God empowers us to walk by faith in unbroken communion with Him. Before Adam and Eve sinned, they walked with God daily in the garden. Enoch walked with God regularly, and then God took him home (cf. Genesis 5:24). “Walk” also means a way of life. Jesus called disciples to come, follow Him, to walk with Him, talk with Him, and by faith obey Him.

By faith, Noah did what God commanded him to do, to build the Ark. Can you imagine the faith it took to work for nearly 120 years (several commentators use this time frame) to build a huge ship, miles from any body of water in which to launch it? Noah had not just momentary faith, but a persevering, enduring faith, believing as reality that when he finished the boat, it would save their lives from flood waters.

These same three traits characterize what it means to be a Christian in the New Testament. Grace leads to righteous-

ness, which is embraced by faith, and then we live by grace and faith in communion with God. As we do this, we become God's representatives through our daily lives and activities.

A Great God Brings Us Through Everything (6:5-9, 14-15, 17-19)

If we focus only on the flood and the judgment this passage depicts, we miss the greatness and beauty of God revealed in the verses. The God of the Bible is not like other so-called gods. Pagan gods, such as Baal, or the gods of Olympus, are depicted as self-absorbed beings, interacting with humans, but only to use humans for their own pleasure.

The God of the Bible is totally different, greater than anything else that is labeled "God." In 6:5-9, God perceives us totally, knows us completely. But He is not an angry bully, inflicting pain upon us just because He can. He loves us and is concerned for His creation. Our sins and wickedness negatively impact us, and destroy the orderliness of creation on many levels, and this causes God pain. He designed us for such a glorious life. As our sins cause us to sink into pits of despair and destructive self-inflicted wounds, God comes to us to help us. He is such a great God!

God provided an Ark to save Noah's family and animal species from the devastating waters. In the New Testament, God has given us Jesus as an Ark of sorts. Jesus saves us when we entrust our lives to Him and commit ourselves to

journey through life with Him. He can protect us from anything and guarantees that we arrive at our destination of eternal life with God in Heaven (cf. John 10:27-30).

God gave us Jesus to live His righteous life through us, a life we could never have without Him. Jesus became sin for us so we who believe might become the righteousness of God in Jesus (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17-21). Receiving Jesus gives us His righteousness, so we stand in right relationship with both God and others. Whoever believes in Jesus has eternal life and passes out of judgment into being safe in the arms of God (cf. John 3:16-17). Living with Jesus provides us the way to survive the storms of a hostile world.

Implications and Actions

The story of Noah and the Flood assures us that God loves us, does not want our lives devoured by wickedness, and that God provides the way to escape the wickedness dominating our fallen world. Noah obeyed God's command, while the others of his culture were filled with evil thoughts and destructive living. God saw Noah's heart, and lifestyle. Here was a person that was receptive of God's grace, who could play a part in saving a remnant of humans, animals, and birds.

Noah's faithfulness and right living saved humanity and preserved much of the animal life we have today. Salvation was offered during the whole time the Ark was being built,

but no one stepped forward to accept it, to change their behavior, or to walk with God and to live for God.

Questions

1. Have you committed your entire life and future to Jesus, just as Noah placed his life in God's hands by boarding the Ark?
2. List several things in your daily life that reveal you are walking in daily relationship with God or living for God.
3. Explain how you might practically and helpfully respond when a person mocks God or mocks your faith in God.
4. Describe a time when you discovered that something you said or did for someone became an influence that made them aware of God, or to desire to move closer to God.

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