

Session 8: Protect (Genesis 9:1-15)

Genesis 9:1-15

1 God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “**Be fruitful and multiply** ^A and fill the earth. 2 The **fear and terror** ^B of you will be in every living creature on the earth, every bird of the sky, every creature that crawls on the ground, and all the fish of the sea. They are placed **under your authority**. ^C 3 Every creature that lives and moves **will be food for you**; ^D as I gave the green plants, I have given you everything. 4 However, you must not eat meat with its lifeblood in it. 5 And I will require **a penalty for your lifeblood**; ^E I will require it from any animal and from any human; if someone **murders** ^F a fellow human, I will require that person’s life. 6 Whoever sheds human blood, by humans his blood will be shed, for God made humans **in his image**. ^G 7 But you, be fruitful and multiply; **spread out over the earth** ^H and multiply on it.” 8 Then God said to Noah and his sons with him, 9 “Understand that I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, 10 and with every living creature that is with you—birds, livestock, and all wildlife of the earth that are with you—all the animals of the earth that came out of the ark. 11 I establish my covenant with you that never again will every creature be wiped out by floodwaters; **there will never again be a flood to destroy the earth**.” ^I 12 And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for **all future generations**: ^J 13 I have placed **my bow** ^K in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. 14 Whenever I form clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds, 15 I will remember my covenant between me and you and all the living creatures: water will never again become a flood to destroy every creature.

Exploring Key Words

A This is the same command God first gave in Genesis 1:28. However, the rest of the blessing (vv. 2-9) is quite different from Genesis 1.

B Before the fall, no mention is made of animals having a fear of humans.

C “Into your hand” (KJV; ESV); “handed over” (NAS); “in your power” (NLT). The Hebrew stem can also be translated “entrusted to.”

D Compare to Genesis 1:29. This is the first time God gave people permission to eat meat.

E God holds people accountable for the irresponsible or sinful shedding of blood.

F This was before the Mosaic law. Humans didn’t need the law to tell them murder was wrong. That was actually established even before the flood (see Gen. 4:8-11).

G The sanctity of life is based on the fact that we are created in God’s image, not on any human rulings or political declarations.

H God wanted humans to exercise their stewardship of all living things throughout creation, not just a small corner of it.

I A day is coming when God will once again destroy the world and make a new one (see Rev. 21:1-3), but this judgment won’t come in the form of a flood.

J The sanctity of life doesn’t have an expiration date. This covenant will last “as long as the earth endures” (see Gen 8:22).

K Just as the changing seasons remind us of God’s faithfulness (Gen. 8:22), the rainbow points to His promise after every rainstorm. Everywhere we look we see reminders of God’s covenant love.

TALKING POINTS

The Blessing (Gen. 9:1-4)

- God blessed Noah and his sons, directing them to multiply and fill the earth.
- God also explained that animals would now fear humans since animals were to be added to the human diet. God stipulated that the blood of the animal could not be consumed.

The Warning (Gen. 9:5-7)

- God issued a warning, calling for the life of any animal that kills a human or any human who murders another human.
- God pointed to humans being created in the image of God as rationale for carrying out capital punishment.
- He reminded the people to focus on multiplying and spreading out over the earth.

The Covenant (Gen. 9:8-15)

- God established a covenant with Noah and his sons, vowing to never again destroy human and animal life through a flood.
- God then placed a rainbow as a sign and reminder of this covenant between Him and all the earth.

Summary Statements

All people are to value all human life.

- Believers are to be stewards of God's provisions.
- Believers are to stand up for those who have been murdered.
- Believers are to reflect God's values and priorities in His creation.

Key Doctrine

Man

The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love. (See Exodus 20:13; Matthew 5:43-48; John 15:12.)

- History demonstrates that human beings have a propensity to devalue others. Prejudice based on skin color or ethnicity is one manifestation of this truth. Child abuse, sexual abuse, spousal abuse, neglect of the elderly, abortions, and bullying likewise are expressions of the devaluing of human life.
- In Genesis 9, God declared that He values all human life, and so should we.

EXPLORE

1. THE BLESSING (GEN. 9:1-4)

- God's blessing is a prominent theme in Genesis. God's blessing of Noah echoes His blessing of Adam to be "fruitful and multiply and fill the earth," and it is the second time God communicated this to Noah (Gen. 1:28; 8:17).
- Before the flood, humans ruled over the animals with no evidence of hostility between them. After the flood, animals remained under human authority, but with a sense of fear toward humans.

Why did God put special emphasis on the blood of animals?

- The fear would be magnified because God gave humans the freedom to eat meat, along with plants, for the first time.
- While God allowed humans to eat meat, He prohibited eating raw meat that had the animal's "lifeblood" in it. Blood represents life, and all life is precious to God.

2. THE WARNING (GEN. 9:5-7)

- After expressing the value of all life, God emphasized the value of human life in particular. Verse 5 contains three statements emphasizing that God will demand an accounting for the loss of human life.
- First, God said He would require a penalty for the loss of human life. Second, He noted that whether the guilty party was another person or even an animal, He would hold them (or the animal's owner) responsible. Finally, anyone guilty of murder would be subject to capital punishment.
- "God made humans in his image." This punishment is rooted in the ultimate value God conferred to every person during creation (Gen. 1:27). To take a person's life is to usurp God's sovereignty over life and death (Deut. 32:39). The severe penalty highlights the sanctity of human life.

3. THE COVENANT (GEN. 9:8-15)

- God announced that He was now establishing the covenant that He promised before the flood (Gen. 6:18). This covenant included Noah and his family, along with "your descendants after you." It also would bless "every living creature" on earth.
- The Lord promised to never again "destroy the earth" with a flood. He provided a rainbow as a sign of this covenant for all generations to come.
- Nothing is required of anyone but God in this covenant. Accordingly, the sign is a symbol of God's ongoing mercy and grace. Whenever the storm clouds come, the bow is a reminder that God is faithful to His covenant and that He values all human life.

Use multiple Scripture passages to understand the sanctity of life.

Take time to read the following passages. After reading each one, write down your take on what each passage teaches about the value of life. When you have finished reading and responding to each passage, write out your own philosophy regarding the sanctity of life. Genesis 1:27; 9:5-6; Job 33:4; Psalms 100:3; 139:14-16; Isaiah 64:8; and Matthew 5:21-22.

Enlist volunteers to read each of the passages mentioned in the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 80). Encourage the group to consider what insight each passage provides for better understanding the sanctity of human life. Encourage adults to write their philosophy about human life as directed in the Bible Skill at home during the coming week. Challenge them to identify ways they can uphold the value of life each day.

Ask: What is the connection between God's laws against murder in Genesis 9:5-7 and His promise to never destroy the world through a flood in Genesis 9:8-15? Emphasize the value God places on human life in each case. Share that He also calls us to value human life because every person is made in His image.

Point out that one way to demonstrate our belief in the sanctity of life is to share the gospel with those who need to hear. Direct attention to the inside front cover of the PSG and briefly walk through the Plan of Salvation. Let the group know that you will be available for anyone who wants to know more about accepting God's gift of salvation through Jesus.

DIG DEEPER

DOMINION AND STEWARDSHIP

We tend to think that all life—animal, vegetable, and human—is ours to do with as we choose. This is due, in part, to an incomplete understanding of what God meant when He said every living creature is placed under our authority (see Gen. 9:2). As a result, we've hunted some animals to near extinction, paved over wetlands to build luxury homes, and treated the unborn as inconveniences that can be removed without a second thought.

This is not what God intended. In Genesis 1:28, before the fall, God told Adam to “subdue” the world and “rule” over it. But then sin entered the picture. From that point on, “subdue” (Hebrew, *kavash*) took on a more menacing tone. It came to mean “dominate,” “subjugate,” “put into bondage,” and even “assault” or “violate” (see Esth. 7:8).

Likewise, “rule” (*radah*) in Genesis 1:28 has mostly negative connotations in the Bible. It is used to describe a slave owner who rules harshly. Ezekiel used it to condemn abusive priests who “ruled [God’s people] with violence and cruelty” (see Ezek. 34:4).

None of this is what God had in mind before the fall, but sin always twists God’s perfect design. Maybe that’s why God used a different word when He told Noah and his sons that everything was placed under their authority. Here, the Hebrew is *natan yad*, which literally means “given into your hand.” That particular phrase is never used in a negative way in Scripture. In fact, it *always* refers to God giving something (usually God’s enemies) into someone’s hands. No exceptions.

So a better understanding of “having authority” is “being entrusted.” It’s a statement of stewardship, not domination.

Of course, since sin entered the world, humans haven’t been able to exercise dominion without abusing the authority. But God still expects us to act as stewards of life, especially human life. It isn’t something we can discard if it doesn’t meet our needs. He has put life into our hands because he wants us to see it the way He sees it: something precious.