

A Good Shepherd- Sacred Story

Noah's Ark

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NOAH'S ARK ••• ~[A TERIALS

- large rectangular wicker basket to hold:

- wooden ark
- 2 wooden elephants
- 2 wooden bears
- 2 wooden alligators
- 2 wooden birds
- 2 wooden dogs
- 2 wooden goats
- 2 wooden pigs
- 2 wooden giraffes
- 2 wooden llamas
- wooden figure of Noah
- wooden figure of Noah's wife

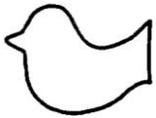


Noah

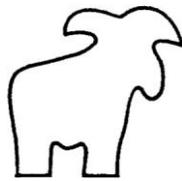


Noah's Wife

Llama



Bird



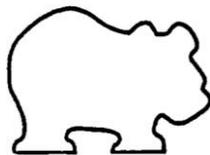
Goat

Pig

Dog



Alligator



Bear



Elephant



Giraffe

NOAH'S ARK ••• GENESIS 6:1-22, 7:1-24, 8:1-22, 9:1-17

ACTIONS

After speaking, stand up and walk to the shelf. Using two hands carefully carry the basket containing the ark materials back to the circle.

After speaking, Sit In silence for 10-15 seconds as you reverently touch the ark.

Spread both arms wide with palms up. Nod and smile.

Look sad and slowly shake your head.

Starting with both palms in front push them to the sides.

Place Noah and his wife in left center of the storytelling area.

With one arm, sweep aside an imaginary world.

Nod your head slowly.

Hold up two fingers.

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will always know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

All of the words to this story are inside of me. Will you please make silence with me while I find all of the words to this story?

God had made the world. God thought that world was very good.

But then the people of God started acting in ways that made God very sad. And God began to wonder if maybe it was not a good world after all.

And God thought perhaps the world should be washed clean so God could start over.

But there was one family that was righteous. A man called Noah and his wife and children still lived as God intended them.

God decided to keep Noah and his family safe. So God told Noah, "Build an ark, a large boat, because I am going to bring a flood to this earth.

And that flood will destroy everything that I have made.

But I will make a promise, a covenant, with you and your children. I will keep you safe.

After the ark is built take two of each kind of animal. Take a male and female of each kind. Also take food to feed them and your family. "

Place the ark in center front of you.

Remove the ark roof and face the ramp away from you. Place Noah and his wife in the ark.

Move each pair of animals up the ramp and into the ark as you call their name.

Put these animals in the top part of the ark. Put the roof on.

Place the ramp in front of the open door, covering the open space.

With one finger "rain" on the roof of the ark. Then do the same with another finger and then another ...

Lift the ark up very slowly until it is above your head, swaying it on imaginary waves.

Keep the ark in the air.

Gradually bring the ark back to the floor, landing it with a small bump.

Place your hands, palms up, together in front of you. Move them upward and apart as if releasing a bird for flight.

And Noah did as God told him. When the ark was finished Noah and his family went into the ark.

Then came the animals:

The huge lumbering elephants, swinging their trunks, the bears from their mountains. The alligators came from the swamps and the birds flew to the ark. The dogs came aboard ready to play with the children. Then came the goats, with their long beards and the pigs, hoping there would be mud on the ark.

Still they came, the giraffe ducking her long neck and the llama with his shaggy coat.

And God shut the door.

Then the rain started. Just a drop, then another and soon the sky was dark with pouring water.

And slowly the ark began to lift as the water covered the grass, then the bushes, the trees and finally the mountains.

For forty days and nights the ark floated with its precious cargo.

And all that was left on the earth was gone.

Then the rain stopped. And very gradually the water went down, until, finally the ark scraped and landed on Mount Ararat.

After waiting a while Noah opened the window to the ark and let a dove loose.

Hold your right index finger outward, like a perch on which a bird can land.

Repeat the flying and returning movements, but this time pretend to remove a small branch from the "birds mouth" with your left hand as it lands on your "perch".

"Fly" the dove again, then fold your hands in your lap.

Nod and smile as you remove the ramp from the door and place it in the grooved slot.

Move the animals back down the ramp as you call them by name, placing them in the area around the ark.

Place Noah and his wife in the center of the animals.

Make hand motions as if you were stacking a pile of rocks.

Place a hand over your heart.

Smile slowly.

But the dove returned to Noah so he knew there was no place for her to build a nest.

So Noah waited another seven days.

Then he let the dove go again. This time the dove returned, but in her mouth was an olive branch. So Noah knew the water had gone down on the earth.

After another seven days Noah let the dove go again. This time she did not return.

Then Noah knew it was time to move the animals from the ark, back to the world that was washed clean.

Out they came, the llamas and the giraffes, who stretched their long necks. Next came the pigs, who hoped there was still some new mud left from the rain.

Then came the goats, the dogs, and the birds who flew happily. The alligators left slowly for the swamp and the bears went back to the mountains. The elephants moved out slowly still swinging their trunks.

Then came Noah and his family.

They stopped and remembered God's love for them and built an altar to God.

And in God's heart, God said, "I know that people will always do things that will make me sad, but I will never again destroy the world like this."

Then God gave Noah a sign so this promise would be remembered.

Reach down in your lap and throw an imaginary rainbow into the sky.

Firmly shake your head when you say "not".

God took God's bow and flung it into the sky. And God said, "Whenever I see my rainbow, I will remember my promise to you and I will not destroy the world by a flood."

WONDERING QUESTIONS:

I wonder how the animals knew to come to the ark?

I wonder if the animals were all friendly on the ark?

I wonder if God cried when the beautiful world was being destroyed?

I wonder what Noah and his family said when they saw the first rainbow?

Carefully place all of the wooden figures and the ark in the large story basket.

Watch carefully how I put these materials away so you will know how to use them if you make this your work today or another day.

After speaking, carry the basket with two hands and place it back on the shelf.

Watch where I put these materials so you will know where to find them if you choose to work with them today or another day.

Dismiss the children to their work **ONLY** after everyone has had a chance to choose what they will do.

I wonder what you will choose for your work today? Maybe you will do our project or maybe you will work with a story and make it your own. Let's go around the circle and choose our work.

NOAH'S ARK TEACHER HELPS

The story of the great flood and God's actions to prevent the death of faithful Noah and his family has been one of the best loved of the sacred stories by children for years. It is also probably one of the most often misinterpreted stories of the Old Testament.

This is not a story about the people of God being immoral and making God angry so God chose to destroy the world. It is about the people of God forgetting that this is God's creation and making God very sad about the rift between the creation and creator.

This text also allows God to change God's mind. Genesis 6:6 says that God was sorry that God had created humanity. That phrase, among others, does put a very human side to God's being. Here is a God who interacts with the creation. This God is creator and destroyer, if necessary. But nowhere do we find that pleasing to God. So the power of this story comes not from the fact that God was gracious enough to save Noah, his family and a crew of animals; but that God was willing, in the end, to accept that the creatures of the "very good" creation would always have evil in their hearts. However, God's love and grace would transcend that evil. The covenant is made and the sign given. In Genesis 9: 16 notice that it is God who will remember when the bow is in the sky, not Noah. God sets the bow in the heavens so even though God may be preoccupied when the bow is visible, God will be called on to remember the promise with this peculiar and set apart people.

What is not in the story is as important as what is. For instance, there is no place in the story where the neighbors of Noah deride him for his work at building the ark. Neither is there a place where Noah gathered all the animals and ushered them into the great boat. Rather Noah and his family entered first and the animals followed.

This story also helps us understand how the people of God perceived the world. Many scholars believe that early Israelites, and others during that time, believed that the firmament held the forces of nature at bay. Notice in Genesis 7: 11 the account of the flood has water coming up from the deep and the "windows" of heaven opening. The firmament was then, in their minds, controlled by God who could open the windows and let the forces of wind and rain through. Notice then, the parallel that the windows of heaven were opened, but God shut, the door of the ark. Perhaps those two sentences tell us more about the understanding the early people of God had about the nature of their God than any other sentence in this book. While God would allow destruction by having the windows of the heavens open, God would prevent destruction by using God's own hand to close the door of this man-made lifeboat.

For the children I have lengthened the story of the animals coming into the great boat.. I've tried to give the animals personality and characteristics that are their nature. I've done this to try to build continuity for them. The goal is to have them believe that God is still working, even in nature. Because God cared enough to save these animals, they can each experience them today. Because God cares so much about each of them God will provide for their safety.

The wondering questions in this story are fun! I can remember wondering as a child how the animals all knew it was time to show up at the ark. This helps the children learn that in the Bible it was not Noah who went out and did a "last roundup" sort of thing, but God who moved the animals to the ark.

The question about the animals being friendly is one all children will identify. They've seen animals, or at least brothers and sisters or friends, who fight in close quarters. It's designed to help them imagine the conditions on the ark for that many animals and people.

The third wondering question is the most poignant and should be asked very quietly and seriously. It is to help the children understand that in this story God's pain is very great over the behavior of God's children.

The final question will allow the children to imagine out of their own concrete experience. As they imagine how Noah and his family felt seeing the first rainbow, they may remember their own wonder at seeing a rainbow.

There may always be a child who asks, "Is this a true story?" In response you may wish to answer, "This is the story the people of God used to understand how much God loved them and cared for them. What it teaches is true." For your own edification, understand that this is but one ancient flood account. Both the Assyrian and Babylonian flood accounts of approximately the same time have many of the same elements as does the Biblical account. But this is the story particular to the set apart people of God in the Old Testament. (Harper's Introduction to the Bible, Gerald Hughes and Stephen Travis, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981, p. 4)

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

What would be the hardest part about being Noah?

When Noah and his family were on the ark they had a long wait. What is the hardest thing for you to wait for?

After the flood God said that the rainbow would be a reminder to God not to ever destroy the by flood again. Why do you think God needed a reminder?

Notice that God chose to save animals and humans. What does that say to us about how we are to live in this world?