

Tell Me the Stories Noah: Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells My Story

I love movies, musicals, books – I love stories. I love good stories. I enjoy listening to stories as I drive between Liberty & Fannett. With the world being upside down I have not had enough good stories in my life. In the last few months Josh and I have tried introducing our children to some good stories. Some of them are silly. Some of them are thought-provoking. Some of them provide an escape from reality. Some of them are simply entertainment. My favorite stories are really ones that combine all three. A while back there was a television show that captured my heart and never let it go. One of the characters had the habit of simply saying, “what’s next.” When that person had the information needed and was ready to move on, he would say what’s next. I kind of feel like we could say what’s next when it comes to chapter 9 in Genesis. We already know that God has promised never to do it again so the first section learning about the rainbow we already know. The second part, where we learn of Ham’s curse again feels like we could say what’s next. We learned in chapter 8 that the flood didn’t change human hearts but God’s heart. We knew that it would only be a matter of time before we were back to our old ways. And after 4 weeks on Noah, I think we all may be ready to say, what’s next.

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Except we're not quite there yet. Repetition is often used to reinforce what's important. So chapter 9 is not just a rehashing of what we found in the end of chapter 8 but actually goes all the back to the beginning of chapter 1. You may have caught the call back – “be fruitful & multiply,” what God said to Adam is now being said to Noah and his sons. But instead of being told to be fruitful & not to touch, God takes a different road. God again gives the commandment and restates the covenant that God will never flood the earth.

In our often hurried approach to scripture we lost the real significance of the rainbow. We see it as a sign for us to remember. Some of us may even look to see where the treasure can be found at the end. But God's intent with the rainbow is for God to remember that even though we humans are doing the same old things that God has promised to change. This promise is vital for us today. We must change, we must grow, we must learn from our past. When we try something that doesn't work we can follow after God's example and try something new. And yet we all struggle with this.

As we move to Noah's last story, we may struggle a little bit with what to do with the it. If you've been following along and doing the bible study, you already know that there are more than

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a few questions that pop up with this text. Noah getting drunk, Ham's son Canaan getting cursed for his father's actions are just a few. The heart of the problem is that Ham didn't take care of his father, he instead went and told others about it. This story would've been different, if Ham had simply covered his father and been done with it. Ham told a story about his father. Was there anything good that could come out of sharing this information? No.

As much as I love good storytelling, we must strive to tell the stories that are true, kind and useful. It is hard to believe that Ham did not know what to do about his father. So is it true that Noah got drunk? Yes. Is it kind to share that information with others? No. Is it useful to tell others that Noah got drunk? Maybe but only if there was more to the story. We do know if this was the first time or simply the most recent. At least that is how we may read it today. For ancient readers the problem is that the son dishonored his father and that causes issues in the entire family as we hear of the curse that is to follow Ham's descendants.

So again, just as Genesis 1 was repeated, we have a repeat of dishonoring Father, cursing & blessing of siblings. This is the first time in the book of Genesis where God is not the actor or storyteller. So what does this tell us about God? That God is

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changing. It is not God who curses or blesses but Noah. God sees that God was right, the flood didn't change us. So who lives, God and Noah's children and children's children. Who dies, Noah. Who will tell the story of what is to come. God, through the redactor tells the next part of the story. The story that we're skipping to get to Abram gives us the next genealogy in how we get to next generation from where we are. I wonder if God may be taking some long, deep breaths before trying again with Abram. God has changed, the question becomes, can we? In the name of the Father, the Son & the Holy Spirit. Amen.