



BRIDGES

Connecting God's Word to Life

Adult Student Guide

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ADULT STUDENT

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Curtis D. Corzine, Layout

September, October, November 2017

Volume 24, Number 1

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Published quarterly for the teaching church by Warner Press, Inc., PO Box 2499, Anderson, Indiana 46018. Printed in the United States of America. Lessons based on International Sunday School Lessons; the International Bible Lessons for Christian Teaching, Copyright © 1971, by Committee on Uniform Series. Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Unit I at a Glance

Signs of God's Covenants

Covenants are often established with “signs”—visual reminders of the promises that have been made. Some of God’s covenants may seem complex to us, but their accompanying signs can be understood by children, and the principles of these covenants can be grasped and applied by people of various levels of faith.

Week 1 studies God’s use of the rainbow to assure Noah that neither humankind nor the earth would ever again be destroyed by water. The rainbow should still remind us of God’s faithfulness and of the physical security of the world he has given us to live in.

Week 2 explores God’s use of circumcision to ratify an everlasting covenant between the Lord and Abram to make him and his descendants prosperous if they would walk with God and live blameless lives. The people originally marked by circumcision would become the nation through which Christ the Messiah was born.

Week 3 examines God’s command to Moses and the Israelites to rest on the Sabbath and keep it holy as a sign of their reverence to God. Whatever time period we have to rest each week, we do well to honor the principle of setting time aside to recharge ourselves and to honor the Lord.

Week 4 looks at God’s promise to give his people new hearts and put a new spirit inside of them. This spirit is the very Spirit of God, and it enables us to follow the decrees and laws of the Lord “from the heart.”

Writing contributors for Unit I:

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The Rainbow

What Is Our Study about Today?

After tragedy strikes, there are possibilities for people to seek renewed hope and strength to rebuild their lives. God used the rainbow to assure Noah that neither humankind nor the earth would ever again be destroyed by water.

Bible Passages

Genesis 8:20–22; 9:8–17

What Topics Will Be Discussed?

Covenant, God's faithfulness, security.

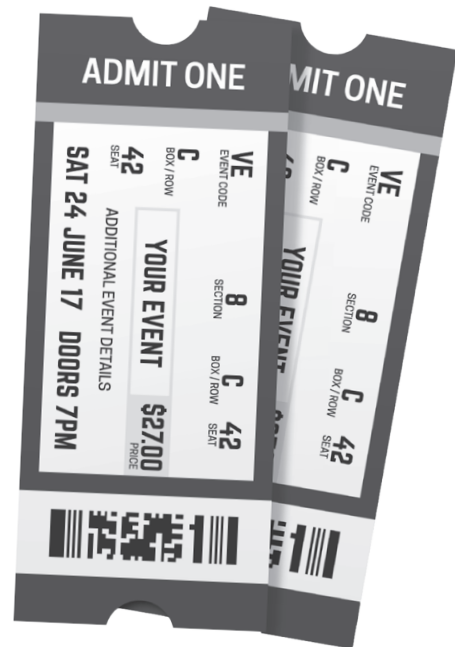
Bible Background

After the great flood, Noah and his family faced a world full of fear and challenges—and perhaps the first cases of post-traumatic stress syndrome. In Genesis 9, God made the first of a series of binding promises to his people through a covenant with Noah. The Almighty sought to meet the need of Noah and his family for security in a fearsome world through a promise to stand by them and never to send another flood that would destroy life across the whole earth. That promise was made without strings attached and was symbolized by the rainbow. It is a reminder that God faithfully sustains his people.

CONNECT

Covenants are generally understood to be agreements between two parties, usually for the benefit of both. In a covenant, one party usually promises to do something for the other in return for an appropriate response. Here is a list of items that might be called covenants. Check those you have personally experienced. Circle the four that you think are the most important.

- a. _____ A home mortgage
- b. _____ A marriage certificate
- c. _____ A ticket for a concert
- d. _____ A driver's license
- e. _____ The New Testament
- f. _____ A promise to teach a Sunday school class
- g. _____ A vacuum cleaner warranty
- h. _____ A note from an old sweetheart
- i. _____ A graduation certificate
- j. _____ A credit or debit card
- k. _____ Raising children to adulthood
- l. _____ Citizenship in your country



I. Genesis 8:20–22, No More Curse

KJV

Genesis 8:20 And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

21 And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

22 While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

NIV

Genesis 8:20 Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it.

21 The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: “Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.

22 “As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.”

20 In gratitude for surviving the flood, **Noah built and altar to the Lord and...sacrificed burnt offerings on it.** When entering the ark, God had Noah take extra of those animals that would have been acceptable for eating and also for sacrifice (Gen 7:2). It must have been a great feeling to stand on dry land again after so many months.

21–22 The sacrifice “reminded” God of his care for his creation, and it elicited a promise. In spite of the **inclination of** humans to do **evil**, the Lord would not **destroy all living creatures** as he had done through the flood. **As long as the earth** lasts, the seasons and even **day and night will** continue.

II. Genesis 9:8–10, A Covenant with the Creatures

KJV

9:8 And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying,

9 And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;

10 And with every living creature that *is* with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.

NIV

9:8 Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him:

9 “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you

10 and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth.

Noah and his family needed encouragement after the devastation that wiped out the rest of humanity. God encouraged them to repopulate the decimated land (Gen 9:1). A family and numerous descendants were considered to be signs of God’s favor. That is what God wanted for Noah and Noah’s sons. The Lord proclaimed that he was going to make a promise, an agreement, a covenant with **Noah** that would extend to Noah’s **sons** and all of their descendants and would cover **every living creature**. God’s promise was inclusive; he cares for each of his creatures, and each has a place in the ongoing plan.

III. Genesis 9:11–15, No More Flood

KJV

11 And I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

12 And God said, This *is* the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that *is* with

NIV

11 I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

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 generations to come:

KJV continued

you, for perpetual generations:

13 I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

14 And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud:

15 And I will remember my covenant, which *is* between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

NIV continued

13 I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

14 Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds,

15 I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life.

11 God's **covenant** was stated in terms of a promise related to the **flood**, but it had the broader purpose of granting a sense of security to God's people. It was given without strings. God was simply making a promise and not demanding any specific behavior in response. As with all biblical covenants, it was a statement of dependable relationship between God and his people.

12–15 Like other covenants forged by God, this one had a symbol that accompanied it. The **rainbow** that came with **the clouds** of a storm would remind both God and his people of the promise made. No unlimited flood would ever again **destroy all life** on earth. God would always be concerned about the security of his people and the rest of his creation. Some people have supposed that God created the rainbow at this time in order to be a symbol of the covenant that was being set in place, but nothing in the text makes that a necessary conclusion. In fact, the Bible is full of instances in which God gave new meaning to something that was already in existence. For example, the Lord's Supper, instituted by Jesus, utilized elements that had been in use for generations as part of the Jewish observance of Passover. The Jewish observance of Pentecost, which was connected to the giving of the Mosaic Law, took on new meaning for the New Testament church on the day the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles and other followers of Christ.

IV. Genesis 9:16–17, The Rainbow Reminder —

KJV

16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.

17 And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that *is* upon the earth.

NIV

16 Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.”

17 So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”

As tenuous as life seems to those of us who live in the twenty-first century, it is easy for us to forget how vulnerable and precarious life must have seemed to those who lived in earlier times. We understand that tremors in the earth come in varying degrees of intensity. There are earthquakes that can bring widespread destruction, and others that do little more than rattle the dishes. There are rains that cause floods covering mile upon mile of the countryside, and some that provide gentle moisture for the dry and thirsty ground. But imagine what it would be like for those with primitive understandings of earth’s weather patterns or the movements of geological plates. For people who had seen a flood that snuffed out most of the planet’s life, gathering rain clouds could have caused rising dread and panic. For that reason, God assured Noah and his family—and the family of humankind—through the **rainbow**, that he would **remember** his **everlasting covenant** and never again send such a devastating flood.

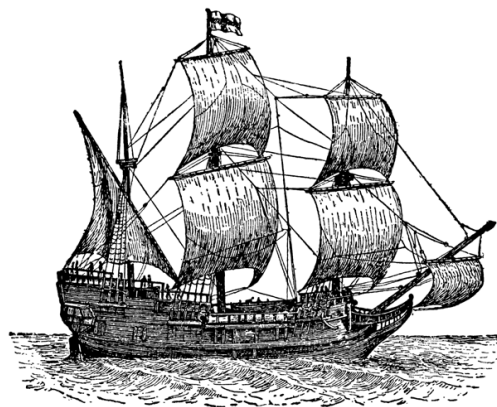
Covenants abound in the history of humankind. One of the earliest in the Judeo-Christian tradition was the covenant God gave to Noah after the flood. Another covenant was the Mayflower Compact, signed aboard the Mayflower sailing ship off Cape Cod, along the coastline of the United States, on November 11, 1620:

In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, defender of the faith, etc.

Having undertaken, for the glory of God, and advancements of the Christian faith, and honor of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the Northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents, solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic; for our better ordering, and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.

In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cape Cod the 11th of November, in the year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King James, of England, France, and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth.

Anno Domine 1620.



Which of the words listed here seem to fit in best with the idea of covenant, particularly a covenant between God and us? How might some of the other words fit in more indirectly? What words can you add?

- C** Caring, Cooperating, _____
- O** Owing, Obeying, _____
- V** Verifying, Volunteering, Voicing, _____
- E** Energizing, Emphasizing, _____
- N** Noticing, Notifying, _____
- A** Anointing, Announcing, Awakening, _____
- N** Naming, Negotiating, _____
- T** Thinking, Teaching, Telling, _____

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

M	August 28	Genesis 6:1–8	Noah's Favor
T	August 29	Genesis 7:1–10	Entering the Ark
W	August 20	Genesis 8:13–19	Leaving the Ark
T	August 31	Genesis 9:1–7	Be Fruitful and Multiply
F	September 1	Matthew 24:36–44	Nobody Knows When
S	September 2	Revelation 10:1–7	The Angel Speaks
S	September 3	Genesis 8:20–22; 9:8–17	The Rainbow

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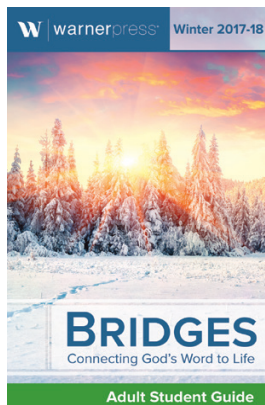
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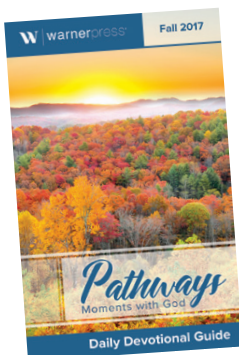
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