

Protect



SESSION 8

Genesis 9:1-15

Memory Verse: Genesis 9:6

All people are to value all human life.

Our society has flipped the script! From the beginning, Scripture declared that children are a blessing from God. Psalm 127:3-5 speaks of children as a gift and a reward from the Lord. God's design has been for parents to be filled with great joy. Today, though, many people see the conception of a child as more of a burden than a blessing. Pregnancy becomes an inconvenience, a problem to be solved, a tragedy—anything but an indication of God's blessing.

This session's key passages challenges us to recognize the value and the blessing of every human life. As you study these verses from Genesis 9, consider your own attitude toward the sanctity of life—not just children, but all of human life. Ask God to give you compassion where it might be lacking and wisdom as you encourage the adults in your Bible study to adopt God's view that all human life is sacred.



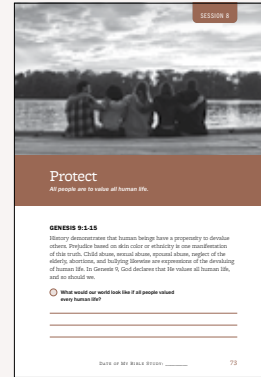
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History demonstrates that human beings have a propensity to devalue others. Prejudice based on skin color or ethnicity is one manifestation of this truth. Child abuse, sexual abuse, spousal abuse, neglect of the elderly, abortions, and bullying likewise are expressions of the devaluing of human life. In Genesis 9, God declares that He values all human life, and so should we. (PSG, p. 73)

What would our world look like if all people valued every human life?



Understand the Context (Genesis 9:1-29)

Genesis 9 opens with the fifth communication of God to Noah (Gen. 6:13-21; 7:1-4; 8:15-17,21-22; 9:1-17). In this case, His words spoke of a renewed blessing and covenant relationship that He would establish with Noah and all created life. As God addressed Noah and his family, He gave them specific instructions concerning four areas of life.

First, God echoed the instructions given to Adam to fill the earth with human life. In a sense, Noah was serving as a “second Adam,” charged with repopulating the planet. The page of human history was basically blank again, and Noah’s family would start the process of adding the details and colors.

Second, God spoke to Noah about the plan for sustaining life on the earth. This would involve a new relationship with animals and the provision for eating meat in addition to the produce of the ground. While Adam was a farmer and his son, Abel, was a shepherd, Noah and his offspring would now become hunters along with tilling the ground and herding livestock. But God’s new provision about eating meat came with an important guideline: People could not consume the blood.

The third part of God’s address involved the protection of life, specifically the prohibition of shedding human blood. Looking back over the first chapters of Genesis, it quickly becomes clear that humanity had established a poor track record in this regard. Cain and his ancestor, Lamech, were both guilty of murder. Genesis 6 speaks twice of the fact that violence filled the earth (6:11,13).

Because of this, God spoke directly about the taking of life and the penalty for shedding blood. Because humanity was created in the image of God, attacking another person represents an attack on God.

Finally, the Lord spoke of His covenant with Noah and all of creation. This covenant was a unilateral agreement. The Lord would be responsible for fulfilling the promise. All Noah and his family had to do was stay faithful and trust Him.

God promised protection to Noah, his descendants, and all created things. He would never again destroy the world with such a flood. This covenant, as with the whole of verses 1-17, highlights the great value that God places on life. To re-emphasize His promise, God gave the sign of the rainbow, indicating His promise of mercy toward sinful humanity.

The chapter closes with a dark shadow. After cultivating a vineyard, Noah became drunk and naked, bringing shame on the man of God. Adding to the shame of Noah’s debauchery was the disrespect and mockery of his son, Ham. Because of Ham’s disrespect, Noah pronounced a curse on his son Canaan. The text is not clear as to why Noah cursed his grandson instead of Ham, but Canaan because the forefather of the inhabitants of the promised land when the children of Israel entered the area.

Read Genesis 9:1-15. What do these verses communicate about God’s character and His expectations of humanity? (PSG, p. 74)



INTRODUCE: As the group arrives, lead them to discuss their favorite outdoor reality shows (such as *Alone*, *Life Below Zero*, *Dual Survival*, *Survivor*, and so on). Consider writing the names of the shows on the board.

ASK: **How would you feel being completely alone and on your own in the wilderness? What would be positive and what would be negative about it?**

EXPLAIN: Point out that once they left the ark, Noah and his family were literally the only humans on earth. Share that as they began the process of rebooting humanity, God had some specific rules, especially about respecting human life.

REFLECT: Allow a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 73 of the PSG. Emphasize that each of the sins listed is a reflection of disrespect for human life.

ASK: **What would our world look like if all people valued every human life?** (PSG, p. 73)

TRANSITION: *In today's session, we'll look at God's directions for Noah's family—and we'll consider how His words challenge us to promote and protect the sacred nature of all human life.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Music

Play the song “God Really Loves Us” by David Crowder. (You can find a lyric video for the song on YouTube, as well as a performed version.) Ask: **How does this song convey the value God puts on all human life?** Highlight that today's session emphasizes how God calls His people to respect and protect human life.

The Blessing (Genesis 9:1-4)

1 God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. **2** The fear and terror 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. **3** Every creature that lives and moves will be food for you; as I gave the green plants, I have given you everything. **4** However, you must not eat meat with its lifeblood in it.”

(v. 1) Blessed: To “bless” means to bestow good or advantage on someone. God **blessed** Noah and his sons by showing them favor and grace. Since this was a new beginning to God’s creation, He repeated the blessing (and command) He gave to Adam in Genesis 1:28.

(v. 1) Be fruitful and multiply: As noted, this represents a second creation. The Creator had issued the same command on day five of Creation to sea creatures and birds (Gen. 1:22). On the sixth day of Creation, He commanded humanity—and, by extension, the animals—to do the same. Along with the repeated blessing, God also re-issued the command to reproduce and populate the earth. Such a command was necessary to replenish the earth after the devastation of the flood.

(v. 1) Fill the earth: The entire population of the world had been reduced to only eight people, two of each kind of unclean animal, and seven pairs of clean animals (minus those sacrificed by Noah in chapter 8). God’s desire was for the earth to again be filled with His creation, despite the ongoing presence of sin. Otherwise, He would not have saved Noah’s family or the animals on the ark.

(v. 2) Fear and terror of you: The relationship between humans and animals changed after the flood. In Genesis 1–2, the relationship between humanity and the other created things had been voluntary and motivated by trust. Now, it was driven by **fear** and **terror**.

Adam and Eve had enjoyed harmony with nature. Now that aspect of “dominion” was gone. Motivated by a God-given fear of people, animals would flee from humans and the threat of death. This fear of humanity in the animals was likely part of God’s plan to have human beings rule over the animal kingdom.

(v. 2) Every living creature: God’s new order included all the animals He had created initially, including birds, creatures that crawl, and fish (Gen. 1:28). Each

species was placed under humanity’s dominion. With the exception of fish, these are also the same categories of animals taken on the ark with Noah.

(v. 2) Under your authority: Literally “into your hand.” These words were later used to describe the victories that God gave to Israel over their enemies. Although human beings could face mortal attacks by many animals, the fear that God placed in animals provides a safeguard against such attacks. Humanity’s docile dominion over animals before the flood changed radically afterward. Man now rules over animals primarily through force and fear.

(v. 3) Food for you: This suggests that, from this time forward, God granted authority to man to use animals for **food**. If eating meat had happened before the flood, possibly it was done without God’s approval. There is one condition, however. The blood was not to be consumed. In addition, this permission to kill was for dietary purposes and not for revenge against others.

Key Word

Lifeblood

Eating raw meat containing blood was strictly prohibited. This restriction would be codified in the Mosaic law (Lev. 17:10-14; Deut. 12:24) and is rooted in the sanctity of life. Even though God gave permission to kill animals for food, life (symbolized by blood) was still sacred to God and had to be treated with respect. The law would be very precise about animal sacrifices and butchering animals for food.

What was true of animal life takes on even greater significance with human life. Humans are God’s highest creation and made in His image, so the sanctity of their lives—from conception to grave—is paramount. This prohibition precedes the Mosaic law by several centuries, indicating that sanctity of life was always part of God’s design.

EXPLORE Genesis 9:1-4



APPLICATION POINT: Believers are to be stewards of God’s provisions.

REVIEW:

Remind the group that Noah and his family, along with the animals, had exited the ark after more than a year. Refer to **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Background of Genesis*) as necessary to add to the discussion. Allow volunteers to share what they may have thought, feared, and experienced as they left the ark.

READ:

Invite a volunteer to read aloud Genesis 9:1-4, as the group listens for God’s instructions to Noah and his family.

DISCUSS:

Call for another volunteer to read aloud the explanation of verse 1 (PSG, p. 75) with a focus on the instruction to “be fruitful and multiply.” Allow a few adults to share what that meant and why it was important at this point in history.

EMPHASIZE:

Read aloud again Genesis 9:2-3. Explain that God told humans that they now could eat the animals, as well as fruits and vegetables. Use information from pages 75-76 of the PSG to describe how things had changed between people and animals.

ASK:

Why did God put special emphasis on the blood of animals? (PSG, p. 76)

TRANSITION:

God has called us to be wise stewards of the things He provides. Related to that is a respect for human life. To emphasize the incredible value of all human life, God issued specific instructions in the event of the loss of human life.



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Art

Give each adult a pencil and a sheet of paper. Encourage them to draw their family tree, going back as far as they can. Be prepared to share your own family tree, possibly on a large sheet of paper hung on a focal wall. After a few minutes, allow a few volunteers to share their work. Point out that every family tree goes back to Noah. Highlight God’s command to be fruitful and multiply. Share that while God had cleansed the earth with the flood, He also had a gracious plan for repopulating the world He had created.

The Warning (Genesis 9:5-7)

5 “And I will require a penalty for your lifeblood; I will require it from any animal and from any human; if someone murders 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. **7** But you, be fruitful and multiply; spread out over the earth and multiply on it.”

(v. 5) Require a penalty: The Hebrew construction is somewhat awkward, but it speaks clearly to the fact that humanity is accountable for the sacredness of the life of all of God’s creation. Genesis 9:5-6 form a typical Hebrew parallelism where the thought (a required penalty) is expressed and then repeated in different words to increase the emphasis. God stressed emphatically the sanctity of human life and the severe consequences for violating its sanctity.

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.)

(v. 5) Any animal . . . any human: The penalty for taking a human life extends to both animals and humans. For example, when God later established the Mosaic law, oxen and their owners could be stoned to death when a person died as the result of a goring (Ex. 21:28-32).

(v. 5) Require that person’s life: The Mosaic law would later emphasize “life for life” (Deut. 19:21). The focus here is not so much on the death penalty as on the value God places on human life. The sanctity of life is exceedingly serious to God. In the same way, all human life must be valuable to us. In fact, human life is so valuable to God that in His economy murder warrants the death of the murderer. God will hold humans accountable for their failure to value life.

The translation **person’s life** literally is the “brother of every man.” This speaks of the kinship of all humanity. It is also a flashback to the murder of Abel by his brother Cain and God’s direct implication that we are all our brothers’ keepers (Gen. 4:9).

(v. 6) Sheds human blood: In the Old Testament, the idea of “shedding blood” refers to both premeditated murder and killing on the battlefield. This verse is couched in poetic form, most likely for emphasis. It also repeats the thoughts from verse 5, emphasizing its critical importance.

The thought of “accounting” occurs three times in these verses. There could be no clearer picture of the immense value that God places on human life, and there could be no greater truth for us. We are to value life to the same degree that God does.

(v. 6) By humans his blood will be shed: Three times in verse 5 God said He would “require” the lifeblood of a murderer. In verse 6, humanity itself becomes the instrument for carrying out God’s accounting. Humanity is both the victim and the avenger in God’s order.

(v. 6) In his image: The Lord’s strong statement against murder is grounded in His creation of Adam and Eve in His own **image** (the *imago dei*). Thus, to attack human life is to attack God because His image within humanity is sacred and must be respected as such. To take the life of another is to usurp authority that belongs to God alone. While godly Christians may disagree about the current implementation of the death penalty in our society, the image of God must stand at the center of any discussion or debate.

(v. 7) But you: After dealing with death, God turned His focus back to life. His words echoed His primary command for humanity: replenishing life on earth rather than extinguishing it. To Noah and his sons God’s direction could be summed up as, “make life; don’t take life.” In a real way, procreation represents an intentional commitment to the sanctity of human life.

EXPLORE Genesis 9:5-7



APPLICATION POINT: Believers are to stand up for those who have been murdered.

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud **Genesis 9:5-7**, encouraging the group to listen for God’s instructions related to human life.

RESEARCH: Direct the group to form pairs and use pages 77-78 of the PSG to discuss these verses. Instruct them to focus on the apparent harsh shift between verse 6 and verse 7.

ASK: Why does being made in God’s image place a different value on human life? (PSG, p. 78)

DISPLAY: Draw attention toward **Pack Item 5** (*Poster: The Christian and the Social Order*). Lead adults to read the statement together. Explain that this is drawn from the *Baptist Faith and Message* (2000). Encourage adults to share how it applies to our lives as believers.

ASK: How should believers respond to attacks on the sanctity of human life?

IDENTIFY: Explain that these commands pre-dated the law of Moses, which also provided detailed directions for respecting human life, including the unborn (see Ex. 21:22-25). Acknowledge that capital punishment is a hard topic about which godly people disagree, and it deserves thoughtful consideration and grace.

TRANSITION: *Ultimately, God focused on life more than death. He returned to the command to be fruitful and multiply. After God delivered Noah and his family, God made a special promise.*



Group Activity Option

Reflective

Distribute index cards and pens to each adult. Lead the group to write the following on their cards: *The Sanctity of Human Life: God values all human life.* Instruct the group to consider one or two specific ways they can support the sanctity of human life each day. Direct the group to prayerfully consider how God wants them to put those ideas into action.

The Covenant (Genesis 9:8-15)

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.” **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: **13** I have placed my bow 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.”

(v. 9) Establishing my covenant: A form of the Hebrew word for **establishing** (*qum*) is used three different times in this passage (vv. 9,11,17). It means “to fix,” “to stand,” or “to confirm.” The word also appears in three different Hebrew tenses: imminent future (v. 9), present (v. 11), and past tense (v. 17). This emphasizes the unilateral nature of the covenant, meaning that God alone bears the obligation (Gen. 6:18). Initially, the covenant involved those in the ark. After the flood, it extends to all creation. It is God’s solemn word that He will no longer destroy the earth by flooding.

(v. 10) Every living creature: As God spoke to Noah before the flood, He specified that every creature with the breath of life would perish except those in the ark. Now, the covenant included every animal that exited the ark. This was an all-inclusive covenant promise.

Bible Skill

Use multiple Scripture passages to understand the sanctity of life.

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

(v. 11) Never again: This phrase occurs twice in verse 11 as an emphatic repetition to validate the certainty of God’s promise.

(v. 11) Wiped out: The term has also been translated “cut off” and “destroyed.” The term is also used in Genesis 15:9-19, where God “cut” a covenant with Abraham. In the ancient world, an animal would be cut in half and the party being placed under obligation would pass between the parts of the animal. In a sense, both parties were saying, “May I also be cut asunder like this animal if I violate this agreement.” In Genesis 15, God alone passed through the carcasses to guarantee His words. In Genesis 9:12, though, the opposite thought is established, as God promised life to His creation and not death.

(v. 12) All future generations: Along with Noah’s family, this covenant was given to **generations** to come. It is a remarkable act of God’s mercy and grace because He had already lamented the utter sinfulness of humanity (8:21). Despite knowing that human depravity would not change, God extended mercy to future generations in anticipation of the coming Messiah and His atoning death for the sins of all humanity.

(vv. 12-13) Sign of the covenant: This **sign**—a rainbow—was an assurance to humanity that God would keep His promise. Just as God had declared “my covenant” (v. 9), so He declared that this was **my bow in the clouds**. The rainbow was a visible manifestation attesting to the grace that God extended to the human race.

Rainbows appear three more times in Scripture: Ezekiel 1:28 and Revelation 4:3; 10:1. In each of these instances, the rainbow was a sign of God’s presence, just as it is here in Genesis 9.

EXPLORE Genesis 9:8-15



APPLICATION POINT: Believers are to reflect God’s values and priorities in His creation.

READ: Call for the group to read silently **Genesis 9:8-15**, looking for the promise God made to Noah and all humanity.

ASK: **What is a covenant?**

EXPLAIN: A covenant is basically a contract or agreement between two parties. Ancient covenants usually set down the rules for how a stronger person or group would treat a lesser person or group. In the Bible, God makes covenants with His people as a promise of His blessings and protection.

RESEARCH: Divide the group into an even number of teams. Instruct half the groups to review verses 8-10 (PSG, pp. 78-79) and determine with whom God was making a covenant. Instruct the other groups to review verses 11-15 (PSG, pp. 79-80) and determine the sign of the covenant. After a few minutes, allow the groups to share their findings.

HIGHLIGHT: Point out that God made His covenant with Noah, but it also applies to us. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 10 (Handout: Covenants in Genesis)**. Highlight the covenant that God made and how He sealed it with the rainbow.

ASK: **How does God’s promise to preserve life impact the way humans should treat each other and respect all human life?** (PSG, p. 80)

Covenant	Parties	Sign	Significance
Abraham	God and Abraham	Uncircumcised	God promises Abraham that he will have many descendants and that they will inherit the land of Canaan.
Moses	God and Israel	Uncircumcised	God promises Israel that He will be their God and that they will inherit the land of Canaan.
Noah	God and Noah	Uncircumcised	God promises Noah that He will never again destroy all life on earth with a flood.
Jesus	God and humanity	Uncircumcised	God promises humanity that He will send His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins and to give us eternal life.

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Prism

Use a prism (or show a video of a prism in action) to demonstrate how light refracts to reveal the colors of the rainbow. Point out that even though we don't see them, the colors are still there. Remind adults that God used the rainbow to remind people of His promise to protect life. *While rainbows should create a sense of gratitude in our hearts, they also should challenge us to follow God's example and work to protect all human life as valuable.*

CHALLENGE

- SUMMARIZE:** Review these points from Apply the Text on page 81 of the Personal Study Guide:
- *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.*
- REVIEW:** Invite the group to share how these statements are supported by the Scripture verses read in this session.
- DISCUSS:** Guide the group to discuss the second question set on page 81 of the PSG: **In your day-to-day activities, what are some ways you can reflect the value God places on people? Where are your values and priorities different from God's? What needs to change?**
- PRAY:** Close in prayer, asking God to remind each individual that every person is made in the image of God and to give the group an appreciation for all human life as valuable in God's eyes. Encourage adults to represent the character and nature of God by reflecting the value He places on all human life.

After the Session

Reinforce the session by texting the group and encouraging them to actively look for ways they can reinforce God's value of all human life. Also, challenge them to spend some time in prayer this week, asking God to remind them just how deeply He loves them. Remind adults that God loves them more than they could imagine and that He wants them to embrace that love and to celebrate their creation in His image.

ADULT COMMENTARY



Want to go deeper in your study?
Explore the Bible Adult Commentary offers additional information and biblical insights related to the key passages.
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