

of Following Jesus

were walking along the road, a to him. "I will follow you you go." "Foxes have holes, and air have nests, but the Son of man has no place to lay his head." "Follow me," he said. "Lord,...

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who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me." "The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." "He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do...

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2017 STARTER KIT WEEK 12

THE FIRST EVANGELISTS OBEY THEIR CALLING

FOR YOUR YOUTH GROUP OR SMALL GROUP MEETINGS

and out workers into his harvest. I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. "Do not take a purse or bag or sandals, and do not greet anyone on the road."

"When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will turn against you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move from house to house."

"When you enter a town and are welcomed, what is set before you, eat and drink. Heal the sick there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.' But when you are not welcomed, go into the street and say, 'Even the dust of your feet sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.' I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for you."

"Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented and been sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And you, Nazareth, will you be lifted up to the heights? You will go down to the depths. Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

see but did not see it, and to hear what you heard but did not hear it."

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

"On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

"He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' "

"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

"In reply Jesus said: " A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took...

HERE IS WHAT WE PROVIDE IN EACH SESSION:

1. A brief reading on the topic. This can be read, but of course should be shared instead in the leader's own words, adding or subtracting details that fit your group. Usually, there are Bible readings and questions worked into the text.
2. A short devotion that brings home the principles of the topic of the week. This is intended to be shared with the whole group.
3. An activity suggestion. These are simple, requiring few, if any, materials, but we all learn and retain better if we do something physical with what we've heard and seen.
4. A short skit. If you have time to rehearse and learn, these can be done on different weeks, or even for other meetings such as church services. But they can also be and done in impromptu fashion, each person reading his/her part expressively. Always allow time to discuss people's reactions after skits.
5. Very important: Each week's starter kit includes a page called "7 Days of Soul Food." Print these out and give copies to each person, or give each person the link if they have online access. These are personal applications that will carry the devotion through the whole week. It is highly recommended that each person begin some sort of prayer journal and use it all year. We general think of journals as being full of writing, but if you don't like to write, you can draw, doodle, paste in pictures that bring the lessons of the week to mind — anything that helps you draw closer to God.

THE STORY

THE FIRST EVANGELISTS OBEY THEIR CALLING

The first evangelist in the Bible, believe it or not, is Enoch. Genesis doesn't tell us this, or at least not at first sight. Read or have someone read **Genesis 5:18-24**. Take a minute to discuss all the details about Enoch that you can glean from this passage. You could have a scribe record them if you like.

Can you tell he was an evangelist from this passage? Well, that depends on what you mean by evangelist. All through these lessons we have been discussing the ways that allowing God to reform your life can speak to those around you, even without words. So if Enoch was so close to God that his biography reads, "Enoch walked with God," then yes, his life definitely shared the Good News with those around him.

What was the Good News at that time? **Read Gen. 3:15**. God had promised deliverance. There would be more details revealed in coming generations, but they knew that they had sinned, that God had forgiven and still loved them (*great news!*) and that He was going to provide a Redeemer.

However, we know something more about Enoch. Read or have read Jude 1:14-16. He was preaching about what we recognize as the Second Coming! Now, it's possible they didn't know at that point that Jesus would come twice, once as a human and once as a conqueror, but it's clear that Enoch knew and taught about the final judgment.

The next evangelist mentioned is Noah. We know a lot more about him. **Read or have read Gen. 6:8-14**. What can we learn about Noah here? (*Make a list if you wish.*) Now read verse 22. Noah obeyed. That's when his real trouble began.

At first, Noah had no sons to help him. From Gen. 7:6 we know that the flood came when he was 600, which means he had been building and preaching since he was 480. And according to 5:32 his first son was born when he was 500. So Noah had already been preparing for 20 years before he had children. It's possible that he and his wife, like many famous Bible characters, were barren at first, until God's promises to them were fulfilled. However, he did still have the help of Methuselah and his sons, all of whom died before the Flood came, but they were believers and would have gone into the ark if they had still been alive. Here is how Mrs. White described the situation:

“Amid the prevailing corruption, Methuselah, Noah, and many others labored to keep alive the knowledge of the true God and to stay the tide of moral evil. A hundred and twenty years before the Flood, the Lord by a holy angel declared to Noah His purpose, and directed him to build an ark. While building the ark he was to preach that God would bring a flood of water upon the earth to destroy the wicked. Those who would believe the message, and would prepare for that event by repentance and reformation, should find pardon and be saved. Enoch had repeated to his children what God had shown him in regard to the Flood, and Methuselah and his sons, who lived to hear the preaching of Noah, assisted in building the ark” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 95.)

At first, Mrs. White says, people listened. They were fearful because they knew they had been living unholy lives. After all, Adam’s godly son, Seth, died only a few years before Noah’s birth, and Seth’s son, Enos, lived until Noah was 84! The believers still didn’t move far from Eden, worshiping near the gate where the angel guarded the way in, and everyone alive still knew the true story of creation and the fall of Adam and Eve very well. Nobody should have had to remind them of their guilt.

But as time passed and nothing changed, nature still seemed to work nearly perfectly, and “crazy Noah” kept building his boat and claiming that water was going to fall from the sky, they lost interest. Especially after Methuselah and his children died, it looked to all the world as if Noah was simply out of his mind.

Yet he faithfully kept on, now with the help of three sons, as well as the four wives...and one day the animals and birds came. That must have made the people stop and think. But still they refused to enter, and finally, the door was shut.

For that generation, probation had ended.

DEVOTION

The generations after Eden was closed de-formed incredibly fast. The first generation saw the first murder, but it wasn't the last. Within a few generations there were men claiming more than one wife, which shows that already the idea that women are somehow less valuable than men was gaining credence. The beginnings of war mentality, such as Lamech seeking revenge "seventy-sevenfold" (Gen. 4:24) were present. And even idolatry, the worship of creations instead of the Creator began—while they could still see the angel at the gate of Eden!

Yet still God worked, still people faithfully worshiped and obeyed and taught the truth. Enoch was taken to heaven, to the astonishment and bewilderment of all. Methuselah and his sons and grandsons (Noah was his grandson) tried to live and teach the truth in the midst of violence and turbulence. But they probably weren't as much in the public eye as they were after God told Noah to build the ark. And being in the public eye was not a comfortable thing. And the numbers of the faithful must have been dwindling terribly, or more would have been saved in the ark.

Can you imagine what it must have been like to stand faithfully for the truth in such a situation? Let's think about how it progressed.

First, Noah probably told his wife and relatives of God's command. They must have been awestruck, and promised to help him fulfill what God had asked.

Next they started gathering the materials, and answering questions from neighbors. As the story spread, people came to watch, and perhaps to help, at least at first. So they began preaching more fervently to larger crowds.

Some eagerly said they believed and would repent. Maybe they even showed a little life reformation—at first. But others mocked and jeered, and time passed...how discouraging it must have been for Noah and his family when they—those who seemed to believe what Noah preached—began to fall away and change their minds.

Their sons were born and grew old enough to help. They found wives among "the sons of God," the believing community, and those three young women joined in the work. No doubt by now Noah was famous in the whole known world, which was all still centered in and near what we today

would call the Fertile Crescent and North Africa. No doubt also that he and his family were the subjects of every kind of mockery, taunts, and perhaps threats.

How did they stand? How did they maintain their love for their fallen neighbors and keep pleading with them to come in and be saved?

It had to be, as it always is, by the Spirit of God. God “repented that he made people,” but He still loved them. He wanted to save them all if He could. Maybe, like the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, or of Jonah and Nineveh, if many had repented, He would have turned back the Flood.

They didn’t. Noah and his family had to go in all alone. But they did not give up faith. They stood firm. (Though that seven days before the rain began must have tested their faith!)

And when they came out, the whole planet had been re-formed. Taken apart, torn up, and turned into something completely unrecognizable. But God was still there. **Read or have read Gen. 9:12-17** to see how He reassured them.

ACTIVITY SUGGESTION

Using clay, popsicle sticks, paper, cardboard, or whatever you have, try to build a model of the ark following the directions in Genesis 6:14-16.

Decide what your scale will be—for example, 1” to 10 cubits would give you a model 60” long, or 1 cm to 5 cubits would give you one 60 cm long.

Choose any scale that fits your materials, or even have individuals make their own, probably smaller.

Instructions from Genesis 6:14-16:

1. Build yourself a ship from teakwood
2. Make rooms in it
3. Coat it with pitch inside and out
4. Make it 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high
5. Build a roof for it
6. Put in a window eighteen inches from the top
7. Put in a door on the side of the ship
8. Make three decks, lower, middle, and upper

SEVEN DAYS OF SOUL FOOD

SEVEN DAYS' WORTH OF DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

You must love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind (Luke 10:27). To put it another way, body+heart+mind=one living soul.

We can't divide ourselves into different sections, but it's useful to look at these different aspects of ourselves and be sure we have a well-balanced faith that uses all the avenues of a soul. Each of these starter kits will include a week's worth of food for your soul in each of these four methods of understanding and expression.

Write about each of the following in your prayer journal this week. Each day strive to use language of emotions, thought, physical health and strength, or spirit on the given days.

DAY 1: Noah and his family and thousands of animals and birds, representative of all the species God wanted to save, spent an entire year in a boat that, for the first 40 days, rocked so hard that "Satan himself, who was compelled to remain in the midst of the warring elements, feared for his own existence" (PP 99). What was that like? Read, if possible, the chapter "The Flood" in *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Consider what your present life suggests about how you would have reacted if you had been there to hear Noah preach.

DAY 2: Heart. Reread Gen. 6:5, 6. Write about the two hearts mentioned here. Which one do you reflect? Prayerfully connect with these emotional themes and consider how God wants to work in your heart this week.

DAY 3: Mind. List some of the ways Noah and his helpers had to use their brains to do what God asked. Do you think Noah knew about boat-building before this? Are there things you know God is asking of you that will take more intellect than you think you have? What will you do?

DAY 4: Strength/body. Physical strength comes into this story in several ways. First, there is the great health of the people before the Flood. They were still only a few generations from the Tree of Life. How hard do you think farming and gardening, and even building, were at that time? Then the whole world changed terribly, and so did their health and strength. Now what might it have been like? How can we today maintain health even though we are mere shadows of what our ancestors were? What are the ways God wants to strengthen your body this week?

DAY 5: Soul/spirit. As you prayerfully ponder the heart/mind/body insights God has given you so far this week, write out a commitment to God that you will stand for Him no matter how hard it is, and that you are depending on *His* strength, not your own.

DAY 6: In your family, community, and church, how do you see the message being given that we are near the end and must get ready to go with Jesus? What can you do to help?

DAY 7: Use day 7 to create something beautiful that reflects what you have learned. Write a poem or song or story. Create a poster. Write a letter. Paint or draw a picture. Make a sign. Do some sidewalk chalk art or writings. Build something. Create a podcast or blog post or Twitter post(s). Make food and give it to someone in need. Use whatever creativity God has given *you*. We all have something. Share the love!

a short skit

EVANGELIST NOAH AND HIS FAMILY

written by

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Skit

15-20 minutes depending on how long you take on between-scene things, which are optional

CHARACTERS

1. Noah
2. Mrs. Noah
3. Methselah
4. Lamech
5. More of their family if you wish and have enough people
6. Noah's 3 sons and their wives
7. Other people

PROPS

1. You could have hammers, saws, and so on, to pretend to build with. You could even, if you do this skit outdoors, have some boards to carry around.
2. Designate a spot that will be the ark. It could have some chairs for the family to sit on once they go in. **Noah** (smiles at her) And so are we all. I'll send a dove. (They wait) No, she's coming back. If there's no place for a dove to land, there's no point in our trying to get out, even if we could.

Act 1

Have Noah and Mrs. Noah together in one spot, and Methuselah, Lamech, and his family ready to be called.

- Noah:** (to his wife) You're not going to believe this, but...(he hesitates)...God wants me to build a boat!
- Mrs. Noah:** (startled) What?
- Noah:** A boat! A huge boat, 300 cubits long! Out of gopher wood.
- Mrs. Noah:** But...why?
- Noah:** I need to call the family. I'll tell you all together. (He calls to Methuselah, Lamech, and his family, and they come to join them.) God has given me a calling. He says people are only evil continually, even in their thoughts, and He's... (he hesitates again, looking upset) He's going to destroy the earth! (The others react with shock and horror.
- Methuselah:** (shakes his head sorrowfully) I had a feeling something like this was going to happen.
- Lamech** But, are we all going to die?
- Noah** No, everyone has a chance to be saved. God has told me to build an enormous boat. There will be lots of room. He says we have 120 years, and surely we can convince some to get in the boat, in all that time?

Mrs. Noah But I still don't understand, why a boat?

Noah Well, the way He will destroy the earth is that water is going to fall from the sky.

Everyone: From the sky?! What? How??

Noah: (raises his hands to quiet them) Water. Lots of it. He called it "rain."

Everyone is silent for a moment.

Methuselah: (looks around) Well, we'll help you, won't we, everyone?

(All agree. For the next 3 minutes or so, all builders gather and use or pretend to use tools, bring lumber, etc. A couple of other people begin to gather, asking questions, and Noah and his family answer. As more and more people gather, he tells them all about the Flood and the boat and begs them to get in. Some agree and begin to help, but others make fun of them, so they quit. After a minute, have Noah's 3 sons and their wives join in. If you don't have enough people, some of the "other people" can become Noah's family in the next scene.)

Act 2

(Noah, Mrs. Noah, Shem, Ham, Japheth, and their three wives are gathered together, with tools if you have them, pretending to inspect the completed ark.)

Noah: Well, it's done. It took a long time, especially after Methuselah and his sons died. (All sigh and put down their tools, stretching as if they're sore. Noah looks around sadly.) Nobody. Not a single one. Can you believe it? They're not even here to mock us today.

All wives: (turn and gasp and point. They talk at the same time.) Look! What's happening? Do you see that?

Noah: (and his sons turn, too. Noah's face lights up.) They're coming! Just as God promised!

Noah: The birds and animals—God said—

(He is interrupted as others run up, pointing and shouting fearfully) What's happening, what's happening? Magic! Sorcery!

Noah: (raises his hands and his voice) Listen! Listen to me! Don't be afraid. It's the animals and birds coming to get into the ark. God promised this would happen. You will notice there is one pair of each unclean animal and seven of each of the clean ones. Now how could I do that? It's God, don't you see? (He points, and the others calm somewhat. Also, Noah's family move out of the way as the imaginary animals come toward the door.)

Mrs. Noah: Look! They're going right in, just as if...
(she pauses and looks up and another wife finishes)

A son wife: (with hushed voice) I think angels are
shepherding them!

Others: (begin to shout and threaten again) It's
magic! Noah's put some kind of spell on
them!

Noah: No, no, my brothers and sisters, listen
to me! God is saving the animals, and He
wants to save you, too! Won't you please
come in with us?

(Others jeer and refuse, and finally Noah and his family
sorrowfully go in alone. If you have time, spend a min-
ute or so with the family first waiting and trying not
to be anxious, saying things like, "It's been a whole
week!" and then "Oh, here it comes!" and pretending to
be thrown around and frightened, taking care of and
reassuring animals, and so on. The storm calms after a
while.)

Act 3

Wife: I think we've stopped moving.

Mrs. Noah: I ...I think we have!

Others: I can't believe it! Thank God! At last!

Noah: (stands as if he's looking out from the boat, shades eyes with hand) I think we're on a mountain.

(Pause a moment.)

Shem: It's been 40 days since we stopped! When will we be able to get out?

Noah: We can't get out until God opens the door, but I think I'll send out a raven and see what it finds. (He pretends to send out a bird from his hand.)

(They all watch. Ham speaks.)

Ham: No, here it comes back again.

Another pause.

Mrs. Noah: Another week. How long do you think it will be, Noah? The animals are getting very restless!

Noah: (smiles at her) And so are we all. I'll send a dove. (They wait) No, she's coming back. If there's no place for a dove to land, there's no point in our trying to get out, even if we could.

(A third pause.)

Noah: It's been another week. Let's try the dove again.

(Pause)

Japheth: Look! Look! She has an olive branch in her beak!

Everyone Everyone is excited. Things are growing! Soon! I can't wait!

Pause

Noah: (sighs) Well, it's been five months since we first came to rest on the mountain! And finally, the dove has not returned. Surely God will open the door soon now. (He looks up to the sky.) Please, Lord?

Pause

Mrs. Noah: Another month? How long, Lord?

Everyone: (with great excitement, all talking together) It's opening! It's opening! Oh, thank God!! (They run out, look around, look shocked.) Oh, what a mess! How will we ever--?

Noah: (holds out his arms, gathers in his family) Listen. We are safe. God kept us together, kept us alive, and has brought us out to begin again. Let's begin with prayer. (All kneel, and you could use this as closing prayer for the meeting, asking God to help all to hold up His name and His glory in the earth.)