** BIBLE 101**

Unit 1: Created by God

*The Story of Noah and the Ark*

**A Note to the Teacher:** The story of Noah and his ark is one of the most widely known Bible stories of all time. In fact, almost all cultures and faith traditions around the world have a “flood story.”

Lack of obedience to God leads to trouble countless times in the Bible. In fact, it was the human inability to be fully faithful to God’s commands that brought Jesus to earth. This lesson helps students to understand that the repeated and ongoing disobedience of the Hebrew people led to the flood. Thousands of years later, Jesus came to earth to take on our shortcomings, that our sins would no longer lead to trouble, but be forgiven in love.

This lesson teaches students about the reality of sin, God’s boundless grace and mercy, and the salvation of Jesus Christ.

**Gathering**

Before students arrive, hang the large paper ark on the wall. Set out cutout animals.

As students enter the space, gather them in a seated circle. Explain that this mornings lesson tells a story we have likely all heard before. **Say, “It is the story of a large boat, an old man, his wife and children, and a LOT of animals. Who knows what story that might be?”** Give time for students to answer.

**Say, “The story of Noah comes from the first Book of the Bible. Who knows what the first Book of the Bible is named?”** Give time for students to answer.

**Say, “The story of Noah comes from Genesis, the first book of the Bible, chapter six. It is one of the earliest stories in the Bible, not long after the story of creation. Humans had not been on the earth very long, but already they were misbehaving. There were wars and fighting and stealing. People were unkind to one another. They were selfish and did not care about their neighbors. God looked at the people that God had created and was disappointed. How could the people that God had made in God’s image be so evil?”**

**Ask, “Who knows what God decided to do?”** Give time for answers.

**Say, “To find out what God decided to do, let’s read the story of Noah.”**

*The story of Noah and the flood occurs across 5 chapters of Genesis. Have students turn to Genesis 6 in their Bibles so that they know where the story is located. For the purpose of time, read aloud the story from the children’s storybook Bible.*

Read, or invite a volunteer to read, the story of Noah.

When you are finished reading, recap the story. Invite students to select their favorite animals and add them to the ark poster. The ark will quickly fill, and animals will end up stacked on top of one another.

**Say, “Wow, our ark is filled to the brim and then some! Can you imagine what it would have been like on a boat with 4 of every kind of animal on earth? How did they all get along? How did Noah feed them all?”** Allow time for discussion.

**Ask, “Do you think that one man really built a boat large enough to hold four of every animal on earth? Do you think all of the creatures and Noah and his family were able to survive in that boat for 40 days and 40 nights?”**

**Say, “Maybe there really was a big flood, and maybe there really was an ark. Or maybe the story in Genesis 6 is a metaphor. Maybe it is a story that people told about how the early humans were selfish and didn’t listen to God. God was disappointed, and wanted to start over. The story of Noah teaches us that God wants us, Gods people, to love God and one another. God intends for us to be caring and gentle and kind. And when we are not, God is sad and disappointed and frustrated.”**

Explain to the class that as humans, we are always going to make mistakes. The word “sin” means anything we do that separates us from God and the plan that God has for us. Humans sin, not because we are bad, but because we are not perfect. Our job, as followers of God, is to try to sin as little as possible. It is also to know that we are going to make mistakes and to apologize to God for those mistakes and thank God for forgiving us.

**Rain in a Jar**

Explain that this morning, we are going to see how the sins, or mistakes, of the early people were like drops in a cloud that eventually led to the flood. **Say, “We are going to create our very own rainstorms, right here in the classroom! Thankfully, they are small storms, and will fit in a jar.”**

Have students divide in to pairs of two and choose a workspace. Give each pair a plastic tray, a mason jar, and a pipette. **Ask, “What is a rainstorm made of?”** Students will naturally answer, water. **Say, “Rain is water, so the first thing we need to do is fill our jars with water.”** One member of each pair should fill their mason jar nearly full with water, then return it to the plastic tray. **Say, “Next, we need a cloud.”** Help a member of each pair add shaving cream on top of the water until it reaches above the top of the jar.

**Say, “Now, we said that God sent the flood because God was frustrated with the way people were behaving. Every time people fought or treated each other poorly or were selfish, God got a little more upset, and the storm got a little closer.** (Hold up blue water) **This blue water represents our mistakes. I am going to give each pair a cup of water. Take turns using your pipette to slowly add drops of water on top of your cloud. Each drop represents a sin. If you want, you can even name some sins, or mistakes, that you have committed recently as you do it.”**

Students will take turns adding blue water until they begin to see it “rain” in their jar.

As the jars begin to form storms, talk about what students observe. Ask the questions for the appropriate age group:

**PreK-Grade 1:**

1. What is happening in your jar?
2. Where do you think the rain is coming from?
3. What happens if we keep adding more drops?

**Grades 2-5:**

1. What do you think the science behind this experiment is?
2. What happens if you keep adding more drops of blue water?
3. How does this experiment demonstrate what happened in the story of Noah?

When all pairs have created a storm, bring the group back together in a seated circle. Pull out another jar, with water and a shaving cream cloud, and a container of blue water. **Say, “Following the flood, God made a promise. God promised never again to flood the earth. God told the people that God understands that humans are not perfect and that we will always sin and make mistakes. And God put a rainbow in the sky as a sign of that promise, so that we always remember that God loves us and forgives our mistakes. Thousands of years after Noah, God saw that people were still making the same mistakes – they were still selfish and unkind. They still sinned. And so God sent Jesus. Jesus came to teach us how to live. But even though Jesus was sinless, God knew that humans would not be able to live up to Jesus’ standards. And so Jesus died, taking the punishment for all of our sins all at once. (Of course, we also know that Jesus was and is far more powerful than death, and so Jesus was resurrected and lives forever).”**

Place a piece of sponge over the top of the shaving cream in the jar. **Say, “This sponge represents Jesus. We are going to do our experiment again, just like you did, but this time with the sacrificial love of Jesus.”**

Add drops of water until the blue water container is empty (do NOT give yourself too much blue water!). Students will see that the sponge absorbs all of the blue water and a storm never forms.

**Ask, “What happened? Where was the storm? I added sins and sins and more sins, but the storm never came!”**

**Say, “Jesus’ death atoned – or took the punishment for – all of our sins. And so we do not experience the storm. Instead, we get to experience God’s love and grace and forgiveness. No matter what we do, or how many times we do it, God does not punish us, but loves us and encourages us to try harder next time.”**

**Closing/Cleanup**

When everyone is finished, work as a group to clean up the classroom. Empty and wash the jars for the next class and dry the trays before returning them to the shelf.

If extra time allows, students may explore the variety of books and recounts of the story of Noah available in the class library.