

The Book of Genesis, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 5: From Adam to Noah

Genesis 5:1–6:8

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This passage covers a genealogy and a grim assessment of humanity, and yet it carries real doctrinal weight. It demonstrates the reign of death that the fall unleashed (the relentless “and he died”), the persistence of God’s image and human dignity across the generations, the genuine possibility of a life that pleases God in the example of Enoch, the spreading corruption of sin when a society abandons God, and, most strikingly, the truth that God is not detached from human evil but grieved by it. It ends with the introduction of grace in the person of Noah.

Take care with two points. First, when teaching Genesis 6:5 (“only evil continually”), present it as the description of a real, willful corruption that had spread through that generation, the bitter fruit of choices to abandon God, and a warning of how far sin can go when unchecked. Do not turn it into the Calvinistic doctrine of total depravity, as though every human being were born incapable of any good or unable to respond to God. Scripture holds that generation accountable precisely because their evil was chosen. Second, when teaching that God was “sorry” and “grieved,” explain that this is the language of God’s real relational response to sin, not a confession that God made a mistake or changed His eternal nature. God does not learn or err; He genuinely feels and responds, and our sin truly grieves Him.

Formationally, this passage invites students to two great aspirations: to walk with God like Enoch in the middle of a dying world, and to find favor with God like Noah in the middle of a corrupt one. It soberes us about death and sin and then sets before us the beauty of a faithful life. Send students home wanting to walk with God, guarding their hearts, and resting in His grace.

Question 1

Student Question:

Eight times in chapter five the record says of a man, “and he died” (5:5, 8, 11, and so on). What does this steady refrain teach us about the reign of death after the fall (compare Romans 5:14), and about the reliability of God’s word of warning?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The genealogy of chapter five is built around a refrain that is impossible to miss once you hear it: “and he died.” However long these men lived, hundreds of years in some cases, the sentence always ends the same way. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), and Genesis is showing us that wage being paid, name after name.

This is the somber confirmation of God's word in the garden. God had warned that disobedience would bring death (Genesis 2:17), and here is the evidence stretching across the generations. God's word proves reliable, even in its warnings. What He says, happens.

Paul reflects on exactly this in Romans 5:14, where he says death reigned from Adam to Moses. Death is not natural in the deepest sense; it is an intruder, the consequence of sin entering the world. The genealogy quietly preaches that the problem the Bible is addressing is real and universal: we all die.

Yet even here there is direction. The list is not random; it is moving toward Noah, and beyond him toward the promised Seed. God is keeping a line alive through whom redemption will come. Even in a chapter of death, God is advancing His plan of life.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The reign of death after the fall as the confirmation of God's word (Romans 5:12–14).
- Death as an intruder and consequence of sin, not the natural good God intended.
- The reliability of God's word, including His warnings.
- God preserving a line toward the promised Redeemer even through generations of death.

Discussion Prompts

- What does the repeated 'and he died' preach to us?
- How does this chapter confirm that God's word can be trusted?
- How is God still advancing His purpose even in a list of the dead?

Question 2

Student Question:

Genesis 5 is, in part, a long reminder that life is brief and death is certain. How does honestly facing your own mortality, the fact that your days are numbered, shape the way you want to live now (compare Psalm 90:12)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses the reality of death into present living. Our culture works hard to keep death out of sight, but Scripture treats facing our mortality as a path to wisdom. "Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:12).

Help students see that remembering we will die is not morbid but clarifying. It sorts out what matters from what does not. Knowing our time is limited presses us to invest in what lasts: our walk with God, our relationships, the souls of those around us.

Encourage a concrete reckoning. If a student knew the number of weeks they had left, what would change? Often the honest answer reveals where we are wasting our brief lives on the trivial or the sinful, and where we are neglecting the people and the God we say we love.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Numbering our days as the path to wisdom (Psalm 90:12).
- Facing mortality honestly rather than avoiding it.
- Investing our limited time in what lasts.
- The brevity of life as a motive for walking with God now.

Discussion Prompts

- How does facing your own mortality change your priorities?
- What are you spending your brief life on that will not last?
- What would you change if you truly grasped that your days are numbered?

Question 3

Student Question:

Of Enoch alone it is said that he “walked with God” and was taken without dying (5:22–24; Hebrews 11:5–6). What does it mean to walk with God, and what does Enoch’s life teach us about pleasing God and about hope beyond death?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Enoch is the bright exception in a chapter of death. Twice it says he “walked with God,” and then, instead of “and he died,” we read “and he was not, for God took him.” Hebrews explains that he was taken up so that he should not see death, and that before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God (Hebrews 11:5).

Draw out what “walking with God” means. It pictures a life lived in close, continual fellowship with the Lord, day after day, in step with Him. It is not a single dramatic experience but a steady direction, a friendship maintained over a lifetime. Hebrews 11:6 adds that such a walk requires faith: “without faith it is impossible to please him.”

Note that Enoch walked with God in a world sliding toward the judgment of the flood. His was not an easy or sheltered age. This is encouragement for believers in any corrupt time: it is possible to walk closely with God even when the surrounding culture is far from Him.

Finally, Enoch’s being “taken” is an early ray of hope shining through the gloom. Death is not the inevitable end for those who walk with God. Enoch foreshadows the greater hope, secured in Christ, that those who belong to God will not be held by death forever.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Walking with God as steady, faith-filled fellowship over a lifetime (Hebrews 11:5–6).
- Faith as essential to pleasing God.
- The possibility of godliness even in a corrupt age.
- Enoch's translation as an early hint of hope beyond death.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean, practically, to 'walk with God' day by day?
- How is it possible to walk with God in a culture that is far from Him?
- What hope does Enoch's life offer in the face of death?

Question 4

Student Question:

What does walking with God look like in the ordinary routine of your week, at work, at home, in your private moments? Where is that walk strong right now, and where has it grown distant?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns Enoch's walk into a personal inventory. Walking with God happens in the ordinary places: how we work, how we treat our families, what we do when no one is watching, how we spend our private hours. A walk is made of steps, and our days are made of small, repeated choices.

Invite students to assess honestly where the walk is close and where it has grown distant. Many can name a season when God felt near and a present in which He feels far. Usually the distance is not because God moved but because the steady steps stopped: prayer thinned out, Scripture went unopened, sin went unconfessed.

Encourage one practical step back toward closeness. Walking with God is restored not by a grand gesture but by resuming the steps: a daily time in the Word and prayer, gathering with God's people, honesty about sin. Enoch's three hundred years of walking began with a first step and a next one.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Walking with God as a matter of daily, ordinary faithfulness.
- Discerning where our walk is close and where it has grown distant.
- Restoring closeness through resumed spiritual habits.
- Integrity in private as part of walking with God.

Discussion Prompts

- Where is your walk with God strong right now, and where is it distant?
- What small steps have you let slip that once kept you close to God?

- What is one step you could resume this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

Genesis 5:1–3 reminds us that humanity was made in the likeness of God, and that this likeness was passed on to following generations. Why does it matter that human beings still bear God’s image even after the fall, in a world full of sin and death?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Genesis 5:1–3 deliberately echoes chapter one: God made man in His own likeness, and then Adam fathered a son “in his own likeness, after his image.” The image of God did not vanish at the fall. It is marred, but it persists, and it is passed down through the generations to every human being.

This is enormously important. Even in a chapter dominated by death and a world sliding into corruption, every person on the list still bears the likeness of God. Human dignity is not something we earn or lose by our behavior; it is grounded in how God made us, and it endures.

Genesis 9:6 will make the practical point explicit: because man is made in God’s image, the shedding of human blood is a grave offense. The image is the basis for the sanctity of every human life, born and unborn, strong and weak, godly and ungodly.

Help students see how this guards against two errors: despising others as worthless, and despising themselves. In a fallen world it is easy to write people off, or to feel written off. Genesis 5 insists that the image of God still rests on us all.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The persistence of God’s image after the fall (Genesis 5:1–3).
- Human dignity grounded in creation, not in behavior or achievement.
- The image of God as the basis for the sanctity of human life (Genesis 9:6).
- Guarding against both contempt for others and contempt for ourselves.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does it matter that the image of God survives the fall?
- How does this truth shape the way we value difficult or broken people?
- Where do you most need to recover a right view of human dignity?

Question 6

Student Question:

Do you treat your own life, and the lives of others, as bearing the image of God, even broken and difficult people in a broken world? Where do you most need to recover that view of human dignity?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question applies the persistence of the image of God to how we actually treat people, including ourselves. It is one thing to affirm human dignity and another to honor it in the coworker we resent, the relative who exhausts us, or the stranger we would rather ignore.

Help students notice where they functionally deny the image of God: in contempt, in dismissiveness, in the way they speak about people they dislike or disagree with. The doctrine is tested not in the abstract but in the breakroom and the family dinner.

Address self-contempt as well. Some believers struggle to believe their own lives have worth, perhaps because of failure, shame, or hardship. The image of God is a steady answer: your value does not rest on your performance but on your Maker.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Honoring the image of God in difficult people and in ourselves.
- Contempt and dismissiveness as functional denials of human dignity.
- Self-worth grounded in God's making, not our performance.
- Speech as a test of whether we honor others' dignity.

Discussion Prompts

- Who do you find it hardest to treat as an image-bearer of God?
- How does self-contempt deny the truth of how God made you?
- What would change if you truly saw God's image in everyone you met this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

Genesis 6:5 describes a generation in which "every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." What does this teach us about how far sin can spread through a society that has turned away from God, and about the importance of the thoughts and intentions of the heart?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Genesis 6:5 is a devastating verdict: "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and... every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." This describes a civilization that had given itself over to evil so thoroughly that corruption reached down into the very thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Teach this carefully. The verse describes the actual, willful condition of that generation, the ripe fruit of a society that had abandoned God across many years. It is a warning about how far and how deep sin can spread when it is unchecked, not a statement that human beings are born unable to do any good or to respond to God. That generation was held accountable precisely because their evil was chosen, not coerced.

Note where the verse locates the problem: in the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Sin is not only outward action; it begins in the inner life, in what we ponder, desire, and intend. Jesus taught the same, that out of the heart come evil thoughts and the deeds that follow (Matthew 15:18–19).

This is a sober warning for any age, including ours. A culture, and an individual, can drift so far that evil begins to feel normal and even continuous. The remedy is to guard the heart diligently, “for from it flow the springs of life” (Proverbs 4:23), and to keep returning to God before corruption takes root.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The spread of sin through a society that abandons God (Genesis 6:5).
- The verse as a description of chosen, willful corruption, not inborn total depravity.
- Personal accountability: that generation was responsible for its evil.
- Sin beginning in the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Matthew 15:18–19; Proverbs 4:23).

Discussion Prompts

- What does Genesis 6:5 show about how far sin can spread when unchecked?
- Why is it important to say this generation chose their evil rather than being born unable to do good?
- Why does Scripture locate sin in the thoughts and intentions of the heart?

Question 8

Student Question:

Sin in chapter six is traced to the thoughts and intentions of the heart. How carefully do you guard your own thought life and inner intentions? What “intentions of the heart” do you most need to bring under God’s authority?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question moves the focus from that ancient generation’s heart to the student’s own. If sin begins in the intentions of the heart, then the guarding of the heart is frontline spiritual work, not an afterthought.

Help students examine what they feed their minds and what they allow to take root: resentments rehearsed, fantasies entertained, ambitions nursed, grievances replayed. What we dwell on shapes what we become. The thought life is the soil in which both holiness and sin grow.

Offer practical guarding. Paul tells us to take every thought captive to obey Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5) and to fill our minds with what is true, honorable, and pure (Philippians 4:8). Encourage students to name one intention of the heart they need to surrender, and one good thing they will deliberately set their minds on instead.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Guarding the heart and thought life as essential spiritual work (Proverbs 4:23).
- Taking every thought captive to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).
- Setting the mind on what is true and good (Philippians 4:8).
- What we dwell on shaping what we become.

Discussion Prompts

- What do you most often allow your mind to dwell on?
- What intention of your heart most needs to come under God's authority?
- What good thing could you deliberately fill your mind with instead?

Question 9

Student Question:

Genesis 6:6 says God "was sorry that he had made man" and "it grieved him to his heart," and yet 6:8 says, "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord." What do these verses reveal about God's holiness and grief over sin, His patience, and His grace, and how do we understand the statement that God was "sorry"?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal center of the lesson, and it holds together several profound truths. First, God's holiness and His grief: "the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart" (6:6). God is not a distant, unmoved force. He sees human evil and is genuinely grieved by it. Our sin is not merely a violation of rules; it wounds the heart of the One who made us in love.

Explain the language of God being "sorry" or "regretting," because students may stumble over it. This is not a confession that God made a mistake, learned something new, or changed His unchanging nature. Scripture elsewhere affirms that God does not change and does not lie (Numbers 23:19; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). Rather, this is the Bible's way of describing God's real, relational response to a changed situation: a holy God responding to human sin with

genuine grief and a settled resolve to act in judgment. It tells us truly what God feels, without implying He erred.

Then comes the resolve to judge, which we will see carried out in the flood. God's grief is not weak sentiment; it moves Him to righteous action against evil. A God who could look at the corruption of 6:5 and feel nothing would not be good. His grief and His justice belong together.

But the passage does not end in judgment. Verse 8 turns on a single word: "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord." Here grace breaks into the darkness. Note that this is genuine grace (Noah did not earn God's favor by being sinless), and yet it is not arbitrary or impersonal: the next verse tells us Noah was a righteous man who walked with God (6:9), a man of faith (Hebrews 11:7). God's grace and Noah's faithful response meet. This is not the Calvinistic picture of an unconditional decree that overrides the man; it is the familiar biblical pattern of God showing favor to one who trusts and walks with Him.

On the puzzling "sons of God" and "daughters of man" in 6:1-4, teach with humility. Godly interpreters have understood this in more than one way, and the text does not settle every question. What is clear, and what matters, is the main point the passage is making: corruption was spreading and intermingling throughout humanity, provoking God's grief and judgment. Do not let a debated detail distract from the central truths of God's holiness, grief, justice, and grace.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's holiness and His genuine grief over human sin (Genesis 6:6).
- Understanding God being 'sorry': real relational response, not error or change in His nature (Numbers 23:19; Malachi 3:6).
- God's grief moving Him to righteous judgment, holding grief and justice together.
- Grace breaking in: 'But Noah found favor' (6:8), genuine grace met by Noah's faith and walk with God (6:9; Hebrews 11:7).
- Rejecting an unconditional, impersonal decree in favor of grace that meets a faithful response.
- Humility on debated details (the 'sons of God'), keeping the focus on God's holiness, grief, justice, and grace.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that God was 'grieved to his heart' over human sin?
- How do we rightly understand the statement that God was 'sorry' He had made man?
- How do God's grace to Noah and Noah's own faith fit together?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over the whole passage, from the genealogy of the dying to the grace shown to Noah. Name one specific way God is calling you to walk with Him and to find favor in His eyes, the way Enoch and Noah did.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Use this capstone to gather the passage's two great aspirations into one resolve. Genesis 5 and 6 set before us Enoch, who walked with God, and Noah, who found favor with God. In a world of death and corruption, these two men show that a different kind of life is possible, and God is inviting each student into it.

Press for the specific. Walking with God and finding favor are not vague ideals; they take shape in concrete steps: a renewed habit of prayer, a guarded thought life, a turning from a particular sin, a deliberate faithfulness in a culture that has drifted. Ask each student to name one.

Close with grace and with Christ. Noah found favor not because he was sinless but because he trusted and walked with God, and the favor was God's gift. So it is for us. We do not earn God's grace, but we receive it through faith, and that faith expresses itself in a life that walks with Him. The same grace that spared Noah from the flood meets us in Christ, who carries His people safely through judgment into new life.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The two aspirations of the passage: walking with God (Enoch) and finding favor with God (Noah).
- Concrete steps toward closeness with God in a drifting culture.
- Grace received through faith, expressed in a faithful walk.
- Christ as the One who carries His people safely through judgment.

Discussion Prompts

- What would walking with God like Enoch look like in your life this week?
- What does it mean that Noah's favor was grace received, not merit earned?
- How does Christ fulfill the hope of being carried safely through judgment?