

The Book of Genesis

Lesson 5: From Adam to Noah -- Genesis 5:1–6:8

At first glance, Genesis 5 looks like the kind of chapter we are tempted to skip. It is a long list of names and numbers, fathers and sons marching down the page: Adam, Seth, Enosh, Kenan, and on it goes. But read it out loud and you will start to hear a drumbeat underneath the names, a single phrase repeated again and again like a tolling bell. “And he died.” “And he died.” “And he died.” Eight times in one chapter. God had said that in the day they ate of the tree they would surely die, and here is the proof, generation after generation, lowered into the ground.

But listen closely, because the drumbeat skips a beat. One man in the list does not die. “Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.” In the middle of all that dying, here is a man who walked so closely with God that God simply took him home. He is a small, bright window in a dark wall, a hint that death does not have to be the end of the story, that there is a way to walk with God right through the middle of a dying world.

Then the tone darkens. By chapter six, the human family has multiplied, and so has its corruption. We are told that “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” This is not the story of a few bad people; it is a whole civilization that has thrown off God and given itself to evil. And then comes one of the most startling sentences in the Bible: God “was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.” The God who made us is not indifferent to what we have become. Our sin grieves Him.

And yet, the passage does not end in grief. After all the dying, after all the wickedness, after all the grief of God’s heart, comes a tiny conjunction that changes everything: “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.” One word, “but,” and a thread of grace runs straight through the darkness. This is the rhythm of the whole Bible: human sin, divine grief, and then grace breaking in. Read this passage and let it do two things at once: let it make you sober about death and sin, and let it make you hungry to be someone, like Enoch, like Noah, who walks with God and finds favor in His eyes.

Group Discussion: The phrase “and he died” rings out over and over in chapter five, but of Enoch it says he “walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.” What stands out to you about Enoch’s life in the middle of all that dying, and what do you think it means to “walk with God”?

Personal Reflection: Genesis 6 says God was grieved to His heart over human sin. We often think of how sin affects us, but here we see how it affects God. Does it change anything for you to know that your sin genuinely grieves the heart of the God who made you? How?

Read Genesis 5:1–6:8

Study Questions

1. 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?
2. 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)?
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. 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?
6. 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?
7. 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?
8. 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?
9. 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”?
10. 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.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Hebrews 11:5–7, Enoch and Noah commended for their faith; Romans 5:12–14, death reigning from Adam to Moses; Micah 6:8, to walk humbly with your

God; 2 Peter 2:5, Noah a herald of righteousness in an ungodly world; Psalm 90:12, teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.