



B REVEALING WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

Fatalism – can we avoid disasters?



Why use this Bible study?

This Bible study can help us explore whether we can prepare for disasters and learn from them for the future.



Judgement or avoidable?

Read Genesis 6:9-8:22. Constant rain for 40 days caused a total flood of the world's surface to a minimum depth of seven metres (Genesis 7:20) for 150 days. The flood completely destroyed the human and animal populations (except those with Noah).



Key points

- Noah was warned by God that a flood was going to take place, and he responded by making a preparedness plan and assembling the necessary resources. Churches can play a key role in bringing communities together to prepare for the threat of disaster.
- Noah's preparation included making provision for the duration of the flood (food) and the period after the flood (male and female animals). Churches and communities should also be careful to prepare for possible disasters, including planning for the days during the disaster and for the recovery period afterwards.
- Noah used appropriate methods to monitor the flood situation (sending out a bird), so as to know when to move from survival activities to the rehabilitation phase (resettling on the land). It is important to keep the changing disaster situation under constant review and to adjust our activities accordingly.
- Following the flood, Noah and his family resettled in a less flood-prone area – the mountains of Ararat (Genesis 8:4) and resumed their livelihoods. Disasters should be used as an opportunity to reduce vulnerability, as people are often more open to change at this time.



Questions for discussion

- This particular disaster was the result of widespread disobedience to God's laws. Is this true for other disasters? What passages in the Bible suggest that disasters are not the result of sin?
- Noah was warned by God about the approaching flood. What warnings are available to tell us that floods, or other potential disasters, are coming? What traditional methods do you know, as well as the weather forecasts?

Awareness-raising

Children & youth

Climate & environment

Conflict & peace-building

Corruption & governance

Disaster risk management

Discrimination & inclusion

Food & livelihoods

Gender & sexual violence

Health & HIV

Influencing decision-makers

Migration & trafficking

Water, sanitation & hygiene

B FATALISM – CAN WE AVOID DISASTERS?

Noah was given very precise dimensions by God for building the ark, a very large wooden boat. Engineers tell us that the proportions (the ratio of length to width to height) are about right for a vessel of this size.

- What other instructions did God give Noah to ensure that air-breathing animals survived the flood and were able to repopulate the earth afterwards?
- What are some of the things we must do to prepare for a flood or other hazards?
- What warnings do we get that disaster is coming?
- What traditional knowledge or signs do people use to predict disaster?

The Genesis account says very little of the reaction of other people to Noah's boat-building activity.

- How do you think they felt? What comments might they have made to Noah, given that the boat was far from the sea? What opposition might face us if we try to make preparation for a disaster, and how can we overcome that opposition?
- In what ways can churches build a good relationship with their community, so that the church is able to take a lead in preparing for a disaster? How can we learn from previous disasters to prepare for future disasters?



Notes

This Bible study was first published in Tearfund (2011) *Disasters and the local church*
http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/themes/disasters/disasters_and_the_local_church/

Related tools

- A1 – Revealing fatalistic beliefs about disasters: information for facilitators [*A1: Disaster risk management-1*]
- A2 – The need to prepare - reducing the effect of disasters [*A2: Disaster risk management-1*]
- A2 – Disasters ball game - understanding shocks and stresses [*A2: Disaster risk management-1*]
- B – Noah - lessons in preparedness (Bible study) [*B: Disaster risk management-2*]
- B – Preparing for disaster (Bible study) [*B: Disaster risk management-3*]
- B – God of justice and mercy (Bible study) [*B: Disaster risk management-4*]
- B – God's provision for the future (Bible study) [*B: Disaster risk management-5*]
- C2 – Flood-resistant buildings [*C2: Disaster risk management-1*]
- C2 – Protecting a spring (a water source) [*C2: Water, sanitation & hygiene-2*]