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Arks & Altars

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Series: Made to Multiply
Genesis 6:1-8:22

BIG IDEA - SIN MUST BE DEALT WITH OR IT SPREADS

I love our residency. I love our residents. In fact, two weeks ago, we had 13 people show up Sunday night and all day Monday for a preview weekend to consider the residency. I really believe this. I'm not just saying this. Say it was our twentieth anniversary as a church, which will be here in 12 years.

If we were asking, "What are some of the most key moments in the life of our church?" I hope we would come back to the Multiply Initiative, but I really think we're going to come back to going, "The moment we started the residency." Guys, that residency is how we invest in the leaders of tomorrow today. We think the future missionaries, the future church planters... Some come on our staff. Some go and help other churches. It's all coming out of the residency.

In fact, the residency is such an important thing I want to take a moment and say if you know somebody who's interested in the residency... This is a two-year season of development. It's theological education. It's spiritual formation. It's church ministry experience. I want you to go online or tell *them* to go online and apply and find out more information before January 20. You probably know someone, a niece or a nephew or a friend or a cousin who might be interested.

By the way, sometimes our residents come on our staff. One of our residents came on our staff. His name is Johnson Waterer, and he is going out to plant a church called *King's Cross Church*. Johnson has had a passion to plant a church even before he came into our residency. What he's doing is he's planting a different type of church to reach a different type of person.

Now, where will it be? We don't exactly know yet. He's hoping and aiming for the larger Winston-Salem area, maybe the Davie County area. When you think about church

planting, think about it three ways. Churches plant three different types of churches. Sometimes we plant *twin churches*. A twin church would be if we planted basically exactly what we're doing here somewhere else.

We didn't call it *Two Cities*. It had a different name and a different pastor, but it basically did everything the same. That would be a twin. Then there are *brother churches*. Brother churches do most of the same things, but they have a couple of differences. Then there are *cousin churches*, which are a part of the same family, but they're different and distinct. We're excited that Johnson is planting a cousin-like church.

If you have questions about it, you need to come to his interest meeting on November 17 after the 11:00 service. You may have some questions. The best person to ask the questions of, "What type of church is King's Cross going to be?" is not to ask me but is to ask the future senior pastor of that church, which is going to be Johnson Waterer. He can share the vision, the values, the theology, and the philosophy as well as what it would look like if you or your family wanted to be a part of that.

Finally, guys, I want you to grab your Multiply journal. Whether you're here or in Lexington, grab your Multiply journal. You don't have this today, but eight weeks ago when we watched this series we gave you the Multiply journal and card. I want you to know that next week, when you come here, we're going to give you another card, and at the end of the service we're going to ask you to write down one area that you and/or your family is going to multiply over the next 16 months.

Look. We're excited about the residency, we're excited about Johnson going out as a church plant, but we're just as excited about every person in here asking the question, "What has God given me to multiply?" Let's pray, and then we have to get to work in Genesis 6.

Lord, I want to take a moment and pray right now for our residents. I want to pray for the 13 people who came, that everyone who came to that preview day is asking if they should be a part of this residency for the development of their ministry future. We pray for them.

We pray for others in this room or who are connected to people in this room or down in Lexington who would say, "Man, that might be something I'm interested in to get me an inroad and an on-ramp into life in ministry." We pray for Johnson as he builds his launch team and as he plants King's Cross Church. We ask that you would bless it and bless each of us as we seek you in prayer how we might multiply. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Okay. Open up your Bibles to Genesis, chapter 6. Today we're going to answer this question...*What do you do when things get really, really bad?* That's the story of Noah and the flood. A corrupt and confused culture. What do you do when the culture is in moral free fall, when society keeps getting worse and worse?

I know what some of you are saying. You're going, "Vote! Vote on November 5! Vote!" We'll talk about that a little bit next week, but it's not always an election year, and that's not always an option in every culture. So, what do you do when culture is getting worse and worse and worse? You feel it. What do you do? Do you advance or do you retreat?

Well, it's not that simple, because Jesus says, "If you're persecuted in one town, flee to the next town." It means we don't always have to stay here and deal with it. You can leave. Okay. When do you advance? When do you retreat? When persecution and false teaching and worldliness keep coming up, what do you do? Well, today we see what one guy did. He built an ark.

What we're going to talk about today is sometimes you need to build an ark. We'll get there in about 20 or 30 minutes, but I want to introduce you to Noah, the first ark builder. Noah is super famous. Even if you are the most unchurched person, welcome. You know who Noah is. Everybody knows who Noah is. He's on every kid's Bible. There's Noah, and he's on the boat, and all of the animals have their heads sticking out the windows. Have you seen this? Everybody knows Noah.

Noah perfectly comes in between Adam and Abraham. In the timeline, there's Adam, there's Abraham, and right in the middle is this guy named Noah. Noah is such a big deal that he will show up 50 more times mentioned in your Bible. He will show up in 11 different books in your Bible.

We'll meet Noah in verse 8, but before we can meet Noah we need to see the condition of the world at this time. Turn with me to Genesis 6:1. Here we go. **"When man began to multiply..."** That's a good thing. That's what our whole initiative is about, that God blessed us and said, "Be fruitful and multiply."

"When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them..." Now, get ready for this. Verses 2 and 4 are some of the most difficult verses to interpret and understand in the Old Testament. We're going to try to do it together today. Verse 2: **"...the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose."**

Let me give you the minority view on this and the majority view on this. In other words, what do some people believe about this, but what do most people believe about this? When I give these, if you don't know what you believe, you believe what I believe. I'm just kidding.

The minority view says the *sons of God* represent angels. This may sound crazy to you, because what are angels doing marrying and sleeping with women? But here's what we know. We know there are three types of beings in the world. There is a divine being, the triune God; there are angelic beings, and those can break down into good and bad, angels and demons; and there are humans.

The reason the minority view holds and certain people believe it is every other time the phrase *sons of God* is used in the Old Testament, that phrase is talking about angels. If you go to the book of Job, it says, "When the sons of God came before the Lord," and that's where he has that conversation with Satan.

So, it's not out of nowhere that they say that, but it seems strange that angels would come down and marry and sleep with women. You're like, "Am I in a Scooby-Doo episode? What is going on here? This is insane." Plus, Jesus says in the New Testament when Christians go to heaven they will be like the angels, neither marrying nor being given in marriage.

So, I wanted to share it because it *is* a view some people hold. I think it has a lot of problems, a lot of questions. How does this happen, angels and humans procreating together? I think it's more likely to interpret it the way the church has historically interpreted it, which is the *sons of God* is the line of Seth.

Adam and Eve end up having this other son named Seth. He's a godly line. It's saying the daughters of men (that's the line of Cain) began to intermingle and intermarry. Now listen. Here is what I do think is the big idea at the beginning of this. How does society become corrupt? Answer: when godly people marry ungodly people.

You're like, "Could it be that simple?" Yes, it really can. I mean, think about it. This is why we're always saying, "Date Christians, because you should date to marry." Let me say this. The Bible is not against interracial marriage. It's not like there was this one tribe over *here* and *this* ethnicity and *this* race and we didn't want... No. The Bible is against interreligious marriage.

Here's what happens when a Christian marries a non-Christian. Look. If you're in that situation, there's the grace of God in all this, but listen to me. Most of the time, the faith does not get passed on to the next generation. You end up with confused kids in forms of syncretism where you take a little bit from *this*... "Mom believed *this*, but Dad..." It's going to take all you have, Mom and Dad...all of it and more...for you to pass the faith on, the vision and values you have. In this culture, to pass on to the next generation... If one of you is like, "Eh, maybe, maybe not," it's not going to happen.

Okay. So, that's verse 2. Now we need to go to verse 3. "***Then the LORD said, 'My Spirit shall not abide in man forever...'***" God is doing what *you* do sometimes. He's talking to himself. He's having a conversation with himself. "***...for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.***" People hear "120 years" and go two different ways with it. I think they're both true. Some say *120 years* means this is a prophecy that it's going to be 120 years until the flood. This is the only timeline we have, so most people assume it's 120 years from now until the flood, which means it takes Noah about 120 years to build this massive boat.

The other thing people think is this is God limiting the lifespan of man. It kind of makes sense. What does God do in Genesis 3 as sin enters the world? He goes, "All right. You can't live forever. You can't eat of the Tree of Life anymore." But now, as sin has increased, he's limiting the lifespan of people, which is the grace of God, because there are certain people we would not want to live to be 800 years old.

If you read the first five chapters of Genesis, you're like, "Everybody is 800." You know, Adam and Eve were the same age because they were made on the same day. Adam and Eve had Seth when they were 130 years old. Can we just say that's a geriatric pregnancy? Here's the thing. God graciously limits the lifespan of them.

Now, verse 4 is maybe the most confusing. As you prepare to read this verse, put your tinfoil hat on. People with tinfoil hats love this verse. ***"The Nephilim..."*** Who are they? *Argh!* They show up again out of nowhere in Numbers 13:33. I thought they were destroyed here, but maybe another group took their name. We don't know.

"The Nephilim were on the earth in those days..." It means the mighty men. It means giants. Some people think this could be the first NBA team right here in the Scriptures. ***"The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown."***

Now, we don't know who they were. We really don't. I was joking about them, but we don't. But we know they were a well-known group of people back then, so the reason he mentions them is because the original readers *did* know who they were. He's basically trying to historically date Noah's ark. He's like, "Guys, it happened right when the Nephilim were here." We don't know a lot about them.

Now, I want to show you something in verse 5. This is a description of humanity leading up to the flood. ***"The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."*** Mankind had been completely given over to sin, which is why verse 6... Some people consider verse 6 the saddest verse in the Bible. And the Bible is a long book, so to say this is the saddest verse in the entire Bible...

Here it is. ***"And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart."*** When you break God's law, it breaks God's heart. Pastor Nate did a great job last week talking about how we grieve God. A lot of times we think, "When I break God's law... You know, it's just a bunch of rules he made, and he kind of put them out there." No. The law of God is the expression of the nature and character of God. It's what he loves, and it's what he values.

So, when you break God's law you break his heart, which is why verse 7 comes up. This is what God says. ***"So the LORD said..."*** He's having another conversation with himself. ***"I***

will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them."

Do you know there's another time God does this, where he considers blotting out everybody? This is not the only time God has this option. God is basically saying, "I would rather have no creation than a rebellious creation." Do you remember God does this again? I know not all of us know our Bibles really well. In Exodus 32, Moses is up on the mountain, and he's gone for a long time, and the people start worshiping the golden calf and doing all of these other crazy things.

Moses comes down. He's super upset. Then he goes back up the mountain, and God is like, "I've got an idea." I'm summarizing, but he's like, "Moses, let's wipe them all out, and let's start back with you." Moses, in a unique moment of humility, very Christlike, basically says, "God, for your glory, for your fame, do not wipe out these people." And he prays for them.

So, the condition leading up to verse 7 is not good, and God is considering wiping everyone out, but then everything changes in verse 8 when we meet Noah. ***"But Noah found favor..."*** By the way, that is the Old Testament word for *grace*. ***"But Noah found [grace] in the eyes of the LORD."*** That's verse 8. That's very important. Verse 9: ***"These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth."***

I want to talk about Noah for a minute, because I think we don't know Noah like we should. I want you to know Noah. We tend to think, "Oh, the world was so terrible. There were a bunch of bad people. Thank goodness for one good guy." That's what we can think of, but if you go back to verse 5, it says when God looked at the world and saw everybody, he saw that everybody's thoughts were only always, continually evil. What does that mean? That Noah was part of the "everybody."

Here's what I want you to understand. Noah experiences the grace of God in verse 8, and that makes him into the person we read about in verse 9. Grace changes us. Grace is not an ethereal, abstract, theoretical construct. See, theologians call this the *order of salvation*. You have to get the order of salvation right.

The story of Noah is not a story of religion and moralism. Here's what the story of Noah would be if it was religion and moralism: "There were a bunch of bad people, but thankfully there was this good guy, and his name was Noah. He was good when everybody else was bad, and he did a bunch of things God liked, so God put him on the ark and saved him." That's religion.

The gospel, Christianity, says, "Everybody was bad. God gave grace to one person and his family, and that grace transformed his heart so that he became righteous and blameless in his generation." Look. I'll show you this. Hebrews 11 mentions Noah. It says, ***"By faith***

Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith."

It basically says Noah believed God and was counted as righteous. When we connect ourselves to Jesus Christ through faith, the righteousness of Christ is ours and God no longer sees our sin but sees the righteousness of Christ. That's the gospel. So, think about this story. It's how bad the world is, Noah, and then how bad the world is again. Noah kind of breaks it up, but we're back in verse 11 into how bad the world is.

"Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth." By the way, the word *corrupt* is used three times and *violence* is used twice. ***"And God said to Noah, 'I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth.'"***

What I just read to you... If you were reading the book of Genesis all the way through, you would notice something. You would notice, "Wait a second. This is the first time we're told that God looks down and sees something." It's the exact same language that was used in Genesis, chapter 1.

In Genesis, chapter 1, God *speaks*, then God *sees*, and then God *says*. Right? So, he speaks, "Let there be light," he sees the light is good, and then he says it's good. This is the first time God is looking on his creation and is like, "It's not good. It's not only not good; it's absolutely horrible." He describes it as corrupt. *Corrupt* means to deteriorate, to decay, to become not useful and twisted.

Then he goes, "I'm going to destroy the world." Here's what he's basically saying. Here's what sin is. There are so many definitions of sin, but here's *a* definition of sin. *Sin* is self-destruction. So, God is looking at it, and he uses the words *corrupt* and *violence*. If I could paraphrase and summarize it, he basically looks at it and goes, "They're destroying themselves slowly. I'm going to do it quickly."

By the way, isn't this exactly what sin does? Think about this. Sin always does two things. It dishonors God and destroys people. I want to talk about something that I think is interesting just for a moment. Are certain sins bigger sins than others? Christians have debated this question.

Now listen. At one level, of course, every sin is against God's law and will be judged by God. I'm not saying that. But I think there are different levels of sin based on how clearly it dishonors God and how quickly it destroys the sinner. We saw that God was dishonored in that his heart was broken, and we see that the sinner is destroyed.

Here's a good way to think about sin. When I break God's law, I break God's heart, and when I break God's law, it breaks me. Don't we all see this? You know, the seven deadly sins. I won't go through them all. Why are they called the *seven deadly sins*? Because they're so deadly to us, because they destroy us.

What does gluttony do? It destroys the body God gave you. What does greed do? I mean, it does a lot of things, but it destroys... You no longer love people and use things; you love things and use people. What does lust do? It destroys you, because it messes with your brain and how you view sex. It turns every person into simply a sexual object. What does bitterness do? It destroys all of the relationships in your life. What does pride do? It turns you in on yourself so you only think about yourself.

Here's the situation. The world is really bad. God gives Noah grace. We're reminded again that the world is bad. Then, finally, he speaks to Noah. We hear a conversation between God and Noah in verse 14. Here's what God says. ***"Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch."*** In other words, "This thing is going to need to be waterproof, and you'll find out why soon."

"This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. Make a roof..." Yeah, that's going to be important. We don't want a bucket. You're going to want a roof. ***"Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks."***

So, here's what I want you to know, because the Noah story is long. It's three chapters long. From now on, the rest of chapter 6 is preparation for salvation. It doesn't start to rain until chapter 7. In chapter 6, he's preparing Noah for salvation. And how does he do it? He prepares Noah, first, by giving him his word.

This is why Christianity is a Word-centered faith and the Bible is such an important book. Primarily, if you ask, "What is the Bible?" the Bible is a book of salvation. The Bible tells us many things, but most importantly it tells us how to be saved. A lot of people read the Bible or, actually, people who *don't* read the Bible...

This is how I thought about it as a young Catholic boy. I was like, "Oh, the Bible. It's just a bunch of stories that I already know." Or it's a bunch of sayings. "I'm going to open it up, and it's going to be a bunch of pithy sayings." Some people think, "I don't want to open up the Bible because the Bible is just going to be a bunch of rules."

I'm not saying there aren't laws and commandments and sayings and stories, but the Bible primarily tells us how we can be saved. Now, what's interesting here is he tells how to build an ark. The word *ark* literally can be translated *box*. That's all it is. It's like, "Man! God saves us through something very simple."

This is really neat. Some of you who like how words work in Bible stories will find this interesting. This word *ark* is the exact same word used of the little box the midwives put Moses in when he escaped judgment through water. It's the same exact word. At one level, it's a very simple idea. "Hey, here's a box. I need you to make it." At the same time, he's very specific. It has to have *this* type of wood. I already read all of those things to you.

Now, in verse 17, he mentions the flood. ***"For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die."*** So, now we're told that there's going to be a flood. This is going to be interesting, because they currently live in a desert. So, he's going to live in a desert and build a boat in a desert, expecting for there to be a great flood that no one has ever experienced before. This is where faith comes into it.

You may ask the question, "Why would God destroy the world through a flood?" I mean, he's God. He can destroy the world in any way. Why destroy it through a flood? Why not destroy it through a fire? The answer is that water in the Bible stands for several things, but it stands for judgment and for cleansing. This picture kind of comes to fruition fully in baptism.

If you've ever been new... You visited before. You didn't grow up in a Christian home, and you come. You're like, "It's really weird. Everyone wears the same tee shirt and they go underwater. I don't get it." What's happening there... When you're baptized, you say, "I'm going underneath the judgment of God." In fact, the first baptisms looked like coffins. That's how they would build them.

"I'm going under the judgment of God, and I'm coming up, and I am cleansed." In fact, I was talking to a guy this week. It's kind of a neat story. I met this guy, and he found out I was a pastor, so we started talking. He was so excited to tell me how he got baptized. He wasn't in our church. He was somewhere else. He said, "I recently became a Christian. I got baptized."

He said, "Before I got baptized, my pastor told me, 'All right. When I baptize you, I'm going to keep you under the water for 10 seconds.'" I was like, "What?" "He said, 'During those 10 seconds, I want you to think about your past life, and then I'm going to pull you back up and you're going to be a new person.'" I thought, "If we did this at Two Cities Church, our baptisms would take forever. We'd get sued and stuff like that."

Anyway, it's a picture of cleansing and a picture of judgment. Let's continue on. Verse 18: ***"But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you."*** First mention in the Bible of covenant. There are so many things happening early in the Bible. There will be a covenant with Abraham. There will be a covenant with David. There's the new covenant in Jesus Christ.

Covenant says that God is primarily going to relate to us based on his promises toward us, not our promises toward him. Religion is "I make a bunch of promises to God," which we don't keep, versus Christianity is "God is going to make promises, and he's going to come through." Some people like to divide up the whole Old Testament and New Testament like this. Old Testament: promises made. New Testament: promises kept.

So, God basically says, "I'm going to make this covenant with you." Then look here. Verse 19: ***"And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you."*** So, he doesn't say two of every *animal*; he says two of every *sort* of animal. I don't know exactly how all of the animals got on the ark. We'll get into that in a second. But it wasn't two of every dog; it was two dogs. That's what he's trying to say there.

Now watch. ***"They shall be male and female."*** They understood biology back then. It's amazing. ***"Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground, according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you to keep them alive."*** By the way, people ask, "Well, how did Noah get all of those animals?" It says they will come to him. So, it wasn't *every* animal; it was every *kind*, and God brought them to him.

"Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up. It shall serve as food for you and for them." God basically says, "You and your family need to build the ark, you need to get into the ark, you need to get all of the animals into the ark, and then you need enough food for you and all of the animals."

We are so grateful that the animals got on the ark. Right? Otherwise, we would all be vegetarians. Very sad. But it does bring up some questions. There is a mystery in God's providence. When you realize that all of the animals got on the ark, you do ask this question: "Why did God allow those two cats on the ark?" There are mysteries that we will not understand this side of heaven.

Here's the thing. I think this is key. Verse 22 is a summary verse. This verse is so important it's repeated. In fact, what I'm going to read to you now is said almost verbatim in chapter 7, verse 5. Let me read it to you. ***"Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him."***

Are you doing everything God has commanded you to do? When the flood comes (and it's coming), one of the questions you will ask is, "Did I do everything God asked me to do in preparation?" Think about all of the things Noah had to learn. Noah had to learn how to build an ark. I don't know what his profession was, but he maybe wasn't an ark builder.

Here are a few principles. If God is going to call you to do something and to obey him, you may have to learn new skills. "I may need to learn how to read my Bible, and I may

need to learn how to pray. I may need to learn how to share my faith, and I may need to learn how to disciple other people." There might be skills.

Secondly, he probably had to recruit people. I mean, this is a big boat. I don't think he built it himself. Was it just him and his three sons? Maybe. Did he recruit people and pay them? There's this old idea that if you pay people, sometimes they will show up and do work. We don't know. Did he build teams? He had to learn a ton of skills.

Thirdly, he did this for a long time. Like I said earlier, most people think it took him over 100 years to build this boat. I mean, that's what Eugene Peterson... He was a famous Christian who's now with the Lord. He described the Christian faith as a long obedience in the same direction. Think about doing something and seeing very little fruit for 120 years. Do you know who doesn't get enough credit in this story? Noah's wife. She stuck with him. She must have been very godly. She supported him.

There's one other thing he was doing while he was building the ark. Let me show you this. This is 2 Peter 2:5. We wouldn't know this if we didn't have the New Testament. There's one thing we're told in 2 Peter 2:5 that Noah was doing while he was building the ark. ***"...if he [God] did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald [preacher] of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly..."***

Here's what it's telling us: Noah built the ark while he preached the Word. It appears that even all of the people who built the ark didn't get in the ark with him. It appears that he had a ministry in which he preached the Word and no one believed. Could you imagine his church services?

"How many first-time guests did we have?"

"Zero."

"How many people got baptized last year?"

"Zero."

"How many people checked into kids' ministry last year?"

"Zero."

So, he has one of those ministries... Isaiah had a similar ministry, if you know his story. He had a ministry where he preached to a people who would never believe, which leads to the final thing I want to say about when you're building an ark. When you're building an ark, you need to realize you're going to be misunderstood.

Sometimes it's hard because it's by your parents. They're like, "Why are you making those decisions with your kids?" It's like, "We're building an ark." Sometimes your friends won't understand. Sometimes your neighbors won't understand. Sometimes your coworkers... It's awkward. We have to be okay. Please get over it. You have to be okay. This is not persecution. You have to be okay with being misunderstood.

So, here's what I want to talk about. I want to do a little parenthesis here for a few minutes, because I think this is the right time to talk about this. I think we have to build arks today. Now, I know that Noah's ark is unique. I know that. It was a unique thing that he built under God's revelation that saved him from a worldwide flood. I know that.

But by extension, the ark is a place of safety and security and a place of salvation in a crazy culture. I'm not making this up. I didn't come up with this idea. The church has always viewed itself as an ark in society. In fact, if you go into old, old, old churches, they'll have really high ceilings. You may not even notice, but the high ceilings are often made of wood and are shaped in the way of an ark.

In fact, the oldest word we have for the worship center... We call it the *worship center*. Certain people call it the *sanctuary*. It's where the people gather to worship and sing and take Communion and hear the Word of God. The oldest word we have for that is the Latin word *navis*, which is where we get the word *nave*, which literally means ship or boat.

So, early Christians viewed the church as an ark. Of course. We hope that's what it would be for you. Here's why. We're living in a culture that is less and less kind to Christianity. Just follow this for a second. I didn't come up with this. There's a group of guys who have said there are three ways that culture interacts with Christianity. There's *positive culture*.

Positive culture no longer exists in America, but many of you, if you're over 50, probably grew up in some form of positive culture. It's where the values of America were similar enough to the Judeo-Christian values. We're not saying it was a Christian nation. We're not saying that everybody in America was Christian. We're just saying there were very, very similar values. Think about this for a second. This is why the seeker-sensitive movement worked in the 90s.

Basically, if you don't know what that is, that was where guys like Rick Warren and Andy Stanley and Bill Hybels and these guys basically said, "Guys, can we get rid of the goofy pews and put some chairs in? Can we make everyone not have to dress like they're going to a wedding to go to church? I think if we could remove some of these things, people are not actually that hostile to Christianity. They don't like all of the traditions we put up, but they kind of believe a lot of this stuff." They did that, and they realized they were right. That was positive culture.

Then there was *neutral culture*. Neutral culture was, you know, there's relativism and pluralism and everyone starts saying, "Christianity is not too bad. Maybe it's one idea in

the marketplace of ideas." That's where you get the Coexist bumper sticker from. "We'll put up with you, and you'll put up with us. We'll kind of all believe our different things."

What they're saying is... Again, it depends. I know it depends on where you live in the nation, but what they said is with the Obergefell decision in 2015, which legalized same-sex marriage across all 50 states, what happened in that moment was Christianity took a back seat in culture. Christian views were viewed as archaic. They were viewed as primitive. They were viewed as oppressive.

There's a guy named Rod Dreher. He's an Eastern Orthodox Christian. He's a conservative commentator. He wrote a book called *The Benedict Option* if you want to read more about this. I'm not advocating for the whole book and everything, but I think this is fascinating.

He says the Dark Ages, Middle Ages...that kind of period...lasted from AD 500 to AD 1500. That's 1,000 years. That's four times as long as our nation has existed. So, he says there was this 1,000-year Dark Age period. Very little Christianity. All of the people we talk about, Augustine and all of them, are really early on, and then Luther comes in the 1500s and the Protestant Reformation happens. There are 1,000 years of mostly darkness.

He argues in the book that what got Christianity through the darkest periods was the creation of the monastery. It's really worth thinking about. They needed an actual institution. They needed something that was uniquely and distinctly Christian that was separated from the world that could keep the Christian faith alive in a crazy culture.

Now look. We're not doing Two Cities monastery. I'm not even saying we all have to become Amish or something like that. Here's what I'm saying. I think he's right, and I think this is what the idea of an ark is. You need uniquely and distinctly Christian places and spaces that you can strategically withdraw to to be strengthened.

Hopefully this church can be that for you. Hopefully your Community Group... Your Community Group should be an ark. You should be like, "The kids are driving me crazy and work is so hard and my classmate is [*this*]," or whatever. You're like, "At work I'm the only Christian, and this is what happened in residency." But you go to your group, and you're like, "These 12 people pray for me, and we have the same vision and values."

Let me give you a couple of areas to consider building an ark. Build an ark in your home. Basically, a parent's job is to build arks for their kids. That's the job. By the way, an ark is temporary. You're not supposed to live in the ark forever. I know that. You have to get out of the ark. That's why you go in there so you can be strengthened, so you can leave.

You need an ark for entertainment. You wouldn't leave the front door of your house open, would you? Would you leave the front door of your house open and be like, "Whoever comes in, I bet they mean well"? You would never do that, but people leave the front door of their TV and their iPad and their phone... I'm not saying the only thing you can watch

is *The Chosen*. I'm saying we need to think critically about what we're allowing into our house.

Listen. When I was a kid, if something was going bad at school and I was having trouble at school, I could go home and no one could bother me about it. There was no cell phone. There was no social media. I went home and it was over. It maybe picked back up at school, but now this stuff follows kids home, and you know this.

You're going to need an ark in education. We're not picking sides on homeschool, private school, charter school, Christian private school, and all that. We're simply saying that though not every Christian family homeschools, every Christian family views their home as a school. There are so many things that are being taught. Do you even know? You probably don't.

I'm teaching my boys... I told you about my DNA Group I started with my boys. We've done all of these different things with it so far. I was like, "Guys, I'm teaching you doctrine." They're 8 and 10. They were like, "What's doctrine, Dad?" I was like, "It's a body of teaching on something. We're just going to walk through doctrine, and I'm going to make it as simple as possible for an 8- and a 10-year-old." We talked about the doctrine of the Word of God for 45 minutes. I'm just saying we have to build an ark.

Here's another one: the ark of friendship and families. One of the best things you could do, why you can't just come here, put your ball cap and glasses on, act anonymous, and leave... The reason you can't do that and the reason your kids need to get in our kids' ministry and your students need to get in our student ministry is you need other families here (and it'll take a while to find) where your kids like their kids and their kids like your kids and the parents have similar vision and values.

If you have that, that is one of the greatest blessings this church could give families, and it will be an ark. "Oh, we can send our kids over here, and we trust them. And their kids are a joy to have over here, and we're re-implementing the same values in these homes."

Okay. End parenthesis on building arks. Chapter 7 very quickly: get in the ark. That's his word in chapter 7. I'm just going to read you a couple of verses. Tell me if the emphasis in chapter 7 is not to get in the ark. Here it is. ***"Then the LORD said to Noah, 'Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation.'"***

Drop down to verse 6. ***"Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came upon the earth. And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood."*** Now verse 13: ***"On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark..."***

Verse 15: ***"They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him. And the LORD shut him in."*** You have to go in, but God has to shut the door.

Here's the big idea for chapter 7. Chapter 6 is the world is a mess and God prepares for salvation to come through this ark. Chapter 7 is, again and again, the word to get in the ark. Here's the big idea: *don't just build the ark; get in the ark*. This is the word to religiously lost people, people who are all about, "Okay. We'll give a little bit of money, and we'll go to your Community Group thing, and we'll be on your serving team, and we'll show up occasionally on a Sunday."

We don't want you to just be *around* the ark; we want you to get *in* the ark. This is why Paul's favorite phrase in the New Testament... You can check me on this. The apostle Paul's most-used phrase in the entire New Testament is *in Christ*. In fact, I'm not trying to use the original Greek language to manipulate things, but I want you to understand that in the original Greek the language is believe *into* Christ. It sounds weird to say in English, but that's what it is. Believe *into* him.

This is what you do. You believe, and you are like, "I am in Christ. I'm trusting him. I've transferred trust." Our desire here is that nobody would simply be around the things of God all the time and not make their faith in Christ personal. This is the picture of getting in and shutting the door.

Then let's go to chapter 8. ***"But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided."*** When it says, "God remembered Noah," it doesn't mean God was up there going, "Uh, I forgot. Oh, there's a guy in a boat." It doesn't mean he actually forgot Noah.

When the Bible says God remembers... In the Bible, the word *remembers* means to think about somebody and begin to move toward them. So, God moves toward Noah. Look at verse 2. ***"The fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed, the rain from the heavens was restrained..."*** So, the flood is over now. It took 40 days and 40 nights. You know this.

"...and the waters receded from the earth continually. At the end of 150 days the waters had abated..." But it's still not over. There were 40 days, but then there were 150 total, so that was another 110 days. ***"...and in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. And the waters continued to abate until the tenth month..."***

So, he's there three more months. He's on this ark forever. ***"...in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen."*** Okay. Here's what I want

you to see. There's a principle in this. The destruction of the world happened in 40 days, but the restoration took over 300.

We see this with western North Carolina. What can one storm do in a day or two? A lot. Then you're reading, and you're like, "Oh, okay. Interstate 40 is not going to be done until 2026." Yes, destruction can happen quickly; restoration takes a lot of time. I want to warn us with that and give us hope with that at the same time.

You can, sadly, destroy your marriage in a weekend, and then it might take, by the grace of God, two years to staple back together. You'll have to recommit your vows. You'll have to figure out every snake under every carpet that led to that. Trust will have to be given, and trust will have to be earned. Things can happen very quickly negatively. They take a lot of time to be restored.

I think about it like this. If you ever have work done at your house, demolition is easy. If it's not a load-bearing wall, any unskilled laborer could break it down. Just get a couple of 13-year-old boys. "I'll pay you \$10. Go." Demolition is so easy. It's very hard to build a kitchen...all of the electrical.

What I'm trying to say is if there are things in your life that have been destroyed, it may take time for them to be restored. Sometimes things won't even get to be fully restored on earth. My old pastor Andy Davis said he always wondered what it was like the moment David entered heaven and met Uriah. What an interesting thought. David and Uriah were ultimately restored to one another, but they had to wait until they got to heaven for it to happen.

I want to end with this. I want to end as you see what happens when Noah gets off the ark. Chapter 8, verse 20: ***"Then Noah built an altar..."*** After the ark is an altar. ***"Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar."***

And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, 'I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.'"

As we close, the big idea is that after you get in the ark, you need to build an altar. This is the story of the entire Bible. God saves us so we can worship him. The first thing that happens after God saves the people Israel from the Egyptians... The first thing they do is worship God.

What I love about Noah is Noah doesn't get off the ark and build an altar to himself. "This is how awesome I am. I cannot believe I built this ark. I cannot believe my family and I

are the only ones who survived." He sees the grace of God in his life and responds. Guys, the goal of the ark is the altar. Why do you want an ark in your home or in your family? Because you want more worship in your family.

I love what John Piper says about this. I put this quote on here. I want you to see this. It's very famous. John Piper says, "Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more."

Jesus, in one of his teachings on the end times, talks about Noah and compares himself to Noah, and I want to close with reading you this passage. Here it is. Matthew 24: ***"For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man."*** That's Jesus' favorite designation for himself.

"For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking..." This is what everybody was doing. We saw the corruption and violence, but to them it looked like they were eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage. ***"...until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man."***

So, Jesus talks about the story of Noah, and he says, "Actually, I am the greater Noah. Noah is a picture and a pointer to me and a picture and a pointer to the final judgment, the end of times, when I'm going to come back." See, the story of Noah is about God saving a people through one man's obedience. That's the gospel. How does God save a people? God saves a people by the obedience of one person, the perfect life of Jesus Christ and his death in our place.

It's interesting, though, because when you think about Noah, Noah ends up not being the great guy we think he is. I mean, he's a good guy. We saw some good things. We don't have time to get into this, but in chapter 9, the first thing Noah does when he gets off the ark is plant a vineyard, get drunk, and lie around naked. His son embarrasses him, and then he curses his son.

That's Noah, which tells us that Noah is not our savior; Noah is pointing to somebody else. It also tells us that what we need more than a second chance... Noah got the ultimate second chance and messed it up. We need more than a second chance. We need a substitute, what Jesus Christ has done for us. Guys, as we go forward in this Multiply Initiative, what we're doing is building arks and building altars. Let's pray together.

Lord, would you help us around here to build an ark? We thank you that Jesus Christ is the ultimate ark, the ultimate place of safety, security, and salvation. Lord, we pray that our homes would be arks for other people, that as we practice hospitality, as we invest in others, our homes would be arks, that our Community Groups would be arks, that this

church and all of the good, gospel-preaching churches in Winston-Salem would be arks where people can come out of the storms of life and not just find safety but find salvation. In Christ's name we ask, amen.