

**A MEANINGFUL RIGHTEOUSNESS**

*The LORD then said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation.” (Genesis 7:1, NIV)*

**H**OUSTON, TEXAS, WHERE MANY OF THE WORLD’S TOP MALE PLAYERS have converged this week in a final tune-up before the Masters, is one of those places delivering frequent reports of “deluges” and “floods of biblical proportions.” Rancho Mirage, California, where the world’s top female players are competing in their season’s first major, is no such locale. In fact, if the desert climate of the Coachella Valley is akin to anything biblical, it might be the conditions Noah was used to in the ancient Middle East. Certainly, he must have wondered more than once during his many sessions of ark-building just how this boat would float. There was never water enough where he lived to bear such a vessel.

But Noah kept working. And when we explore the Genesis text as to why this would be—why a man would keep up such a large yet apparently meaningless task—we find one clear answer: Noah was righteous.

Does this come as a surprise? Certainly the popular theological leanings of our time tilt toward Reformed thinking, where the depravity of human beings is Point One, so to speak. The Noah account is OK with that, for we also find there the sin-soaked condition of the people of his time: “God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways” (Genesis 6:12). It is true then as it is true now: “No one living is righteous before you” (Psalm 143:2).

But what then of Noah? Was he righteous in a way that no other ever has been? Of course that cannot be true, for Christ alone lived without sin. Christ alone *is* our righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6).

Still Noah was notably righteous, and his righteousness was meaningful. For it, he was spared.

Consider the work of the superior junior high math student taught by a college professor. This student may be best in her class, rewarded with an A on her report card. She is not brilliant compared to her teacher, but she is declared bright among her peers by her teacher. So it was with Noah. His righteousness was a reflection of the Creator’s perfect hand, and in his corrupt time, this stood out. Because we too live in a corrupt time, we do well to live according to the righteousness we find in Jesus; in this way, for his glory, we may also stand out.

**Opening questions** Who is someone you know who stands out for their righteousness? What drives them to make these choices and live this way?

**READING** Genesis 6:9-7:5, 1 Corinthians 1:30-2:5, Romans 8:1-13

**Noah’s righteousness**

How is the declaration of Noah’s righteousness evidenced in Genesis 6 and 7? Do you think it is possible to do everything God asks of you? How could this be accomplished?

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**The genesis of our righteousness**

According to Paul’s writing in 1 Corinthians, where does our righteousness come from? How did Paul defer to Christ in his kingdom work? What would such deference look like in our lives?

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**The Holy Spirit’s delivery of righteousness**

In Romans 8, how is the flesh (sin nature) contrasted against the work of the Spirit in those who belong to Jesus? Where does the Spirit lead us in terms of righteousness?

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