

There is a well-known book titled, Everything I Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten. Let me suggest another: Everything I Need to Know I Learned from Noah:

1. Don't miss the boat.
2. We are all in the same boat.
3. Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the Ark.
4. Stay fit. When you're 600 years old, someone may ask you to do something big.
5. Don't listen to critics; just do the job that needs to be done.
6. Build your future on high ground.
7. For safety's sake, travel in pairs.
8. Speed isn't always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs.
9. When you're stressed, float a while.
10. Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic by professionals.
11. No matter the storm, when you are with God, there's always a rainbow waiting.

This morning we're turning to the story of Noah in Genesis 6. Listen to the beginning of the account of Noah.

5 The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. 6 The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. 7 So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth—men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air—for I am grieved that I have made them." 8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

YouTube video – Bill Cosby http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=so9o3_daDZw&feature=related

I think some would question the statement that 'Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.' I don't know if being asked to build a ship the length of a football field and a half sounds like favor!

But Genesis 6:22 says: "Noah did everything just as God commanded him."

Noah stands in sharp contrast to most of us when it comes to obeying God. But Noah also serves as a great example of what can be achieved when a person obeys God. Obedience is one of those words that often come loaded with negative baggage. We think of obedience in terms of becoming subservient to someone else. Some people made a big thing during the royal wedding about Kate Middleton not including the word 'obey' in her wedding vows. (The truth is that the word 'obey' isn't in the BCP)

Some people think about obedience and relate it to dog training. We send our dogs to obedience school so that they become tame and civilized.

Some hear the word obedience and think that it means the end of their freedom.

But obedience is not a negative term; it is actually a term that denotes love. Obedience is an outcome of loving someone else and seeking to honor them.

Noah loved God. That is evident by the description of Noah in verse 9: "Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God."

Now if you read the entire story of Noah you notice that Noah never speaks. God gives four little speeches, but Noah just keeps his mouth shut and does his job. Now, he's not a mindless robot. He's a flesh and blood human being with real problems and struggles.

Noah may well have questioned, doubted, and argued along the way, but all we have is the end result of his journey. He received God's grace and then he responded by listening and obeying God. Noah perfected the art of obedience; not the art of thinking about obedience. He acted, putting faith into practice, and as Noah put his faith into practice, he shows us that obedience is costly, messy, and beautiful.

Obedience is costly.

This was a massive project! Building the ark took 100 years! Imagine what obeying God cost Noah. It wasn't a hobby; it consumed his time, money, energy, and life. When God calls us to follow him it is going to cost us something!

In Luke 14 Jesus challenged those who followed him to realize that following would involve taking up our cross.

Peter, the other disciples, Paul...it cost them their life to follow Jesus.

Obedience is costly.

But, obedience is also messy.

Imagine two of every creature in an enclosed space for a year. That's messy! And there were only eight people on the ark to clean up after all those creatures.

It would be nice if obedience to God was neat and clean, but God didn't say that following him was going to be easy and clean. We live in a messed up a world; and God doesn't expect us to live in the ark called the church- God expects us to be out there in the mess!

Being a disciple of Jesus means living for God; and walking with him in the midst of a hurting, broken, messy world. Jesus said being his disciple means letting your light shine into the midst of darkness. Jesus said: Go back into the darkness and form a community of my people who will reach out and shine my light into the darkness as they love one another."

Obedience means being willing to get into the mess of this life and in turn bring beauty to what was ugly.

Obedience is beautiful.

Through the obedience of Noah and his family, God brought beauty back into a world that had been made unattractive by sin.

9 “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you 10 and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. 11 I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

Through Noah’s obedience the world had a fresh start! And the rainbow is God’s promise that he still makes things new!

Do you know one thing that blocks us from obedience? We always think we need more information. We say, “I’d like to obey, but I need some more information; more details; clarity and understanding.”

But at some point we need to say to ourselves, How much more information do I need before I can respond to God with costly, messy, and beautiful obedience?

Do I need more information about forgiveness before I let go of my grudges and release those who have wounded me?

--Do I need another teaching on Christian community before I decide I need a small group?

--Do I need more training on how to pray before I actually set aside time to seek God in prayer?

--How many more Bible studies do I need before I decide it's time to downsize my lifestyle and give the money towards something that will last for all eternity?

Do I need more information before I share my faith in Jesus with other people?

Listen to what Donald Miller says in his book *Blue Like Jazz*:

The trouble with deep belief is that it costs something. And there is something inside me, some selfish beast of a subtle thing, that doesn't like the truth at all because it carries responsibility, and if I actually believe these things I have to do something about them....

I used to say that I believed it was important to tell people about Jesus, but I never did. [My friend] Andrew very kindly explained that if I do not introduce people to Jesus, then I don't believe Jesus is an important person. It doesn't matter what I say. [What matters is what I do!]

God is looking for people who don’t keep asking, “You want me to do what?” God is looking for people like Noah who say, “What do you want me to do?”

But if you are really ready to ask that question of God know that you will need to know the answer to these three questions:

Am I willing to pay the price?

Am I willing to get dirty?

And, Do I want to bring something beautiful into this world?

God is looking for people who are willing to obey. The time for information is past, the time for action is now!