

The Flood

Genesis 6–9

September 20, 2026

This series explores six moments in Scripture marked by the number forty. Not a countdown on a calendar. In Hebrew, forty marks a season of preparation, trial, testing, the stretch of time before something new gets built. This week we start with Noah. The flood, the ark, forty days of rain that gave creation a fresh start.

WELCOME · 5 MIN

LEADER CUE *Read the framing paragraph below aloud to open the group.*

"Throughout Scripture, the number forty marks a season of preparation for something new. Over the next six weeks, we'll walk through six of these seasons. Tonight we start with Noah and the flood."

Icebreaker

1. Tell us about a season when everything felt like it was falling apart, and something new came out the other side.

WATCH THE VIDEO · 7 MIN

LEADER CUE *Press play on the Week 1 video before moving on.*

READ THE SCRIPTURE · 5 MIN

LEADER CUE *Invite someone in the group to read the passages below aloud.*

Genesis 7:4, NIV

"Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made."

Genesis 7:12, NIV

"And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights."

Genesis 7:17, NIV

"For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth."

UNDERSTAND THE STORY · 10–15 MIN

These questions help the group track what happened in the story and what stood out from the video.

1. Before the flood, Genesis says the earth was filled with evil "from morning until night" and that it "grieved God in his heart." God grieved. He didn't just judge. What does that tell you about how God relates to a broken world?
2. The Hebrew word behind "ark" is the same word used for the basket that carried baby Moses down the river. There's no bow, no stern, no rudder. What does that detail change about how you picture Noah's family riding out the storm?
3. When the waters finally recede, God makes a promise and gives the rainbow as its sign. Why might God have chosen a visible, ongoing sign instead of just making the promise once?

DIG DEEPER · 10–15 MIN

These questions move from the story itself into what it reveals about who God is.

1. The flood is often remembered as an act of judgment. The video frames it differently, as a redemption project. God cleansing creation instead of abandoning it. How does that shift change the way you read this story?
2. God's covenant after the flood covers all creation. Every living thing, every family, not one nation set apart from the rest. What does that tell us about the scope of God's faithfulness?
3. Almost as soon as Noah's family leaves the ark, things fall apart again. The restart doesn't fully take. Why might Scripture include that discouraging detail instead of ending the story on the rainbow?

LEADER NOTE (OPTIONAL CROSS-REFERENCE)

- *Jonah later warns Nineveh they have forty days to repent (Jonah 3:4). Another forty tied to mercy extended before judgment. Bring this up only if your group has capacity to go there. It's a bonus thread, not required for the discussion to work.*

MAKE IT PERSONAL · 10 MIN

These questions move the story into this week's real life.

1. When you feel like you're in a flood, some season of chaos or loss, is your instinct to show up for God? Or to run from him? Be honest.
2. God stayed faithfully present to creation instead of walking away from it. Where in your life right now do you need to trust that God is staying present, even if it doesn't feel like it?
3. Noah trusted the ark before he could see dry land. What would it look like this week to trust God's faithfulness before you can see the outcome?

CLOSE IN PRAYER · 5 MIN

God, thank you for staying present with us even when the world feels flooded with chaos. Help us trust your faithfulness before we can see the outcome, and give us the courage to show up for you instead of running. Amen.

Take a few minutes as a group to share prayer requests and pray for one another before you go.

WEEK 2

Moses on Sinai

Exodus 24, 34; Deuteronomy 9

September 27, 2026

Last week Noah waited out a flood in a box with no rudder. This week Moses climbs a mountain. Forty days up there, no food, no water, just God and two tablets of stone. Down at the bottom, the waiting doesn't go so well.

WELCOME · 5 MIN

LEADER CUE *Read the framing paragraph below aloud to open the group.*

"Last week we watched Noah wait out a flood in a giant basket with no rudder. This week Moses climbs Mount Sinai. Forty days and nights, alone with God. Down at the bottom, the people don't wait as well as he does."

Icebreaker

1. Tell us about a time you had to wait on something important with no clear end date. How did you handle it?

WATCH THE VIDEO · 7 MIN

LEADER CUE *Press play on the Week 2 video before moving on.*

READ THE SCRIPTURE · 5 MIN

LEADER CUE *Invite someone in the group to read the passages below aloud.*

Exodus 24:18, NIV

"Then Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights."

Exodus 34:28, NIV

"Moses was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments."

Deuteronomy 9:9, NIV

"When I went up on the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant that the Lord had made with you, I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water."

UNDERSTAND THE STORY · 10–15 MIN

These questions help the group track what happened in the story and what stood out from the video.

1. Moses goes without food or water for forty days while he's with God on the mountain. What do you make of that kind of fasting? What does it say about what he's being prepared for?
2. While Moses is gone, the people at the bottom start to panic. They build a golden calf and give it credit for rescuing them out of Egypt. Why do you think waiting is so often where faith breaks down?
3. God gives Moses two things during those forty days: the law, and the blueprint for the tabernacle, a portable tent where God will live among the people. Why might both come as a package deal?

DIG DEEPER · 10–15 MIN

These questions move from the story itself into what it reveals about who God is.

1. The law wasn't given to punish the Israelites. It was given so they could learn how to live as God's people. How does that change the way you think about rules or commandments in your own faith?
2. Moses is faithful on the mountain. The people are not faithful at the bottom. Same forty days, same trial, two very different outcomes. What separates the two?
3. God doesn't give up on the Israelites after the golden calf, even though he has every reason to. What does his patience here tell you about how he deals with your failures?

LEADER NOTE (OPTIONAL CROSS-REFERENCE)

- *God isn't handing down rules from a distance in this story. He's building himself a home in the middle of the camp. Bring this up if your group wants to talk about what it means that God chooses to live close, not issue orders from far away.*

MAKE IT PERSONAL · 10 MIN

These questions move the story into this week's real life.

1. Where in your life right now are you waiting on something, and finding it hard to trust God with the timeline?

2. The Israelites turned to something they could see and control instead of trusting a God they couldn't see. What's your version of the golden calf when life feels uncertain?
3. What would it look like this week to stay faithful during a wait, instead of filling the silence with something easier to control?

CLOSE IN PRAYER · 5 MIN

God, thank you for staying patient with us even when we build our own golden calves. Teach us to wait well, to trust you in the silence, and to stay faithful even when we can't see what you're doing. Amen.

Take a few minutes as a group to share prayer requests and pray for one another before you go.

WEEK 3

Israel in the Wilderness

Numbers 14; Deuteronomy 8

October 4, 2026

Two weeks ago, Israel waited forty days at the base of a mountain and failed. This week they get another shot at trusting God, standing at the edge of the Promised Land. Twelve spies go in. Ten come back scared. A trip that should have taken days turns into forty years.

WELCOME · 5 MIN

LEADER CUE *Read the framing paragraph below aloud to open the group.*

"So far, Israel has waited out a flood and waited on a mountain. This week they stand at the edge of the Promised Land. Twelve spies go in to scout it. Only two come back believing God can actually deliver."

Icebreaker

1. Think of a time fear talked you out of something you were supposed to do. What happened?

WATCH THE VIDEO · 7 MIN

LEADER CUE *Press play on the Week 3 video before moving on.*

READ THE SCRIPTURE · 5 MIN

LEADER CUE *Invite someone in the group to read the passages below aloud.*

Numbers 14:33–34, NIV

"Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies lies in the wilderness. For forty years, one year for each of the forty days you explored the land, you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you."

Deuteronomy 8:2, NIV

"Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands."

UNDERSTAND THE STORY · 10–15 MIN

These questions help the group track what happened in the story and what stood out from the video.

1. Twelve spies go into Canaan. Ten come back with stories of giants and impossible odds. Only Joshua and Caleb believe God can deliver on his promise. What made the majority report so much easier to believe?
2. A trip that should have taken days turns into forty years of wandering. What does that gap, between what should have happened and what actually happened, tell you about the cost of unbelief?
3. God ties the wilderness years directly to the forty days the spies spent exploring the land, one year for every day. Why might God connect the punishment so closely to the original failure?

DIG DEEPER · 10–15 MIN

These questions move from the story itself into what it reveals about who God is.

1. Scripture says God was hurt by Israel's refusal to trust him, after everything he had already done to rescue and protect them. What does it mean that God can be hurt by unbelief?
2. The wilderness wasn't only punishment. Deuteronomy says it was also meant to humble the Israelites and reveal what was really in their hearts. How do trial and discipline work together in that verse?
3. It's the children of the unfaithful generation who finally cross into Canaan, not the ones who refused to go the first time. What does that say about how God's promises outlast our failures?

LEADER NOTE (OPTIONAL CROSS-REFERENCE)

- *The Jordan River, where Israel finally crosses into Canaan, is the same river where John the Baptist later baptizes Jesus. Bring this up if your group wants to trace how this story echoes forward into the New Testament.*

MAKE IT PERSONAL · 10 MIN

These questions move the story into this week's real life.

1. Where has fear, or a bad report from someone else, talked you out of something God was actually calling you into?
2. The Israelites believed they had already arrived, when really they were still being tested. Where might you be assuming you've arrived, when God still has more to teach you?
3. What would it look like this week to trust the promise even though the road looks longer and harder than you expected?

CLOSE IN PRAYER · 5 MIN

God, forgive us for the times fear has been louder than your promises. Give us the courage of Joshua and Caleb to trust what you say is true, even when the odds look impossible. Amen.

Take a few minutes as a group to share prayer requests and pray for one another before you go.

WEEK 4

The Lord Appears to Elijah

1 Kings 19

October 11, 2026

Elijah just won the biggest fight of his life. Fire falls from heaven on Mount Carmel, and every prophet of a false god is exposed. Then one threat from a queen sends him running for the wilderness, praying to die under a bush.

WELCOME · 5 MIN

LEADER CUE Read the framing paragraph below aloud to open the group.

"Elijah just watched God win in the most dramatic way possible on Mount Carmel. Then Queen Jezebel threatens his life, and Elijah runs. Forty days later, he meets God on a mountain, but not in the way he expects."

Icebreaker

1. Describe a time you hit a high point and then crashed hard right after. What triggered the crash?

WATCH THE VIDEO · 7 MIN

LEADER CUE Press play on the Week 4 video before moving on.

READ THE SCRIPTURE · 5 MIN

LEADER CUE Invite someone in the group to read the passages below aloud.

1 Kings 19:3–4, NIV

"Elijah was afraid and ran for his life... He came to a broom bush, sat down under it, and prayed that he might die. 'I have had enough, Lord,' he said. 'Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.'"

1 Kings 19:8, NIV

"Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God."

1 Kings 19:11–12, NIV

"The Lord was not in the wind... the Lord was not in the earthquake... After the fire came a gentle whisper."

UNDERSTAND THE STORY · 10–15 MIN

These questions help the group track what happened in the story and what stood out from the video.

1. Right after the biggest victory of his career, Elijah runs from one threat and asks God to let him die. What does that tell you about how exhaustion and fear can hit even after a win?
2. An angel has to visit Elijah twice before he's ready to get up and go. Why might God be so patient with someone who just asked to die?
3. Elijah doesn't find God in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire. He finds God in a gentle whisper. Why do you think Scripture lists everything God wasn't in, before saying what he was?

DIG DEEPER · 10–15 MIN

These questions move from the story itself into what it reveals about who God is.

1. Elijah tells God twice, almost word for word, "I am the only one left." God's response includes the detail that seven thousand people in Israel have not bowed to Baal. What does that tell you about how isolated we can feel even when we're not actually alone?
2. The forty days end with a new assignment. Elijah has to anoint two kings and his own successor. Why might God respond to Elijah's burnout with a commission instead of a break?
3. Elisha burns his plow and slaughters his oxen before following Elijah. What does that level of commitment cost him, and what does it say about what following God sometimes requires?

LEADER NOTE (OPTIONAL CROSS-REFERENCE)

- *Elijah's despair under the broom bush and his encounter on Horeb happen on the same mountain where Moses met God generations earlier. Bring this up if your group wants to talk about how God meets different people in the same place, in different ways.*

MAKE IT PERSONAL · 10 MIN

These questions move the story into this week's real life.

1. When have you felt like Elijah under the bush, wanting to quit right after a win or a hard season?

2. Elijah expected God in the dramatic moments and found him in the silence instead. Where do you need to slow down enough to notice God in a quiet voice this week?
3. God gave Elijah a job to do instead of letting him stay in his despair. What might God be asking you to step back into, even if you don't feel ready?

CLOSE IN PRAYER · 5 MIN

God, meet us in our exhaustion the way you met Elijah. When we want to quit, remind us you're not finished with us yet. Help us listen for your voice in the silence, not just the noise. Amen.

Take a few minutes as a group to share prayer requests and pray for one another before you go.

WEEK 5

Jesus' Temptation

Matthew 4; Luke 4

October 18, 2026

Every failed test in this series so far belongs to someone else. Noah's family. The Israelites at Sinai. The spies at Canaan. This week, someone finally passes.

WELCOME · 5 MIN

LEADER CUE Read the framing paragraph below aloud to open the group.

"So far, everyone in this series has failed some version of the test. This week, Jesus goes into the wilderness for forty days and passes every temptation the devil throws at him."

Icebreaker

1. What's a temptation you know is going to come back around, no matter how many times you've already dealt with it?

WATCH THE VIDEO · 7 MIN

LEADER CUE Press play on the Week 5 video before moving on.

READ THE SCRIPTURE · 5 MIN

LEADER CUE Invite someone in the group to read the passages below aloud.

Matthew 4:2, NIV

"After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry."

Luke 4:2, NIV

"For forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry."

Matthew 4:4, NIV

"Jesus answered, 'It is written: Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

UNDERSTAND THE STORY · 10–15 MIN

These questions help the group track what happened in the story and what stood out from the video.

1. The devil offers Jesus three things: bread, power, and proof. What do those three temptations have in common?
2. Every time Jesus responds to the devil, he quotes Scripture instead of arguing his own case. Why might that matter more than it first appears?
3. Jesus is starving, alone, and exhausted when the temptations come. Why do you think testing tends to show up when we're already worn down?

DIG DEEPER · 10–15 MIN

These questions move from the story itself into what it reveals about who God is.

1. Everywhere else in this series, someone fails the forty-day test. Jesus is the first one who doesn't. What does it mean that he succeeds where Israel failed?
2. Jesus is fully God and fully human at the same time. His sinlessness isn't because he was never tempted. It's because he kept saying no. What does that distinction change about how you think about your own temptation?
3. The devil can't make anyone do anything. All he can do is find a weakness and offer it back dressed up as something good. What does that tell you about how temptation actually works?

LEADER NOTE (OPTIONAL CROSS-REFERENCE)

- *Jesus' baptism happens right before he's led into the wilderness. He passes through water before he passes through testing, the same pattern Israel followed out of Egypt. Bring this up if your group wants to connect this story back to the earlier weeks.*

MAKE IT PERSONAL · 10 MIN

These questions move the story into this week's real life.

1. What's the version of "turn stones into bread" in your life right now, a shortcut that would meet a real need the wrong way?

2. How well do you actually know Scripture well enough to use it the way Jesus did, in the moment, under pressure?
3. What would it look like this week to respond to temptation with something true, instead of just willpower?

CLOSE IN PRAYER · 5 MIN

God, thank you for Jesus, who faced every temptation we face and never gave in. Teach us your word well enough to use it when we need it most. Give us the strength to say no, and the humility to ask for help when we can't. Amen.

Take a few minutes as a group to share prayer requests and pray for one another before you go.

WEEK 6

Resurrection Appearances

Acts 1

October 25, 2026

This is the last forty in the series, and the only one that starts after a resurrection instead of before a rescue. Jesus spends forty days appearing to his followers, then sends them out to build something that's still going.

WELCOME · 5 MIN

LEADER CUE *Read the framing paragraph below aloud to open the group.*

"This is the last forty in our series. Jesus has already risen. For forty days he appears to his followers, teaches them, and prepares them for what comes next: the birth of the church."

Icebreaker

1. Tell us about a season that felt like an ending, but turned out to be the start of something you didn't see coming.

WATCH THE VIDEO · 7 MIN

LEADER CUE *Press play on the Week 6 video before moving on.*

READ THE SCRIPTURE · 5 MIN

LEADER CUE *Invite someone in the group to read the passages below aloud.*

Acts 1:3, NIV

"After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God."

1 Corinthians 15:6, NIV

"After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep."

UNDERSTAND THE STORY · 10–15 MIN

These questions help the group track what happened in the story and what stood out from the video.

1. This forty days is different from every other one in the series. It isn't a test Jesus has to pass. Who is this period of preparation actually for?
2. Paul tells the Corinthians that Jesus appeared to more than five hundred people after the resurrection, and tells them to go ask those witnesses directly if they don't believe him. Why include that detail?
3. The forty days end with the ascension, and then the Holy Spirit arrives at Pentecost. What does it mean that this whole series ends with the church being born, not just one person's story?

DIG DEEPER · 10–15 MIN

These questions move from the story itself into what it reveals about who God is.

1. Every other forty in this series ends with someone stepping into a new calling. Noah repopulates the earth. Moses receives the law. Elijah anoints his successor. What is the church being called into at the end of this one?
2. Jesus tells his followers they'll be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. That's a widening circle. What does the order of that list tell you about how the mission was meant to grow?
3. The pastor in the video admits he used to treat church as a Sunday morning thing, maybe choir practice on Wednesday. What's the difference between that and what Acts 1 actually calls the church to?

LEADER NOTE (OPTIONAL CROSS-REFERENCE)

- *This closes the loop on the whole series. Six different forties, six different kinds of preparation, all of them leading somewhere new. Consider using this week to ask your group what they noticed across all six stories, not just this one.*

MAKE IT PERSONAL · 10 MIN

These questions move the story into this week's real life.

1. Where in your life have you treated faith as something you do on Sundays instead of something you carry into the rest of your week?
2. The disciples had to wait for the Holy Spirit before they were ready to go out. What are you waiting on right now, and how are you spending that wait?
3. Looking back across all six weeks of this series, which forty hit you the hardest, and why?

CLOSE IN PRAYER · 5 MIN

God, thank you for preparing us the way you prepared the first disciples. Give us the courage to be witnesses in our own Jerusalem, wherever that is for us, and the patience to wait on your Spirit when we don't feel ready. Amen.

Take a few minutes as a group to share prayer requests and pray for one another before you go.