

life matters

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Noah: Violent or Righteous?

"Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time. . . . and the earth was filled with violence." –Genesis 6:9,11

With those words, Genesis 6 sets up a stark contrast between one man and the rest of the world. God drew a bright line between being violent and being righteous. Apparently, in His mind, you can't be both.

What about today? Isn't violence rampant in our streets and entertainment? Doesn't it sometimes invade our schools and workplaces? The question for Christians is this: How should we set ourselves apart from our culture's violent tendency?

In Noah's day, people lived by Lamech's motto: *"I have killed a man for wounding me and a boy for striking me."* –Gen. 4:23

Everyone except Noah.

We know what happened. God favored Noah and condemned the rest to death. But even after the flood, God acknowledged that people were essentially the same – evil from youth.¹ And still bore His image.²

What was new were added checks on violence. In Genesis 9, God told Noah He would keep a close record of every murder. Men (and animals) would

answer to Him for any human death, and be subject to capital punishment by human governments.³

Violence is still rampant in our day, and abortion – though hidden – is one of its most prevalent forms. But what about violent acts that stop short of causing death? Do they violate the sanctity of human life too?

Since mankind is made in God's image, unprovoked violence is an attack on God and rebellion against His holy standard. Violence is a flawed attempt to deal with problems without God and His truth.

What does God's word say?

- Violence separates people from God.⁴
- Violent people are not like God.⁵
- Violent people should not be envied or imitated.⁶
- Violent people often meet a violent end.⁷
- Violent people will be judged by God.⁸

In Matthew 5:21-22 and James 3:8-10, malicious comments are said to be like murder. Left unchecked, angry words or slaps on the cheek can lead to heavier blows or the use of deadly weapons. At the very

least, violence is careless with life. A person using it can't know or control how it will end.

The good news is:

- Victims of violence are precious to God.⁹
- God redeems violent people.¹⁰
- One day, God will bring violence to an end.¹¹

Noah stood alone against society because he walked with God – as Enoch had done before him, and as Adam had done before the Fall.¹²

If righteousness is the opposite of violence, then we can be sure Noah was never guilty of shedding innocent blood. Neither was he likely to have retaliated against neighbors who mocked him. He would not have belittled or demeaned people verbally. And he would not have joined in with thugs or taken advantage of the weak in order to advance the building of the ark.

Christians stand for righteousness and justice.¹³ By upholding the sanctity of God's image we act rightly. When we defend victims of violence, speak out on their behalf, and care for them, we reflect His mercy and compassion.*

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal [of the flesh]." –2 Cor. 10:4

ENDNOTES: 1/ Genesis 8:21. 2/ Gen. 9:6. 3/ Gen. 9:5. 4/ Psalm 11:5, Isaiah 59:2-8. 5/ Ps. 54:3, 86:14; Is. 53:9. 6/ Proverbs 3:31. 7/ Prov. 21:7. 8/ Ezekiel 7:11, 23; 8:17; 12:19; 28:16; Joel 3:19; Obadiah 1:10; Habakkuk 2:8; Zephaniah 1:9. 9/ Ps. 72:14, 140:1. 10/ 1 Timothy 1:13. 11/ Is. 60:18. 12/ Gen. 3:8, 5:24, 6:9. 13/ Jeremiah 22:3; Ezek. 45:9; Jonah 3:8; Romans 1:29; Galatians 5:19-23; Colossians 3:8-10; James 4:2; 1 Peter 4:15; 1 John 3:12. *Deadly force against abortion providers is *never* warranted.