

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 5/8/2000 Brad Brandt

Genesis 6:1-8 "The Worst Thing You Can Do For Your Family"*

Key: The worst thing you can do for your family is to *disregard God*.

I. When you disregard God, it affects the family (1-4).

A. Marriage is degraded (1-3).

1. People marry the wrong people.
2. People marry for the wrong reasons.

B. Values are degraded (4).

1. In man's eyes the Nephilim were heroes.
2. In God's eyes, they were *fallen ones*.

II. When you disregard God, it affects the future (5-8).

A. We see God's holiness (5).

1. He notices sinful actions.
2. He notices sinful hearts.

B. We see God's passion for His glory (6).

C. We see God's justice (7).

1. This is God's world.
2. God will do as He pleases with His world.

D. We see God's grace (8).

Implications: There are only two options...

1. Disregard the Lord and life gets bizarre.
2. Live by grace and enjoy His favor.

A teacher gave her class of second graders a lesson on the magnet and what it does. The next day in a written test, she included this question: "My full name has six letters. The first one is M. I pick up things. What am I?"

When the test papers were turned in, the teacher was astonished to find that almost 50 percent of the students answered the question with the word "Mother."

Today in a special way our thoughts turn towards the home. It's Mother's Day.

I found the story of a four-year-old and a six-year-old who presented their Mom with a house plant. They had used their own money and she was thrilled. The older of them said with a sad face, "There was a bouquet that we wanted to give you at the flower shop. It was real pretty, but it was too expensive. It had a ribbon on it that said, 'Rest In Peace,' and we thought it would be just perfect since you are always asking for a little peace so that you can rest."

I love stories involving children. Kids can say the most insightful things, can't they?

A teacher asked a boy this question: "Suppose your mother baked a pie and there were seven of you--your parents and five children. What part of the pie would you get?"

"A sixth," replied the boy.

"I'm afraid you don't know your fractions," said the teacher. "Remember, there are seven of you."

"Yes, teacher," said the boy, "but you don't know my mother. Mother would say she didn't want any pie."

It's true. Mothers give and give and give, don't they? Now answer this. What's the most important thing a mother--and a father--can give their children?

Let's turn the question around. What's the *worst* thing you can do for your family? How's that for an introduction to a Mother's Day message!

This morning I want to show you from God's Word the worst thing you can do for your family, obviously, *not* so you can do it, but so you *won't do it!* In my estimation, Genesis 6 gives us the answer.

I must level with you. Genesis 6:1-8 is a hard text to interpret. For centuries Bible scholars have debated its meaning. Who are the "sons of God," and why did they inter-marry with the "daughters of men" mentioned in verse 2? And what did God mean when He said His Spirit would not "contend" with man forever (verse 3)? And who are the Nephilim (or "giants" in the KJV) in verse 4? And what was it that grieved the Lord so much that He determined to wipe mankind from the face of the earth in verse 7?

Without question, the details of Genesis 6:1-8 are hard to understand. In fact, the details almost seem *bizarre*. And in my estimation, that's the point.

When you leave God out--of life, of your family, and of society--things get messed up, don't they? Crazy. Bizarre.

So there's the answer to our question. According to Genesis 6:1-8...

Key: The worst thing you can do for your family is to disregard God.

But what does it mean to disregard God? And what happens when you do? We find out in Genesis 6:1-8. Genesis 6 describes what happened to people who lived a long time ago, people who disregarded God. And when they did, they experienced two disastrous consequences.

It's no different for us, either. When you ignore or disregard God, there are two very specific results.

I. When you disregard God, it affects the family (1-4).

Verse 1 begins, "When men began to increase in number on the earth." Stop there. Remember the context. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and the first two chapters of Genesis tell us how He did it.

Then in chapter three, Adam and Eve disobeyed God and brought the curse of God upon themselves, their descendants, and the world. The fruit of their fateful choice showed up in chapter four when their firstborn son, Cain, killed his brother, Abel. In time, God gave Adam and Eve another son, named Seth.

These two sons represented two types of people that emerged on the planet. Cain was a self-centered, godless man whose lineage is presented in chapter four. On the other hand, Seth was a God-fearing man whose descendants we see in chapter five.

Time passed. Civilization developed. Men began to increase in number on the earth. How many people were there? As we proposed in an earlier message, assuming that each family had six children, and allowing 100 years for each generation, the population of the world at the time of Noah would have been 235,000,000 people.

So the world's population increased. But that's not the only thing that increased according to the text. Wickedness increased, too. And it showed up in a very specific way, the breakdown of the family.

When you disregard God, it affects the family institution, and it does so in two destructive ways. It was true in that pre-Flood world as it is in ours. First...

A. Marriage is degraded (1-3). "When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. Then the LORD said, 'My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years.'"

As time passed and as the world's population increased, some peculiar marriages began to take place. The "sons of God" began to notice the beauty of "the daughters of men." And they married them.

What's going on? It's time to address the question, "Just who are the 'sons of God' and 'daughters of men'?" There are two common interpretations accepted by Bible scholars.

First, some suggest the "sons of God" refers to *angels*. The Hebrew phrase is used this way in the Old Testament. For instance Job 1:6 reads, "One day the angels [the Hebrew literally reads, "the sons of God"] came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also with them." Again we read in Job 2:1, "On another day the angels [again in the Hebrew, "sons of God"] came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him."

Satan is a fallen angel. Here he is mentioned in context with other angelic beings called "sons of God."

The term "son" doesn't always refer to physical offspring, but can depict a member of a group. For instance, the *sons of the prophets* referred, not to biological descendants, but to members of a prophetic guild (as in 2 Kings 2:3; 4:1). In Job "sons of God" could refer to angelic members of some divine council.

Another pertinent text is Psalm 29:1, "Ascribe to the LORD, O mighty ones, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength." "Mighty ones" is literally "sons of God," and here the psalmist seems to be calling the angels to praise and worship God.

The New Testament sheds light on what happened to the fallen angels. 1 Peter 3:19-20 says that Christ "went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built." Some believe this is referring to the "sons of God" in Genesis 6.

Furthermore, 2 Peter 2:4 gives this information, "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment." This could be referring to the "sons of God" in Genesis 6. One problem, however, is that there's no mention about judging angels in Genesis 6, so we would be overstepping our bounds if we insisted that 2 Peter 2:4 and Genesis 6 referred to the same event (Youngblood, p. 94).

A similar reference is Jude 6, "And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home--these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day." Jude says that at some point in history, angels rebelled against God and forfeited their home in heaven. But is that event synonymous with what happened in Genesis 6?

Those who hold the "angel" view propose that "the sons of God" were fallen angels or demons who somehow took women for wives. One proponent explains, "Most likely this stratagem was carried out by means of a technique akin to the demon-possession common in the times of Christ. The men whose bodies were possessed were evidently thereby made so attractive to women that they could take any they chose as wives. These 'sons of God' thus controlled not only the men whose bodies they had acquired for their own usage, but also the wives they took to themselves, and then all the children they bore."

In the gospels we do see the craving of demons for a body. But a statement by Jesus in Luke 20:34-36 renders a challenge for "angel view" proponents. "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection of the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage...for they are like the angels." Here Jesus tells us that angels do not marry.

Another view is that "sons of God" refers to *human beings*, specifically *godly men*. For instance, in Deuteronomy 14:1 Moses says to the people of Israel, "You are the children [literally, "sons"] of the LORD your God." Isaiah 43:6 quotes God as saying, "Bring my sons from afar." In Hosea 1:10 the people of Israel are called "the sons of the living God." Interestingly, Luke traces Jesus' human ancestry back to, "Adam, the son of God (in Luke 3:37)."

In light of the flow of Genesis, I prefer the latter view. If the first four verses of Genesis 6 pertained to angels, then we have an unexplained interruption in the narrative. There's been no mention of angels to this point in Genesis. But if "sons of God" refers to human beings, namely *godly men*, men like Seth, the account flows right out of the background of Genesis 4-5.

Here's what's happening. Marriage is being degraded in verses 1-3. How? The same way it's degraded in our day.

1. People marry the wrong people. In Genesis 6, who married whom? The "sons of God" married the "daughters of men." Who are the sons of God? They're the God-fearing people as opposed to the godless. They're the descendants of Seth whose line was just given in chapter 5.

But who did the men in the godly line marry? Not the daughters of *God*, but the "daughters of *men*." What's going on here? Intermarriage. The Sethites of Genesis 5 are marrying the Cainites of Genesis 4. God's people are failing to maintain their distinctiveness.

How many types of people are there in the world? Only two. People like Seth and people like Cain--people who know and fear the Lord, and people who don't.

God's Word is clear. People like Seth are not to marry people like Cain. Why not? Because God is holy, and God commands His people to be holy and distinct.

Satan's strategy is to lure God's people into mixed marriages, that is, a marriage between a believer in Christ and a non-believer. When that happens, the result is a divided home, a home where one person's allegiance is to the Lord, and the other person's isn't. In my judgment, that's what happened in Genesis 6. People married the wrong people. There's a second way in which marriage is degraded.

2. People marry for the wrong reasons. Answer this. On what basis did the sons of God chose to marry the daughters of men? The text tells us--when they "saw that the daughters of men were *beautiful*."

There's a red flag here, do you see it? Is this the basis for choosing a mate? Beauty? Physical attraction? What's going on here? People were marrying for physical reasons with no regard for the spiritual.

Does that ever happen today? What did Jesus say in Luke 17:26-27? "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in

marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all."

Sadly, people marry for the wrong reasons all the time. But as God's people, we're to be different.

Young people, I'd like to offer you a challenge. Resolve today that you will date only individuals whose first allegiance is to Jesus Christ. Don't get into a dating relationship with a person who's not serious about Christ.

"But," you say, "he makes my heart flip! He's got to be Mr. Right!" The fact is, your heart will "stop flipping"--infatuation doesn't last. If you make physical attraction the basis for your marriage, you're in trouble. On the other hand, if you marry God's kind of person you'll never regret it. Proverbs 31:30 says, "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised."

What was God's assessment of the intermarriage that occurred in Genesis 6? In verse 3 He said (as the KJV puts it), "My Spirit will not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years."

It's hard to translate and interpret this verse. The verb "contend" or "strive" can be understood in a variety of ways. The idea seems to be that man has now passed the point of no return with God. The word can be rendered "remain in." In other words, God is saying He will take His Spirit away from this degraded generation.

When? Verse 3 concludes, "His days will be 120 years." Is God saying from this point on man's lifespan will be shortened to 120 years? Possibly, but I prefer another approach. I think God is saying the judgment He's just mentioned will not happen immediately. It will be delayed 120 years.

There's grace here. Judgment is coming, yes. The Flood will come, but God postponed it 120 years.

Ponder what we've seen so far. When we disregard God, it affects the family. Marriage is degraded when we leave God out of the picture. What else happens?

B. Values are degraded (4). Verse 4 explains how it happened in the Genesis 6 world, "The Nephilim were on the earth in those days--and also afterward--when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown."

We come to another question of interpretation. Who were the Nephilim? The KJV calls them "giants" based on the LXX rendering of the verse. The actual Hebrew word is *nephilim*.

We see the term again in Numbers 13. In the report the spies gave following their trip to explore the Promised Land, here's what they said (13:31-33), "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." . . . "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."

Apparently, the Nephilim were people of great size and strength. Notice carefully that the text doesn't say the Nephilim were the offspring of the sons of God and daughters of men. Rather it says the Nephilim were on the earth at the same time that the sons of God and daughters of men were having their own children. And what was true of the Nephilim according to the end of verse 4? I see a contrast here, a contrast of values.

1. *In man's eyes the Nephilim were heroes.* They were "mighty men," "men of renown" (as the KJV puts it). We live in a world where might makes right, where whoever carries the biggest stick wins. Our heroes are the people who are the biggest, the strongest, the savviest, the shrewdest.

Who are the heroes of our generation? I see the Nephilim on my television as I scan through the channels.

They're on Wall Street. They're making \$75,000 every time they swing a bat. They're pulling in millions for Nike endorsements. The Nephilim were the first big time, championship wrestlers--just kidding.

The point is this. In man's eyes the Nephilim were heroes. But...

2. *In God's eyes, they were fallen ones.* That's right. The Hebrew word *nephilim* means "fallen ones." Isn't that interesting? In man's eyes they're heroes. In God's eyes they're sinners ripe for judgment.

In fact, it's possible that the term "heroes" actually means "violent men," indicating the Nephilim were not only powerful, but that they used their power to injure other image bearers of God. One Bible scholar suggests we might think of the Nephilim as the "pre-Flood Mafia."

Do you see what's happening here? The Genesis 6 world is becoming increasingly violent, and the heroes of the day are the ones leading the way. Listen dear friend, when respect for God leaves the culture, human life becomes cheap.

I'm concerned about who are heroes are these days. Our values have been degraded. Let me talk straight. There ought to be a difference in what we value as Christians from what our non-Christian neighbors value. I'm concerned when I see a young person wearing a shirt with the picture of a person whose known for violence and immorality. I'm just as concerned when I see Dads and Moms working 60 to 70 hours a week to accumulate "stuff," yet ignore their God-given commitments to home and church.

It's a degradation of values. And it begins with disregarding God.

Twisted values show up in lots of ways. We see it in our attitude towards parenting. For instance, listen to Susannah Wesley's "Rules For Raising Children." Here's the approach the mother of John and Charles Wesley took to parenting:

1. Subdue self-will in a child and thus work together with God to save his soul.
2. Teach him to pray as soon as he can speak.
3. Give him nothing he cries for and only what is good for him if he asks for it politely.
4. To prevent lying, punish no fault which is freely confessed, but never allow a rebellious, sinful act to go unnoticed.
5. Commend and reward good behavior.
6. Strictly observe all promises you have make to your child.

That biblical approach to parenting is quite different from the permissive, "let the child find his own way in life," mentality that prevails these days. And we have to decide. Are we going to live by God's values, or the world's? Who are our heroes going to be?

When you disregard God, there are two consequences. First of all, it affects your family. We see that in verses 1-4. Here's the second.

II. When you disregard God, it affects the future (5-8).

The mother of three notoriously unruly youngsters was asked whether or not she'd have children if she had it to do over again. "Yes," she replied. "But not the same ones." That sounds like a mother who was fed up with the way her family was going!

God was certainly not pleased with what was happening to the family in Genesis 6. In fact, the biblical text puts the spotlight on God in verses 5-8. We see four of God's attributes.

A. We see God's holiness (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."

The LORD saw. Don't miss that. Does God see the evil in the world? Does He know what's going on? Yes. He sees. What does He notice? Two things according to verse 5...

1. *He notices sinful actions.* In this case, He saw the "wickedness of man." What wickedness? The ungodly marriages. The ungodly values. The violence. The choice of the wrong heroes. God notices sinful actions. What else?

2. *He notices sinful hearts.* God sees what no man can see. He sees the heart. We tend to use this thought to justify ourselves, "Well, maybe I shouldn't have done what I did, but my heart's right."

Wait a minute. What's God's assessment of our heart? Verse 5 tells us. God saw that "every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time."

Recently I was sharing Christ with someone who has messed up his life big time by his sinful choices. And as he was asking for help he quickly sought to justify himself, "Oh, I've got problems, but I'm a basically a good person."

No matter how wicked we are, as sinners we cling to our own goodness. We're self-focused, rather than God-focused. We'd rather rationalize than repent. We're prone to defend self rather than deny it.

Is there hope for depraved sinners? Yes there is! But not until we agree with God's assessment. *Every inclination. Only evil. All the time.* That's what's true of us from birth. We are depraved sinners.

That's what makes what happened on the Cross so amazing. On the Cross, Jesus, though perfect, endured the penalty of sin for every person that would ever believe on Him. At the Cross, as in Genesis 6, we see God's holiness.

B. We see God's passion for His glory (6). "The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain."

Isn't God sovereign? Yes. And doesn't God have a sovereign plan? Yes. And hasn't God decreed everything that will happen, so that He's not surprised by anything? Yes. Then why is God grieving here?

It's because the Sovereign One is also passionate about His glory. He formed this world to revolve around Him. Sin offends and grieves Him.

And what God saw in Genesis 6 filled His heart with pain. He had created mankind to glorify Him and enjoy Him, but now mankind is doing neither. Here we see God doing what mankind should have been doing--grieving over sin!

Beloved, God is passionate about His glory. And His passion for His glory is tied to what we see in verse 7...

C. We see God's justice (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.'"

The KJV actually renders the Hebrew, "For it *repenteth* me that I have made them." Is God saying He made a mistake? Did He have regrets? Certainly not. God doesn't change. But neither is He fatalistic, unfeeling, and steel-hearted. He is caring and personal. And just.

In light of God's justice we must affirm two truths...

1. *This is God's world.* "Whom I have created," God says in verse 7.

2. *God will do as He pleases with His world.* Does not the Potter have the right to do whatever He wants with His clay? And here the Potter says, "I formed You for my glory but You have filled My heart with pain. Therefore I will wipe you from the face of the earth."

You say, "I thought God was loving." He is. But He's also just. Though God loves the sinner He judges his sin.

Is our world getting better and better? I'm intrigued by the optimistic reports we're hearing: "Violent crime is at a seven year low!" "Unemployment rates are down!"

Great. But there's one thing man hasn't changed and can't change. It's the human *heart*. You can make a person more civilized for a time, but you can't make his heart righteous.

Is there hope? Yes. It's called *grace*.

D. We see God's grace (8). "But Noah found favor [or "grace"] in the eyes of the LORD." What a wonderful word "grace" is! And here we see it for the first time in the Bible. Grace is God giving me what I desperately need and don't deserve.

Notice the biblical order. First, Noah "found grace" (verse 8), and then Noah was a "righteous man" (verse 9). Apart from God's saving grace no sinner can be righteous. But when a sinner experiences God's grace, He becomes a new man.

Someone has said, "When a person works an eight-hour day and receives a fair day's pay for his time, that is a wage. When a person competes with an opponent and receives a trophy for his performance, that is a prize. When a person receives appropriate recognition for his long service or high achievements, that is an award. But when a person is not capable of earning a wage, can win no prize, and deserves no award--yet receives such a gift anyway--that is a good picture of God's unmerited favor. This is what we mean when we talk about the grace of God."

Ray Stedman's remark is worth pondering, "Remember the Christian who saw a drunkard staggering down the street wallowing in his own vomit, and turned to his friend to say, 'There but for the grace of God go I.'"

"We can all say that. What has kept us? What has brought us to the truth? Was it any goodness on our part? No, it is God's grace. It is that he loved us and called us, he wooed us and won us, seeking us out and, through many influences upon us, bringing us at last to see that the age in which we live is an age under the bondage of a lie. He has opened our eyes, partially at least, to the truth, till we have turned to the Lord Jesus and rested under the grace of God."

So what's the worst thing you can do for your family? We've seen a vivid picture of it this morning in Genesis 6. It's what an entire world did--save one man. The worst thing you can do for your family is to *disregard God*.

I exhort you this morning, seek first God and His kingdom. To put it bluntly...

Implications: There are only two options...

1. *Disregard the Lord and life gets bizarre.* It certainly did in Genesis 6. Or...

2. *Live by grace and enjoy His favor.* Like Noah did. The only hope is grace.