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In my childhood I had a science kit that demonstrated the properties of light. I would shine a flashlight through a box that had a slit in the end, and when I placed a glass prism near the hole where the light exited the box, I saw white light divided into the colors of the rainbow. I was fascinated that I could split light into many colors with a small piece of glass, something that Isaac Newton discovered in 1666 as he saw light pass through a prism. He had made a small hole in a window shutter to let a beam of sunlight enter his darkened room. When he placed a glass prism in the light, he observed the multitude of colors, and with further experiments he concluded that white light contains all the colors, which we see when the white light is bent and split in the prism into a rainbow of colors.

This same basic principle happens when sunlight passes through raindrops and is refracted and reflected into the colors we see in the sky. Noah may not have understood the rainbow of colors in the same way that Isaac Newton understood them,

but the colors carried an important message that the world needed to see.

You remember the story of Noah and ark: the narrator tells us that the world had become so corrupt that God decided to destroy it. God invited Noah to build a large boat and collect pairs of animals to ride out the storm and flood to save a portion of the world.

I struggle with the narrator's perspective, for I don't see God as a destructive power who wipes out an entire creation. I realize a tragic flood must have occurred, for stories about this flood exist in other cultures as well, but I struggle with the biblical narrator's interpretation of what happened. Do we interpret such events today caused by God's anger?

We continue to have floods today, such as the typhoon that happened in Japan this past week, almost two months after one of the deadliest of floods inundated the same nation in July. Most would agree that weather patterns don't reflect God's anger in response to our mistakes, for people in Japan are not worse than the rest of us.

I think we realize the danger of taking the biblical narrator's interpretation too literally, as was the case with a young girl and her mother who were looking at a rainbow in the sky.

"That rainbow sure is beautiful," exclaimed the girl.

"Yes," her mother commented, "God painted a wonderful rainbow in the sky."

"And just think," said the girl, "that God did it with only his left hand."

The mother replied, "What do you mean? Why just the right hand? Couldn't God use both hands?"

The girl replied, "We learned in Sunday school that when Jesus went up into heaven he sat next to God and is seated on his right hand."¹

Even though we have a different understanding today of why floods occur, we *can* see God's role in the flood story: to save creation. During the destruction, God offers us another option, a way of salvation, an escape from the floods of life.

In the midst of the flood, God called Noah and his family to save a portion of the inhabitants so

that some life could survive. Imagine what it might have been like for Noah and his family to encounter God's invitation to save a portion of creation. I've invited Noah and his wife and a few members of the ark to share their experience...

(Skit: Noah, wife, elephant, lion)

Have you ever felt overwhelmed, as though a flood of troubles crashed into your life all at once?

- When you face too many deadlines approaching, you may feel overwhelmed with the huge number of responsibilities.
- When your children are all sick at once and you don't feel well either, you may feel flooded with the exhaustion of caring for sick family members.
- When tax payments come due, as well as the mortgage payment and insurance bills, along with a large credit card bill, you may feel your financial situation is overflowing.
- When you find yourself visiting the doctor's office waiting for answers to illness or pain, you

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may feel flooded with frustration of unanswered questions.

Amid these floods of life, God offers us a promise: that we are not alone, we are loved by a caring God. Although we recognize the rainbow as the result of light refracting in raindrops, the rainbow reminded Noah and his family of God's promise: that in the floods of life, God offers hope. When that ark landed on dry ground and they saw the rainbow, God offered a promise to not just their family, but to the entire world: "I am now setting up my covenant with you, with your descendants, ¹⁰and with every living being with you—with the birds, with the large animals, and with all the animals of the earth, leaving the ark with you. ¹¹I will set up my

covenant with you so that never again will all life be cut off by floodwaters. There will never again be a flood to destroy the earth."²

When you face the floods of life, the overwhelming struggles that we all encounter, look around at the beautiful colors of the world, from the rainbows in the sky to the changing leaves on the trees to the white light split into a prism of colors, and may they remind you that you are not alone, that God is with you in the torrents of life, in the white-water rapids, in the downpours that wash into our lives.

¹ Adapted from Hodgin, Michael. *1001 Humorous Illustrations for Public Speaking: Fresh, Timely, and Compelling Illustrations for Preachers, Teachers, and Speakers* (Kindle Location 1304). Zondervan. Kindle Edition, #119.

² Genesis 9:9-11, CEB.