

How to Break God's Heart

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November 25-26, 2000

Roots: A Study in the Book of Genesis

Genesis 6:1-8

One of the great challenges for me, as a pastor, is to attempt to communicate to you week by week what God is like. A significant portion of my job is spent attempting to correct mistaken notions about God. Many Americans have become their own god, their own divine being. Certainly with the spread of New Age ideas, we are seeing more and more popular books being written with the goal of assisting people to get in touch with the god within each of us. There is a general move towards a spirituality without absolutes – you know, Oprah Winfrey's version of God – no need for absolutes; no need for all of the definitions that the Bible or Christianity puts on God. You are free to create your own spirituality and in a sense, to create God on your own terms. For many Americans the word "God" is really a mysterious word. God is unexplored territory. He or she or it may be a force, or your higher power, whatever you conceive your higher power to be.

As a Christian pastor, I see that one of my primary jobs is to communicate to you an accurate perception of the God Who Is. Not the god of Hollywood, necessarily, the god we find in the movies, or on the shelves of Barnes and Noble, or on the magazine racks. Or even the god we might hear about in some churches or from some TV evangelist – you know, the god whose primary goal is to increase your financial prosperity so long as you give a certain amount of money to that ministry.

I have been doing a series from the book of Genesis. A series that I have called "Roots." I have said throughout this series that Genesis 1-11 asks and answers many of the fundamental questions that people are still asking in the 21st century even though this was written thousands of years ago. People still need to know where we come from, what does it mean to be a human being, to be a person. We still are wrestling over what it means to be male and female. We are still trying to figure out what is wrong with the world and why are things so crazy. Genesis 1-11 speaks to our divisions – the divisions in our country, the divisions in our families. And the opening chapters of Genesis particularly speak to the question of the nature of God.

What is God like? The God Who Is and not the god of our imaginations, the god of movies, the god of the TV evangelists, but the God Who Is. The God that we meet in the opening words of Genesis 1. The God who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth. The God who created me and you. What is God like? What content would we give the word "God"?

Of course, I cannot exhaustively unpack the meaning of God, if I was up here speaking for 40 years, much less 40 minutes – the time we have allotted for a message here at Vineyard. But Genesis 6, the story of Noah and the Flood, contains what I believe is a crucial truth about the God who is. And I want to read to you from Genesis 6:6 this statement: ***The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth and his heart was filled with pain.***

The God Who Is is a God who can be grieved and whose heart can be broken. One of the absolutely essential truths about God, the God of the Bible, not necessarily the God of the philosophers or the God of the seminaries, but one of the essential truths about the God of the Bible is that the God of the Bible is an emotion-filled, passionate being. And unless you get in touch with the fact that God, the God we worship, the God we read about in the pages of the Bible, the God we encounter in the person of his son, Jesus – unless you get in touch with the fact that that God is an emotion-filled, passionate being, you will not know the real God.

To spin this in a slightly different direction, you can never get close to God, you will never be intimate with the God Who Is, you will never be able to walk with God or hate your sin, mourn your disobedience, pursue following Christ with all your heart, unless you begin to get a hold of the emotional life of God, that is part and parcel of his being. It says in Genesis 6:6: ***The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth and his heart was filled with pain.***

Emotion is not just something we find in people, because we have hormones and chemicals running through our bodies, because we are flesh and blood. Emotions are not just part of the bodily nature of humanity. They are part of our spiritual nature. An emotion is part of the nature of Almighty God. In fact, you cannot be intimate with Almighty God unless you begin to get a hold of his emotional life.

Listen to me for a moment. Have you ever tried to relate to someone who shows you no emotion at all? No feeling. Someone who has a totally flat affect? You can't tell if they are angry, hurt, happy, sad – they are emotionally flat-lined. Ever try to relate to someone like that? You want to scream, "Get angry. Rant, rave, punch the wall, but feel something." One of the most frustrating experiences a human being can have is desiring a relationship with another person, to get close to another, to connect with another, and to be utterly shut out emotionally. Have you ever had that experience? Stop elbowing your husband...

But I will tell you that you will not know intimacy with God unless you know God as an emotional being. I am not saying that God is dominated or ruled by his emotions. That the nature of God is that he is moody. When I say that God is an emotional being, I am saying that he is filled with emotions. That he is capable of feeling. That God is a God who can be in the words of Genesis 6:6, grieved and that his heart can be filled with pain.

Now, that may be a new concept for many of you. It certainly is in opposition of what many teachers in the church have taught. I want to give you a little doctrinal lesson here in beginning this talk today. The Greeks, especially Plato, but also Aristotle, developed an idea, an understanding of God that became known as the “impassibility” of God: the view that God is beyond all emotion and all pain. The Greek idea of God was that you could never attribute to God pain or emotion because those things are entirely human characteristics.

In the early church, it was considered to be a part of Christian orthodoxy to speak of God as being impassible – not impossible, but impassible. That God doesn't feel anything. That he doesn't experience pain. That he can't be affected by anything we say or do. You can read some of the church fathers who said that when the Bible spoke of God's suffering or having emotions, they were just speaking anthropomorphically, which means they were just attributing human characteristics to God, kind of like when the Bible says that God's ear is open to our prayers. We know that God doesn't have ears. He is a spiritual being. Or when the Bible says that God feeds every living creature from his hand. We know that God doesn't have hands. It is just speaking anthropomorphically, attributing human characteristics to God.

And so these people said that when the Bible speaks of God's grief or God's anger, it was just a manner of speaking. It was just a way of talking about what God looks like from our end. One medieval theologian, a man named Anselm, even said that God could never even be spoken of as being compassionate. Anselm said that God is beyond all of those feelings. He is experienced by us as being compassionate; he is experienced by us as being merciful, but to imply that God has feelings would detract from his perfection.

The most famous medieval theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas, said that it is difficult to even attribute love to God, if by love we mean loving feelings. We certainly experience God as being loving and being kind, being merciful. But it is not part of his feelings, his emotional life, because God is beyond feeling.

Now listen, I believe, for much of the church for much of its history, when it has spoken about God and who God is (you find this today especially in conservative evangelical churches), that the church was more influenced by Greek philosophical thinking, by Plato and Aristotle, than the church was influenced by the Bible. Because in the Bible we see a God who is full of feelings. Who is grieved in his heart and is filled with pain. A God who is not beyond feeling, but he is filled with perfect feelings.

In fact, one of the differences between the God of the Bible and the gods that exists in other world religions is that the God of the Bible feels. In Hinduism, God is impersonal. He doesn't feel anything. The goal of Buddhism is to get beyond

emotion and passion, to get beyond feeling. Allah, the God of the Muslims, is not affected by what people do.

But the God of the Bible feels. He is full of emotion. We certainly see emotion in Jesus. Jesus, of course, is God with a human face. The perfect revealer of God. It says that Jesus was a man of sorrow, acquainted with grief. In Luke 19:41 it says: ***As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "if you, even you, had known on this day what would bring you peace, but now is hidden from your eyes..."***

In John 11 when Jesus came to the tomb of Lazarus, it says: ***When he saw Mary weeping and the Jews who had come along side also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him," he asked? "Come and see, Lord," they replied. Jesus wept.***

We worship a God who weeps at times. I think of all the passages about Jesus' compassion, especially I love that story in Luke 7 where Jesus comes upon a widow who is weeping over her dead son. It says: ***His heart went out to her. And he stretched out his hand and said, "Don't cry."***

An emotional being is our God. And I want to explore that with you as we look at Genesis 6 and particularly the text that reads: ***The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth and his heart was filled with pain.*** My title today is very simply, "How to Break God's Heart." Let's pray.

Genesis 6:1-8

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." 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. 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 was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. 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."

But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

Certainly, it is the case that as we consider who this being God is, that many churches have tried to refashion God in more 21st century terms. Some of the things that for us as 21st century Americans have become unpleasant or embarrassing about the God of the Bible. We take off the hard edges. And so,

in many churches and in many Christian books, God is basically a projection of lots of our politically correct virtues. God is into helping us with our self-esteem. God believes in us. God is basically a really, really nice, really, really tolerant person whose command to the world is: You be nice and you be tolerant too.

There is, in some Christian circles, almost an embarrassment about the God of the Bible. The kind of embarrassment you might feel at a Thanksgiving dinner if you had over your boss or your girlfriend or fiancé, and your dad comes down in his torn t-shirt with his stomach out, or mom has a couple of drinks and talks or laughs too loud. There is an embarrassment, almost a nervousness, about who God is. We want to keep the God of the Bible under wraps.

We talk about God's emotions. One of the emotions that we are going to read about in the story of Noah is the emotion of anger. In the 21st century people say, "Ah no, no, no...you must never describe God as being angry. That's an ancient perspective. I could never believe in a wrathful God."

But the God Who Is, is spoken of over and over again as getting angry. This is not just a human projection onto God. We read it in passages like Jeremiah 23:19-20: ***See the storm of the Lord will burst out in wrath. A whirlwind swirling down on the heads of the wicked. The anger of the Lord will not turn back until he fully accomplishes the purpose of his heart.***

Or how about this one – Hosea 13:7-8: ***So I will come upon them like a lion, like a leopard. I will lurk by the path like a bear robbed of her cubs. I will attack them and rip them open. Like a lion I will devour them. Like a wild animal I will tear them apart.***

The prophets were not embarrassed by the anger of God. They were not speaking as if God got angry. They were talking about the very real anger of the God Who Is. And they were searching for some way to describe his passion.

In fact, the embarrassment, if there is any, by the writers of the Bible, is exactly on the opposite side of 21st century Americans. There is no hint in the biblical writers that they sort of shrunk from the notion that God gets passionately angry. "Well, he does say that here, but let's move on to some other stuff. He is really, really nice."

The embarrassment, if I could call it that, of the biblical writers is exactly on the other side. The problem of the people in the Bible is not that God gets angry, or that we get angry. It was, "God, when are you going to get angry? God, do you condone injustice? Are you morally indifferent to our situation? Are you ever going to act? Are you ever going to deal with people who abuse others? God, are you asleep? God, will you rouse yourself?"

Read through the Psalms and the great prayers of the prophets. Their cry was not, "O God, you're not nice enough. We have to smooth off your rough edges." It was rather, "God, the unbelieving world keeps saying that you don't care what we do, either good or bad, that you have no feelings, that you are never provoked to action."

I will tell you what you should be embarrassed about. Never be embarrassed when someone raises with you the issue of the anger of God in the Bible. The anger of God shows that God cares about abuse, about the Abel's of the world, the victims, the people who get stepped on, the people who get used. The anger of God is never something that should cause you to blush. God cares. God is involved.

You ought to be embarrassed by the thought that we would worship a God who was indifferent. A God who was like Buddha, who sits with his eyes closed and his arms and legs folded in a posture of perfect serene peace while children are blown up in Israel, or die of AIDS in the United States.

Our God always puts himself in the position of the person who is being hurt or harmed. Whenever there is a victim in the Bible, what we find is God reacting as if he were the victim. Whenever there is an offense, God is so responsive, so involved in people's lives, that he responds as if he were the offended. Whenever something wounds a boy or a girl, a man or a woman, God responds as if he were the one against whom the wound was directed.

Of course, when we talk about the emotions of God, we always need to remember that the Bible teaches that the God Who Is does not delight in showing anger. He doesn't take pleasure in handing us over. We read in Lamentations 3:31-33: ***For men are not cast off by the Lord forever, though he brings grief, he will show compassion. So great is his unfailing love for he does not bring affliction or grief to the children of men.***

Punishment is distasteful to God. Even when we grieve God, even when it says in Genesis 6:6 that his heart was filled with pain, our God is a merciful and loving father, who delights in showing good. The Bible says over and over again that God's anger lasts just for a moment, but his mercy endures forever. Listen to some of the Bible texts regarding the emotions of God.

Isaiah 54:8 In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you. But with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the Lord your redeemer. His wrath is for a moment; his love is everlasting.

Psalms 30:5 For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime. Isn't that wonderful? God's anger only lasts for a moment, but his favor lasts for a lifetime.

God does respond to our sin with anger. And we are going to find that he responds with grief. But he delights in being compassionate and gracious. He is slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love. He is a God who forgives sin and who will forgive you if you turn to him.

When it says here in verse 6 that God was grieved that he had made man on the earth and his heart was filled with pain. Verse 7 ***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.***

This word “grief” expresses the most intense kind of emotion that the Bible writers had words for. It is not just “I’m sorry.” “I am upset.” “I am perturbed.” “I am annoyed.” This word “grieved” in verse 6 expresses an overwhelming feeling of rage and intense anguish. Later on in Genesis 34 when Jacob’s sons find out that their sister, Dinah, had been raped, the writers use this word “grieved” – intense rage and anguish.

When David learned that his son, Absalom, was killed and he tears his clothes in one of the most poignant texts in the Bible, it says that he just kept wailing, “Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom.” Like those news broadcasts where you see a widow in Serbia throwing herself on the coffin of her dead son. That is what we are talking about. This passionate kind of feeling of rage and anguish - God is not apathetic.

What does it mean for God to look out at his creation and be grieved that he had ever made men and women? For me, it is like a father or mother who is so heart-broken over the trajectory of a child’s life – a child who ends up stealing from them because he is addicted to drugs. A child who is a repeat offender and is back in jail. A child who unfeelingly and casually hurts people – just abuses people without conscience or a second thought.

What we are reading here in Genesis 6 is like unto a parent who finally says to themselves, “It would have been better if my son or daughter had never been born.” Do you know how bad things have to get to have a parent come to a place of wishing that their child had never been born? Could a mother ever wish that for their child, the one they gave birth to, the one they nursed and rocked and fed and played with? Do you know how bad things have to get before a mom or dad wished that their child had never been born?

Imagine now God our Father, the one of whom it is written that his anger just lasts for a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; this perfect being who is infinitely patient, who is not needy or petty, who is not easily provoked; this perfect being named God who is incredibly long-suffering and forgiving; who is overflowing in love and faithfulness; imagine how far we have to push things and

how bad things have to get before God says, “I am sorry I ever made you.” You can’t imagine how much pain we have to cause him.

What kind of pain was caused to God in the days of Noah? It says: ***When men began to increase in numbers 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.***

Men and women are multiplied. But apparently, it didn’t result in the spread of God’s image everywhere. It didn’t result in everywhere you looked seeing another representative of God, another testimony of God. All that happened was that there was a spread of the contagion of sin. What happens when you multiply people? Do you multiply representatives of God, multiply goodness? Multiply mercy?

Think about this with me for a moment. What would it be like if the American character spread throughout the world? What would it be like? If all that we are as Americans, all that we represent, all that we are about – what if it dominated the whole world, more than it did now? Everyone was like an American. What would the world be like?

50 years ago, we would have been confident that the world would be much better off if America multiplied throughout the world. Now, we’re not so sure. Certainly, the rest of the world is not so sure. That they want the spread of our popular culture. They aren’t so sure they want their kids listening to American rap music or hard rock or watching our movies.

Let me put it more personally. What would the world be like if you were cloned, with all that you are – good and bad? What would the world be like?

I remember my friend, John Wimber, once speaking to a pastor who kept saying to him, “John, I want you to help me grow my church. Help me to grow my church. Teach me how to grow my church.” John took off his reading glasses and looked up and he said to the pastor, “Friend, how many more like you do you want in the church? How many more like you do you want? If you were multiplied, would that be a good thing?” The pastor hung his head and said, “I don’t want any more like me. I just want people to be like Jesus.”

Genesis 6:1 tells us of the multiplication of men and women, but it wasn’t a bunch of people who looked more like Jesus. It says, ***The sons of God saw the daughters of men were beautiful.*** Now this is a very controversial text. What is the Bible writer talking about when he speaks of the sons of God who married the daughters of men? Very briefly, there are three different interpretations of this phrase “sons of God.” Some say that the sons of God are children from the line of Seth, the one who was born to Adam and Eve after the death of their son,

Abel. The line of Seth was the line of redemption. But there is no reason to call the line of Seth “sons of God.” We never read that anywhere else in scripture.

And what was there to condemn? The marriage of the line of Seth with the daughters of men. And why would their union give birth to the Nephilim in verse 4? It says, ***The Nephilim were on the earth in those days – and also afterwards – when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them.*** The Nephilim were these giants. Somehow there is an implied condemnation of the union.

Some people say that the sons of God were human rulers, or kings, and the Bible in places like Psalm 82 does occasionally speak of human rulers, kings as being like sons of God. Maybe their sin was in abusing their power by marrying whomever they chose.

But it is much more likely, in my mind, that what it is talking about, when it speaks of the marriage of the sons of God and the daughters of men, is a marriage between demonic beings, who somehow took on human form and people. Demonic beings and people. And this, by the way, was the interpretation of the Jewish writers before the time of Christ and this was the majority view of the earliest Christian writers – those Christian writers who wrote in the second and third century of the church. Men like Justine and Irenaeus and Tertullian and Origin. The earliest writings from the church and before the time of Christ from the Jewish writers were virtually unanimous in saying that the sons of God had to do with some sort of spiritual beings – angels or spirits. We see that phrase used over and over again in the Old Testament. “Sons of God” is used to refer to angelic beings or to refer to Satan. For example, in Job 1:6.

What I think is going on here is a transgression of the boundaries that God had set in Genesis 1. In Genesis 1, God said that reproduction would be according to “their kinds.” Species would mate with each other according to their own kind. But here there is a violation of the barrier that God set on reproduction. Not only did people violate the limit that God set on eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but it appears that boundary after boundary, limit after limit was broken. Every one of the “thou shalt nots” is trespassed including the fundamental barrier of uniting with a being that is not human. Stepping over every single barrier is what we see from Genesis 3 forward. This progressive march, kicking through every “No Trespassing” sign.

Do you ever see that in yourself? An unwillingness to take “no” from God as an answer? The only word you can ever hear from God is “yes” – yes to your marital plans; yes to your business plans, yes to your living situation; yes to what you want to do with your boyfriend or girlfriend or who you want to go out with; yes to your housing and home building decision; never no. Never “thou shalt not.”

There is very tragically a growing literature of 21st century accounts who claim that they literally have had sexual encounters with demons. This is the kind of thing that we should not even speak about, much less ever investigate. But I mention it only to say that the notion of a demonic and human union is not so ancient or mythological as you might at first blush imagine. There is in the Bible this relationship between perverted sexuality and demonization. It seems that our bodies form some sort of protection against invasion by demons. But the more a person abuses their body, the more a person sins against the Lord sexually, the more a person in the Bible appears to open themselves up to the demonic realm until the far-out point where the person literally unites themselves with a demon.

And the fruit of this union is said to be in verse 4 the birth of the Nephilim. We don't have much information about the Nephilim; they are only mentioned one other time in the Bible in Numbers 13. They apparently were giants. But the word "Nephilim" likely is derived from the Hebrew word "nephil" which means to fall. So what we are reading about is that the product of this human and demonic relationship was the epitome of fallenness. The chapter speaks about the epitome, the extent to which people sin against God.

What did God see when he looked over the world in the days before the flood? Did he see the world that he had made and that he had called "good" in Genesis 1? Seven times it says in Genesis 1 that God saw that it was good. And after he made man and woman, we read in Genesis 1:31: **God saw all that he had made and it was very good.** Is goodness what God saw when he looked out over the world in the days before the flood?

We read: **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.** You couldn't speak about the spread and the multiplication of sin any more extensively. We have evil activity springing from thoroughly evil hearts all the time. The contrast between Genesis 1 and Genesis 6 couldn't be sharper. In Genesis 1 we have a fountain of the clearest, freshest water imaginable bubbling up from the very heart of God – a pure, fresh, clean fountain of water. By the time we get to Genesis 6 the fountain has been hooked to the local sewage treatment plant and what spews up is some foul smelling sludge.

Why is God's heart broken? Very simply because Genesis 6 is a record of men and women violating every boundary that God sets up. That's what sin is. It is boundary breaking. I mean it is not enough according to God's plan of creation that men have one wife; that a man would leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and the two would become one flesh. It's not enough. It says that **the sons of God saw the daughters of men were beautiful, they married any of them they chose.** I think they are referring to the practice of polygamy.

No limits on the number of our encounters. It is not enough that God gave men and women the power to rule the world. It says in verse 11 of ch. 6: ***Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence.*** It is not enough to rule under God; the world has to be dominated. We have to abuse one another and be violent. It is not enough that God gives us human partners. We have to reach for other kinds of experiences, however dark and perverted they are. Not enough.

This is the essence of boundary breaking. This is the thing that breaks the heart of God. When you say, "God, this marriage is not enough. This partner you gave me is not enough. I must have an emotional or physical affair with another person because my partner is not enough."

Not enough. The credit that you have received is not enough. You have to finagle a way to get more attention. The clothes in your closet are not enough. You need more. More shirts, more shoes, more sweaters. Your house is not big enough. You have to add on and on and on. The money you make is not enough. You have to cut back on your tithe to God. The position is not enough. You need to step on others.

The heart of the seven deadly sins is always this cry: not enough. I have to step over the boundary that God laid down. Greed says, "not enough stuff." Gluttony says, "not enough food or drink." Lust says, "not enough sensuality." Envy says, "this other person is getting too much, there won't be enough for me."

Do you ever see this in yourself, friend? This unwillingness to live with the limits that God has set? This constant itch inside that says no matter what God gives you, it is not enough? One of the basic ways that you can tell where you are at with God regarding this spirit of "not enough" is to ask yourself whether you are a grumbler or if, instead, you regularly are thankful to God. If you are generally discontented, if you are often grumbling or complaining, if you aren't regularly thankful, then you have this thing in you that was in the people who lived in Noah's day – this urge to break one of God's boundaries.

And breaking God's boundaries results in the breaking of God's heart. Verse 6: ***The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth and his heart was filled with pain.*** Why should you say to yourself, "Enough. I will live within the boundaries that God has set. I will not pick through the "thou shalt nots" of God. I will take "no" from God as an answer and in that be thankful." Why not trespass God's boundaries? Bottom line – why not sin? Why obey God?

The Bible says here and in Ephesians 4:30, ***Because when we don't obey God we grieve him. We break his heart.*** Friend, this is a powerful reason not to sin. And I think Genesis 6:6 where it says ***The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth and his heart was filled with pain*** shows the difference between Christianity and every other moral system. When people say that being

a Christian is the same thing as being a nice person or a tolerant person – nice people, tolerant people never think about grieving the Holy Spirit.

Every other system of morality presents people with a code. Don't do this; do that; you are breaking the code. Only Christianity says, "don't do this; or do that; because you are in such an intimate relationship with God, because God is inside of you by his Holy Spirit, and that relationship is so intimate and so close that if you do otherwise, you would grieve the Lord. You will hurt him. You will cause pain to his heart." The Spirit of God is living inside your heart. That's how close God is. He is not sitting serenely with his arms and legs folded and his eyes closed, meditating on Mars somewhere.

If you are a Christian, it is because you have invited God to live inside of you. But if you have invited God to live inside of you, then what you do with your body, your thoughts, and your words affects God. We can grieve the Holy Spirit. We can break God's heart. Do you need any more powerful incentive - to keep you from blurting out some statement of criticism, some angry harsh judgments, when you slice someone apart with your words – than that you are grieving the Holy Spirit?

And for your own sake, both because you hurt God and because you hurt yourself, don't grieve the Spirit. Because when you grieve God, God withdraws his presence from you. I don't mean that God will leave you, that you can be saved today and lost tomorrow. God places his seal on us and no one can break that. When I say the Spirit withdraws himself when he is grieved, I mean he withdraws a sense of God's presence from you.

When you grieve God, when you break God's heart, you aren't going to have a sense that God loves you. You aren't going to experience the joy of your salvation. You aren't going to have assurance that you will be with God eternally. You aren't going to have God's peace on you. You aren't going to be able to say "I internally feel the Spirit bearing witness to my spirit that I am a child of God." When God's Spirit is grieved, like a sensitive lover, he pulls back. He draws away. Not only do we break God's heart, but we ourselves are wounded.

And the great discipline of God is to let you have what you want. Once God withdraws his presence, he turns us over to our own flesh. And all of us have had that experience of not having the subduing power of the Holy Spirit, but instead experiencing the power and the control of our own flesh. This is part of the discipline of the Lord. If you are experiencing the domination of your own flesh, your own sinful nature, God wants you to turn around and run back into his arms. Ask his forgiveness for grieving him.

I close with verse 8: ***But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.*** You know, we can bring a very different emotion to the heart of God than grief and pain. Our God is a feeling being, a passionate, emotional being. One of the

emotions that God feels is profound joy and he can feel that over your life and over my life. When? When do we see the Father rejoicing? When the prodigal, who has been wandering away, comes home. When you choose, any time you choose to turn around and say, "Father, I have blown it. I know I have hurt you. I know I have broken your heart. I haven't just violated some code. I have violated our relationship and I have wounded you. I have experienced the sense of your withdrawal in my life. I know what it feels like now, God, to have your Spirit lift, to be turned over to the power of my flesh. Lord, I hate my life without you. I hate not feeling the witness of your Spirit that I am your beloved child. Father, this day I turn back to you."

Whenever a prodigal, someone who has been walking away from God, turns around, Jesus tells us there is joy in heaven. The angels rejoice, but even better, your Father in heaven rejoices. Don't you want him to experience joy over your life? Let's pray.

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Roots: A Study in the Book of Genesis

Genesis 6:1-8

I. A God Who Feels

A. God's Feelings

B. God's Anger

C. God's Love

II. A God Who Grieves

A. Grief Over Boundary Violations

1. Sons of God

2. Sins of People

B. Grief Over Being Ignored

III. A God Who Disciplines