

Small Group Guide

"Destination Disease" — First Baptist Church of Stanleyville 81st Anniversary Sermon

OVERVIEW

This sermon uses the life of Noah as a lens through which to examine a dangerous tendency in the life of both individual believers and established churches — the temptation to treat a milestone as a finish line. The pastor calls the congregation to remember where they started, reflect on where they have been, assess where they are now, and press forward with renewed purpose toward what still lies ahead.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Milestones are not finish lines.** The ark was not the end of Noah's story, and 81 years of faithful ministry is not the end of the church's story. Every great work God does through us is meant to propel us further forward, not bring us to a stop.
 - **Past faithfulness cannot substitute for present mission.** A church — or a believer — that rests entirely on what God did through them yesterday risks becoming ineffective for what God wants to do through them today.
 - **The gospel is a verb, not a noun.** It is meant to be lived out actively in daily life, not merely believed privately and stored away.
 - **Destination disease is subtle.** Like Noah after the flood, we can drift into spiritual complacency not through dramatic failure but through quiet inactivity — simply doing nothing significant with the time we have left.
 - **The cure is Christ at the center.** When Jesus remains the focus — not our history, our tradition, or our comfort — the church remains on mission.
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these questions to guide your group through honest, meaningful conversation. Not every question needs to be answered in one sitting. Let the Spirit lead.

OPENING (5–10 minutes)

Use this to warm up the group and connect the sermon to real life.

1. Think about a significant accomplishment in your life — finishing school, raising children, reaching a career goal, completing a major project. What happened in you emotionally and spiritually after you crossed that finish line? Did you feel a sense of "now what?"
 2. Have you ever heard the phrase "so heavenly minded they're no earthly good"? What does that look like in real life? Have you ever seen it — or experienced it yourself?
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GOING DEEPER (20–30 minutes)

These questions engage directly with the sermon's biblical content and main ideas.

3. The pastor described "destination disease" as the tendency to treat a milestone as a finish line. In your own words, what does that look like in the life of a church? What does it look like in the life of an individual believer?
 4. The sermon pointed out that after the flood, Noah lived 350 more years — roughly one-third of his entire life — and Scripture records almost nothing significant about that time. What do you think that silence communicates? Does it challenge you? Why or why not?
 5. The pastor said: "Past faithfulness cannot be a substitute for the present mission of our church." What is the difference between honoring the past and being held captive by it? How do you think a church finds that balance?
 6. In Genesis 6:9, Noah is described as a righteous man who found favor with God — yet we also know from the rest of Scripture that no one is truly righteous on their own. What does it tell us about God's character that He would choose to work through imperfect people like Noah, David, and even us?
 7. The pastor shared that research suggests the average Christian has zero unsaved friends after five years of following Christ. Does that statistic surprise you? Why do you think that happens? What does it cost the mission of the church when believers insulate themselves entirely from those outside the faith?
 8. The sermon described the gospel as "a verb, not a noun." What is the practical difference between those two things? What would your week look like if you treated the gospel as something to be lived out rather than something to simply be held?
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PERSONAL REFLECTION (10–15 minutes)

These questions invite honest self-examination. Encourage vulnerability and grace.

9. The pastor described the Holy Spirit's work as a tug, a draw, a summoning — and shared that many people resist it, white-knuckling the pew during an invitation. Can you recall a moment when you felt that pull? What did you do with it?

10. Where would you honestly place yourself right now — inside the ark, walking in active fellowship and mission with God, or outside the ark, still scratching at the hull, trying to fill that God-shaped space with something else?
 11. Is there an area of your spiritual life where you have quietly declared "mission accomplished" and stopped moving forward? What would it look like to pick that back up?
 12. The pastor used the image of a coal removed from the fire — it stops glowing, loses its heat, and becomes cold. What tends to pull you away from the fire? What has historically brought you back close to it?
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GROUP APPLICATION (10 minutes)

Move from reflection to action.

13. The sermon named four ways to avoid destination disease:

- Remember where you started
- Know where you have been
- Assess where you are now
- Fix your mind on what still lies ahead

As a group, which of these four feels most urgent for your church right now? Which feels most urgent for you personally?

14. The pastor challenged the congregation to think about who in their life — at work, on the ball field, in the neighborhood, at the pickleball court — needs to hear the gospel. Who came to mind during the sermon? What is one concrete step you could take this week toward that person?
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PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Choose one or more of the following to commit to between now and your next group meeting.

- **Pray specifically for one person by name** who does not yet know Christ. Ask God to open a door for a natural gospel conversation.
- **Reflect on your own "milestone moments" with God** — times when He clearly moved in your life. Write them down. Let that list remind you that the same God who worked then is still at work now.
- **Reach out to someone outside the church** this week — not with an agenda, but simply with genuine friendship and care. Let relationship be the beginning of gospel influence.
- **Have an honest conversation with God** about where your coal is right now. Is it hot? Is it cooling? Ask Him to draw you back close to the flame.

- **Share your story** — even a small part of it — with someone this week. Not a polished testimony, just the honest truth of where you started and what God has done.
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CLOSING PRAYER GUIDE

Close your group time by praying together. Consider using these prompts:

- Thank God for the milestones He has already brought your church and your own life through.
 - Confess any areas where destination disease has quietly set in.
 - Ask God to reignite the fire — both in your group and in your church as a whole.
 - Pray by name for those in your lives who are still outside the ark.
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KEY VERSE FOR THE WEEK

Hebrews 12:1-2 — The writer of Hebrews calls believers to run with endurance the race set before them, fixing their eyes on Jesus, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross and is now seated at the right hand of God's throne.

Let this verse anchor your week. The race is not over. Keep running.