

Genesis/ Tower of Babel/ Chapter 11:1-9/ Week of 5-2



MAIN POINT

We still have the same sin as in the time of the Tower of Babel. We still think we can exist apart from God and elevate ourselves of above Him.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

ICE BREAKER QUESTION: What are some of the challenges you would have if you were in a country where you did not speak the language?

Communication is something that we easily take for granted. At the Tower of Babel, God confused the languages of the people so that they could not communicate with one another. In this study, we will see the consequences that a generation of people faced because they ignored God's purposes for their lives and settled together to develop their own fame by building a grandiose tower.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What insight, lesson, or observation from this weekend's message did you find to be the most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? How was your experience with the Life Tool's this past week?**
- 2. Read Genesis 11:1-4. What were the goals that the people had when they settled in the land of Shinar? What is wrong with the goals?**

Soon after the flood, the descendants of Noah and his family moved East and settled in Shinar, which in itself is not a problem. However, their two stated goals gave the Lord cause for concern. First, they said they wanted to build the tower to make a name for themselves. The problem with this is, our purpose on earth is to magnify the name of the Lord, not make a name for ourselves. This passage implies the pride that the builders had in themselves and in their creation.

Another problem is that the people were building in order to keep from being "scattered over the face of the whole earth." After the flood, "God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth'" (Genesis 9:1). God's will was for the people to fill the earth; their plan was to stay in one place instead of filling the earth as God intended. The people at Shinar were struggling with pride and disobedience.

3. How has pride sometimes led you astray from God's purposes? How do we "settle in" in our own ways today?

Adam and Eve had sought to become like God (3:4-6). In doing so they overstepped their human limitations and tried to obtain divine attributes. This idea is seen very clearly in a statement by Kent Hughes in his commentary:

"History demonstrates that Babylonian hearts are endemic to humanity...Or course, we do not need history to understand this. We have the imperial self-our tendency to become mini-potentates-to exalt our little Babylonian hearts to the thrones of our lives"

Faced again with humanity's attempt to seize divine power and authority, God acted to punish the sinners and prevented them from committing greater sin and suffering its consequences. Challenge the group to think examine their own life and think through times our pride and desires to live our own ways cause us to be like Adam and Eve and the people in the time of the tower of babel.

4. Read 11:5-9. Why would it bother the Lord that "nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them"?

In this passage, the "plan" of the people was to make a great name for themselves. Since the beginning of Genesis, we have seen that plans and schemes of mankind have been towards evil and not for good. God's judgment on the plans of mankind indicate that if God had allowed them to continue in their plans, it would have had disastrous consequences for them. These people's understanding of who God was so twisted that they had created their own belief system of God that suited their own sinful selfish desires. Kent Hughes stated this idea well in this quote:

"The problem with the tower as such lay not in the desire to be in touch with God but in its underlying suppositions and approach. Its builders supposed that God was localized, in direct contradiction to the explicit teaching of Genesis. The post diluvians had created a god in their own image. Also, the unadorned belief that man by his superior effort could reach God betrays the fatal delusion of all mad-made religion. This delusion is at the heart of every religious enterprise apart from the gospel because the world's religions all teach that works bring spiritual advance-as in an improved karma or works-righteousness"

5. Read Daniel 4:30 and Acts 12:22. Based on the examples of Nebuchadnezzar and King Herod, how can we be sure to use our words to bring God glory instead of using them for our own? What kinds of speech should we avoid?

In those two accounts in scripture, we see a prime example of the pride and arrogance of man. Our natural sinful tendency is to say and do what will glorify ourselves but through

the Holy Spirit we are able to live to glorify God. Read James 4:6 and think through how we should use our words and actions to bring glory to God.

6. What did you learn about God’s judgment and mercy from the story of the Tower of Babel?

God issued judgement on the people who built the Tower of Babel because of their pride in wanting to be like God and his mercy was that he caused the dispersion to restrain the sinfulness of people in the world. This idea is seen in a message from John Piper which says:

“So his response to the presumption and arrogance of man was to make it harder for man to communicate and thus to unite in God-belittling global plans. God has built into the world a system by which the pride of different groups of people restrains the pride of other groups of people. God knows the immense potential of human beings created in his own image. And he has given them amazing liberty to exalt themselves and design their own security systems without trusting him. But there are limits. Thousands of languages around the world and thousands of different peoples limit the global aspirations of arrogant mankind”

7. Have you ever built a “tower” or “Kingdom” for yourself only to have it shattered by God? What happened?

We may have not tried to build a physical tower to the heavens, but we have tried in other real ways to build our own kingdoms that give us security and bring praise from others. Maybe it’s our career’s, money, car, house, or status that has turned into an idol because we’re failing into the trap of needing that extra security and/or praise from those around us. By God’s grace, He intervenes at times to break down our man-made kingdoms so we will turn back towards Him. Read Proverbs 16:9 and then discuss everyone’s responses.

“⁹In their hearts humans plan their course,
but the LORD establishes their steps”

8. What other identities are you currently trying to make for yourself besides your identity in Christ?

In trying to build these kingdoms for ourselves like we discussed in the previous question, that is also typically tied to trying to an identity that we’re trying to maintain for ourselves. Our culture is constantly pushing the message that we should put our identity in all of these other worldly things and people for years have tried to chase after a name, only to be disappointed. The hope for humanity can only be found in finding their identity in Christ. Kent Hughes said it well in his commentary:

“Then, and today, the message is the same. We must leave Babel with its proud dreams and God-defying ways if there is to be any hope. We must abandon our Babylonian hearts search for security in the city of man with its collective delusions. Man’s Babylonian heart may meld political philosophy and economic theory and technology and psychology and religion into a mighty, self-elevating ziggurat-but it will never effect the autonomy or security we long for. We will never scale heaven. We must leave off chasing after a name and find our identity in Christ”

Conclusion

The point the narrative makes is that mankind’s attempt to make a “Name” for itself ends in futility. Though God judged the world by confusing language, we know that through Christ God is going to restore all people by making them one kingdom again. When we become Christians, we submit ourselves under the kingship of Jesus. We become a part of a body of believers; our goal is no longer to “make a name for ourselves,” but to give God the glory in everything that we do. Furthermore, when God restores all things the language curse will no longer be necessary because every word we say will be said for the glory of God and not for our own.

PRAYER

Pray that the people in your group would choose to follow God’s plans for their lives and experience the blessings of obedience. Ask God specifically for the Holy Spirit’s strength to resist temptation in the days ahead.



FURTHER STUDY



Revelation 21:24-26 (NIV)

²⁴The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. ²⁵On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. ²⁶The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.

John 1:12 (NIV)

¹²Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—



“God’s will for all mankind is not that we find joy in being praised, but that we find joy in praising him.”

- **John Piper**

“There is not one blade of grass, there is no color in this world that is not intended to make us rejoice.”

— **John Calvin**

Additional Resources

Devotionals-

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/tower-babel/>

Articles –

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/echoes-of-babel-our-new-national-sin/>

Sermon-

<https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/90-267/judgment-of-the-rebellion-at-babel-part-1>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-pride-of-babel-and-the-praise-of-christ>