

Small Group Handout - Genesis 11

In your opinion, what are some of humanity's greatest achievements?

- Do you feel pride in any of these achievements? Why do you think that is?

or

What do you consider your biggest personal accomplishment?

- Why are you proud of that accomplishment?

Genesis 11:1-9 (NIV)

1 Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. 2 As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.

3 They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

5 But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. 6 The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. 7 Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."

8 So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. 9 That is why it was called Babel—because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

Discussion Questions

Why did the people want to build a tower?

Why was God unhappy with the people after coming to see the tower?

How does the idea of building a tower to reach the heavens distort the relationship humanity has with God?

- Have you ever tried to build a "tower" in your life?
- How did your "tower" impact your relationship with God?

In Genesis 2, God told Adam and Eve to, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." In what way were the people disobeying this command by building the tower (look at the end of verse 4)?

- How does a tower reaching towards heaven fail to honor God's actual purpose for His command?

Was it wrong for men to speak one language? What is the real problem created when humanity shares one language?

How do you think the people felt when they no longer understood each other?

How did changing the peoples' languages affect their relationship with God?

- Can you think of a time in your life when you felt "forced" to rely on God after realizing you could not do it by your own power?
- What was your response?

Acts 2:1-12 (NIV)

1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

What parallels do you see between the passage from Genesis and this passage?

For what reason does the Holy Spirit allow the Apostles to miraculously speak many different languages?

In Genesis we see God divide men by their language; in Acts God uses language to unite the church. What do you think God's ultimate goal is in both of these passages?

One of the Holy Spirit's first acts after Christ's resurrection is to restore what God divided at Babel. How does the Holy Spirit change how we communicate with each other and with God?

Humanity can now communicate with each other in ways like never before (e.g. technology, accessibility, etc). In what ways might we be able to use these modern tools for God's glory?

What is our community application of this passage?