



## Parkway Fellowship

Epic Fails • Dude Watch This...Tower of Babel • Genesis 11:1-9 • 10/27/2019

### Main Point

We find security and joy in God and His works, not in ourselves and our own accomplishments.

### Introduction

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

**Tell about a most embarrassing or "epic fail" moment.**

**When you fail at something, are you more likely to: make fun of yourself to get laughs, keep it to yourself because you feel like a failure, ignore it and hope no one noticed, other? Explain.**

Most of us enjoy a good epic fail story, especially when it's at someone else's expense. That's why America's Funniest Home Videos has enjoyed television success for over 30 seasons! All laughter aside, though, there are some epic fails in the Bible that teach us important things about ourselves and our relationship with the Lord.

### Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 11:1-4.

God had blessed Noah and his sons and told them to multiply and fill the earth (Genesis 9:1,7). By the time we get to Genesis 11, we find that they had, indeed, multiplied. The story picks up in Shinar, an area in Mesopotamia—around the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. We know this area now as Iraq. These two rivers were also mentioned in Genesis 1 as we learned about the garden of Eden. Though the people had multiplied, we see that they were

straying from God's purposes by not filling the earth. They had returned to near the site of the original sin.

**What do we know about these people based on what they have to say?**

**What are they interested in doing?**

The people mentioned in the beginning verses of Genesis 11 intended to make a name for themselves. They believed their completed city and tower would form an impressive, lasting monument to their power and ability. In seeking to ensure their fame and prestige, they tried to take over a right that belongs only to God and not to any human being.

**Read Genesis 11:4 again. What does this verse reveal about the nature of their sin?**

Pride was the central issue. God gave a command to Noah to spread over the earth (Gen. 8:17). However, these people deliberately disobeyed that command. A prideful people cannot fulfill God's purposes. God alone can make an individual or nation's name great. God promised to make Abram's name great (12:2) as well as David's (2 Sam. 7:9) and kept both promises. By trying to make their name great, the people demonstrated incredible arrogance.

Pride and arrogance prevent us from organizing our life around God's purposes. Believing we know what is best for us, we do not seek God's guidance or we intentionally resist His purposes. When we substitute our purposes for God's, we miss out on the blessing of serving Him, and we go in directions harmful to ourselves and others.

**How has pride sometimes led you astray from God's purposes?**

**How do we "settle in" in our own ways today?**

**Which of God's clear commands are difficult for you to obey?**

Adam and Eve had sought to become like God (3:4-6). In doing so they overstepped their human limitations and tried to seize divine prerogatives for themselves. In response God prevented Adam and Eve from eating the fruit of the tree of life and trespassing further against Him (3:22-24). 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.

| Ask another volunteer to read Genesis 11:5-9.

**What does verse 5 remind us about God's nature?**

**Why was God concerned with “nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them”?**

**Couldn't God have simply destroyed the tower and city? Why did He choose to confuse the people's language instead?**

The buildings were only a symptom of the greater problem of pride. Forcing the people to scatter shows God's purposes will be accomplished one way or another.

**What do you learn about God's judgment and mercy from the story of the Tower of Babel?**

God has chosen to work through people to accomplish His purposes. Sometimes people cooperate with God and receive the blessing of participating with Him in His work. At other times people choose not to cooperate with God and even resist His purposes.

## Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

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

**In this week's message we learned we should find security by trusting God, not in our own efforts. In what situation(s) is this difficult for you right now?**

**We also learned we should find joy in praising God, not in being praised. How does regular and consistent praise of God help you find security?**

## Prayer

Thank God that your security is found in relationship with Jesus Christ, not in your own efforts. Ask Him to show you where you have built "towers" for yourself that need to be demolished so that you might find true security and joy in Him.

## Commentary

| Genesis 11:1-9

The account of Adam and Eve's sin in the garden of Eden (chap. 3) and the Tower of Babylon share many similarities in plot, vocabulary, and theme. Both show people acting with sinful pride to try to make themselves godlike, and both show God expelling sinners from their homes as punishment for their sin.

11:1. The Tower of Babylon incident occurred earlier than at least some of the events of chapter 10 since the whole earth still had the same language and vocabulary (10:5,20,31).

11:2. The land of Shinar corresponds to ancient Babylonia and includes the region of the cities of Babylon, Erech, Accad, and Calneh (10:10).

11:3. Unlike the original readers' homeland of Israel, with its extensive quantity of limestone building material, the people of Babylonia used oven-fired bricks. Archaeological excavations have confirmed that ancient inhabitants of the land used asphalt for mortar.

11:4. The people's pride and ambition is expressed in three different ways: (1) the fivefold use of the first-person pronouns—us (twice), ourselves (twice), and we; (2) their desire to build a tower into the sky, thus giving them access to "the heavens," the domain of God; and (3) their attempt at self-glorification—let us make a name for ourselves. Because they did it to avoid being scattered over the face of the whole earth, all their efforts amounted to a rebellion against God and His command to fill the earth (9:1).

11:5. In spite of their best efforts to elevate themselves to God's domain, the Lord still had to come down to look over the city and the tower. Human attempts to achieve glory, which belongs to God alone, always fall pitifully short.

11:6. God's concern that nothing the people might plan to do would be impossible for them does not express a divine fear that humans might someday become as powerful as God. Rather, it conveys dismay that people, unchecked, would undertake extraordinary deeds of evil and defiance.

11:7. Perhaps the most dramatic Hebrew wordplay in the Tower of Babylon episode involves the deliberate reversal of sounds between verses 3 and 7. Human beings created brick—a word which contains the sound sequence l-b-n in Hebrew—to rebel against God. In response God created confusion—a Hebrew word containing n-b-l—to reverse the evil human plot.

11:9. Most English versions refer to "Babel" here, but this is the same Hebrew word translated "Babylon" throughout the Old Testament. The connection between the words "Babylon" and "confused" constitute another of the many instances of wordplay in this chapter. The Lord's action had two positive outcomes: first, because it confused the language of the whole earth, it ended the possibility of large-scale evil ventures; second, it caused humanity to scatter over the face of the whole earth, thus bringing people into compliance with God's command to fill the earth (9:1).