

GENESIS: The Book of Beginnings - Week 7

Text: Genesis 11:1–9

Main Idea: Human pride always tries to build life apart from God, but God graciously intervenes and calls His people to live in humble dependence on Him.

Introduction

Genesis 11 records the account of the Tower of Babel. At first glance, it may seem like a story about language and geography, but at its core it is a story about pride, rebellion, and God's gracious response.

The people of Babel were united, organized, and capable. But instead of using those gifts to fulfill God's purposes, they used them to resist Him. Rather than spreading out in obedience, they settled in self-sufficiency. Rather than making God's name great, they wanted to make a name for themselves.

This passage reminds us that the greatest danger in life is not weakness, but pride. It also reminds us that God sees, God knows, and God cares enough to interrupt what would ultimately destroy us.

Setting the Passage

Genesis can be understood through four major events and four major figures:

Four key events:

- Creation
- Fall
- Flood
- Tower

Four key figures:

- Abraham
- Isaac
- Jacob
- Joseph

The Tower of Babel comes after the flood. God had already instructed humanity to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth. But in Genesis 11, people do the opposite. They gather, settle, and build in order to secure themselves and glorify themselves.

Read the Passage

Genesis 11:1–9

As you read, pay attention to:

- what the people say
- what they want
- what God does
- what this reveals about the human heart

1. Pride Must Be Rooted Out

Key Verses

- Genesis 11:3–4
- Proverbs 16:18
- 1 Peter 5:5–6
- 1 John 2:16

What the Text Shows

The people said, “Let us build... let us make a name for ourselves.” Their goal was not worship, obedience, or stewardship. Their goal was self-exaltation.

They were not trying to honor God. They were trying to replace Him.

This is the essence of pride. Pride is not merely feeling good about yourself. Pride is living as though God is unnecessary. It is self-rule. It is self-glory. It is self-dependence.

The Tower of Babel shows how quickly human achievement can become human rebellion.

Bible Study Questions

1. What motivations are revealed in verse 4?

2. Why was making a name for themselves such a serious issue?
3. How does pride show up in subtle ways in everyday life?
4. Why is pride so dangerous spiritually?

Application

Pride often hides beneath things that seem respectable:

- the desire for recognition
- the need to control outcomes
- the fear of obscurity
- the refusal to depend on God

A helpful diagnostic question is: **Am I trying to build something for God's glory or for my own significance?**

Personal Reflection

- Where am I tempted to rely on myself instead of God?
- Where do I want recognition more than obedience?
- What would humility look like in this season of life?

2. God Sees and Knows

Key Verses

- Genesis 11:5
- Job 23:10
- Psalm 139:1–3

What the Text Shows

Verse 5 says, "But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower." This is not because God lacked information. It is a dramatic way of showing how small man's greatest accomplishments are compared to God's greatness.

The people thought they were building something massive, impressive, and untouchable. But from heaven's perspective, God had to "come down" even to look at it.

This passage is both humbling and comforting. It humbles us because it reminds us how small we are. It comforts us because it reminds us that God is not distant. He sees. He knows. He is aware.

Bible Study Questions

1. What is the significance of the phrase “the Lord came down”?
2. How does this verse challenge human pride?
3. Why is it comforting to know that God sees and knows us fully?

Application

God is never absent from what is happening in your life. He sees:

- the motives no one else sees
- the burdens no one else understands
- the confusion, fear, pressure, and struggle you may carry

This means we do not have to prove ourselves, protect ourselves, or build our own security apart from Him.

Personal Reflection

- Where do I need to remember that God sees me clearly?
- Am I living as though God is near and aware, or distant and uninvolved?

3. God’s Intervention Is an Act of Grace

Key Verses

- Genesis 11:6–9
- Genesis 9:1
- Acts 2:1–11

What the Text Shows

God confused their language and scattered them over the earth. On the surface, this looks like judgment only. But it is also mercy.

Why? Because if humanity remained united in rebellion, they would only deepen their corruption. God disrupted what they wanted in order to prevent greater ruin.

Sometimes God's interruptions are actually protections.

The people wanted to settle in rebellion, but God scattered them according to His larger purpose. He would not allow human pride to have the final word.

Bible Study Questions

1. Why did God intervene at Babel?
2. In what sense was this judgment also merciful?
3. How does Acts 2 connect to Genesis 11?

Gospel Connection

At Babel, languages were confused and people were scattered.

At Pentecost in Acts 2, the gospel was heard in many languages and people were gathered.

Babel shows the division caused by pride and rebellion.

Pentecost shows the unity made possible through Christ and the Spirit.

This is a powerful reminder that God not only judges sin — He also redeems what sin has broken.

Application

There are times when God says no, closes a door, disrupts a plan, or scatters something we were determined to build. In those moments, it may feel confusing. But Genesis 11 reminds us that God's interruption may be an act of mercy.

Personal Reflection

- Has there been a time when God disrupted my plans for my good?
- Am I resisting something that may actually be God's protection?

4. The Real Issue: What Are We Building?

Key Verses

- Genesis 11:4
- Matthew 7:24–27
- 1 Corinthians 3:11

What the Text Shows

The central question of Babel is not simply, “Why did they build a tower?” The deeper question is, **What are we building our lives on?**

Everyone is building something:

- a reputation
- a career
- a family identity
- a sense of control
- a version of success
- a spiritual life

The issue is whether that life is being built in faith and dependence on God or in self-sufficiency and pride.

Bible Study Questions

1. What are some modern-day “towers” people build?
2. How can even good things become prideful projects?
3. What does it mean to build a life rooted in faith instead of self-made greatness?

Application

A life built on Christ may not always look impressive to the world, but it will last. A life built on self will eventually collapse, no matter how impressive it appears for a time.

Personal Reflection

- What am I building right now?
- Is it rooted in faith, obedience, and surrender?
- Or is it rooted in fear, image, success, or control?

Key Takeaways

- Pride leads people to seek significance apart from God.
- God sees every human effort clearly and accurately.
- God’s intervention is not only judgment; it can also be mercy.

- The gospel reverses what pride and rebellion destroy.
- The central question is not whether you are building something, but what you are building and for whose glory.

Discussion Prompts

1. What stands out most to you in the Tower of Babel account?
2. Why is pride often harder to recognize in ourselves than in others?
3. How does this story challenge the way our culture thinks about success, influence, and identity?
4. Where do you see God's mercy even in His judgment in this passage?
5. What is one practical way to choose humility and dependence on God this week?

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word and for the truth we see in Genesis 11. We confess that pride still rises in our hearts and that we are often tempted to build our lives around our own name, our own plans, and our own strength. Forgive us for the ways we resist Your will and seek significance apart from You. Teach us to walk in humility, to trust that You see us and know us fully, and to rest in Your care instead of striving for our own security. Thank You that in Christ You have provided what we could never build for ourselves. Help us to build our lives on Him and for Your glory. In Jesus' name, amen.