

## Roots: What a Half-Built Tower Teaches Us

Genesis 11:1-9

### Growth Group Discussion Guide

*Begin with prayer. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you all through God's word, and to lead your discussion.*

#### Opening Questions (try to get everyone involved in discussion):

- Have you ever tried learning/speaking a second language? If so, share a humorous or challenging experience related to that pursuit.
- Today's passage not only shows us the origins of the world's many languages; it shows us the heart of our problem, a false solution to avoid, and an authentic solution to embrace.

#### Read Genesis 11:1-9, then discuss the questions below.

- What jumps out at you as you read this passage? Are there particular insights, challenges, or questions, which you want to make sure we discuss? (Leaders, take note!)
- Commentators agree that in describing the eastward human migration (v. 2), the writer is intentionally reminding us of what we lost in the Fall (Genesis 3). Pastor Josh summarized the problem this way: **Because of the Fall, we have a void that we spend our lives trying to fill.**
  - In your own words, re-hash what humans lost in the Fall.
  - How have you most felt or experienced this void?
  - If you are comfortable, share one way that you have attempted to fill this void, apart from God. (Leaders, be mindful that this question invites vulnerability!)
- As such, the attempt at building the Tower of Babel shows us humanity's effort to regain what was lost. What do you think the people were trying to accomplish in this building project, as described in v. 4: "so that we may *make a name for ourselves*." What does this mean? How do we try to do this same thing in our day?
- We can see another element of what the people at Babel were attempting to regain by recalling God's earlier commands. Read Genesis 1:28 and 9:1.
  - What relationship do you see between these commands of God, and the people's fear of being "scattered" in today's passage?
  - What were they ultimately trying to accomplish, in this regard?
- Pastor Josh described the false solution in this way: **Our efforts to fill the void in our lives amount to attempts at self-salvation.**
  - What problems do you see with these efforts, if any?
  - Would you agree with Josh's assessment that these attempts fail on two fronts: 1) They don't accomplish what we hope, and 2) They leave us worse off than before?
  - If comfortable, please share one way that a "false solution" has failed you or left you worse off than before. (Keep in mind that one person's vulnerability in sharing might save another person from going down the same road!)
- What do you think of God's observation and intervention in vv. 6-7? What is motivating God's actions here?
  - Pastor Josh suggested that God's intervention is actually a form of mercy. How could that be the case? Do you see any parallels in your or our experience today?
- In vv. 8-9, we see the result of the people's attempts with the tower. How did their efforts turn out, with respect to the pursuit of security and identity?

- The name “Babel” is closely related to “Babylon” and “Babylonia,” and this story is considered to be an early look at Babylonian civilization. In the sermon, Pastor Josh touched on—but did not elaborate on—the idea of Babylon as an archetype. If you have time, explore the following passages. What else do they show us about our attempts at self-salvation, apart from God?
  - Isaiah 13:19
  - Isaiah 14:3, 12-15
  - Revelation 17:3-6
  - Revelation 18:1-3 (or the whole chapter!)
- In this week’s sermon, we saw that the true solution is this: **what we most long for would only be found by receiving, not by achieving.** Pastor Josh traced the desire expressed at Babel down through the Old Testament story, resolving in Jesus. (If you have time and want to look into this thread further, see the following passages: Genesis 12:1-3; Genesis 28:10-15; John 1:12-13; John 1:43-51; Acts 2:1-21; Revelation 3:12.)
  - In what way does Jesus give us—as a free gift—what we ultimately long for but could never achieve on our own?
  - How have you applied his gift to the “void” in your own life? Practically, how does this play out?
- **Concluding application:** Josh mentioned in his conclusion that we can actually experience things like career and relationships—things we often look to for *false* identity and security—in healthy ways, if we’re allowing Jesus to define our identity and provide our sense of security. Practically, how does this happen?
  - What steps do you sense God prompting you to take as a result of this study and discussion?

### Sharing/Prayer

- As always, take some time to share areas where you need people to pray for you. Spend time praying for one another.
- Pray also in response to today’s Bible Study and discussion, as the Spirit prompts you. If confession and repentance are appropriate, make space for those. If people have expressed action steps they need to take, pray for the Spirit’s power in those steps.