

introduction

This is our final study in the “*God Our Maker*” series before we enter the Advent season. Throughout our discussions in Genesis, we’ve wrestled with the sobering reality of the human heart — how sin runs deep, bends our desires inward, and even grieves the heart of God. And yet, we’ve also seen that God’s justice and mercy co-exist: he confronts evil while providing a way of grace. He relates to his people by way of covenant and even fulfills those conditions himself. Genesis 11 continues this theme from a different angle. Rather than focusing on the corruption of the heart, it shows what happens when human pride gathers, organizes, and expresses itself in culture. The story of Babel vividly portrays humanity’s desire to make a name for itself and secure identity apart from God — and the God who lovingly intervenes when our self-made pursuits lead us astray.

Towards the end of your time, set aside a few minutes for a brief **group reflection** exercise, giving everyone a chance to consider what God has revealed through the entire series and how these truths might shape your hearts, lives, and relationships.

read **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.

Take a few moments to reflect on the Scripture. Share some insights, questions, or points that strike you. Then read what follows.

identity apart from God

In Genesis 11, the ambition of the Shinarites is described in one revealing statement: “*Let us make a name for ourselves*” (v. 4). Their tower and city were not simply architectural innovations — they were attempts to secure identity, significance, and stability without God. On one level, they were pursuing “a name” through human achievement. From a human standpoint, the efforts at the Tower of Babel seem impressive, and even God acknowledges the ingenuity of human beings (v. 6).¹ The construction of the tower promised greatness, importance, and a sense of arriving somewhere spiritually — yet all by their own strength, independent of God. Rather than receiving their identity from God, they attempted to create it through accomplishment.

But verse 4 also shows a second way they sought “a name” — through collective strength. Their desire to avoid being “scattered” reveals that their security came from the size, success, and unity of their group. They found identity not just in personal achievement but in belonging to a powerful, impressive people. This is the age-old temptation to make an idol out of tribe, nation, community, or cultural success.

Babel shows how easily human beings attach their worth either to what “*I can achieve*” or to the greatness of “*my group — my tribe.*” Both offer counterfeit identities that leave us profoundly insecure — always building, never arriving.

“The project is typically grandiose; men describe it excitedly to one another as if it were the ultimate achievement... At the same time they betray their insecurity as they crowd together to preserve their identity and control their fortunes...”

—Derek Kidner²

¹ Belcher, Richard, Jr. *Genesis: The Beginning of God's Plan of Salvation*, Christian Focus, 2012.

² Kidner, Derek. *Genesis, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, InterVarsity Press, 2008.

discuss

1. **Do the temptations of the people of Babel resonate with you? Where do you personally experience the temptation to “build a tower” to secure your significance or future?**
2. **What are some reasons for why attaching our name to our accomplishments feels so satisfying – and so necessary – to many people?**
3. **Where might God be gently dismantling a “tower” in your life – not to shame you, but to free you to depend on him instead of on your accomplishments?**
4. **Is there any group, community, or affiliation that you look to for a sense of importance, power, or greatness?**

God’s purposeful intervention

God’s response to Babel can seem surprising at first: he creates disunity by confusing their language and scatters them (vv. 7-8). But this raises the question — isn’t unity a good thing? At Babel, unity was harnessed for self-glorification, independence from God, and the consolidation of human power. God’s intervention reveals a crucial truth: not all unity is righteous, and not all “progress” leads to flourishing. God steps in because the builders’ ambitions would ultimately destroy them — pride always sows the seeds of division. Their desire for greatness and security contained its own undoing.

What looks like judgment, then, is also mercy. By confusing their language, God brings to the surface the very fractures that sin inevitably produces. Pride cannot sustain unity; self-exaltation cannot produce love; seeking a name apart from God cannot unite a community. Yet God’s scattering does more than restrain human pride — it also multiplies cultures, languages, and peoples, enriching the world in ways the builders never envisioned.³ Even in

³ Keller, Tim. “Study 10: City of Man; City of God,” *What were we put in the world to do?* Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2006.

judgment, God brings blessing. This is demonstrated consistently throughout the Bible — God’s interventions, whether in Cain’s life, in the flood, or here at Babel, never lack mercy. His judgments are not cruel acts of suppression but loving acts of redirection, steering humanity away from ruin and toward renewal.

Babel also teaches us that no society can “work” when it is built on a foundation other than God. Whether we idolize individual achievement or collective identity, the result is always fragmentation, oppression, or conflict. Our hope is not in human systems, technologies, or cultural achievements but in a God who intervenes — sometimes by disrupting our plans — to draw us back to himself. And the wider story of Scripture points us forward to Pentecost, where God begins gathering a scattered humanity not through human pride but through the Spirit, forming a people united in Christ.

discuss

- 5. According to this passage, what exactly is God responding to in his judgment at Babel? What attitudes or actions is he confronting?**
- 6. Do you align with the view that God’s intervention at Babel — creating disunity from unity — is both a blessing and a curse? If not, what’s challenging about that? How do you make sense of this?**
- 7. Have you ever experienced a moment when God “disrupted” your plans — closed a door, scattered a direction — and only later realized it might have been mercy?**

group reflection

Throughout the *God Our Maker* series, we explored themes of:

- the *imago dei*, God’s design for rest, the dignity of all work, the design of human relationships and community, the condition of the human heart and sin, human rebellion, divine judgment and mercy, the seriousness of sin and its impact — just to name a few.

Take a moment to reflect and share:

- What insight stuck with you from your group discussions? Or
- What is one area of your life — thoughts, relationships, ambitions — where you sense God calling you to change or trust him more fully? How might you practically live that out this week or month?

announcements

- Sunday, December 7 | **Church Family Meal, after both services**
- Friday, December 12 | **Young Adults Christmas Party**
<https://redeemerws.com/event/young-adults-christmas-party/>
- Saturday, December 13 | **Volunteer at His Toy Store, various times at All Angels' Church** (W. 80th St & Broadway)
RWS is partnering with YoungLives to provide toys to families in deep need and volunteers are needed to help run the store with joy. Various positions available, sign up soon to volunteer together as space is limited.
www.hfny.org/redhen/org/43006
- Sunday, December 14 | **Lessons & Carols, at both services**
Consider who could benefit from hearing the Christmas story this season and invite them to join us for a worship service with special music and favorite carols! Make it a social to sit together as a CG and grab a bite afterwards together with your guests.
- Sunday, December 14 | **Spiritual Practices Workshop, 1:15-2:30pm**
*Join for lunch and this month's discussion on how reimagining **community** might encourage how we weave it into our daily lives.*
redeemerws.com/spiritualpractices