

Genesis

Tower of Babel
(Genesis 11:1-9)

INTRODUCTION

What does the word “babble” mean? (*A confusion of sounds or voices.*) How do you think that sounds?

What would you think if you woke up one day and couldn't understand a word anybody around you was speaking? At first you might think it was funny, but after a while you might get pretty frustrated.

Today we're going to learn about a whole city where that happened. The story took place in a town called Babel, which means “Gate of God” in the people's native tongue.

OPENING PRAYER

Lord, we want to learn how to honor You in everything we do. Please help us to learn from the mistakes the people of Babel made, who lifted themselves up in pride before You. We want never to do that, so open our ears and the eyes of our hearts this morning as we read and study Your word. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

MEMORY VERSE

From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined...the exact places where they should live. (Acts 17:26 NIV84)

LESSON

Last week we learned that after the great flood, when Noah and his family first got off the Ark, God told them to populate the whole earth.

Genesis 9:1

And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

God wanted people to spread out and fill the whole earth; not just all stay together in one spot.

Well, Noah's sons and their wives began to have children who grew up and had more children. Soon there was another population explosion just like before the flood. So, they were obeying the first part of God's command; they were being fruitful and multiplying! Let's see if they were obedient to the second part of God's command, to “*fill the earth.*”

Genesis 11:1-2

Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. ²And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.

At this point, the people probably lived in tents and moved around as the seasons changed so they could lead their animals to good pastures. When they came to a valley called Shinar, they decided that it would be a great place to settle down and make a city for themselves.

Genesis 11:3

And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar.

[Teacher: Bitumen is tar or asphalt, like we use for road repair.]

The people began to talk about building a great city, so they went to work making bricks and they used tar for mortar.

Ask: How do you make bricks?

Remember the Israelites in Egypt were forced to make bricks out of mud and they added straw to the mud to make the bricks stronger.

Ask: Do you think that these man-made bricks would hold up and be as sturdy for building as God-made stones? What do you think might happen to bricks made of mud over time?

Genesis 11:4

Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."

Ask: Look at verse 4, why did they want to build this great city and a tower that reached heaven? (To make a name for themselves.)

The people wanted to build a temple-tower reaching to the skies, not to glorify God, but to glorify themselves. They wanted to make a name for themselves! They wanted to show off how smart and clever they were and make themselves famous. Their hearts were full of pride.

[Teacher, show a picture of the Tower of Babel, if available.]

The tower they built most likely looked like a pyramid with steps or ramps leading up the sides. It probably stood about 300 feet high. They wanted this tower to be the central focal point of the city.

The tower of Babel was a monument to themselves. Sometimes we do things to call attention to ourselves, too. Have you ever known someone who tried to impress others into thinking they were better than others? For example, someone might try to impress others by buying expensive name-brand clothes or a fancy bicycle. When that happens "things" take God's place in our lives.

Ask: Can you think of other ways that people call attention to themselves? (By bragging or acting silly in class.)

And notice the people wanted this tower to bring the people together. It says they wanted this tower to keep them from being scattered all over the world. This was prideful disobedience to the Lord's command to "*fill the earth*."

Last week we learned that because of the wickedness of mankind, God wiped the whole human race off the face of the earth with the great flood, except for Noah and his three sons and daughters-in-law. You would think they would have learned their lesson, right?

But here it is only about 100 years later and wickedness is ruling in the hearts of mankind again! It just goes to show you that wickedness is born with a person.

Romans 3:23

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

People are not born good and then turn bad later. No, we are born sinners and must learn to be kind and loving and thoughtful and courteous. That's why God gave us the Ten Commandments; He knew it's natural for us to steal or lie or not honor our parents.

Genesis 11:5-7

And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. ⁶And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. ⁷Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech."

I think it is funny that the people thought they were doing such an impressive thing by building a tower that would reach heaven. But it must not have been very high if God had to come down to see it!

Who is talking in verse 7? Who is the “Us?” (The trinity!)

When God saw what they were doing, He knew that they had left Him out of their lives thinking only of how clever they were. God also knew that soon they would become as evil as the people who had lived before the Flood.

For their own good, God had to stop them. God had to force them to spread out and populate the whole earth as He had commanded them when Noah and his family first got off the ark.

Now God could have knocked down the tower, but He knew they would just try to rebuild it. So, He decided to confuse their language. By giving them different languages, they wouldn't be able to understand each other. Wouldn't that be confusing?

One morning when the people came to work on the tower something weird happened. Suddenly, throughout the city, people were not speaking the same language anymore. They couldn't understand each other.

One man would ask, “*May I borrow your tools*” and the other man would think he had asked for more bricks. All was confusion. They became frustrated. No matter how loud they shouted they couldn't make themselves understood. Nothing was getting accomplished.

Soon they gave up trying to work together and the tower building stopped. The people got fed up with all the confusion. Groups of people that could understand each other decided to move away.

Genesis 11:8-9

So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city.

⁹Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.

God has placed a very funny joke here in His word. The Babylonian word “babel” means, “gate of god.” (*Bab* = ‘gate’ and *el* = ‘god’.) But it sounds like the Hebrew word for “confusion”. So, it's a play on words. The humor is that their so-called “gate of god” was destroyed by “confusion.”

The people stopped building the city and the Lord scattered them all over the world.

God had shown that as clever as the people of Babel thought they were, they couldn't accomplish anything of lasting value if they wouldn't honor and obey God.

Now you know how all the different nations developed; God spread the population out over all the earth by confusing the languages at Babel. All the people who could understand each other grouped together.

All people came from Noah. Through his three sons came all the colors and nationalities of the world. Today many different languages are spoken. Each country has its own language like Chinese, Spanish, French and German. But God is the God of all peoples, of every nation and of every tongue.

Closing Prayer

However good the work is that we are doing, Lord, it will fail if You don't bless it. That's why we should always consult You in prayer so our plans will be according to Your plan for our lives. Keep us from building towers in our lives to promote our own greatness. Keep us humble before You. And help us always to keep You high and lifted up as the center of our lives. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

LEARNING CENTERS

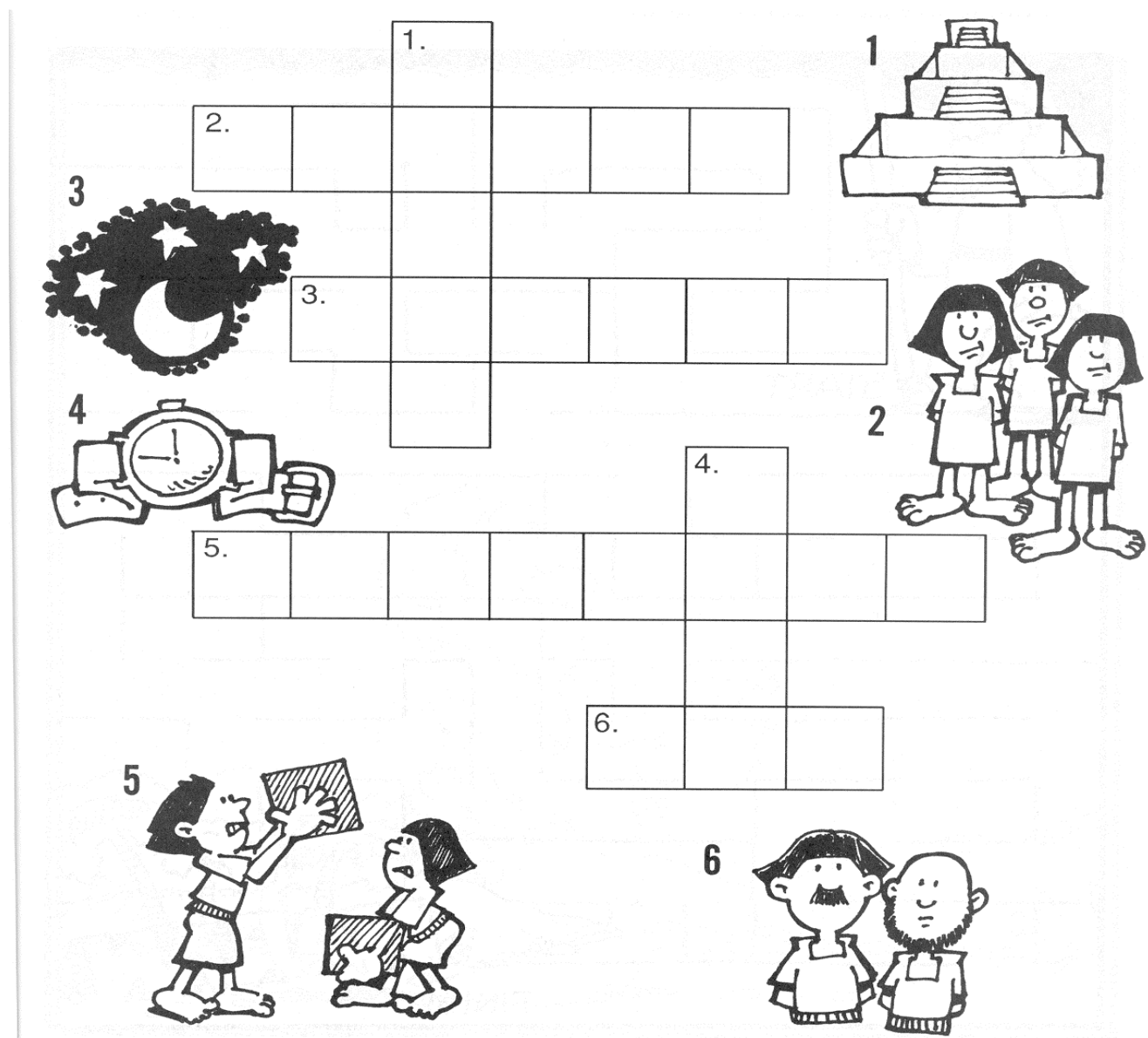
Imagination Station

(Craft Center)

Tower of Babel Crossword Puzzle

Write in the words and color the pictures on the following crossword puzzle. Hint: To help you solve the crossword puzzle, you can use the picture clues or you can find the words for the crossword in the following sentence:

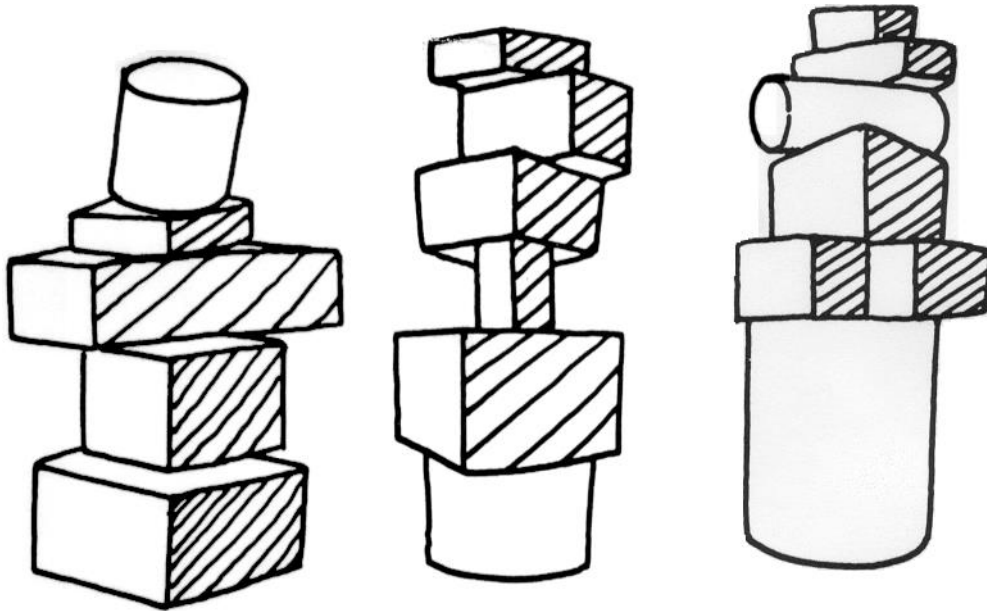
As time passed, people began building a tower to reach heaven. To stop the men from building the tower, God caused them to speak different languages (Genesis 11:3-9).



Fun House

(Game Center)

1. Tower of Babel Relay



Materials

You will need the same number and kind of stackable objects for each team, such as:

- Blocks
- Boxes
- Empty containers

Game Rules

Divide children into two teams. Teams line up about twenty feet from their stacking materials. The first player stacks one of the objects on top of another, runs back to the starting line, tags the next player, and goes to the end of the line. Players take turns stacking an object onto the tower. If a player knocks down the tower, he must leave the objects as they are and return to the end of the line. The next player may restack one object. The game continues until one team has completed their “Tower of Babel.”

2. Groupies

On small pieces of paper write an animal name. Have at least two of each animal. On “GO” have the children find the member(s) of their species by just uttering the sound of their animal. Thus, all the “moos” gather together as cows and all the “quacks” gather together as ducks, etc. This demonstrates how the people of Babel grouped together by like languages.

3. Language Game

The following game will demonstrate man's ability to reason and put together complicated ideas.

Divide the children into various groups and give each group ten different words written on separate pieces of paper. Each group should receive the same words. Give the groups a set amount of time to see how many

different sentences they can create out of the ten words. One person in each group needs to write down the sentences so that they don't have any duplicates within their group. See which group can make the most sentences.

God's Weird and Wonderful World

(Science Center)

1. *Discover Where Races Came From*

Key Points

- Very tiny things called cells make up the human body.
- In the nucleus of our cells is genetic material, which determines what characteristics we are born with, such as eye color, skin color, height, intelligence, etc.
- We receive half of this genetic material or genes, from each parent.
- We notice similarities in those who are related.
- This genetic material started with the first parents—Adam and Eve. They passed their genetic material onto their children who passed it onto their children.
- Following the flood, all human races were descendants of Noah's three married sons and their wives. They passed their genes onto the human race.

Background Facts

In order for races to arise, a population must split into small, isolated groups, leading to "inbreeding". (Gish, pg.92) In that way traits become common among a people. This is what happened at the Tower of Babel.

"According to a recent summary of modern biological knowledge on human racial characteristics, the difference in human genes linked to race is only .012%. Humans all have the cellular machinery to make them very white or very black. What color you are reflects only trivial genetic differences. In transplant surgery, an organ from a white donor can make a more acceptable match for a black patient, and vice versa" (Discover, November 1994, pp. 72, 73).

Science Activity

Compare traits among your students. How many can roll the end of their tongue, or raise an eyebrow? Who has dimples, or free ear lobes versus those that are attached? When they fold their hands naturally, does their left thumb cross over their right thumb? All these traits were there even when they were in their mother's womb.

Give each child a piece of paper with a cell in the middle and the following instructions: Imagine that the cell represented on the paper is the beginning of a unique life form—YOU! We know that we each began as a single cell with all the information needed to make a human being. Think about your unique self—then add words or phrases that describe you to complete your genetic puzzle.

Spiritual Lesson

God allowed each of us to inherit special and unique traits from our parents. He created different colors, sizes and shapes of people but really what matters to Him is what is inside our heart. God wants us to view people the same way and realize that we all have one thing in common. That one thing is the need for a savior!

Genetic Oddities

Black and white twins—twins with different skin color have been noted in both England and New Zealand. A couple in New Zealand have twin daughters, one light and one dark, who have become less alike as they have grown older. Melissa is taller, with dark brown eyes and black curly hair. Marianna has the light European tone of

her mother, with straight red hair. There is also documentation of boys in New Zealand who are known as the "black and white" twins because one looks European while the other has Maori features. Doctors in Britain said the chances of producing such black and white twins were a million to one" (The Dominion, Wellington, NZ, Aug. 31, 1994, p. 8).

There is a very rare condition of excessive body hairiness that has not been known to afflict anyone outside of a large family in rural Mexico. Newborn males are born with hair all over their face, including the eyelids, with only the lips remaining hairless. Men with the condition have inch-long hair all over their face, and parts of their upper body. Women with the condition, while not being affected to the same degree as the men, have random patches of hair on the face and the body. Scientists have written that the gene has "reawakened from a long sleep during human evolution", meaning that it is a leftover trait from our alleged ape-type ancestry. Another, just as viable explanation is that it is simply a mutated gene changing the amount of hair that has existed in humans since creation (Creation ex nihilo vol. 18 no. 1, December 1995 – February 1996).

2. Discover Languages

Look at the confusion of languages. Discuss how different nations developed out of this and how Jesus will be Lord of all Nations.

Key Points

The primary objective is to communicate how so many different nations came about, viewed from a Biblical perspective.

Differences of languages are one of the reasons for the divisions in the human race. Others are culture and religion.

Illustrate how frustrating it would have been for people of Babel. Invite someone to Sunday School who speaks a foreign language. Have them try to communicate a fairly difficult message to another person who doesn't speak the same language.

Have the children name as many different languages that they can. Do the people that speak these languages get along with each other? Help the children to realize that one day all nations shall live together in peace under Christ's rule (Isaiah 2:1-4).

Where did our ability to speak come from? Were we born with this ability or did we learn it from people around us? Have the children give their answers to these questions.

One theory is that language developed from animal grunts or calls, or from people making instinctive sounds caused by pain. Another theory is that people reacted to the stimuli of their surroundings. An example is the expression, "bye, bye" which supposedly simulate the lips and tongue waving goodbye.

There are cases of children who were reared in the wild by animals or kept isolated from all social contact. Most attempts to teach them had no success.

We know, of course, that God created the first man with the ability to speak and that as babies, we hear our parents talk and therefore advance in our God given abilities to use language.

Have the children think about the different features that God has given them to enable them to speak. What parts of their body are being used when they speak? The vast majority of speech sounds are made using lung air. Before we can speak, lung air has to be changed into audible vibrations using the various organs within the vocal tract. The most important source of vibration for the production of sounds is in the lower region of the vocal tract, at the larynx. The front part of the larynx can be easily felt and we refer to it as the "Adam's apple".

There are several other types of speech sounds which do not use air stream from the lungs such as click sounds, like, "tut tut," and "tsk tsk" which are made by the tongue against the top of the mouth.

Have the children say the following words and identify what parts of their bodies besides their lungs that are being used to make these sounds

"Thin" - uses upper the teeth.

"Tall" - uses the ridge behind the upper teeth.

"You" - uses the hard palate.

"Paw" - uses the lips.

Have them grit their teeth and say something. They use their jaw for this.

Animals also have the ability to communicate but it is not the same as man. Man has a unique gift of using language, not only spoken, but written.

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