Tower of Babel



Scripture Reference: Genesis 11:1-9

Suggested Theme: God is the only one worthy of worship and praise. We should not have unhealthy pride.

Memory Verse: "Pride leads only to shame. It is wise not to be proud." Proverbs 11:2, ICB

Story Overview:

After Noah and his family left the ark, God planned for them to spread out over the whole earth and repopulate it. Instead, in their pride, they gathered in one place and began to build a tower. To intervene, the Lord confused and stopped their plans, causing everyone to speak different languages. Once again, people began to move away and spread all over the earth.

Background Study:

Only eight people survived the flood. They were Noah and his wife, his three sons and their wives. Through these eight people, the world was populated again (Genesis 9:18-19).

God's plan was for Noah's descendants to spread out and replenish the earth (Genesis 9:7). Instead, they wanted to stay in one place and show what amazing things they could do. Genesis 11:4 records that the tower they were building was a monument to their own abilities instead of a reliance upon God. Like Adam and Eve, they chose to use their own wisdom and reject God's. Years later, the Psalmist addressed this attitude.

"If the Lord doesn't build the house, the builders are working for nothing."
Psalm 127:1, ICB

In addition to this self-pride, there seemed to be a direct intention to push God out of the picture. The people revealed this when they said they were building this tower *"so that we may make a name for ourselves."*

In contrast to this attitude, God will later make it very clear that HE is the one with the power to make a people and name great. He tells Abram,

"I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you. I will make you famous. And you will be a blessing to others." Genesis 12:2, ICB

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Ironically, the tower at Babel seemed to soar so high, and yet the Lord had to “come down” to see it. Towers in ancient Mesopotamia were called Ziggurats. The buildings began with a square base and then “had the form of a terraced step pyramid of successively receding stories or levels.” (Wikipedia)

The people proudly built their towers higher and higher without any apparent intention to pause and consider God. But God took notice. He intervened and “re-set” the situation. By confusing their language, He forced them to come to terms with their own limitations immediately. The building project stopped, and the people began to move out of the place.

In today’s lesson, talk about the difference between healthy self-esteem and unhealthy pride. Here’s a definition of pride from Dictionary.com:

- Positive Pride- A becoming or dignified sense of what is due to oneself or one’s position or character; self-respect; self-esteem. Pleasure or satisfaction is taken in something done by or belonging to oneself or believed to reflect credit upon oneself:
- Negative Pride is a high or beyond-ordinary opinion of one’s own dignity, importance, merit, or superiority, whether cherished in the mind or displayed in bearing, conduct, etc.

Way to Introduce the Story:

As the children arrive, have blocks or Legos available. Guide the children in building a tower as tall as they can. Older children might want to play a round or two of “Jenga” or build a house of cards. “Today we are going to read about a time when some people decided to build the tallest tower that had ever been built.”

The Story:

After the flood, people had to begin all over again. Noah’s sons had large families, and there were soon many people. Sadly, the people began to forget about God. God wanted them to move to other places, but they decided to stay together in one city instead.

As time went by, they began to forget about God and only think about how good they were as builders. They were so proud of themselves! The people wanted to build something to show how good they were and to be famous. They decided to build a very tall tower.

Do you know what the word “pride” means? It can have a good or a bad meaning.

Good Pride is when you feel good about yourself because you have done a good job or are part of something good that makes you happy. You might feel proud of the way you have learned something new at school, or you may be proud of your family. God likes it when we feel this kind of pride.

Bad Pride is when you think too well of yourself. If you have bad pride, you might think you are better than you really are. You might also look down on other people and think you are better than they are. God does not want us to have this kind of pride.

The people who were building the tower had a bad kind of pride. They thought their plan was better than God’s plan. They thought they didn’t need God to make the best city and the tallest tower. They thought they could do it all on their own. They thought so much about themselves that they didn’t even think about God very much at all.

Finally, God decided to put a stop to this pride. He wanted the people to think about Him and not about a tower. He wanted the people to start moving to new places and not all live in one big city.

So, God caused something amazing to happen. God confused the people’s languages so they could no longer understand each other. When someone talked, it just sounded like strange noises or “babbling.”

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It became impossible to work together on the tower. Everyone just got mixed up. The people stopped working together. The town became known as “Babel” because of all of the different languages. Everything in the city was so confusing that the people started moving away into smaller places where they could learn to talk together better. Now, they stopped having so much bad pride. They learned an important lesson about pride. They learned that they were not the best after all. God is the best!

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child’s spiritual development and help them connect to God. Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.

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Review:

- Did God want Noah’s sons and descendants to live in one place? (No)
- Why did the people of Babel begin building a tall tower? (To make a tall tower in their city so they would be famous)
- Why did God want to stop the people from building the tower (He wanted them to obey Him by spreading out in the world)
- How did God stop the people from building the tower? (He caused them to speak different languages.)
- Why was the city called “Babel”? (Because the different languages sounded like ‘babbling’)
- What does a good kind of pride cause us to think about? (God, and what He has done for us)
- What does a bad kind of pride cause us to think about? (Only ourselves and how we are better than others)

Reflection:

- What do you think the people who were building the Tower of Babel thought or felt when their languages were suddenly mixed up?
- Have you ever tried to communicate with someone whose language you didn’t know? How difficult or easy was it?
- When have you felt ‘good pride’?

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- Have you ever felt ‘bad pride’ before?
- What can you do when you realise you have lots of ‘bad pride’? (talk to God and ask for His forgiveness, refocus on worshipping God and serving/loving others, etc.)
- What is something you would ask God about this story?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. A variety of prayer methods are found here.

Song Suggestions:

- My God is So Big Song
- Oh, Be Careful Song
- Humble Yourselves in the Sight of the Lord
- Refer to the Song Page on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

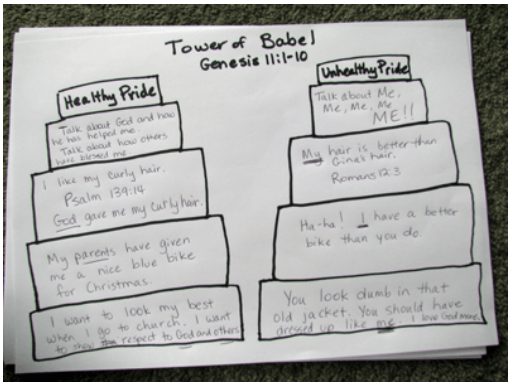
- How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.
- Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.

Activities:

- Brainstorm things people might say when they brag about something.
- Ask someone who speaks a different language to give the children simple instructions on how to do something (for example: “Children, take a pencil and paper and write your name on the paper” or “Open your bible to Genesis chapter 11”). Discuss how difficult it would be to build a tower when everyone spoke different languages.
- Snack: Build a tower out of square biscuits/cookies or crackers. Use icing or peanut butter to stick the pieces together.
- Look up and discuss scriptures concerning pride: Romans 12:16; Galatians 6:4; Philippians 2:3; James 4:10

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- Contrast “Healthy Pride” and “Unhealthy Pride” using these Drawing Contrasts for an Application Activity idea.



Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. Free printables for this story.

Crafts:

- Make a poster depicting Proverbs 16:18.
- Cut rectangles from coloured paper to represent bricks. Use the paper bricks to “build” two towers. Write godly attributes (humility, love, unselfishness, etc.) on the individual bricks in one set. The bricks for the other tower should have ungodly traits written on each of them (pride, hate, selfishness, swearing, etc.) Discuss which tower God would want us to build.
- Construct a tower with craft sticks.

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. Free printables for this story.

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Other Online Resources:

- Colouring page and puzzle worksheets (Calvary Curriculum)
- Crafts: Crafty Snacks (DLTK)
- Worksheet: Wordsearch puzzle (Christian Answers)

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