Preschool–Grade 6

The Tower of Babel

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Babel is what happens when people try to make a name for themselves instead of doing things God's way. God humbles the proud, and He lifts up those who humble themselves before Him.
Bible passage: Genesis 11:1–9. Students read Genesis 9:1, Genesis 10:32 and Genesis 11:1–9 out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." *Proverbs 16:18 (KJV)* and "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:" *1 Peter 5:6 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Genesis 9:1, 10:32, 11:1–9, Proverbs 16:18 and 1 Peter 5:6. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses.

1. Opening game: Make a Name (5–10 minutes)

Ask students to call out ways people try to "make a name" for themselves today: followers, likes, trophies, the right clothes, being the funniest, being the best at a game. Write them on the board. Then ask: *Which of these are wrong in themselves? Which only become wrong when they are about making ourselves look great?* Say: "Long ago, a whole city of people said, 'let us make us a name.' Let's read what happened."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: Genesis 9:1 and Genesis 10:32. Replenish means fill again. After the flood, God told Noah's family to fill the earth, and Noah's family grew into the nations.

Read out loud: Genesis 11:1–4. Old words in this passage:

- **of one language, and of one speech** (11:1): everyone spoke the same words
- **journeyed** (11:2): traveled; **plain**: wide, flat land; **Shinar**: the land where the plain was; **dwelt**: lived
- **Go to** (11:3, 11:4, 11:7): Come on, let's; **burn them throughly**: bake them hard, all the way through
- **slime** (11:3): a sticky tar; **morter**: what holds bricks together
- **make us a name** (11:4): make ourselves famous and honored; **lest we be scattered**: so that we won't be spread out

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Read out loud: Genesis 11:5–9. Old words in this passage:

- **the children of men** (11:5): people; **builded**: built
- **the people is one** (11:6): they were united as one; **restrained**: held back; **imagined to do**: planned to do
- **confound** (11:7, 11:9): mix up, confuse
- **left off** (11:8): stopped; **from thence**: from that place
- **Babel** (11:9): the name of the place, "because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth"

Point out the contrast: the builders said "let us build" and "let us make us a name" so they would not be scattered (11:4). The LORD came down (11:5), and they were scattered anyway (11:8).

Teacher note on "let us go down" (11:7): the Bible doesn't explain the word "us" here, so don't build a teaching on it, and don't let it take over the lesson. Stay with what the passage says plainly: "the LORD came down" (11:5), "the LORD scattered them" (11:8), "the LORD did there confound the language" (11:9). One LORD did it, and "The LORD our God is one LORD" (Deuteronomy 6:4).
Teacher note: Genesis 11:1–9 gives no height for the tower and names no leader. Don't add either.

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. "Let us make us a name" (11:4). Why do people want to make a name for themselves? Where do you see it today?
2. God told Noah's family to replenish the earth (9:1). The builders wanted to stay together "lest we be scattered" (11:4). What happens when our plans pull against what God has said?
3. The tower's top was meant to "reach unto heaven," yet "the LORD came down to see" it (11:5). What does that say about our greatest work next to God?
4. Being united is usually a good thing. Why wasn't it good at Babel (11:4–6)?
5. Read Proverbs 16:18 and 1 Peter 5:6 side by side. What is the difference between making a name for yourself and letting God exalt you "in due time"?
6. At Babel, people could not understand one another (11:7). At Pentecost, people from many nations heard the believers "speak in his own language" (Acts 2:4–6). What does that show you about God?

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4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Explain the words: in Proverbs 16:18, **pride** means thinking you are above others or don't need God, **goeth before destruction** means it comes right before ruin, and a **haughty spirit** is a proud, stuck-up attitude. In 1 Peter 5:6, **humble yourselves** means put yourself low before God, **the mighty hand of God** is His power, **exalt** means lift up, and **in due time** means at the right time, God's time. Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Proverbs 16:18 this week; keep working on 1 Peter 5:6 next week too.

5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "At Babel, God confounded the languages of the whole earth. On the day of Pentecost, God filled believers with the Holy Ghost, they began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance, and every man heard them 'speak in his own language' (Acts 2:4, 2:6). God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

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6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Where am I trying to "make a name" for myself: at school, online, in sports, with friends?
2. Is there something God has said that I've been working around, the way the builders worked around being scattered? What would doing it God's way look like this week?
3. Write a short prayer asking God to help you humble yourself and honor His name.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: when you do something well, give God the glory out loud. When you're tempted to brag, say Proverbs 16:18 to yourself instead.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, You are greater than anything people can build. Forgive us for the times we try to make a name for ourselves. Help us humble ourselves under Your mighty hand and trust You to lift us up in Your time. Thank You for loving us and making a way to save us through Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks what happened to the tower: Genesis 11:8 says "they left off to build the city." The passage doesn't say what happened to the tower afterward, so don't add an ending.
If a student asks where the nations came from: Genesis 10 lists the families of Noah's sons, "and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood" (10:32). Students may read Genesis 10 on their own.

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