The Tower of Babel

BIBLE PASSAGE:
Genesis 11

STORY POINT: People wanted to build a tower to make themselves famous.

KEY PASSAGE:
Colossians 1:16b

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:
Who is God? God is our Creator and King.

Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.
LEADER Bible Study

Following the flood, God commanded Noah in Genesis 9:1 to “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” This command echoes the one given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28. God intended the paradise of the garden to spread into the whole world, but sinful people had other desires.

Genesis 10 accounts for the nations that spread out in the land after the flood (Gen. 10:32). The people moved east and settled in a valley. This story continues the cycle of distrust and disobedience to God. In Genesis 11:2, Scripture indicates that instead of filling the earth as God commanded, the people devised a plan to settle in one place and build a city and a large tower into the sky.

Read Genesis 11:4. The people’s motive was clear: “Let us make a name for ourselves.” The people didn’t want to be scattered. They didn’t believe God would give them what was good if they obeyed Him. They sought to obtain for themselves what they believed was good.

The people tried to build a monument with its top in the sky, but they succeeded only in separating themselves from God and from each other. God confused their language and scattered them over the earth. They were unable to finish building the city, so the city was called Babel—which sounds like the Hebrew word for “confused”—because there the Lord confused the people’s language.

This week you have the opportunity to tell the preschoolers you teach about God’s better plan: His plan not for people to reach up to Him, but His plan to reach down to people by sending His Son, Jesus, to live the perfect life we couldn’t live and die the death we don’t want to die. Through Jesus, God brings together people of every tongue, tribe, and nation; we are all one in Christ. That is the gospel. Pray that the preschoolers you teach would have open hearts to receive it.

God Created Everything

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The Tower of Babel

*Genesis 11*

After the great flood, God told Noah’s family to spread out and fill the whole earth. Noah’s family grew. Soon, more and more people were on the earth. The people moved to a valley and decided to stay there. They did not spread out and fill the whole earth; they did not obey God.

They said to one another, “We are great! Let’s build a city together, and let’s make a tower so tall that the top of the tower reaches to the sky. Then everyone will know how great we are!”

God created people to give Him glory, but the people did not want to give God glory. They wanted to give themselves glory. Instead of saying, “Look how great God is,” they said, “Look how great we are!”

But no one is greater than God. While the people made bricks and started building, God came down to look at the tower. He was not happy about what they were doing.

God said, “If they are doing this, they will keep thinking of more bad things to do.”

So God decided to mix up their words. When the people tried to make plans, they did not understand one another. If one workman said, “Hand me another brick,” nobody else knew what he wanted.
The people had to stop building the city. People had to move away to live with people they could understand. God made it so the people did just what He had told them to do after the flood. They spread out all over the earth. The city with the unfinished tower was called Babel (BAY buhl).

Christ Connection: People chose to make themselves famous instead of God. God mixed up their language and the people spread out over the earth. One day, Jesus will bring His people back together. People from every group and every language will worship Him together. (Revelation 7:9-10)
INTRODUCE the Story

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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who is God? God is our Creator and King.

Welcome time
Play a theme song in the background as you greet preschoolers and follow your church’s security procedures. Set an offering basket near the door to collect at an appropriate time. Post an allergy alert, if necessary. Set out a few favorite theme-related toys, such as puzzles and blocks.

Activity page
Invite preschoolers to draw a line connecting each brick on the ground with where it fits on the tower.
SAY • Good job deciding where each piece fits. In today’s Bible story, the people decided to build a tower. Building a tower sounds like a good idea, but in this story it was a wrong idea. The people’s reason for building the tower was not good. Listen to our Bible story to find out why the people wanted to build a tower and why it was wrong.

Speak in funny voices
Invite preschoolers to practice saying the key passage or big picture question and answer using funny voices such as the voice of a baby, robot, gorilla, chipmunk, someone who is very happy, someone who is very tired, someone who has a cold, and so forth. Allow preschoolers to suggest different
voices to use. Continue as time allows.

**SAY •** Hearing you all speak in different voices was funny! Even though you used a different voice, I still understood what you said. In today’s Bible story, God mixed up the people’s words. They could not understand what others were saying. Listen to our Bible story to find out why God mixed up their words.

**Play out moving**

Set out a variety of cardboard boxes. Tell preschoolers to pretend that you all are moving to a different classroom and ask them to help pack classroom items. Invite preschoolers to gather items from around the room to pack in the boxes.

Help a preschooler tape the box shut and draw what is inside the box on the outside. Several minutes before Bible study, tell preschoolers to pretend they are in their new classroom and unpack. Guide them to return all items to their previous location.

**SAY •** Thanks for your help with our pretend move! In our Bible story last time, God told Noah’s family to spread out and live in different places. God wanted them to fill the whole earth. In today’s Bible story, we will find out if Noah’s family obeyed God and moved or not.

**Transition to Bible study**

To gain the attention of all the preschoolers to move them to Bible study, show the countdown video, flip off the lights, or clap a simple rhythm for the children to copy. Invite preschoolers to pretend to carry a heavy brick as they walk to Bible study.
TEACH the Story

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Introduce the Bible story
Place a bookmark at Genesis 11 in your Bible. Invite a preschooler to open it. Reverently display the open Bible.

SAY • There is no other book like the Bible. The Bible is the only book with God’s words in it, and all God’s words are true! Today’s Bible story is from the first book of the Bible, Genesis.

Point to the Bible story picture on the giant timeline. Remind children that all the stories in the Bible fit together to tell an even bigger story. The Bible tells us the big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Watch or tell the Bible story
Show the video or tell the Bible story using the provided storytelling tips. Use the bolded version of the Bible story for young preschoolers.

SAY • People wanted to build a tower to make themselves famous, but God created people to make Him famous. We were not made to say, “Look how great we are.” We were made to say, “Look how great God is!” God was right to mix up the people’s words. One day, Jesus will bring His people back together. People from every group and every language will worship Him together.
Practice the key passage
Cut out the “Key Passage Marker” and place it at Colossians 1:16b. Invite a volunteer to come up and open your Bible to the key passage. Read the key passage aloud. Practice the motions you created for the verse.

Write the words or phrases of the key passage on masking tape placed on individual blocks. Read the words and stack the blocks in order to form a key passage tower.

SAY • Our key passage tells us that everything was created for Jesus. That means everything was made to give Him glory. Only Jesus deserves to be made famous. Sing the key passage song, “All Things,” and the theme song, “My Father’s World.”

Learn the big picture question
SAY • Do you remember the answer to our big picture question? Who is God? God is our Creator and King. God made everything and He rules over all of it. The things He created are meant to give Him glory, or show how great He is.

Missions moment
SAY • The Rigneys are a missionary family living in London, England. People in London speak many different languages, so the Rigneys work on a team with people who can share the gospel in different languages. Aden and Addison Rigney are kids like you. They tell friends and neighbors about God’s love. Hear them share the gospel in this video.

Show the “Our Gospel” video.

Pray and transition to experience the story

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Gather toys

Scatter blocks, books, and various toys around the room. Play the key passage song or theme song. Invite preschoolers to gather the scattered objects in a designated place. Scatter the items and play again as time allows. Consider timing how long it takes preschoolers to gather the items. Challenge preschoolers to beat their time each round.

SAY • People wanted to build a tower to make themselves famous. God mixed up their language and the people finally spread out over the earth like God had commanded them to do. One day, Jesus will gather all His people in one place. But for now, we are to go the ends of the earth to make God famous everywhere.

Play with building tools

Set out toy tools, such as plastic hammers, mallets, saws, shovels, drills, screwdrivers, wrenches, pliers, squares, clamps, and tool boxes. Add hard hats, goggles, aprons, tool belts, soft tape measures, paintbrushes, plastic levels, and plastic cones if available. Place cardboard boxes beside the tools. Invite preschoolers to “work on” the cardboard boxes.

SAY • The people in today’s Bible story made God sad with how they used their tools. People wanted to build
a tower to make themselves famous. Instead of saying, “Look how great God is,” they said, “Look how great we are!” One day, people from every group and every language will worship Jesus together.

Sort nuts and bolts
Set out an assortment of nuts and bolts. Provide shallow baskets or bowls for preschoolers to sort the nuts and bolts into. Show a prescrawler how to thread a nut onto a bolt as he or she shows interest.

SAY • These nuts and bolts are used for building. The people in our Bible story probably did not have nuts and bolts like these when they were building their tower. God was not happy about what they were doing. People wanted to build a tower to make themselves famous, but God created people to make Him famous. Only He deserves to be worshiped because God is our Creator and King.

Experiment with block shadows
Weather permitting, lead preschoolers outside with a large sheet of paper and blocks. Find a flat area where the sun casts a clear shadow. Lay the paper on the flat surface. Invite preschoolers to build on the paper with blocks. Point out the shadow the blocks create. Allow preschooler to observe the different shadows created by stacking blocks in different heights and patterns.

SAY • The shadow cast by the tower the people in today’s Bible story were building would have been enormous! People wanted to build a tower to make themselves famous. God mixed up their language and the people spread out over the earth. One day,
Jesus will bring His people back together. People from every group and every language will worship Him together.

Say “Jesus is Lord” in different languages

Lead preschoolers in practicing saying “Jesus is Lord” in different languages. Use the provided translations below. Use an online translating tool to hear the proper pronunciations.

- Spanish: Jesús es el Señor.
- French: Jésus est Seigneur.
- Portuguese: Jesus é senhor.
- Swahili: Yesu ni Bwana
- German: Jesus ist der Herr.

Invite any children or leaders in your class who speak other languages to teach the class a few words.

SAY • These are some of the languages the Rigney family often hears as they serve as missionaries in London, England. The Rigney family tells the people of London the good news about Jesus. One day, people from every group and every language will worship Jesus together. Let’s pray that many people in London will believe the good news about Jesus.
Snack and review

Play the countdown video to signal the end of activities. Wash hands and gather preschoolers for snack time. Pray, thanking God for the snack.

Serve vanilla-flavored wafers for snack. Invite children to stack the wafers to make a tower. Remind preschoolers that people wanted to build a tower to make themselves famous, and God mixed up their language. One day, Jesus will bring His people back together. People from every group and every language will worship Him together.

Show the Bible story picture as you ask the following questions. Retell parts of the Bible story as needed.

1. What did God tell Noah’s family to do after the flood? (spread out and fill the whole earth)
2. Did the people obey God? (no)
3. What did the people want to build to make themselves famous? (a tower to reach to the sky)
4. What did God do about the people building the tower? (He mixed up their languages.)
5. Why did the people have to stop building the tower? (because no one could understand each other)
6. Who is God? God is our Creator and King.

Transition

When children finish their snack, preschoolers may color the Bible story coloring page, play a simple game to practice the key passage or big picture question, or sing along to the key passage or theme song.

If parents are picking up their children at this time, tell them something that their child enjoyed doing or did well during the session. Distribute the preschool big picture cards for families.