



***YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!***  
**Summer 2018 Leader Commentary**

**Unit 1: The Truth Starts Here**  
**Session 4: Where Do We Go from Here? (see pp. 114-117)**

**The Question:** How do I fulfill God's calling for my life?

**The Point:** I get in trouble when my focus is on my agenda and me.

**Background Passage:** Genesis 9:7; 11:1-9

**Focal Passage:** Genesis 9:7; 11:1-9

This commentary is designed to help you think about the question, "How do I fulfill God's calling for my life?" and drive home this one truth: I get in trouble when my focus is on my agenda and me.

**Focus on These Points**

***Do More than Make a Name for Yourself***  
***(Gen. 11:1-4)***

The Tower of Babylon story covers nine verses. The first four verses address the people's plans. The last four are about God's plans, His actions, and the results of His actions. Verse 5 describes God's evaluation of the people's actions. It provides a focal point for the story.

The story begins with the people (descendants of Adam) having one common language. There was an underlying sense of unity among the people. They were on the move. When they arrived at Shinar, they decided to make their home there.

Several important cities would later be established there (Gen. 10:10) in what we call the Mesopotamian region or "the Land Between the Rivers" because it sat between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers. This region would later bear several different names including Babylonia, Sumer, and Akkad to name a few. The names also refer to empires that developed in the area.

The people had a purpose and devised a plan to avoid being scattered (v. 4). Their collaborations led to their building a city and a tower as a symbol of their unity.

Finally, their journeys had led them to a place they could call home: Shinar. They only needed to groom it to their liking. Their city would be a center, a place of dwelling. Theirs would have "a tower with its top in the sky" (v. 4). At first glance, their description seems overreaching, even prideful. However, the phrase may have only meant that it would be a great height.

Two purposes for building the tower are clear: fame and unity of the people. The people wanted to make a name for themselves. Unlike today, a name was more than a verbal designation. For Hebrews, a name expressed the essence or character of a person. It could also give insight into a person's reputation. Obviously, these folks wanted a lasting reputation.

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God was displeased at their rebellion. The people had challenged God's command to scatter the earth (9:7). He wanted them to multiply and fill it. He hadn't planned for them to be wanderers or homeless vagabonds. His plan was for the earth that He created (and later purged) to eventually be populated and filled with people.

### ***Live Up to Your Full Potential (Gen. 11:5-6)***

God "came down to look over" (v. 5) the building projects. His on-site inspection was not an initial observation. After all, He is God—omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. He revealed His thoughts so that readers could understand His concerns.

In verse 6, God provides His evaluation. He noted the people's unity and the common language that helped to bolster their unity. Then He mentioned a concern. He saw their potential. If they were successful in carrying out their plans, they'd gain a name, fame, and confidence to do whatever they set their minds to do. With this kind of empowerment, they could do large-scale evil, possibly setting themselves against God's plan to fill the earth, as well.

### ***Allow God to Create His Heavenly Kingdom Through You (Gen. 9:7; 11:7-9)***

After Noah and his family survived the flood, God commanded them to "be fruitful and multiply; spread out over the earth and multiply on it" (9:7). By building the tower, people were blatantly disobeying God. They were doing just the opposite of His command when they avoided being "scattered throughout the earth" (11:4).

God's judgment on their efforts included confusing their language. Without being able to communicate effectively, they could no longer make or carry out plans together. In essence God had set up their environment such that they had no recourse but to go their own ways.

We see God's concerns and plans (vv. 6-7); then we see the results (v. 8). God didn't need to scatter the people by forcing them into different locations. They scattered because they simply couldn't communicate. When they left, the building projects were halted too. They sought out their own places to live. The thing they feared most—venturing into the vast world, settling into unknown places, and losing their sense of togetherness—had happened. They allowed pride and fears to get in the way of their obedience to God. They were wrong to claim their own place and refuse to populate the earth. The way that seemed right in their eyes was unacceptable in God's sight.

The unfinished city was named Babylon because of God's activity in verse 9. The Hebrew word translated "confused" (v. 9) is *balal*. It sounds similar to *babel*, the Hebrew word translated "Babylon" (v. 9). The Babylonian Empire was Babylon's namesake. Early in the Old Testament Babylon was a symbol of human achievement. Still, neither in its past nor its future would God allow a culture to continually exalt itself without being checked.