

A study of Genesis 1–12

YOU SERIOUS MAN?

As concerns of racism and injustice soar across the country, a high school assistant basketball coach got pulled over for not using his turn signal. During the stop, the story took a turn. “What are you doing in this neighborhood?” The officer asked where the coach was from, why he moved into this neighborhood, even asking his 6’5” 15-year-old son in the passenger seat his social security number. After getting home, the coach posted the encounter on social media ending with the question, “A turn signal or skin tone?”



Long story short, the coach and officers had a face to face in which they reviewed the body cam footage of the stop. The coach responded with what he “always tells his players—‘film don’t lie.’” In retrospect, the coach not having his license on him, by driving an out of state relative’s vehicle, and that the turn signal did not appear, everything the officer’s said and did was understandable.

As our country grieves the death of people like George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, this story of a coach and officers meeting face to face shines bright. There are many issues of race and justice that need attention. However, we’ll never accomplish anything until we are able to overcome our perspective, seek clarity, and see things from the other side.

GENESIS 11:1–9

¹ Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. ² And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. 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. 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.” ⁵ And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. ⁶ And 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. ⁷ Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech.” ⁸ So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. ⁹ Therefore 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.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

“Who wants to study a sport and never play? You’ve been invited in to play, to push back darkness.” Moody Bible Institute in Chicago annually celebrates the birthday of its founder D. L. Moody with a Bible conference called Founder’s Week. Matt Chandler, quoted above, preached an amazing and continually relevant message at Founder’s Week in 2018. Scan the QR code. Listen and be challenged by Chandler as he discusses issues of race and how believers should get in the game.



DISCUSSION

How does the language we use shape and or reflect the culture to which we belong?

1. How many languages and cultures did people have in verse 1?

2. What did the people want to do and why? (4)

3. What was the Lord’s response? (6-8)

4. What was the outcome of God’s plan? (9)

5. Previously, God promised not to flood the earth again because of sin. How did God’s solution “fix” the current problem until a more permanent “fix” could come? (8-9)

6. What is the world’s solution to racial injustice? How is that similar or different to a Christian solution?

Discussion on race is a raw nerve for many people. It affects us all. If you’ve struggled either internally or externally with race, injustice, or other questions, talk to your coach today.

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

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STUDY NOTES

GOD'S WISDOM SEES PRIDE

Last week, Noah and his family started all over as they exited the ark. However, soon after, shame and sin showed their strength. The flood wiped out a generation of wicked people, but it did not wipe out wickedness because sin had not yet been slain.

Genesis 9–10 records the expansion of Noah's family to a multitude. Our passage today gives us more insight into the world as we know it. Up until this point, humanity had remained somewhat homogeneous—the primary evidence was that **the whole earth had one language and the same words**. We're talking about hundreds of years with everybody sharing basically the same cultural experience.

The population grew **and as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there**. At this place **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."** So, not only were they unified, but they wanted to concentrate their influence and make a *name* for themselves.

As **the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built, 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."**

The idea of no impossibility sounds great, right, like *Mission Impossible*? Wrong. Humanity has illustrated its gravitational pull toward sin. The fact that the tower would make *their* name great, instead of making *God's* name great, shows just how far off course they'd gone. God knew humanity's self-destructiveness and that elevating themselves would only bring more disaster.

GOD IS WISE

God's plan to save humanity from itself created the diversity we see today. God said, **"Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech."** Suddenly, people couldn't communicate. **The LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel**, meaning "confusion."

The tower of Babel instituted culture and diversity. The people left that place and struck out to create the people groups and diversity that

not only existed in the time of the Bible, but in our day as well. Language remains one of the primary keys to culture. It both shapes culture and changes through culture. When it's held in common, people unite. When cultures rub against one another, they often clash.

WINNING THE RACE

Racism is nothing new. It feels more intense than ever, yet we forget that it's a *major* theme in Scripture. From the Israelites and the Philistines in the Old Testament, to the Jews and Gentiles in the New, racism has existed and will always exist because sin exists. Part of the Fall's curse divided humanity from itself. Sin causes people to look out for themselves first, then when given the choice, they will look out for *their* people next. When tension rises, people defend their "tribe." It's us against them—and we must "win."

Once Jesus died on the cross, the need for this division died as well. Christ laid a foundation for unity clearly expressed in Ephesians 2. As believers, we recognize we cannot defeat issues like racism, oppression, or injustice, until we deal with the root—sin. Our fight isn't reformation, it's restoration. However, that doesn't mean we turn a blind eye to the injustice around us. But how?

I recently came across the story of Kenyan runner Abel Mutai. Just a few feet from the finish line, Mutai became confused with the signage and stopped, thinking he had completed the race. A Spanish runner, Ivan Fernandez, was right behind him and, realizing what was happening, started shouting at the Kenyan to continue running. Mutai didn't know Spanish and didn't understand. Realizing what was taking place, Fernandez pushed Mutai to victory.

A journalist asked Ivan, "Why did you do that?" Ivan replied, "My dream is that someday we can have a kind of community life where we push and help each other to win." The journalist insisted "But why did you let the Kenyan win?" Ivan replied, "I didn't let him win, he was going to win. The race was his." The journalist insisted, and again asked, "But you could have won!" Ivan looked at him and replied, "But what would be the merit of my victory? What would be the honor in that medal? What would my Mother think of that?"

Early on in this study we discussed that the divine image should cause us to recognize the dignity and worth of every person. That means literally putting, sometime pushing, others first. Help people who need your help. Push people along if you can. Ultimately, oppression cannot be undone until the shackles of sin are broken. So, fight for justice, but fight sin at its root. Fight for the Gospel.