

# What Are You Working For? | Tower of Babel

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Everyone works. Whether you are an executive, a student, a plumber, or a stay-at-home mom, everyone spends their lives working for something. But have you ever asked yourself, what am I building with my life? Chances are that many of us are spending our lives building the wrong thing. This is the central truth of a famous story in [Genesis 11](#): The Tower of Babel. This story reveals that many of us are working for our own success, but God has a greater goal for our lives.

## We naturally drift away from God

At first, the story of the Tower of Babel feels quite foreign to us. At that time, all of the world spoke one, unified language, and a large portion of the population settled in the east ([Genesis 11:1-2](#)). As different as this world may look, it has a lot in common with us today. A careful reading of Genesis shows that the hearts of these people were in rebellion against God. By moving to the east, they were moving away from God and his desire for their lives. Something as simple as living in a different area was actually an affront against God. Similarly, we make many small compromises with our lives. We perform little acts of disobedience that pull us away from God.

## We have an obsession with our own success

As we get deeper into the Tower story, we see that the people's real motivation was to displace God's role in their lives.

***Genesis 11:4** Then they said, "Come, let's build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world."*

We see that the people took something innocent, like building a city and making a large tower, and turned it into an act of rebellion against God. Their motivation was to make their name great. In fact, in doing this they were directly disregarding God's command to spread out and fill the whole world ([Genesis 1:28](#)). We, too, spend our lives trying to make our name great. We do this through achievements at work or school, success with hobbies or sports, or trying to make our kids the best in something. This is simply the old sin of pride. Pride makes us bring honor to ourselves instead of God. If we want to avoid this sin, we need to ask ourselves, "What motivates me in the things I do?"

*[Related Series: [How to Win at Work](#)]*

## God opposes our attempts to make a name for ourselves

This story takes the problem of pride even one step further. It shows us that God works against us when we are only motivated by our own glory.

***Genesis 11:5-9** But the Lord came down..."Come, let's go down and confuse the people with different languages. Then they won't be able to understand each other." In that way, the Lord scattered them all over the world, and they stopped building the city.*

God judged the people by making them speak different languages. People couldn't communicate or cooperate with each other any longer. As a result, they were scattered over the world, just as God planned. God never works with

the prideful ([James 4:6](#)). This is why we will ultimately be disappointed if we just live for ourselves.

*[Related Topic: [Death to Pride \(and Fake Humility\)](#)]*

## **Living to honor God leads to greater joy**

Many of us believe the lie that if we work for our glory, we will be satisfied. If we get that promotion or get that scholarship, we will have everything we have ever wanted. While these things might bring temporary happiness, they do not lead to lasting joy. Thankfully, God gives us a better way. Jesus offers us freedom from striving to be the best, the greatest, or to make a name for ourselves ([Matthew 11:28-30](#)). True joy comes when you set aside your self-directed priorities and focus on following God with your life.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. *Watch the video together or invite someone to summarize the topic.*
2. *What is your initial reaction to this video? Do you disagree with any of it? What jumped out at you?*
3. *If all the world spoke one language, what would be some of the advantages? What would be some of the disadvantages?*
4. *List some ways that people make small, sinful compromises with their lives. What are some ways that we subtly disobey God?*
5. *Read [Genesis 11:4](#). What was the people's plan? What was their motivation? How did their plan go against what God has said in [Genesis 1:28](#)?*
6. *What are some things we do to make our name great today?*
7. *Why is enticing to make a name for yourself?*
8. *Read [Genesis 11:5-9](#). How is God's judgment against the people an attack on their pride?*
9. *Read [James 4:6](#). How does God oppose the proud today? How have you experienced God opposing your pride?*
10. *Why is it foolish to look for your ultimate joy in your accomplishments?*
11. *Read [Matthew 11:28-30](#). What is Jesus' alternative to exhausting ourselves by chasing our own glory?*
12. *Write a personal action step based on this conversation.*