


the  
Jesus   
Storybook  
Bible  
Curriculum

# A giant staircase to heaven

The tower of Babel, from Genesis 11

☉ Please see the curriculum Introduction .pdf for more guidance on praying with your group and on Scripture memory.

☉ The total allotted time per lesson is 45 minutes. This is the minimum amount of time it would take to complete the whole lesson. The time can easily be extended to increase the lesson to as much as 1.5 hours. If you have more than the allocated 45 minutes, please use the extra time to extend the time for activities, to learn the memory verse, and to pray.

☉ The “Notes for Teachers on the Text” section is intended as explanation of the Bible text and advance preparation for you only; it is not expressed in terms or language the children could understand.

*The Jesus Storybook Bible Curriculum*  
By Sally Lloyd-Jones and Sam Shammas

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## Recap of the Previous Story

3 min. 

☉ Welcome the children and ask them to sit in a circle.

☉ Briefly recap the main points of the previous stories: “We’ve been learning that in the beginning God created everything and it was perfect. But then it all went wrong because of our sin. Last time we read that God sent a flood, but God rescued Noah and his family. We also memorized a verse about sin.”

☉ Ask the children to recite together the verse they learned at home about the story. “Genesis 6:5 — ‘The LORD saw that the human heart was only evil.’”

☉ To lead into the theme of today’s story ask: “What is a skyscraper? Yes, it is a very tall building. Who has been to the top of a skyscraper? Raise your hand. Thank you, hands down.”

## Activity Introducing the Story

10 min. 

**Aim:** To expend energy and introduce the experience of building a tower and feeling proud.

**Materials:** Any objects that can be used to build a tower; e.g., blocks, dominoes, books, etc.

1. Say: “Today, we are going to build a skyscraper.”
2. Divide the circle into two teams and have each team form a separate circle. Put building blocks for a tower in the center of each circle and announce that each team is going to use them to build a skyscraper or tower.
3. Say: “You will have 5 minutes to build the tallest tower you can. The rules are that you have to take turns as you go around the circle adding blocks to the tower and only one person in the circle can touch a block at any one time. When I say ‘Go!’ one of you stands, goes to the center of the circle, adds one block to the tower, and sits down again. The next person in the circle cannot stand up until the previous person has sat down.”

4. Announce that the winner will be the team with the tallest tower.

5. Say “Go!” and allow 5 minutes to build the towers. Remind them that they cannot move until the person before them has sat down.

6. After 5 minutes, allow the teams to stand and view each other’s towers. Announce the winner and then ask the children to help you put away the building blocks. Ask everyone to sit back down in the circle.

7. Ask the appropriate team: “How did it make you feel to build the tallest tower?”

8. Get answers like “proud,” “happy,” “we’re the best,” etc. Then say: “In our story today the people also try to build a really tall tower. Let’s find out why and what happens.”

**For larger groups:** You may want to divide the group into more circles, each building its own tower.



Join the children in the circle and announce the title of the story. Read aloud pages 48–55 from *The Jesus Storybook Bible* or listen to CDI track 5.

### Notes for Teachers on the Text

It is interesting that there are two reasons given for the building of the first skyscraper. In Genesis 11:3 the builders say, “Let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” So “they used brick instead of stone.” This means there had been some form of technological advance over previous methods of building. It meant that they could build a much taller building than had ever been made before. They wanted to demonstrate their new talents/discoveries.

But there is a second, deeper reason for their project. Verse 4 records the builders saying, “So that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.” This is a deliberate attempt to use technological and cultural production not for the glory of God’s name, but for their own self-glorifying ends. Their desire was to maximize their own power and autonomy, to become independent of God.

Yet this very statement in verse 4 shows radical insecurity. They need to “make a name for themselves” through their accomplishments because they feel like they lack a name, like they don’t know who they are.

“To get a name” in the Bible is to get what we call an identity. God, of course, constantly names people in the Bible. When he names Adam, Abraham, Israel, and even Jesus, he refers to what he has already done or what he is going to do in their lives. When God tells someone “what I have done/will do is your name,” he means that his grace in their lives should be the defining factor.

Our security, our priorities, our sense of worth and uniqueness – all the things we call identity – should be based on what God has done for us and in us. This means that if we do not have a name, if we are insecure and have to “find who we are,” we have either no grasp or an inadequate grasp of what God has done.

The people of Babel seem to be getting their identity from the greatness of their personal accomplishment/technology, and the size and power of their group.

First, the grandiose statement “a tower that reaches to the heavens” means that they are assigning spiritual value to their work and accomplishment. They are getting significance and power from their work when they ought to be getting it from God. It is fair to say that they are saving themselves through their work, trying to get to heaven without God.

Secondly, the desire to “not be scattered over the face of the whole earth” seems to mean that they also got a name from being gathered into a large group. They got a sense of power and greatness from the size and wealth of their city and of their people. They will feel they have a name if their nation or tribe is great and powerful.

While the first way of identity comes from making an idol of one’s talents and accomplishments, the second way of identity comes from making an idol of one’s group. The tower is a symbol of how we seek to be our own saviors through our personal and social accomplishments.

# Understanding the Story

15 min. 

**Aim:** To understand that people cannot get to heaven by themselves.

**Materials:** Crayons; copies of the handout (the last page of this document).

1. At the end of the story, say: “So just like *we* did, the people in this story decided to build a really tall tower. I’m going to say some things about the building of this tower. Some of the things I say will be true and some will not be true. I will then say ‘Go!’ If what I say is true, stand up and raise both your hands in the air. If what I say is not true, then curl up into a ball. Ready?”

2. Read aloud the statements in the following table, saying “Go!” after each one. When the children have either stood up or curled up, use the questions/comments to check understanding. After commenting, ask them to sit down or uncurl. Say “Ready?” and announce the next statement.

STATEMENT	ANSWER	QUESTIONS/COMMENTS
The people decided to build a really tall wall.	NOT TRUE	You should all be curled up into balls because it is not true. The people didn’t want to build a wall. What did they want to build? Say it together. That’s right, a really tall tower.
The people decided to build a really tall tower because they wanted to show that they did not need God.	TRUE	Yes, it is true. You should all be standing up with your arms raised.
The people thought they could get to heaven by themselves.	TRUE	Again, arms raised, this is true.
Building the tower was a really good idea.	NOT TRUE	Building the tower was not a good idea. It made the people think they could live without God and that they could get to heaven by themselves.
If the people had built the tower, they would have ended up destroying and hurting themselves.	TRUE	Yes, it is true.
Because he loved them, God decided to stop the building.	TRUE	Again, it is true.
To stop the building, God sent a flood.	NOT TRUE	God sent a flood in our last story. What does God do here? That’s right; he gave the people different languages so they could not understand one another.
The people did not need a tower; they needed a Rescuer.	TRUE	Who is the Rescuer that the people needed? Say it together. Correct, it is Jesus. Remember the end of the story: “People could never reach up to heaven, so heaven would have to come down to them. And one day it would.”

3. At the end of the activity, say: “The people built a tower because they thought they did not need God and that they could get to heaven by themselves. God stopped them by giving them all different languages so they could not understand one another. We’re going to play a game to show how easy it is to misunderstand one another.”

4. Explain the game: You will whisper a sentence from the story to one of the children in the circle. The sentence is then whispered around the circle and the last child repeats out loud what they think they heard. Then the first child will say the original sentence and you will compare.

5. Some sentences to use:

- ☉ Let’s build a really tall tower to reach up to heaven.
- ☉ We’ll be famous and safe and happy and everything will be all right.
- ☉ God wasn’t pleased with them. God could see what they were doing.
- ☉ Their words were all new and funny.

6. Play the game. Remind them to whisper to the next person in the circle whatever they think they heard even if it does not sound right or make sense.

7. Toward the end of the allocated time, give each child a copy of the handout and a crayon. Say: “Even when we speak the same language, it is easy to misunderstand what someone else is saying. We came up with some funny phrases, but for the builders of the tower it was not funny. They quarreled and fought and so had to stop building. Can you see what it says on your paper? Use the code to find the missing words. You can work in pairs if you like. You have 1 minute to find the missing words using the code.”

8. After 1 minute, say: “What are the words in code? Yes, ‘silly’ and ‘boring.’ One builder says, ‘How do you do?’ and the other builder hears what? Everyone say it together. Yes, he hears: ‘How silly are you!’ One builder says, ‘Lovely morning!’ and the other builder hears what? Say it aloud together. Yes, he hears: ‘You’re boring.’ They could not understand one another and stopped building the tower.”

**For larger groups:** You may want to divide the group into smaller circles, each with a teacher. Each teacher can then work with their circle on understanding what is true and not true. Smaller circles will also ensure that the whispering game does not take too long for each sentence.

## Drawing the Story to a Close

1 min. 

Say: “The people wanted to build a tower because they thought they could get to heaven by themselves. They thought they did not need God. Because this is not true and because God loved them, he stopped them by giving them all different languages so they could not understand one another.”

Say: “God wanted them to see that the way to heaven is not a tower; it is a person. It is Jesus.”

## Jesus in the Story

2 min. 

Ask: “What did we discover about Jesus from today’s story?”

Get a few children to share their answers aloud, commenting appropriately; then ask everyone to write an answer in the space on their handout.

## Praying about the Story

5 min. 

Pray aloud, asking that God would help you and the children to remember that you cannot get to heaven by yourselves.

Ask the children to pray, thanking God that Jesus is the way to heaven.

## A Verse from the Story to Learn at Home

2 min. 

☉ Introduce the verse: “Do you remember the verse we memorized? It also fits with our story today.”

☉ Announce the verse: “Remember the verse, Genesis 6:5 — ‘The LORD saw that the human heart was only evil.’”

☉ Read the verse out loud together as a group.

☉ Remind the children to give the handout to their parents and to memorize the verse for next time.

# A giant staircase to heaven (The tower of Babel, from Genesis 11)

☐ = b    ⦿ = g    ≡ = i

≡ = l    ≡ = n    ⦿ = o

⦿ = r    ⦿ = s    ≡ = y

Lovely morning!

How do you do?

What did you say?

What did you say?

He said, "You're ☐ ⦿ ⦿ ⦿ ≡ ⦿ !"

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He said,  
How ⦿ ≡ ≡ ≡ ≡ are you?"

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## Jesus in the Story



What did you discover about Jesus from this story?

Jesus

## A Verse from the Story to Learn at Home

The LORD saw that the human heart was only evil.  
(Genesis 6:5)

Genesis

Exodus

Leviticus

Numbers

Deuteronomy



Notes for parents: The people in the story thought they didn't need God and tried to get to heaven on their own. We learned that the way to heaven is not through something we do, but through a person — Jesus.

Please help your child to memorize the verse and the Scripture reference for next time. Please review with them the place of the book of Genesis, using the diagram above.

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