

# STALLED

## GENESIS 11:1-9

(Prepared by Gene Thompson using ETB materials from LifeWay.)

1. Does anyone speak a foreign language? Which one?

(If you know ahead of time that you do have someone who speaks a foreign language you might have them be prepared to read or quote John 3:16.)

Today we will see how God confounded the people by causing them to speak different languages. Their disobedience is what caused God to act as He did.

2. Has anyone spent much time tracing your genealogy? (Discuss this for a few minutes, and then talk about Gen. 10.)

In Genesis 10 we find the genealogy of Noah's family after the flood. These lists of genealogies occurred after our Scripture text for today. **A careful reading of these generations reveals that there were 292 years from the flood to Abram and Abram was 58 when Noah died!!**

Here in chapter 11, we see how all of the different languages came about.

### UNITED! Read Genesis 11:1-4

The translation of the phrase "migrated from the east" should read "migrated eastward." It is obvious from looking at the map that they traveled east or southeast when they left Mount Ararat.

In Genesis, "east" often marks occurrences of separation. In this case, the people settled in Shinar, a region in ancient Mesopotamia.

1. Who is the primary focus on in these verses? (The people, rather than God and His commands in Gen. 9:7.)

The area they settled in was called the "Fertile Crescent."

2. What was at the heart of the people as they decided to blatantly disobey what God told them to do? (Pride. They wanted to make a name for themselves—and they did!)

Pride is usually a symptom of a deeper problem. The people were afraid to scatter; they were comfortable just like they were.

3. Why do people find it difficult to give up control of their lives? (They are prideful. They are afraid to let go and let God!)
4. How are selfishness and creating a name for oneself a display of distrust in God? (We think we know what is best and we want the credit rather than giving God the glory!)
5. Once in Shinar what did the people decide to do? (They wanted to build a great tower reaching to the heavens, known as a ziggurat which looked like a big wedding cake!)

They all spoke the same language and were united, but for the wrong reasons.

6. How do people try to make a name for themselves today? (Make lots of money. Accomplish notoriety. Simply be famous.)

7. Why is that dangerous? (They leave God out of their lives.)

We must safeguard against selfish motives. God acted to create confusion among the people and disrupt their plan.

The unity of believers should be rooted in their obedience to God's plans!

### REVIEWED! Read Genesis 11:5-7

United humanity is not a threat to God or His sovereignty. However, God was expressing a deep foreboding about the extent of the wickedness they might create in their collective sinfulness.

**Pride always leads to a fall and to destruction (Prov. 16:18).**

1. How can unity of purpose get in the way of fulfilling God’s purposes? (We must be sure our purpose aligns with God’s purpose! Too often we make our own plans and expect God to bless them.) All the people worked hard to reach God; the Lord “came down” to examine what they were doing. The language emphasizes the awesome vastness of God and the smallness of humanity. Even our best creations pale in comparison to His power, authority, and creativity. In this vast universe we have only been able to make it to the moon. Our efforts are laughable!
2. How can you see God’s grace in the way He moved against the residents of Shinar? (He could have destroyed them again because of their disobedience.)
3. When have you felt God’s grace when He stopped something you were doing? After God confused the people’s languages, He dispersed them—which is what was supposed to happen in the first place!

**We can trust God to help us fulfill His purposes.**

### **DISPERSED! Read Genesis 11:8-9**

1. Has anyone traveled abroad and had a difficult time communicating with the people there?
2. Why and how did the people scatter after God confused their language? (People who could understand each other gathered and went off to other places.) “It probably included changing their ways of thinking, cultures, values, and the meanings they gave words.”—Elmer Towns.
3. What do we learn about God’s sovereignty over His creation? (He is in absolute control!) God expects His will and desires to be carried out by His people. Believers can trust God to help them fulfill His purposes.

### **CHALLENGE!**

How does the story of the Tower of Babel relate to these statements?

- Believers must safeguard against selfish motives.
- The unity of believers should be rooted in their obedience to God’s plans.
- Believers can trust God to help them fulfill His purposes.

Where do you see selfishness in your life?

What are some ways we can safeguard against having selfish motives?