



Weaving God's Promises

LESSON 3

The Tower of Babel

Summary of Today's Story

People decide that they want to reach heaven by building a tower so high that it touches heaven. God sees their foolish desires and messes up their act by bringing them different languages so that they cannot understand each other. In frustration at not being able to communicate, the people abandon their work on the tower and scatter over the earth.

Where You'll Find Today's Story

In the Bible

We recommend the *New Revised Standard Version* Bible.

Genesis 11:1-9

In Children's Bibles

If you plan to use a children's Bible for storytelling, write the page numbers of today's story in the space below.

In Our Sunday Lectionary

Today's story is told in church on the following Sundays:

Year A: The Day of Pentecost

Year B: The Day of Pentecost

Year C: The Day of Pentecost



Weaving Our Story with the Biblical Story

Here is another story of our continuing fall from God. This time we try to reach heaven by our own efforts! Instead of serving and worshiping God, we try to invade God. For this act of arrogance, the Lord scatters the people all over the earth, with different languages so they cannot understand one another.

Actually, by this act, we brought this punishment—more alienation from God and from one another—upon ourselves. Spiritual and moral confusion, which led to this effort, then led to confusion of languages.

The reversal of Babel's confusion happens on Pentecost, as related in Acts 2:1-14, when the disciples, receiving the Holy Spirit, begin speaking and people from different lands—speaking different tongues—can all understand each other.



The Episcopal Thread

The sin of presumption is part of our Great Litany, in which we pray to be delivered from “pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy” (*BCP*, p. 149).

The foolishness of the builders of the Tower of Babel is not that they wanted to reach God, but in the way they tried to do it. We all want to be with God, but this is not the way. Our way to God is not found through our own efforts, but in dependence on God.

Later, God will send us the Law and the prophets and then God's own Son, that we might be reconciled with God. And it will be in Jesus Christ that we will find the way to freedom and peace with God.



Weaving God's Beloved Community

People tried to reach heaven when they should have tried to reach God. There is a difference. And in this world, there are a lot of places and ways to reach God besides building a tower.

In the Book of Revelation, it is said that God's home is with mortals. Jesus himself is “Emmanuel, God-with-us.” As Jesus inaugurated the Kingdom of God, his very presence on earth inaugurated God's Beloved Community and its values.

Topics that can be discussed with children:

If building a really tall tower is not the way to get to God, where can you find God here, right in your neighborhood?

Besides your church, can you recognize other places of worship where people find God



Gathering

As the children enter the room, have them do a relatively quiet activity that relates to today's lesson.

For the younger children, you might set out building blocks to play with or crayons and paper to make a drawing.

For the older children, you might offer a word game or puzzle. (You'll find two Gathering Activity puzzles on pp. 10-12 in the activity section at the end of this lesson.) Or you might simply allow the children a few minutes to reconnect after a week's separation and catch up with each other on what they have been doing. This social time is important for building relationships and community.

After all the children have arrived and had a few minutes of activity or fellowship time, gather them together and say a simple opening prayer, for example:

- We come together, Lord, to learn about your love for us. Help us to hear your voice in your stories. Help us to see you more clearly. And help us to love each other, as you love us. We ask this in Jesus' name. *Amen.*



Telling the Story

Read aloud today's story from a children's Bible, showing the pictures, tell the story in your own words, or read from the version of the story we provide, found on pages 8-9.

To bring the story to life, try one of these suggestions:

- Use building blocks to tell the story.
- Tell the story with hand movements from the book *Interactive Bible Stories for Children: Old Testament Stories* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 1994).

Today's story is a myth with a clear lesson. Feel free to have the children act it out and to embellish it as long as the point of the lesson is not lost. You'll find suggestions for ways to dramatize a story along with more ways to bring the story to life on pages 2-3 in the Appendix, also found on the Website.

The story of the Tower of Babel is an important part of the story of our salvation. This part of the story helps explain why we need saving—we keep choosing paths that lead not to God but to alienation from God. It is only when we understand this that we understand why God needed to send God's Son to bring us back to God.

Let the children hear the story without analyzing it for them or asking them to explore its meaning. For now, simply let the story sink into their minds and hearts. Later, while having snacks, you can bring up the story again and invite the children to talk about it.



Prayer

Set up a small worship center in your classroom.

Materials

small table with a cloth to cover it

2 candles or a single large Christ candle

matches

Bible

cross

optional: flowers (real, fake or handmade by the children)

Have the children set up a simple altar with the materials listed above. Invite them to place on the altar any drawings or crafts that they created during Gathering time. Then light the candles.

Read one or two verses from today's scripture to help the children connect the story that they just heard with the Bible. If working with older children, you might expand the reading to several verses, though we recommend keeping the reading short.

Suggestions for the reading:

For younger children: Genesis 11:4

For older children: Genesis 11:1-4

Help familiarize the children with our liturgy by doing the reading as it is done in church. Read as follows:

Reader: A reading from the book of Genesis:
(*Read the selected passage.*)

Reader: The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Invite the children to sit in a circle and join in prayer. Say a brief prayer yourself, then invite prayers from each child in the circle:

- Ask for prayers of thanks for God's work in our lives during the past week.
- Welcome prayers of petition for others or for God's presence to be felt in us.
- Give thanks to God for the variety of people in this world and the different ways of knowing God that they give us.
- Ask if anyone has had a birthday or celebrated a special day during the past week and give thanks for these special times.
- End the prayer time by praying together the Lord's Prayer.

Carefully extinguish the candles.



Sharing

Pass out snacks and say a simple grace. You may use one

of the graces mentioned in previous lessons or try this old Jewish grace:

- Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who bringeth forth bread from the earth. *Amen.*

Or share a favorite grace that you or one of the children say at home.

Serving a food originating in another country might be fun. Try tortilla chips, mango juice, rice crackers or croissants. Or try pita (pocket) bread with hummus, a traditional Middle Eastern food.

This is an excellent time, while sharing a snack, to begin talking about the story of the Tower of Babel. Encourage children to share their reactions to the story.

Things to wonder about:

- What might have been the motivations of the people for trying to build a tower that would reach heaven?
- How is this way of trying to reach heaven *not* the way God wants us to come to heaven?
- How does God want us to reach heaven? What would we do?
- What kind of attitude problem did the people have? Do we have the same attitudes sometimes?

We suggest duplicating and distributing these two pages to children and/or their parents at the end of each lesson.



Memorization

Continue to encourage intermediate children to memorize the books of the Bible.

This is the main memorization assignment for Pentecost and is essential for getting to know the Bible.

Suggestions for ways to help the children with their memorization can be found on page 15 in the Appendix, also found on the Website.



Weaving Our Faith

As the class draws to a close, reinforce the message of this lesson by asking questions such as:

- What was our story about today?
- What does this story say about God?
- What does God want, in this story?
- What can we learn from today's story?

Questions such as these help children weave the story into the fabric of their own lives by encouraging them to think about God and about themselves in the context of the lesson.

To help the children remember today's story, remind them of these key words or phrases:

- *reaching heaven*
- *tower*
- *languages*



Closing Prayer

Before the children leave, say a closing prayer to send them into the church worship service or back to their homes with God's love and blessing.

The prayer can be very simple, such as this one:

- O God, who made the heaven and the earth, and who wants us to join you in love in your heaven: Send us now back to our families and friends, and show us this week how we can be with you in your love by loving all those around us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

End the class with a dismissal that we say in church, such as:

- The peace of the Lord be always with you.

The children respond:

- And also with you.



Weaving God's Promises

GENESIS 11:1-9

How high is heaven? If you climb high enough, can you get to where God lives? A long, long time ago, maybe people thought they could build such a tall tower that it would be as high as the sky. This is God's story, about how foolish people might be when they try to be like God, but not in the right ways.

A long, long time ago, everybody on the earth spoke the same language and used the very same words. Because they all spoke the same, they also traveled together.

One day, the people come to a big open field and like it, so they decide to stay there. They build houses out of mud and stone, and maybe some wood. Then they look around. Look at all the mud! And if we squash the mud into big square shapes and let it dry, it will make bricks! And then we can put bricks on top of bricks and make something really tall!

So one of the people has an idea. "Hey, let's make some bricks and use them like stone, to make some giant buildings! We can make a city full of lots of people, and we can build a tall, tall tower in the middle—a tower that will go all the way up to the top of the sky! A tower that will reach all the way to heaven! If we do this, then we can all stay together in one place, and we can make a big name for ourselves and be important people. Maybe we will also find God there!

So the people build big bricks and let them dry. Then they stack the bricks one on top of the other until the tower gets taller and taller. As the tower starts to reach the top of the sky, the people start to feel as if they are like God, because they can build tall things.

God knows better. But God doesn't know how to tell the people that you can't be like God just because you can build tall things. You can't get to heaven just by climbing there.

So God has an idea. If the people can't talk to each other anymore, they can't work together to build the tower.

So God sends his angels down to earth and gives the people new words. Now the people are confused because they can't talk to each other like they used to do. Neighbors can't understand each other. Workers can't understand each other. The people gather together wherever they understand each other's words. They stop building their city and their tall tower and scatter all over the earth, so they are not living just in one place anymore.

Now there are people all over the earth—in North and South America, in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, and everywhere that people can live. And in each place, people speak the languages that they can understand.

But the Tower is gone. It is called the Tower of Babel because in the Hebrew language, *babel* means “confused,” and that's just what the people were when they started talking different words one day.



Weaving God's Promises

GATHERING ACTIVITY SCRAMBLED BIBLE STORY

Unscramble the words and write them down so you can read the whole story. For a hint, look at **Genesis 11:1-9** (NRSV—but not all verses!).

Now the _____ had one language

and the same _____.

LOHWE HEATR SRODW

Then they said, “ _____, let us _____

ourselves a _____, and a _____

MEOC DLIUB YICT WERTO

with its top in the _____,

and let us make a _____ for ourselves.”

EEAHVNS MANE

The Lord came _____ to see the city and the

_____ which people had

WNOD OWERT

_____ . And the Lord said,
“Come, let us go _____, and confuse their
TULBI WODN

language, so that they will not understand
one another’s _____.” So the
EHCEPS

Lord scattered them abroad from there
over the _____ of all the earth, and
EACF

and they left off building the city.
Therefore it was called _____ because
ALBBE

there the Lord confused the language of all the earth,
and from there the _____ scattered them abroad
over the face of _____ the _____.
DROL LAL TEAHR



Weaving God's Promises

GATHERING ACTIVITY MIXED-UP BRICKS

These bricks are all mixed up! Can you match the words on the left with the right piles of bricks?

EARTH

LANGUAGE

BRICKS

TOWER

CITY

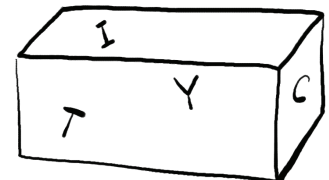
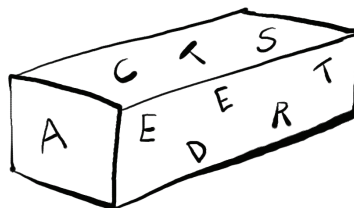
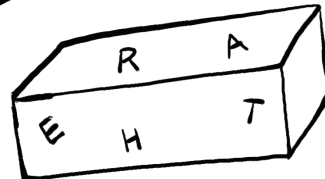
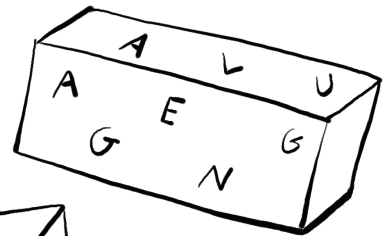
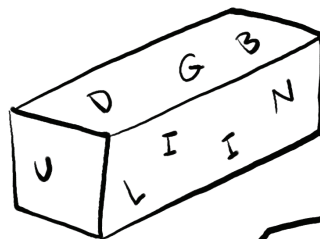
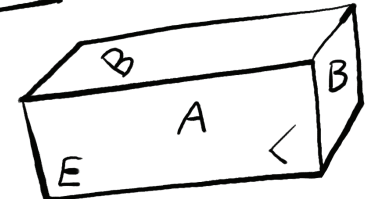
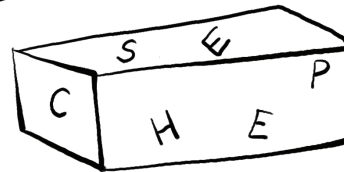
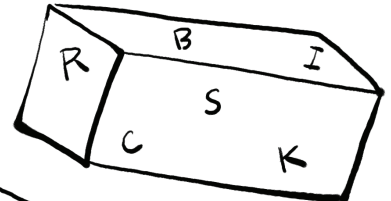
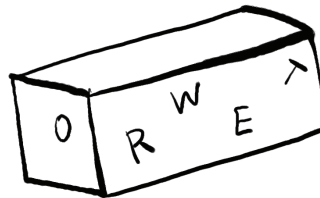
SCATTERED

BUILDING

SPEECH

BABEL

LORD





Weaving God's Promises

INVENTING SPECIAL LANGUAGES for Elementary, Intermediate

Children invent languages and take turns seeing if the rest of the class can guess how they did it.

Directions:

Invite the children to play the Inventing Special Languages game. The children can pick a partner or work individually:

1. Ask each child or pair to invent a special language, using a made-up set of rules. Give the children these examples:
 - Take off the first consonant sound of each word and add it to the end of that word, with an agreed-upon sound attached to that consonant. This is like Pig Latin, where the sound *ay* is attached to the first consonant sound and then tacked onto the word, like this: *Ig-pay Atin-lay*.
 - Begin each syllable of each word with an agreed-upon consonant or sound. G-language puts the sound of a hard G in front of each syllable, like this: *cup of soup* becomes *c-gup gof s-goup*.
2. Give the children a few minutes to practice their new languages. Then gather everyone back together and invite each child or pair to take a turn talking to the class while the other children try to guess their secret rule.



Weaving God's Promises

TALL FLIMSY TOWERS for Elementary, Intermediate

Children build towers of marshmallows then discuss the importance of building buildings versus relationships.

Materials:

- colored toothpicks
- colored or white baby marshmallows, gumdrops
- disposable meat trays

Directions:

Invite each child to build a tower with toothpicks, marshmallows, gumdrops or jellybeans, using the meat tray as the ground. Challenge the children to build the tallest towers they can.

Discuss the question:

- What does God want us to build—buildings or relationships?



Weaving God's Promises

TOWER OF CONFUSION for Intermediate

Children experience the challenges of communication in this game where their vocabulary is limited.

Materials:

crayons
tape
index cards

Directions:

Invite the children to play this communications game:

1. Divide the class into two or more teams. Give each team crayons, tape and index cards.
2. Challenge each team to build the tallest, sturdiest tower possible with the materials given to them. Explain the two rules:
 - Everyone must participate and work together.
 - Each person on the team can say only one word. You can say the word in different tones and with different body language, but you may only use the one word you have been assigned. Here are the words:
goob
skazoom
boogy-booga
lustawanna
alakazoo
shazam
wowie

(If there are more children on a team than there are words to go around, make up more words.)

3. Assign each of the children on a team one of the words then give the teams 5-10 minutes to build their towers.
4. Invite the teams to show off their creations, then gather everyone in a circle, with the towers in the middle.
Ask:
 - Was it easy or hard to build your towers?
 - What would have made it easier?
 - How was your activity like or not like the story of the Tower of Babel?



Weaving God's Promises

GAME: TRANSLATING MOTION INTO WORDS for Intermediate

Children act out scenes in pairs, one pair providing the movement; the other, the voice.

Materials:

Acting Scenes (p. 17)
scissors
slips of paper
pencils
small paper bag

Preparation:

Make a copy of the *Acting Scenes* and cut them apart.

Directions:

Pass out pencils and slips of paper and invite the children to play the Translating Motion into Words game:

1. Ask each of the children to write a one-line description of a scene that can be acted out. Read the description of two or three of the provided scenes as examples.
2. Place all the scene descriptions, both the ones provided and the ones the children described, in a paper bag.
3. Invite two children to be the voiceless actors and two others to be the voices. You can also assign one more child to do sound effects.
4. Ask one of the children to draw a slip of paper from the bag and read it. The actors act out that scene while two other children, standing offstage, make up the words. The last child creates the sound effects.
5. When the scene is finished, ask for volunteers to be new actors and voices and to create sound effects for a new scene.

ACTING SCENES

for Translating Motion into Words

Someone is playing with a pinball machine at a video arcade. You want to play it now.

You are in line to buy movie tickets. Someone cuts in front of you.

At a movie theater, someone wearing a giant cowboy hat sits in front of you.

You are trying to learn how to drive a car. Your mother is in the car with you.

You are getting on a roller coaster ride with a friend.

You are taking your dog for a walk and you meet a classmate. You don't want to see him because you are wearing his shirt that you borrowed from him and forgot to return.



Weaving God's Promises

BUILD A TOWER IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES for Intermediate

The construction overseer needs to tell his workers how to build a tower and they need to follow his or her instructions exactly. But what happens when his language changes every minute or two?

Children play this game using a variety of made-up languages and find out.

Materials:

Legos®, blocks, or other building materials (colorful items would help, but even sugar cubes will do)

New Languages sheet, 1 or 2 copies (p. 19)

optional: paper and pencils

Directions:

Invite the children to play the Build the Tower game:

1. Lay the building materials on the table or floor.
2. Choose one child to be the *overseer* and give him or her a copy of the *New Languages* sheet.
3. Choose 1-3 children to be *construction workers* and one child to be the *caller*.
4. The *overseer* begins giving instructions to the *workers* on how to build the tower. The *workers* must try to follow the instructions exactly.
5. After a minute or so, the *caller* interrupts by saying “Stop!” Then the *caller* names a new language that the *overseer* is to use for giving instructions.
6. After about 5 minutes, re-assign the roles.

Option: Have the children make up their own new language(s), either individually or as a group, to add to or replace the new languages on the handout sheet. Hand out paper and pencils and ask the children to write the rules or words of their new language(s) on a piece of paper, following the examples on the handout sheet.

NEW LANGUAGES

Gorth

Substitute a G sound for every beginning letter of every word. Example: Instead of saying “I love you,” say “*Gi Gove Gou.*”

Opposites

For these words, use their opposites:

↓ up	↓ down
down	up
left	right
right	left
on top	underneath
under	over
yes	no
no	yes

Backwards

When you talk, say your sentence backwards: *You love I.* You may want to write down your sentences before you speak!

Dinkle

Say “dinkle” after every word: *I dinkle love dinkle you dinkle.*



Weaving God's Promises

LEARN A NEW LANGUAGE!

for Preschool, Primary, Elementary, Intermediate

Encourage children to learn these simple words and become part of reconciling what people split apart at Babel!

What to say:

Hello (good day):

in German:

Guten tag (*Gooten tock*)

in Spanish:

Hola (*Oh-la*)

in French:

Bonjour (*Bone zhoour*)

in Russian:

Dobri den (*Dobree dien*)

How to say it:

How are you?

in German

Wie gehts? (*Vee gates?*)

in Spanish

Como estas (*Co-mo ay-staas*)

in French

Comment allez-vous? (*Comawn t-ollay voo?*)

in Russian

Kak vui pozhivaete? (*Kok vouee pu-zhee-vy-eh-teh?*)

in Chinese

Nee how ma? (*Nee how ma?*)

Fine...

in German

Intermitte (*Inter-mit-uh*)

in Spanish

Bien (*Bee-en*)

in French

Tres bien (*Tray bee-en*)

in Russian

Ochen khorosho (*O-chin kho-ro-sho*)

in Chinese

Hun how (*Hun how*)

Thank you

in German

Danke (*Donka*)

in Spanish

Gracias (*Gra-see-as*)

in French

Merci (*Meer-see*)

in Russian

Spacibo (*Spuh-see-buh*)

in Chinese

Shieh shieh (*Shyeh shyeh*)

Please

in German

Bitte (*Bitta*)

in Spanish

Por favor (*Por fa-vor*)

in French

S'il vous plait (*Seel voo play*)

in Russian

Pazhaluista (*Puh-zhah-loos-tuh*)



Weaving God's Promises

GIANT BUBBLE BUILDING for Primary

The Tower of Babel didn't last much longer than these Towers of Bubbles!

Children blow bubbles to help make them aware of just how temporary our creations are.

Materials:

- liquid dishwashing soap (Joy® or Dawn® work best)
- glycerin (available at drug stores)
- pipe cleaners
- Pipe-Cleaner Patterns* (p. 22)
- water
- flat cake or pie tins
- scissors
- optional*: thin wire, dowels with a hole drilled at one end

Preparation:

Mix together 1 cup liquid dish soap, a bit of water and a spoonful of glycerin in the pan.

Directions:

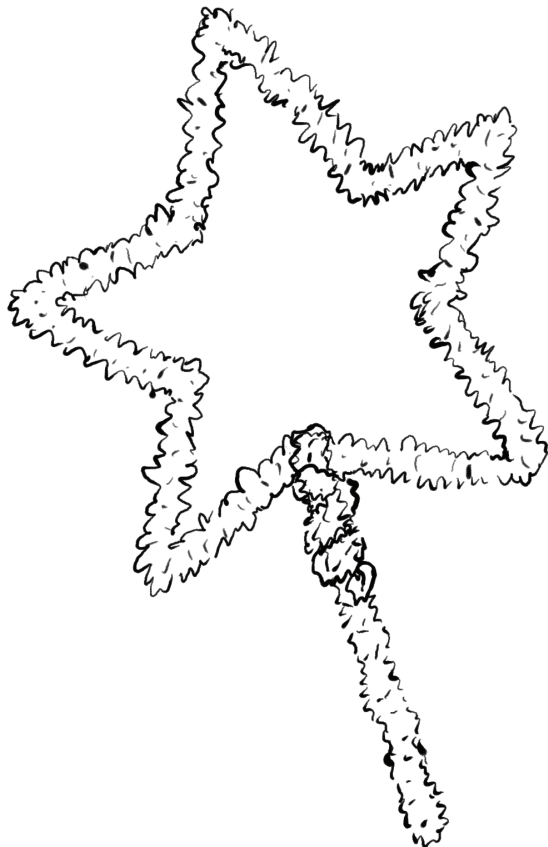
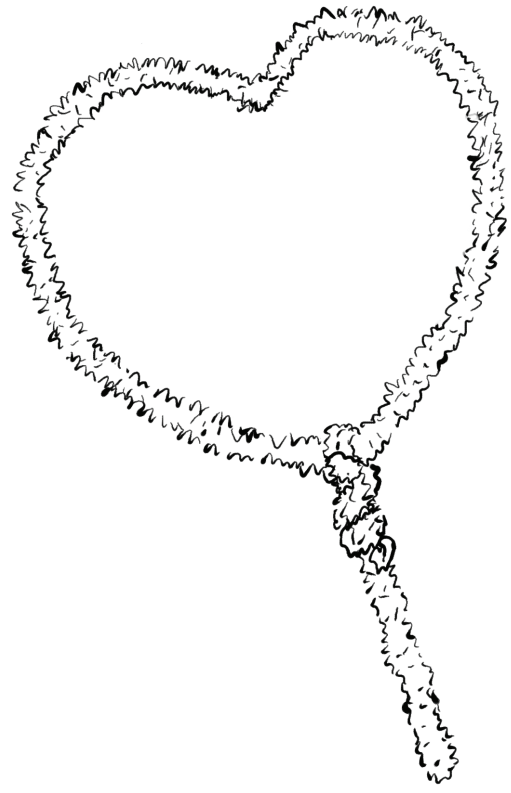
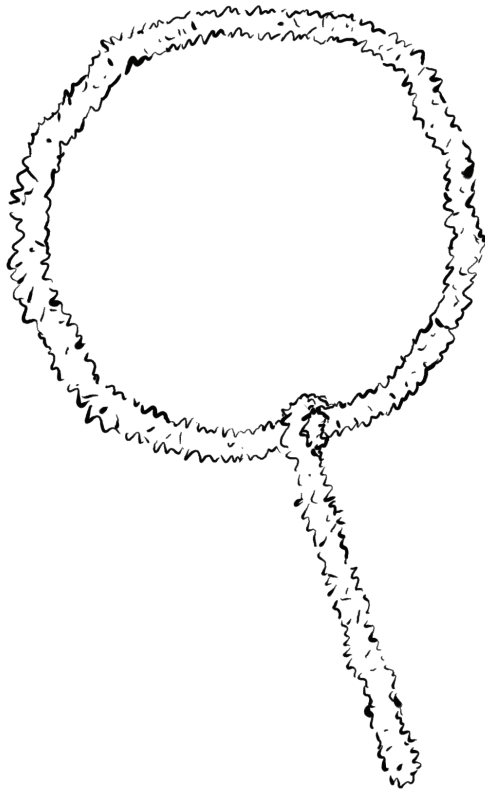
Invite the children to participate in this bubble-blowing activity. As they are making bubbles remind them that it is through God—not our temporary creations—that we will find our way to heaven:

1. Help the children make bubble wands by twisting two pipe cleaners together. Keep one pipe cleaner straight and shape the other into a heart, square or circle shape (see the *Pipe-Cleaner Patterns* on p. 22).
2. Invite the children to dip their wands into the soap solution and wave in the air.

Other ways to make bubble wands:

- Drill a hole in the end of a dowel. Shape thin wire into a circle or square, leaving at least 1" straight at the end. Thread the straight end of the wire into the hole in the dowel and twist to secure.
- Shape a long length of wire into both the wand and the handle.

PIPE-CLEANER PATTERNS





Weaving God's Promises

TROUBLE WITH THE LOGS for Elementary, Intermediate

This is a variation of the Babel Rabble game on the next page.

It's hard to build the Tower of Babel when the logs keep getting up and running away! In real life, the building materials don't actually run away, but neither are they meant to reach heaven. They are meant for us to use on earth. Heaven is reached through our relationship with God.

Children play this action game, a race to see which team can get their *logs* back in place first.

You need a fairly large empty space for this game.

Directions:

Invite the children to play the Trouble with the Logs game:

1. Divide the class into two teams. If there is an odd number of children, let one child be the *caller*; otherwise, you will be the *caller*.
2. Have the teams sit on the floor in a line facing each other, with their legs stretched out and their knees straight so that each child's feet are touching the feet of the child directly opposite them. These are the *logs*. Make sure there is enough space between the *logs* for the children to step over them.
3. Ask each pair (the two children whose feet are touching) to count off down the line.
4. The caller shouts out a number. The pair whose number has been called jumps up, steps over the *logs*, runs around the outside of the line to the other end, then steps over the remaining *logs* to return to their original spots. The first player back in place wins a point for their team.
5. Keep calling out numbers until everybody has been called or until you want to end the game.



Weaving God's Promises

BABEL RABBLE for Elementary, Intermediate

This is a variation of the Trouble with the Logs game on the previous page.

The building crews of the Babel Building Company are behind schedule. They need to get materials in place as fast as they can in spite of having logs in their path.

Children play this action game, a race to see which team can get their materials in place first.

You need a fairly large empty space for this game.

Materials:

items to serve as *bricks*: scarves, cardboard boxes, shoes, etc.

Directions:

Invite the children to play the Babel Rabble game:

1. Divide the class into two teams. If there's an odd number of children, let one child be the *caller*; otherwise, you will be the *caller*.
2. Place the *bricks* in a pile at one end of the playing area. Designate a place on the opposite end of the playing area to be the *Tower*.
3. Have the teams sit on the floor in a line facing each other, with their legs stretched out and their knees straight so that each child's feet are touching the feet of the child directly opposite them. These are the *logs*. Make sure there is enough space between the *logs* for the children to step over them.
4. Ask each pair (the two children whose feet are touching) to count off down the line.
5. The *caller* calls a number. When their number is called that pair jumps up and races to the pile of *bricks*, stepping over the *logs* in front of them. Each player grabs a *brick*, runs to the opposite side of the room and puts the brick down at the designated *Tower*, then returns to his or her original place, stepping over the remaining *logs*. The first player back in place gets a point for their team.
6. Call out another number and repeat the game, until all *bricks* have been put in place.

To make this more challenging, make up a certain order or way that the children must stack the bricks.



Weaving God's Promises

VERY TALL TOWERS for Preschool

Children build towers with sugar cubes and frosting.

Materials:

sugar cubes
white frosting
plastic knives
small cups for frosting
paper plates or flat cardboard squares

Directions:

Give each child a paper plate or cardboard square, a small cup of frosting with a plastic knife and some sugar cubes and invite him or her to build a tower:

1. Ask each child to spread a little frosting on the bottom of 9 sugar cubes and “glue” them onto the paper plate, in a square shape.
2. Then show the children how to build a tower of sugar cubes on top of the base, using frosting as mortar. Encourage the children to see how tall they can make their towers.



Weaving God's Promises

RIBBON TOWERS for Preschool, Primary

Children color a series of rooms and stack them on ribbons.

Materials:

wide ribbon, any color
Room Patterns (p. 27)
crayons
scissors
glue

Preparation:

Make 8 to 10 copies of the *Room Patterns* for each child. Cut lengths of ribbon that are longer than the height of a set of rooms placed one above the other. Cut one piece of ribbon for each child.

Directions:

Hand out the *Room Patterns* and pieces of ribbon and invite each child to make a ribbon tower. Help the younger children as needed. Give the children these directions:

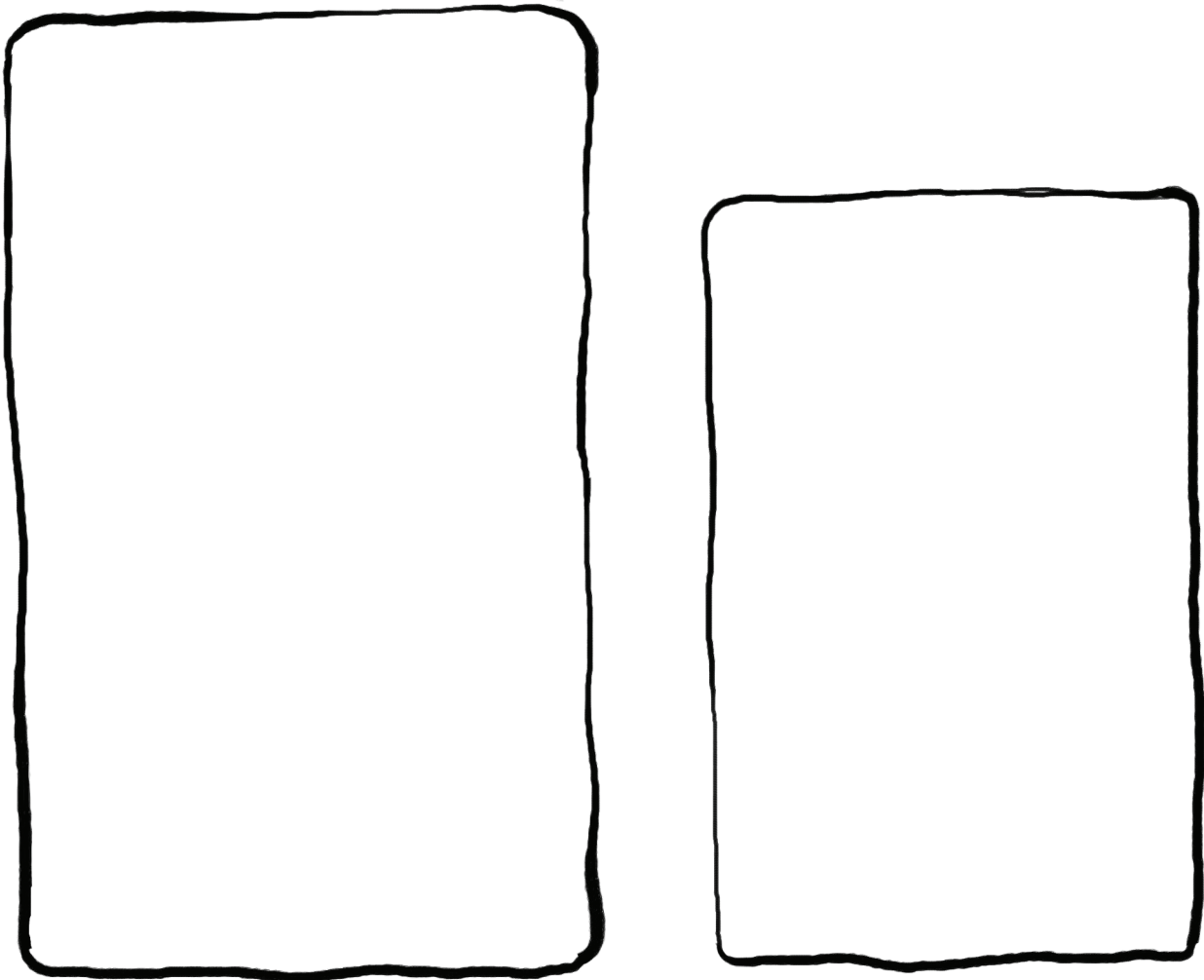
1. Color the rooms and cut them out.
2. Glue your rooms, one above the other, on the piece of ribbon.

Invite the older children to do these additional steps:

3. Cut three sides of the windows so that they will open and shut.
4. Draw a small picture of a person, pet or room scene inside the small squares the size of the window opening.
5. Cut out these pictures and glue them on the back side of the rooms, inside the windows.



ROOM PATTERNS



LESSON 3: THE TOWER OF BABEL



We Believe . . .

The sin of presumption is part of our Great Litany, in which we pray to be delivered from “pride, vainglory, and hypocrisy”

(BCP, p. 149).

The foolishness of the builders of the Tower of Babel is not that they wanted to reach God, but in the way they tried to do it. Our way to God is not found through our own efforts, but in dependence on God.

Later, God will send us the Law and the prophets and then God’s own Son, that we might be reconciled with God. And it will be in Jesus Christ that we will find the way to freedom and peace with God.



Today’s Story:



Genesis 11:1-9

People decide that they want to reach heaven by building a tower so high that it touches heaven. God sees their foolish desires and messes up their act by bringing them different languages so that they cannot understand each other. In frustration at not being able to communicate, the people abandon their work on the tower and scatter over the earth.

This is yet another story of our continuing fall from God. This time we try to reach heaven by our own efforts! Instead of serving and worshiping God, we try to invade God. For this act of arrogance, the Lord scatters the people all over the earth, with different languages so they cannot understand one another.

Actually, by this act, we brought this punishment—more alienation from God and from one another—upon ourselves. Spiritual and moral confusion, which led to this effort, then led to confusion of languages.

The reversal of Babel’s confusion happens on Pentecost, as related in Acts 2:1-14, when the disciples, receiving the Holy Spirit, begin speaking and people from different lands—speaking different tongues—can all understand each other.



Words of Faith

Reaching heaven—something we all desire to do, but something we need to trust in God to accomplish

Tower—a tall structure that won’t get us any closer to God

Languages—something that divides us and reminds us of our limitations

We don’t need to reach for God; God is with us and within us, closer than our own breath.



Sharing

Read the story of the Tower of Babel from a children's Bible, showing the pictures, or from your family Bible.

There may be many questions about Babel and about God's response to the efforts of the people to "reach heaven," for example:

- Why was God upset that the people wanted to get closer to heaven?
- What happened to all the people when they couldn't talk to each other?
- Is it bad that we all speak different languages?

Reinforce the idea that God has bigger plans for us than we can imagine.



Weaving God's Promises



This Week at Home

- **Play a bit with language.** In how many languages can you say "Thank you!" or "I Love You"? A quick Internet search will uncover several sites that list both of these phrases in many, many languages. Experience with pronouncing them and pick a few favorites to memorize. Use them at home throughout the week ahead.
- **Imagine what it feels like to suddenly not understand what people around you are saying.** Think of something you want to say to members of your household, then say it in gibberish. Let each person do this, or talk all at once. Then try to guess what each person is saying. How hard or easy is it to stay together as a group if you can't understand each other? What does it feel like?
- **Build your own "Tower of Babel"** using blocks or some other construction toy. Talk about the story; why did God *not want* the people to build the tower? Read the verses from the Bible where God scrambles the language, then together knock down the tower!
- **As a family, together enter into an experience with another culture.** You might attend an ethnic festival in your town or city, or go out for a meal at a restaurant that features an ethnic cuisine you're never tried, or talk to a neighbor from a different cultural background and invite them to show you how to cook a favorite meal, or do some research in cookbooks or online and put together your own meal with foods from other countries that you've never tried before. Make the meal even richer by reading up on and sharing some of the traditions and lifestyles of the culture you're highlighting. The Internet can be an easy source for this material.
- **Talk about people from other lands and other cultures.** In what ways are we different? In what ways are we all alike? Your local library will have books for all ages exploring other lands and peoples; either take a trip to the library together, or bring some books home to explore as a family. You'll also find great multi-cultural resources online.



Household Prayer

God, sometimes you need to jump in and save us from doing the wrong thing. We pray that you will be at our side and lead us to the right ways to live, or when we trust in you, we will always be guided in the right path. And for your love for us, we thank you. *Amen.*

