

Genesis 11:1-9
The Genesis of God's People:
My Way vs. God's Way
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Introduction: **(S1)**

1. Napoleon Bonaparte rose to political and military power during the French Revolution. **(S2)**
2. He's famous for being a short man with incredible military cunning and charismatic abilities.
3. During the Napoleonic Wars he "fought about 60 battles and lost seven, mostly at the end of his reign."
4. He's famous for taking the crown from Pope Pius and crowning himself the first emperor of France.
5. Napoleon was proud of doing it **his way**—rightly so, he conquered all of continental Europe.
6. Eventually **his way** led not to victory, but death, when he invaded Russia.
7. Despite being warned not to invade Russia, he did so with 680,000 men.
8. That's when he ran into a retreating Russian army and a bitter Russian winter.
9. He won some battles but in the end only 27,000 soldiers survived—Napoleon's way resulted in disaster.
10. In the Tower of Babel, people do it their way instead of God's way, and it also leads to disaster.

(In this story, it's not just one man who does it his way, but the whole world. It tells us...)

I. Doing life my way leads to disaster. (Gen 11:1-4) **(S3)**

(How can I tell if I'm doing life my way instead of God's way?)

(The tower of Babel gives us three signs we're doing life "my way":)

A. **Pride**—If we're filled with pride, we're doing it our own way. **(S4)**

1. The people were filled with self-importance because of their new technology, the brick.
2. They have an inflated ego—the stone is stronger than tar and a baked block of clay.
3. They migrated from mountain region (Asia Minor/Turkey) to plain region (Mesopotamia/Iraq).
4. They say they're going to make a big city and tower to make a "name" for themselves.
5. If we skip to v. 9, God tells us they do make a "name" for themselves, "Babel."
6. Babel is a Hebrew play on words because it sounds like "Balal" that means "to mix, confuse."
7. Instead of becoming the hero, they become a babbling mess full of confusion.

B. Did you know you can have incredible self-esteem and pride and be terrible at math?¹

1. In a recent study, American fourth-graders had higher average self-esteem than most countries.
2. They only do slightly better than average; Hong Kong has lower self-esteem but performs better.
3. If we as a nation continue to push self-esteem without hard work, you can see where it's leading.
4. Pride is a mark of doing life my way, and pride leads to disaster.

C. **Disobedience**—Not obeying God is the most obvious sign of doing life my way. **(S5)**

1. After the flood, God commands Noah and his sons to scatter and settle the whole earth.

¹ Matt Chandler's June 5 2016 podcast sermon "God's Glory as Our Courage" used similar illustration.

Genesis 9:1 Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number and **fill the earth**. (NIV®) **(S6)**

2. Instead of filling the earth, they gather together in one place (plain of Shinar).
3. If they had simply obeyed, they would have skipped the literal ruins Babel turns into.
4. Disobedience is a mark of doing life my way, and disobedience leads to disaster.

D. The story of Al and Ray is a story of disobedience leading to disaster.

1. Al and Ray were brand new scuba-divers, age 35 and 19, one a father and the other student.
2. Diving is exciting, but swimming around in the open water can get boring.
3. There was a nearby cave entrance but their instructor had warned them not to go in.
4. Their competitive spirit got the best of them, and they disobeyed, entering the mouth of the cave.
5. The cave was murky, they got turned around, and Ray hit his head on a low hanging rock.
6. They both died by drowning about 500 feet from the entrance.
7. Disobedience is enticing and exciting, but our eternal destinies are at stake.

E. **Idolatry**—False worship is a sign of walking the wrong path. **(S7)**

1. Historians think the “tower” they built was a Ziggurat, which was a religious center.
2. There was a small shrine at the top and each of its seven levels served as a stair for the gods. **(S8)**
3. It was 300 feet wide and tall, which is 2/3 of pyramid and almost as long as football field. **(S9)**
4. It is over 100 feet taller than the tallest brick building today, the Monadnock in Chicago. **(S10)**
5. They were trying to control God and climb their way to heaven and so worshipping false gods.
6. Whenever we choose to do life our way, we’re really saying, “I’m God and I know best.”

F. It’s easy to do things my way—but in the long run this road always leads down hill. **(S11)**

1. Maybe you know you’re wrong, but you can’t stop because your reputation is at stake.
2. If you come clean at work, what will people think of you?
3. If you say you’re sorry to your spouse or relative, will it prove them right?
4. When we live this way, we’re really saying, “I’m going to climb to heaven my way.”
5. The gospel is the good news that you don’t have to build a tower to reach heaven.
6. God himself has come down so that through Jesus Christ we might be lifted up.
7. God invites you to confess your pride, disobedience, and idolatry—he’ll forgive you.

(Doing life my way leads to disaster.)

(God doesn’t want us to do it our way because he’s provided a better way.)

II. Doing life God’s way leads to good. (Gen 11:5-9) **(S12)**

(God’s response to the people doing it their way shows us another path, God’s way.)

(God’s way gives us three opposite signs that lead not to disaster, but God’s goodness.)

A. **Humility**—When we recognize God’s greatness, it humbles us, and helps us follow God. **(S13)**

1. The people of the world built a skyscraper, but it says God has to come down to see it.
2. Their huge project is so tiny, God has to crouch down like a child looks at an ant.
3. Our God is big... he’s not just a really big person, he’s out of our conception, our reality.
4. Babel isn’t just about people doing it their way, it’s about the greatness of God’s way.

5. The best way to deal with your pride, is to remember how small you are and how great God is.

B. Several years ago I wrote a Christian inspirational book about myself.

1. If that sounds a little egotistical to you, I think that's a fair assessment.
2. I wrote about myself because that's what I knew best and I wanted to write down my faith story.
3. When I tried to get it published, I realized it was too much about me and not enough about God.
4. As followers of Jesus, humility is seeking to make Jesus famous instead of ourselves.
5. Is your goal in life to self-promote or to promote God?
6. When we make much of God, he promises to make much of us (1 Peter 5:6).

(Doing life God's way leads to good.)

C. **Obedience**—Listening to God and doing what he says leads to goodness. (S14)

1. Maybe some of you wonder why God ruined the good thing people had going on.
2. God isn't against the city, he loves the city, it was the way they were going about it.
3. In v. 6 it says, "they have begun to do this..." the word "begun" means "to desecrate, profane."
4. What they were planning was evil (child sacrifice, idols, red light district).
5. In the garden, Adam and Eve broke everything, and this city is furthering that brokenness.
6. If the people had filled the earth as God commanded, they would have avoided this misery.

D. What's one way you can show God you're more interested in his way than your way this week?

1. Maybe it's showing kindness to a stranger, coworker, or commuter...
2. Stop and pay attention to what God might be doing in others.
3. Maybe it's sacrificing "me time" for "family time"...
4. Whenever it's hard for me to give up my time for others, I ask God to redeem the time for me.
5. Maybe it's prioritizing worshipping God over your other plans...
6. Part of not just saying you prioritize God but showing it is coming to church regularly.

E. **Worship**—We praise God, when we say how good he is. (S15)

1. By confusing the people's language, and scattering them, God prevents further evil.
2. The opposite of "profane" (חלל *hqalet*) is "praise" (הלל *halel*) (Heth vs. He). (S16)
3. Notice that the Hebrew words are very similar—it's easy to turn praise into profanity.
4. When I'm tempted to be mad at God, it helps to remember God's goodness, and praise him.

F. Here are just a few of the ways God has been good to us at Cornerstone: (S17)

1. God gave us this building to start a new church.
2. God gave us a parent church that has invested over a hundred thousand dollars in us.
3. God gave us a pastor, a launch team, and already we've doubled in size.
4. What are some ways God has been good to you? (cute house, wonderful wife, friends)

G. There's a line of argument against Christianity that questions God's goodness and power.

1. If God is all good and all powerful, why doesn't he stop bad things from happening?
2. Here's an example of God stopping evil, but people still don't like it (God can't win!).

(Doing life God's way leads to good. Ultimately, the tower of Babel teaches us this... big idea...)

III. God's ways are higher. (S18)

A. God's ways are higher.

1. Chapter eleven ends the story of humanity falling into sin and not having a clear hope.
2. Everyone is a babbling mess and confused and like a defeated army they scatter into the world.
3. In Genesis 12 we're going to discover God's promise to rescue these scattered peoples.
4. God begins to do that in the NT book of Acts, which tells the story of the reverse Babel.
5. In Acts 2:1-13 God's newly rescued people the church experiences a miracle.
6. The Holy Spirit descends on early Christians who begin to speak in foreign languages. (S19↓)

Acts 2:1-4 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and **began to speak in other tongues** as the Spirit gave them utterance. (NIV®)

7. God is saying, "Through Jesus, I'm going to undo the damage done at Babel."
8. The very last book of the Bible gives us a glimpse of what that restoration will look like. (S20↓)

Revelation 7:9-10 After this I looked, and behold, **a great multitude** that no one could number, **from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb... crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (NIV®)

9. One day everyone who knows and loves Jesus will be gathered all together.
10. We'll speak every language not out of defiance but out of praise.

(God's ways are higher.) (S21)

(We can only live life God's way through Jesus Christ.)

Conclusion:

1. At Gethsemane, just before Jesus was crucified, he pleaded with God to deliver him.
2. Matthew 26:39 says Jesus "...fell on his face and prayed..." (NIV®)
3. At the garden Jesus became a babbling mess for you and me.
4. He became confused and sorrowful and troubled so that we don't have to anymore.
5. Jesus was becoming our substitute, trading his perfection for our mess.
6. Jesus trades his humility for my pride.
7. He gives me his obedience for my disobedience.
8. His worship takes the place of my idolatry.
9. Are you a babbling mess? Christ can make you whole.
10. God's ways are higher.

Philemon 25 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. (NIV®)