

GOD & VOCATION BIBLE STUDY

PURPOSE

Remember that we are meeting together to discover and discuss any connections we see between spirituality and vocation. Although our study will flow from a Christian worldview, we welcome perspectives from other faith and non-faith traditions. What we do with our bodies and our lives, our *vocation*, matters deeply. We will explore how our vocation can be a participation in God's work of renewing all things and how vocation is related to the career we are pursuing.

GATHERING (10 MINUTES)

- What stuck with you from the videos we watched in our last study?
- What did you learn about yourself, humanity, or God?

SCRIPTURE DISCUSSION (30 MINUTES)

Today we will read an account called "The Tower of Babel" from the Hebrew Bible. This is a sacred text of both the Jewish community and followers of Jesus, and it tells the story of God (the Lord) bringing people back to God's original plan: "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it" (Genesis 1:28 NLT). Following this plan would have naturally led to the development of many different cultures around the world.

GENESIS 11:1–9 (NLT)

At one time all the people of the world spoke the same language and used the same words. ² As the people migrated to the east, they found a plain in the land of Babylonia and settled there.

³ They began saying to each other, "Let's make bricks and harden them with fire." (In this region bricks were used instead of stone, and tar was used for mortar.) 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."

⁵ But the Lord came down to look at the city and the tower the people were building.

⁶ "Look!" he said. "The people are united, and they all speak the same language. After this, nothing they set out to do will be impossible for them! ⁷ Come, let's go down and confuse the people with different languages. Then they won't be able to understand each other."

⁸ In that way, the Lord scattered them all over the world, and they stopped building the city. ⁹ That is why the city was called Babel, because that is where the Lord confused the people with different languages. In this way he scattered them all over the world.

- What do you appreciate about this content?
- What makes you wonder? What do you disagree with?
- God opposed the people in their attempt to consolidate power and build structures that would make them famous (in contrast to God's original instructions that they would spread across the earth and care for the community of creation). Why do you think God intercepts their plan and scatters them?
- What does God's opposition against the great city and tower have to do with vocation (or human participation in God's work of renewing all things)?

NEXT STEPS (5 MINUTES)

Which next step will you take this week based on our discussion today? Choose one.

Perspective: Giving different languages and scattering the people caused the development of many different cultures, which the Spirit of God later affirmed by speaking to a diverse crowd such that each person could hear God's voice in their own language (Acts 2:1–13). Ponder how this aspect of a Christian worldview seems true or untrue from your perspective.

Engagement: One way that humans consolidate power today is through accumulating wealth while others are left with too little. Research the cost of living in your area and compare that to the range of salaries earned in your community. Visit livingwage.mit.edu to begin your research. Look for information about whether those earning the least in your community are able to cover basic needs (food, clothing, housing, etc.). Share what you find with a friend.

Investment: Clinging to healthy and just motives in your field of study and career journey can be difficult in the long run, so take time now to begin a regular practice of examining your motives. Write 2–3 questions you can ask yourself perhaps weekly or monthly. These questions should help you examine areas such as the choices you are making, the impact of your choices on yourself and the broader community, your motives, how you feel in relation to God, your level of joy, and so on. Consider interviewing someone in your field to learn about how they have cared for their own ethical formation as they participate in helping the whole community flourish.