

It happens all the time in TV shows and movies. Dorothy bumps her head and finds herself in OZ. A man pulls a ticket from both and becomes a boy. A woman is married with children when she falls asleep and wakes up the next day single. These sudden changes can be the basis for some good movies, but they are not a lot of fun when they happen in real life.

Imagine you're working a major construction project one day with a team of expert builders and the next day you don't have a clue what the other guys on the team are saying. Or you're asking your neighbor what they did to remodel a part of their house because you are thinking about doing the same things, but when they get back to you they are literally saying words you have never heard before. Maybe you were over at their house the night before and loved something they gave you to eat. They next day when you ask them for the recipe you don't recognize a single ingredient they give you.

That is exactly what happened in ancient Babylon when the people were trying to build the tower of Babel. God said, **“Let's go down and confuse the people with different languages. Then they won't be able to understand each other.”** (vs. 7) As a result the people were scattered and stop building their tower. Their attempt to make a name for themselves was a failure.

The Tower of Babel was not just the world's first skyscraper, it was also a monument of self-promotion. Why were they trying to build it? Genesis tells us what the people were thinking and saying. **“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.”** (vs. 4)

The people of ancient Babylon wanted other people to validate their self-worth and to admire them for their accomplishments. The desire for admiration is one of the clearest signs of narcissism. The people of Babylon wanted to be admired. They wanted to be famous. They were like so many people today. It has been said many times that we are living in a narcissistic, self-promoting society. One look at all the things people post about themselves on social media validates this claim.

The Tower of Babel was a symbol of permanence. After the flood, God told Noah and his family to fill the whole world. That meant people were going to have to move from the places they knew and explore new territories. But the people of Babylon did not want to be scattered. They wanted to stay in one place. The tower with the great city around it would be their permanent home, their great accomplishment.

But our self-worth doesn't come from our accomplishments. The writer of Ecclesiastes, one of the books of Wisdom in the Old Testament, tells us this. "But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless—like chasing the wind." (Eccl. 2:11) The things that we work so hard for can disappear, be destroyed or taken away in minute. It is hard to believe everything we try to do on our own is meaningless. But remember that a narcissists wants to be admired. They put all of their accomplishments on public display. Their balloon of self-esteem is punctured by the claim that our accomplishments are "all so meaningless—like chasing the wind."

Our value, importance, self-worth doesn't come from our accomplishments. Wait a little while and someone will top the things that we've done. Ecclesiastes tells us, "We don't remember what happened in the past, and in future generations, no one will remember what we are doing now." (1:11) Our worth comes from being children of God. God loves us all. God gives life to us all. Jesus died on the cross to pay for the sins of all. We are all equal in God's eyes.

We are not the center of the universe. The world does not revolve around us. Our days are numbered. Unless we are willing to be team players and pass our insights onto others, unless we use the things that we have for the glory of the Lord and for the good of others, we will be frustrated and unfulfilled. We won't live forever. But God's Word lasts forever. (1Peter 1:24-25). God and His Word remain. He is at the center of everything forever.

Genesis tells us that God came down to look at the city and the tower the people were building. This tower was supposed to reach to the sky. Can you imagine God stooping down to see this great tower that was microscopic in comparison to his vast creation? The people had harmony of language and purpose. But they had no harmony with God. So God confused their language and scattered them abroad.

God came again this time to make things right. God came in the person of Jesus Christ to unite the people of the world, to bring them back into harmony with Him. Jesus didn't come to have everyone admire Him. He came to undo the wrong we have done. When Jesus came down, he left the throne room of heaven for a manger in Bethlehem. He made the cross his throne on earth.

The early Christians described Jesus with these words from what may have been a very early hymn. "Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross." (Philippians 2:6-8)

The confusion of Babel was reversed at Pentecost, when God gave Jesus disciples the ability to talk about Jesus in their own languages. Jesus came to reunite people with God. He sends us out to tell people about the God who loves them.

Jesus teaches us that God should be at the center of our lives. Jesus said that the greatest command is to love the Lord our God with all our heart and the second greatest commandment is to love our neighbors as ourselves. (Matt. 22:37-39) We are sent out to love others in Jesus' name. To focus on God and others is the antidote to narcissism. Because God loves us, we can love one another. Think how different we can make life for others if we show them God's love by actively loving and serving them.