

Cindy Cottone

The Bible Corner



How it all began

"Mom," Davey asked, "what language did Grandpa speak when he first came to America?"

"Grandpa spoke Italian, the language of his native country," his mother answered. "But, after he was able to learn English, he spoke that language because it is the main language of the United States."

"Why can't everyone just use the same words for the same things?" Davey wondered. "How come there are so many different languages anyway?"

"It certainly would be much easier," his mother said, smiling. "There was actually a time when everyone in the world did speak the same language."

"Tell me about it, Mom."

Davey's mother began the story. A long, long time ago, a great flood destroyed everything and everyone in the world except for Noah, his family and all of the animals they had brought with them on the ark. When this flood was over, God told Noah and his family that He wanted the earth to be full of people again. God blessed Noah and said, "From your sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, will come all of the nations of the world."

Before too long, there were many people in the world again, and they were all part of the big family of Noah. Noah had many grandchildren, and soon these descendants had many children, too. Noah was 950 years old when he died.

"Wow," Davey exclaimed. "How old was Grandpa when he died?"

"People don't live to be anywhere near as old now, Davey," his mother explained. "Your Grandpa was 78 years old when he died."

She took the story up again. Before Noah died, he told his family that they should never forget God, for He had blessed them with this good life. So Noah reminded them to pray to God everyday and thank Him.

Davey eagerly asked what happened next.

One day, the people discovered a very fertile plain in the land of Babylon. They called this place Shinar. Again, God blessed His people, and the plain yielded very good crops. God gave His people everything they needed to make them happy. But slowly these people started thinking more and more about themselves, and they began to forget about God. They decided to build a great city for themselves.

It took many people a long time to create this city. First they had to make thousands of bricks. The bricks consisted of mud and straw and were baked in the hot sun to make them strong. After they were dried, tar was used to keep the bricks together.

At last, the city was completed. The people looked at the city and then back at themselves, and they swelled with pride. "Look at what we have done all by ourselves!" they proclaimed foolishly. "See all that we can do!" they cried. The people had completely forgotten all about God, even though He had always watched over them. And God was very saddened by their selfishness. But, still He did not leave them. He waited.

As soon as the city was finished, the people became even more secure in their

own powers. "We want to be famous — the most famous people that ever lived!" they boasted. So they decided to erect a great monument to themselves in the center of their city. Faster and faster they worked at making more and more bricks. "Let us make a great tower on our monument — a tower so tall that we can touch the sky!" They started working day and night making bricks for their tower. Suddenly someone said something that echoed what everyone had been thinking all along: "Let us make our tower on our monument that we have made to ourselves so great and so tall that we can reach heaven! Then we will be able to climb into heaven where God lives, and we will be the greatest people that ever lived!"

But what they really meant to say was that they thought they could be as great as God Himself. God saw their foolishness, and He was very angry. "If together these people can unite and accomplish this much evil in such a short time, imagine how great their sins will be later! I will confuse them, giving them many different ways to speak. Then these people will have to scatter all over the earth."

All at once, everyone in Shinar started speaking in many different languages. The people were so afraid that they stopped working and ran away. The tower was never finished and became known as the Tower of Babel because "babel" means "confusion."

"I guess those people in Shinar must have learned a good lesson, Mom," Davey said.

"What do you think they learned, Davey?"

"To stop thinking about themselves so much and remember God again," Davey answered. "Did God stay mad at them forever?"

"No, God is always ready to forgive us if we are sorry for our sins," his mother replied.

"How many different languages are there in the world today?" Davey asked.

"Probably thousands," she laughed.

"Do you suppose that if I lived as long as Noah did that I could learn to speak all of the languages in the whole world?" Davey wondered.

"You might," she chuckled, "but many years later, God did give us a way to speak in the same language."

"How, Mom?"

"It's called 'speaking in tongues.' After Jesus ascended to His Father in heaven, He promised to send the Holy Spirit. On that Pentecost, the apostles were given the gift of tongues, and people in the city who came from many different countries were able to understand exactly what the apostles were saying to them. But, we'll save that story for another time," she said smiling.

For discussion:

1. What advice did Noah give to his family before he died?
2. Even though the people had sinned against God, did He ever leave them? Does He ever leave us?
3. What does "babel" mean?

For further reading:

1. The Book of Genesis is the very first book of the Old Testament. It was written by Moses somewhere between 1420 and 1220 B.C. The story of the Tower of Babel is found in Genesis, Chapter 11:1-9. The story of the great flood is found in Genesis, Chapters 6-8.
2. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit and the gift of tongues to the new Church on Pentecost in Acts, Chapter 2.

Suggested activity:

Trace your own family roots. Where did your ancestors come from? What languages did they speak? As Christians, we are all part of the family of God in the Church.

Mooney class of '66 sets reunion picnic, dinner-dance

The Cardinal Mooney High School Class of 1966 has announced plans for its 20th reunion. The highlight of the festivities, actually

a two-day celebration, will be a dinner at the Mapledale Party House on Saturday evening, August 2. Mooney grads and their guests will

enjoy a buffet dinner and dance to oldies played by Whirling Disc.

The reunion concludes with a family picnic on August 3 at Ontario Beach Park in

Charlotte.

For information please contact the school's Alumni Association at (716) 865-1000.

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