

## Introduction

This week I was in Houston, Texas, where my plans were to renew my Instructor certification with the International Well Control Forum (IWCF). Every two years IWCF instructors have to renew their certification, and they must pass three exams with a score of 90 or above in each exam. The exams are not easy, and one engineer that worked for us took nearly two years to finally pass the exams and earn his certification. I studied and did all the required work to prepare for the test. I made a 100% on the first exam, the practical assessment. Very few people earn 100% on any of the exams, and in particular, the practical assessment. The second exam was the Principles and Procedures (P&P), which is considered the most difficult of the three exams. You have to have an excellent understanding of the principles of well control, and must be able to do lots of different types of calculations quickly and accurately. I have never struggled with the P&P, and this year was no exception. I made a 97 and thought that I had made a 100 on it. The third exam is the Equipment exam. I have had mixed results with my equipment. I have had to re-take the equipment exam a couple of times in the past because I did not make the required 90 on it. Two years ago when I did my last recertification, I made a 100 on the equipment. For me, my results on this exam have been very mixed. This year, I made an 80 on the Equipment. Most rig personnel and engineers would be excited to have an 80 or above on any part of the exam, because anything over 70 is a passing grade. However, for Instructors, anything less than a 90 is a failed test. So, even though I did well on the first two parts, because I did not do well on all parts of the exam, my plans were foiled.

Our passage this week is about Nimrod's plans to build the city of Babel, and in particular, a tower that reached to the heavens. Nimrod is not mentioned in our passage. We found out in Genesis 10 last week that Nimrod was the one who built Babel. The passage is not about Nimrod. It is about God putting a stop to the work in Babel and scattering everyone throughout the earth. In our passage we will see that they are five key essentials for building successfully. These key essentials are important for building cities, businesses, and even churches. What are these key essentials? First, there must be a Compelling Vision. Second, there must be Common Communication. Third, there must be Creative Resolve. Fourth, there must be Complete Unity. Fifth, there must be Correct Alignment. Nimrod and the descendants of Noah were doing great with the first four Essentials. They made 100's on all four of those tests. They had a Compelling Vision. They had Common Communication. Third, they had Creative Resolve. Fourth, they had Complete Unity. But the fifth Essential Key is Correct Alignment, and their plans were not in alignment with God's plans. They failed the fifth Essential Key. Therefore God intervened and put an abrupt stop to their work. All five of these are Key Essentials if we want to build successfully. Their plans were foiled because they did not make a passing grade in all five Essentials.

### Essential # 1: Compelling Vision.

The first essential for building successfully is Compelling Vision. Let's look at Genesis 11: 2-4.

(Gen 11:2-4) "And it came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. {3} And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. {4} And they said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name; lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

The word for journeyed is “naca” which means to pull up tent pins. In order for us to make a journey we have to be willing to pull out the things that would hold us down in our lives. What is it that is holding you back from moving on with the Lord? Is it fear? Is it a lack of confidence? Is it insecurity? Is it bitterness? Is it unforgiveness? There are lots of things that can keep us tied down and unable to pull up our tent pegs.

The Apostle Paul said that we should forget what lies behind and press forward to the upward call of God. Paul had a compelling vision. He got that vision on the road to Damascus, and he stayed true to that vision. He pulled up the tent stakes on his life as a Pharisee, and pressed forward with the Compelling Vision that God had given him.

(Phil 3:13-14) “Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, {14} I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

In the New Testament one of the words that is used to describe the church is “the Way.” The Greek word is “hodos” which means road, path, or journey. As Christians, we are all on a journey. Let’s pull up the tent pins, the things that would hinder you from moving on with the Lord. Let’s pull up the things that would hinder you and I from building the church together. Let’s pull up the things that would keep us from journeying together. Let’s humble ourselves. Let’s forgive one another. Let’s encourage one another saying, “Come, let us...”

The compelling Vision needs to be something that you are willing to pull up your tent pins for. There is something inside of you that is beckoning you to do it. You are compelled to leave things behind and go for it. The vision is bigger than you are. Vision will move people. People will follow a vision. We have to give people vision and Vision, and it must be a compelling Vision.

In verse 4 we find what their Vision was. They decided to build a city for themselves with a tower that would reach into heaven. They wanted to make a name for themselves. They wanted a place of safety. They wanted to make a secure place to keep from being scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth. Nimrod was not just a great builder; he was a great visionary leader. He sold them on the vision. He gave them a Compelling Vision or reason to pull up their tent pegs and go build the city of Babel. This compelling Vision was something they were willing to work together to build. They were willing to lay their lives down for it. They had a vision and were pursuing it in such a way that if the Lord had not intervened, they would have succeeded.

### **Essential # 2: Common Communication.**

The second essential for successful building is Common Communication. Notice in verse 1 that the whole earth had the same language and the same words.

(Gen 11:1) “Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words.”

The whole earth means everyone on the face of the earth. This includes Noah and his sons and their wives, and any of their children or grandchildren. Some scholars guess there may have been several hundred families by this time.

KJV phrases this a little better: “And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech” The word used for one is echad which means oneness or unity. It is also the same word used to describe marriage. In Genesis 2:24 when a man leaves his parents and cleaves to his wife, they become one flesh. It is the word echad which means united or one. It comes from the root word achad which means to unify, to collect or to go one way or other.

(KJV Gen 11:1) “And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.”

The actual rendering of the one language is one lip. The significance is that it comes from one mouth. It is as if one person was saying everything. There can be no question as to what the meaning was because it was from his own lips, from his own mouth. When you play the gossip game and everyone sits in a circle and the leader whispers something to the person on his left. Each person repeats what the first person has said to the person on his left. Then, the last person says out loud what he has heard. Then, the first person says out loud what he said to initiate it. You will see that there has been a break down. You have to go back to the first person’s mouth to see what was really said.

We have same language as one another—English, but we do not all use the same words. For example, Charlie Rymer was a friend of mine, and is now an announcer with ESPN. I got to know him when he played professional golf. He played golf for Georgia Tech before playing professionally for several years. Charlie won a NIKE event in Florence, South Carolina. When asked about how the win felt on national TV, Charlie let out a great big “Yee Haw.” When I moved to Atlanta from Orlando, Charlie took it upon himself to teach me how to speak like a Georgian. He taught me golf terms like: gee, haw, heeyah, tors, fers. We both spoke English, but we certainly did not have the same words. It wasn’t one language with one lip. Building successfully requires Common Communication.

On the first day that we were in Georgia, Jennifer and I went to Battle Foods to buy a few carts of groceries. Our fridge and pantry were completely empty. At the check out counter, I asked the girl if she accepted checks. Then, I asked her if I could borrow her pen. She replied, “Heeeres ma pen, but don’t steal ma pen. Nothin fries ma taters faster than someone stealing ma pen.” The bag boy looked at her and said, “You hick!” She promptly gave him a swift kick and sent him scrambling.

I was in Trinidad and Tobago twice last fall. They speak English in Trinidad, but it is not the same English that we speak. Typically, I understand about 30-40% of what is said. Now, if they slow way down then I understand about 90% of what they are saying. But when they are speaking to one another, they might as well be speaking Swahili; I don’t understand what they are saying. At Babel, they all spoke the same language the same way. They had Common communication.

I grew up in Iran, and there were many British people working in Iran. They spoke very different English and used different words. When they ask for fish and chips, they are really asking for fish and fries. They called our apartments, flats. A flat to us is a nail in our tire. The English use windscreen instead of windshield. They serve biscuits with their tea in the afternoon. Their biscuits are our cookies. If an Englishman speaks about his garden, you might think he was speaking about his vegetable patch. You would be wrong. They call their yard their garden. We all speak English, but our words are not the same. Noah and his descendants all had the same language and used the same words. Successful building requires common communication.

To reach out to the non-Christians and bring in people, which is building the kingdom, we have to speak the same language and use the same words. We have to communicate their language. When they hear blood, reconciliation, atonement, iniquity, sanctification, justification, meditation, propitiation, and other similar Christianese, they do not have a clue what we are talking about. For us to reach out effectively to them, we have to communicate in terms that they understand. We have to be careful about our words.

To build the Connection Church, we will need to have Common Communication. We will have to understand one another. Good Communication takes time and effort. It requires good listening skills, asking clarifying questions. It requires putting things in writing. It requires many different communication skills and mediums. In today's world we have email, text messaging, cellular phones, faxes, and all kinds of communication tools. We have to work hard at communicating with one another. We have to find out what form of communication works best for each person. We have to be willing to use many different types of communication to reach the unchurched and the unbelievers also. To build successfully, Common Communication is essential.

To stop the work that was going on at Babel all God had to do was stop their ability to communicate with one another. God put a road block in their communication. He confused their language. They named the tower Babel, which means confusion. He made each family division speak a different language. They were not able to understand one another. When the communication broke down, the tower they were building stopped. The people scattered. Poor communication will cause people to scatter. It will cause them to go to other places. It will stop the building from going up. Common Communication is an Essential Key to building any business, marriage, home, or church.

(Gen 11:7-9) "Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." {8} So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. {9} Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth."

We may all speak American English, but there are still things that will stop our ability to communicate. We can call them road blocks to communication. What are the road blocks to our communication today? There are lots of them. Unresolved conflict is a big one. When people have unforgiveness and/or bitterness, communication goes out the door. That is why in Hebrews we are told to see to it that no root of bitterness springs up.

(Heb 12:15) "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;"

Another roadblock to communication is busyness. We have to make time for relationships, particularly the ones that are most important to us. We have to be intentional in our relationships. Jesus was intentional in His relationships. Jesus invested Himself in twelve men and in particular three. We cannot have everyone as our best friend. We must choose who we invest our time with, and find ways to spend time together. There are no short cuts to spending time together.

When I was in prison ministry, I ministered to an architect named Carl. Before his arrest, he was extremely busy with his career. However, in jail, he and his wife began to talk on the telephone every night from 9:30 to 10:30. The pay phones in jail are for collect calls only and local calls

are \$2.50 for 1 minute or 60 minutes. They used their full 60 minutes every night. This helped their communication so much that they decided to set aside the same time to talk when he got out of prison.

Another roadblock is selfishness. When someone is only interested in themselves, they cannot properly communicate with others. Some people will not pay attention to what you are saying. They will look the other way and not listen intently. If they are a talker, they will interrupt you constantly. They are more interested in you hearing what they have to say than in hearing what you have to say.

(Pr 18:1-2) “He who separates himself seeks his own desire, He quarrels against all sound wisdom. {2} A fool does not delight in understanding, But only in revealing his own mind.”

Sometimes selfishness reveals itself by isolation. A selfish person stays by himself. He does not get involved with other people. He is off doing his own thing and wants people to come to him, but he will not go to them. Everything revolves around himself and his world. People have to initiate conversation with this person, because he will not go to them. Selfishness in any form will cause road blocks in communication. Paul said this, “Do nothing from selfishness.”

(Phil 2:3-4) “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; {4} do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

Sometimes we don't communicate well because we have poor communication skills. I was one who did not respond to things. I would listen and then not say a word. Instead, I have learned to tell people that I am thinking about it and will get back with them later. Karen helped me a lot in this area. We may not have been taught some practical communication skills. Communication skills are things we must grow and develop to be successful.

### **Essential # 3: Creative Resolve.**

The third essential for successful building is Creative Resolve. Let's look at Genesis 11:3.

(Gen 11:3) “And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar.”

In the land of Shinar the people did not have forests to build with. They did not have a Home Depot or Lowes to go and purchase building materials. They didn't have metal buildings available. What they had available was common clay, rocks and tar. They used what they had available. They had creative resolve. They were going to find a way to get the job done with what they had available. The people were going to make bricks and burn them. The people burned the bricks thoroughly. This process hardened and strengthened the bricks and made them last a long time. They wanted their work to last for a long time. They had a clay that was excellent for bricks. They were building with what they had.

We can learn from their example. We may not have a big worship team, or lots of programs, but we must build with what we have. What personnel do we have? What resources do we have? What spiritual gifts do we have in our body? We must build with what we have.

They used tar for mortar. The word “chemar” means bitumen or tar. There was an abundance of tar pits in this area. It is the in the Middle East that we have the world’s largest oil supplies. There is tremendous pressure underground and the oil comes bubbling up on its own in many places. The tar was used as mortar to hold the bricks together. The tar is representative of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings unity to believers. We are exhorted in Ephesians 4:3 to be diligent in preserving the unity of the Spirit. As we use the gifts of the Spirit in serving, giving, prophesying, teaching, exhorting, etc. with one another, we are bonded together.

In order for the bricks to stick together, there must be mortar placed between the bricks. If a brick is missing mortar on any side, the integrity of the building is jeopardized. We are the bricks and we must be enclosed on every side with the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit working in our relationships that gives us that bond of peace. Come, Holy Spirit, fill us and bond us together.

(Eph 4:3) “being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

#### **Essential # 4: Complete Unity**

The fourth essential for successful building is Complete Unity. When you have Common Communication, a Compelling Vision, Creative Resolve, it is very natural to have unity. Let’s pick up our text in Genesis 11:5-9.

(Gen 11:5-6) “And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. {6} And the LORD said, “Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they Vision to do will be impossible for them.”

God talks a lot about unity. In Genesis 2 God gave us this principle of unity. He said that the two would become one. A marriage must have unity. Jesus told us that a house divided will not stand. Husbands and wives must work hard at unity. He did not just include houses; Jesus said that kingdoms and cities that are divided will not stand. Unity is an Essential Key to building.

(Gen 2:24) “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”

(Matt 12:25) “And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, “Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand.”

Jesus prayed in John 17:21-23 for us to be one as He and the Father were one. God wants us to have unity. Here are seven Biblical benefits for unity:

1. Nothing Will Be Impossible. (Genesis 11:6)
2. Unity Is Good And Pleasant. (Psalm 133)
3. There Is Tremendous Anointing in Unity. (Acts 4:32-33)
4. There Is Abundant Life. (Psalms 133:3)
5. People Were Saved And Added To The Church. (Acts 2:43-47)
6. Prayers Get Answered. (Matthew 18:19-20)
7. Stability. A Divided House Will Not Stand. (Luke 11:17)

When there is unity among the people, the possibilities are endless. Why does Satan want to keep the body of Christ divided? Why does Satan want the churches split and divided? Because he doesn't want the kingdom of God built. If he can keep us divided up, we will not be able to accomplish what God has called us to do.

### **Essential # 5: Correct Alignment**

Many years ago I wrote and published a couple of different gospel presentations for golfers. In the Good News About Fundamentals, one of the essential keys is correct alignment. Jack Nicklaus said that golf is 90% set-up. Having the correct alignment is part of your set up. If your body is not aligned correctly, even a perfect swing will not have good results. Your shot is going to miss the green because you have not lined up properly to hit the green. You will hit the ball where you are lined up to hit the ball. If you can think of your life as a ball that is getting ready to be struck, your ball is going to go where your life is lined up. How is your alignment.

At Babel, their alignment was not good. God looked down and saw that their compelling vision was not in alignment with his vision. Their communication was excellent. Their creative resolve was impressive. Their complete unity was incredible and Biblical. But, Nimrod was building his own kingdom on earth. They were not building the kingdom of God, but a kingdom of man. We must be in alignment with God's Visions. If our lives are not in line with God's Visions, we could have all the other key essentials in place, but the shots of our lives are going to miss the target.

Where were God's Visions? In the beginning God created us in His image to have fellowship with Him, to represent Him, to rule over His creation. Then, He blessed Adam and Eve and told them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. After the flood, He gave the same command to Noah and his three sons.

(Gen 1:28) "And God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"

(Gen 9:1) "And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.

What was Nimrod's goals in building Babel? First, we saw last week that Nimrod was the first to establish his own kingdom on earth. Nimrod was building a kingdom for himself. We see in verse four that they wanted to make a name for themselves. Their first goal was not in alignment with God's goals.

(Gen 11:4) "They said, 'Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.'"

Second, he wanted to build a tower whose top will reach into heaven. Scholars differ on what that actually meant. Most believe that it was tied it to pagan worship. God's plan was for us to worship Him, and have no other gods before Him. Again, Nimrod's plans were not in alignment with God's plans.

Third, they wanted to build this city so that they would not be scattered abroad over the face of the earth. They wanted to stay right there in Babel. What was God's plans and Visions? He wanted us to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. God did not want all of them staying in Babel. He wanted them to spread out and fill the earth. Again, their visions were not in Correct Alignment with God.

God's mission for the church can be found in Matthew 28:18-20. He said to "*go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.*" He told Adam and Noah to fill the earth. Now, He has told us to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. God wanted people from every tribe, tongue, and nation on earth in His kingdom. In Acts 1:6-8, just before Pentecost the disciples were questioning Jesus about the timing of restoring the kingdom of Israel. Jesus told them not to worry about that. He said that it was not for them to know the times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority. Then, He tells them that they have a job to do. They are to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and even to the remotest places on earth. Our goals have to be in Correct Alignment with God's goals.

We want to see God's blessing on our works so we must get our vision and our mission Correctly Aligned with God's plans and purposes. God tells us in both the Old and New Testament that the most important thing in life is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. He said the second most important commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves. Paul wrote in Romans 10:14, "*How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?*" Our vision is to help people connect with God, so sharing the gospel with people is important. But, it cannot stop there. God told us to go and make disciples. We have to help people learn to follow and connect with God. We have to teach people to read the Word of God, pray, worship, and love God with all their heart. We have to help people in their relational skills so that they can connect with one another. We are the Connection Church because we help people connect with God and with one another. Our vision is rooted in God's vision and Visions. Our alignment as a church is in line with God's vision and Visions.

## CONCLUSION

Gen 11:4 "Come, let us build..." We want to build what the Lord has commanded and commissioned us to build. We want to come together, united, as one body, speaking one language and using the same words, and united in our hearts with the same mission, to build His kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven.

What are the tent pegs that need to be pulled in your life so you can make this journey with the Connection Church? What are the things that are holding you back? Let's pull up the tent pegs that are keeping us from making this journey.

This week, as I was praying and meditating, I had a question come to my mind, so I want to finish with this question. If you think of your life as a currency, with the currency of your life, where are you investing your money? Which kingdom are you investing your time, energy, talents, and resources? Which kingdom are you building?

Let's pray!