

DCF:

I've always wondered about the Sphinx in Egypt. Why did they put it out in the middle of nowhere when they built it? I've always wondered why they built it the way they did. Why did they put the face of a man on the body of a lion? The design of this monument strongly suggests that it was designed by a committee.

I can almost picture it - a group of Egyptians gathered around a table, talking to the royal architect. "What do you want to build?" he asks. The politicians say the pharaoh wants something that will show the world the glory of his reign. The labor unions want something big enough to guarantee work for their union members for the next few centuries. The animal rights activists want something that would honor the world of nature. So, they build the Sphinx!

Maybe that's not the way it happened, but the question the architect asked is a good one to ask ourselves as we travel through life. What do we want to do with all the blessings that God has given to us? What do we want to do with our time, our money, our talents! **“WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BUILD?”** People want to build monuments to themselves. God wants to build His Church.

### ***Part One: People want to build monuments to themselves***

This idea, to build a monument to yourself, is an integral part of sinful human nature. God had Moses write down this story of the tower of Babel to illustrate this point, as well as to explain why there are so many different languages today. Different languages didn't happen because of evolution or chance. They were created by God himself. But why did God create so many different languages? What was His purpose?

At first glance, God comes across as a frightened individual. ***“The Lord said, ‘If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.’”*** (verse 6-7) What's wrong with having one language? What's wrong with having grand plans? To the casual reader of God's Word, it may seem as if these people had a healthy sense of patriotism and national pride. Why not build a monument to their nation?

The problem lay not with the building itself, but the motivation behind the building. These people had been commanded by God to inhabit the entire earth. God had made it very clear that they were to spread out, explore and settle all the world, not just a fertile, comfortable corner of the Middle East. It seems as if these people weren't interested in the hard work of filling the earth. They wanted to sit back, get comfortable, and enjoy life in this particular corner of God's creation.

Not only did these people want to disobey God's command, they also didn't want to glorify their Lord. Notice why they wanted to build this tower. ***“Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”*** (v. 4) They wanted to build a tower for their own glory. They wanted to gaze upon what they had created and bask in the good feeling that they had done something remarkable. No, they didn't want to fill the earth and glorify God. They wanted to stay here and glorify themselves. They wanted to build a monument to themselves, not to God.

It's real easy for us to find evidence of this sinful urge today. Nations want to build monuments to themselves, to glorify what they have accomplished. The pyramids of Egypt, the Acropolis of ancient Greece, Stonehenge, the Statue of Liberty all were built to, in one way or another, glorify a nation. Even business companies can get caught up in this idea of building a monument to themselves. They want to be the biggest, the best, the most profitable. Oh, their first reason for striving for growth may be profits, but the accompanying thought often is "I want to be the best to show the world how good I am. I want the glory and honor that comes from being a successful business person."

And do we need to say anything about people? We all have that urge, that desire, to build a monument to ourselves. We want to be remembered when we're gone. We want to leave a legacy, proof that we were good people, successful people, loved people. That desire to leave a legacy, or build a monument to ourselves often motivates athletes, engineers, farmers, fathers, mothers, and Little League players. Now, it's not wrong to do your best with the talents that God has given to you. What is wrong is to use them for your own glory and honor.

Do you see the temptation that we Christians face when it comes to doing what we're doing in our lives? We must always be on guard against the temptation to build a monument to ourselves. Yes, we want to do the best with what God has given us, but we are to do it to give glory to God, not to ourselves.

How can we do that as Christians? Well, by making sure we know why we are doing a particular thing. Are we following God's directions in our lives to glorify God, or to satisfy a desire to build a monument to

ourselves? Are we spending our money to make life more comfortable for ourselves, or using it to spread the Gospel message? Are we using our time to build up God's church, or our own comfort level?

We are all tempted to build monuments to ourselves, to become comfortable in life, but God wants to build His Church.

### ***Part Two: God wants to build His Church***

And as you all know, what God wants, He does! God made sure that His command to go and inhabit all the world was carried out. He scattered His people over the face of the earth – just as He commanded them to do in the first place - by scrambling their languages. It's as if a divine lightning bolt struck their brain's modem. In a computer system, if the modem is struck by a power surge, it becomes useless for communicating. It can't process the information it receives, nor can it make itself understood by another. That's what God did.

Make no mistake - this was a loving gesture by our Lord! He could have wiped them all out, or sent a plague to make them flee one another. No, God lovingly, gently, and instantly confused their language so that they couldn't communicate effectively with one another. I suppose if they had stuck around long enough, they could have translated one another's language, but it was far easier for them simply to scatter to the far corners of the world and build new civilizations with people who spoke the same language. And if God had allowed them to remain in one place, their rebellion against God's commands would have grown to include everything that God said.

Just as God's will was done that day, so was it accomplished on Pentecost. Pentecost has rightfully been called the birth of the Christian Church. On that day, God gave the gift of speaking different languages to His chosen messengers, so that all people might hear the wonderful news of eternal life in their own language. God also gave His disciples the courage to use this wonderful gift. They boldly stood up and proclaimed the greatest news of all - the news that Jesus had paid for the sins of the entire world. They went forth to the four corners of the world with God's message of salvation.

And today, we are the blessed recipients of those first Pentecost gifts. We hear His Word in English, translated from the original Hebrew and Greek. Our great-grandparents learned God's Word in German. Our Hispanic friends hear it in Spanish. Throughout the world, people hear the news of Christ's sacrifice in their native languages, thanks to the gifts that God uses to build His Church.

You see, God wants many more "living stones" in His Church. He wants people to hear that they are sinners, damned to hell if they depend on their own works to earn eternal life. He wants people to hear that Jesus lived a perfect life, suffered and died for their sins, and made them worthy to enter paradise. He wants us to be His translators of this message to as many people as we possibly can.

"Oh, I can't do that!" some of you may be saying. Why not? We have the same Spirit residing in our hearts as those first disciples. The Holy Spirit has come through the gift of Baptism to all of us. That gift is no less powerful than the gift at Pentecost. It gives us courage to tell. It gives us courage to live for the glory of God. It gives us power to build God's Church, just like those first disciples did.

It gives us power to be translators. You say you're not a translator? You say you don't know Hebrew, Greek, Swahili or some other foreign language? Yes, you do. You know the language of God's grace. That's a foreign language to unbelievers. God wants us to "translate" His grace into language that unbelievers can understand.

We have the Holy Spirit working in us when we tell our neighbors in our own words the message of God. You've done it before, haven't you? When you've told someone "The way to heaven is just by believing that Jesus died for your sins" you've translated the message of Christ. When you say "He traded his perfect life for our imperfect life" you've translated the message of Christ. By doing so, you are giving the Holy Spirit an opportunity to enter that person's heart and create a saving faith. That's how God builds His Church, through translators like you and me.

What a joy it is watching the kingdom, the Church of God grow! Imagine what it was like for the disciples to see thousands of people saved by the power and grace of God simply by hearing the message that they had translated! Imagine what it will be like for you, when you see the words of life believed by someone you've just talked to! What a wonderful feeling to glorify God by your words!

It's a good thing that our lives aren't designed by committee. They'd probably end up looking like the Sphinx. A Christian's life has been designed by God, who wants us to build lives that give Him all the glory and honor that are rightfully His. **"WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BUILD?"** God's Church!

AMEN