

# Introduction

The earliest group project recorded in the Bible is the attempt to build the Tower of Babel.<sup>1</sup> The sponsors of this project were unified in purpose to build a tower to the heavens. There was clear and common communication, a necessity for any major endeavor. They selected a level place that would support such a structure. To build a tall structure required that it be erected perpendicular to the ground. As the structure was built, deviations from perpendicular would be exaggerated, creating stability problems. To minimize deviations, the builders used brick instead of stone. Brick can be made uniform in size, whereas stone is naturally irregular. Initially the project enjoyed success; the project, however, was doomed to failure. The sponsors of the project had the wrong motive: they were seeking to exalt themselves, which is inconsistent with God's purposes.

There are many lessons to be learned from the Tower of Babel incident. The sponsors of the project adroitly used several key principles. They understood the critical nature of unified communications and a proper foundation. Also, they understood the importance of using the correct technology, bricks instead of stones. But they failed to understand the critical nature of motive. God is interested in man's heart.<sup>2</sup> The Bible states that God "*detests the proud of heart . . . they will not go unpunished.*"<sup>3</sup> God's judgment at Babel was to disrupt the communication, which stopped the project.

It is my objective to go beyond Babel. This means that we must learn from the mistake at Babel. It is not enough to build great projects based on the unity of the sponsors, a solid foundation, and the best technology. We must also have the right motive rooted in humility and submission to the God of the Bible, the Creator of the universe. Humility means that we humans don't define reality but submit to God's definition of reality. In other words, we see reality through God's eyes or His worldview. This means that organizations need to seek God's perspective on what projects to build, when to build them, and how to build them. Discovering how to build God's way is a process of developing a philosophy of organizational behavior and practices, including principles and values, aligned with the revelation of God given in the Bible.

This book is about how organizations can enjoy success through alignment with God's perspective. The typical book on organizational behavior is either a report on the principles practiced by a highly regarded organization such as Neiman Marcus, a research project by someone like Jim Collins (*Good to Great*) or a philosophical discussion by a noted pundit such as Peter Drucker. The principles presented are discovered pragmatically. *Pragmatism* is a worldview that defines truth and reality based on what works. This is the worldview of most organizations. The fact that pragmatism is so ubiquitous is a testimony to the complexity of managing organizations. It is also an acknowledgment that there is no perceived definitive handbook on organizational behavior.

*Beyond Babel* offers a different worldview for assessing organizational behavior. In particular, it offers a model for organizational excellence based on a *biblical worldview*, which I call the Beyond Babel Model. For most people, the Bible, at best, provides personal ethical guidance. Some esteem it highly, but very few would consider using the Bible as an authoritative source of principles and practices to manage organizations. *Beyond Babel* assumes that the Creator of the universe provided the Bible to guide us in all areas of life,<sup>4</sup> including organizational principles and practices. In other words, my presupposition is that the God of the Bible created the universe, and that He also defined the rules for all the games of life—personal life, family life, church life, business life, and community life.

The immediate challenge in using the Bible as a handbook of organizational principles and practices is *dualism*. Dualism is the assumed bifurcation of spiritual and material reality. This book does not embrace dualism; rather it embraces the opposite, which is *integration*. Integration is a holistic approach to life based on the presupposition that the Bible is God's revelation to man and that the Bible speaks definitively and authoritatively to every jurisdiction, including business and government.

Hermeneutically, this book assumes that the Bible is to be interpreted grammatically and historically. *Grammatically* means that the various types of literature contained in the Bible are to be recognized and interpreted accordingly. *Historically* means that the Bible's historical setting is to be considered in its interpretation.

Every organization enjoys the opportunity to use the Bible, as illuminated by the Holy Spirit, as a source of principles and practices to govern its organizational behavior. To glean these principles and practices, it is understood that the Bible reveals the character and nature of God and how God builds. It is assumed that God's principles and practices for building provide us with a model for how He wants us to build. Therefore, when organizations align with God by embracing His principles and practices, the result is outstanding organizational performance.

Pragmatic experience can lead to alignment with the Bible. For example, many organizations practice the Golden Rule<sup>5</sup> not because it is biblical, but because it works. For most organizations, alignment with God's principles occurs because the organizations pragmatically discover that God's principles work even though the organizations may not realize the origin of the principles. It would be even better if organizations practiced the Golden Rule because it was biblical, not simply because the principle works.

Since alignment with God is the predicate for enduring organizational success, it follows that an organization's success is proportional to its alignment with God's principles.

This book presents the Beyond Babel Model of organizational excellence, which is rooted in the Bible. In my work with organizations, I seek those that desire to engage in this approach to organizational management. Some organizations merely give lip service to employing biblical principles. Others try to practice it, but lack biblical knowledge and understanding. And still others have achieved superior results by embracing biblical principles. I find great joy in working with organizations that eagerly embrace and practice biblical principles. It is a delight to see these organizations move "Beyond Babel." What a joy it would be if this became an ubiquitous reality.

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## Notes

1. Genesis 11:1–9.
2. Proverbs 17:3.
3. Proverbs 16:5.
4. 2 Peter 1:3.
5. Matthew 7:12.