

## The Tower of Babel

Since we are in the “story telling” mode, I thought I’d tell you another application related story. Since the previous story took place in the arctic, this one will take place in the tropics, specifically, Venezuela. Venezuela is a desert in the west and a tropical rain forest in the east. The tallest water fall in the world, Angel Falls, is in the Venezuelan province of Guyana. With a 3000’ vertical drop, it is one of the most magnificent sites in the world! PRAISE GOD!!! Venezuela is also one of the largest oil producing countries in the world. The oil comes from Lagunias, a desert town near Lake Maracaibo (which is actually a Caribbean bay, not a lake.) They have pumped so much oil out of the ground that the earth has actually subsided over 30 feet. This wouldn’t ordinarily be a problem except this region was originally only about 20 feet above sea level. Now the ground level is 10 feet below sea level! Thus, the region is very similar to Holland with all it’s dikes, ditches, and pumps to keep the area dry. (Sorry, no classic Dutch windmills.) The temperatures were typically 100°F! The humidity was just as high, and there were no shade trees!

Our company sold equipment into this desert region of Venezuela but, due to language barriers, it took three trips to adequately train them. Ordinarily a full time translator accompanied me, but on my third trip, if I wasn’t at their office, I was on my own. This sets the stage for an amusing story.

In many countries, they do not permit you to leave the hotel with your room key. Such was the case here. So, at the end of my first day, I arrived at the hotel and asked for the key to room 513 just as I ordinarily would. The response was nothing short of a long blank stare! So, I repeated my request again. This time a little more slowly, “Ah, ...Key? ...Room 513, please?” I wiggled my hand indicating the action of the key. The clerk stood there, and continued to stare. At this point it became more of a glare! “Ah, Oh!” I thought. “This is a problem.” So I began to think about my 5<sup>th</sup> grade language class and count very slowly on my fingers, “Une, Duex, Trois, ..... Oh, No!! That’s French! Spanish??? I never studied Spanish!!!”

Now I began to panic. “Ah!” I thought. We used to play a card game called “Uno.” So, I began to rack my brain, counting very slowly on my fingers again. “Hmm, 513. Uno, ..... Dos, ....Tres, .....??? .....???? Four?!? Ah! Praise God! I don’t need a four! Uno,... Dos, ...Tres, *Four*, ...Cinco. That’s it! I’ve got it!” I thought.

So I began to speak. “Key?” Wiggling my hand. “Ah, Cinco,... Uno,... Tres,... Please?” Touching each appropriate finger as I thought the statement through. At this point the clerk energetically responded in Spanish, had a great big smile on his face, and very politely handed me the key. “Whew!! Thank you Lord!!!”

So, I took my briefcase to my room, came back down to eat, went back up to my room, read the Bible for awhile, and decided to go to bed. Eating in the restaurant was no problem. I knew what I wanted from previous trips and could easily point to the entree on the menu. As I was about to retire, I picked up the phone, and without even thinking of the earlier engagement at the front desk, I asked for a wake up call at 6:30. What a response! I’m not sure what the response was, but it was fast and excited! “Oh, no! Here we go again!” I thought. So, I tried to think of how to say “6:30”

in Spanish. Looking at my fingers, I began to slowly count to myself again, “Uno, ...Dos, ... Hey, wait a minute! Even if I can remember 6, I have no clue how to say 30!” So, I gave up, “Never mind. Thank you.” I said, and hung up the phone.

So, I went to bed, sleeping wide awake all night. Don’t want to over sleep! Eventually, I must have fallen sound asleep because, suddenly, I was rudely awakened by the telephone ringing precisely at 6:30! “Wow! Praise God!” I thought. “How did that happen?” The receptionist cheerfully greeted me with “Buenos Dias!” and I joyfully responded in kind.

At the end of the second day, I was dropped off at the hotel again, walked to the front desk, and greeted the same clerk. “Buenos {mumble}” I said cheerfully. (Never sure what was supposed to come after the “Buenos.” Every time I thought I knew, I got corrected.) I then looked at my fingers and began to count again... just as slowly as before, “Uno,....Dos,....Tres,....Four, ...Cinco,” I thought. So, I looked up at the clerk, smiled, looked back at my fingers, looked back at the clerk, and said, “Key?” wiggling my hand. Looked at my fingers again, and said very slowly, “Cinco, ... Uno,... Tres, please?” Just as before, the clerk smiled and cheerfully handed me the key.

That evening I didn’t even bother to call the receptionist. There wasn’t any point. I went to sleep, and the Lord awakened me at 6:15. Then the phone rang at 6:30, “Buenos Dias!!” she said. “How’d she know to do that?” I thought. Oh, well. Just praise God!

At the end of the third day, I was dropped off again, walked up to the desk, and greeted the same clerk. “Surely he will remember 513, I thought.” But he didn’t. He merely responded to my greeting with that same blank stare. So, I went through the entire process again, counting on my fingers, wiggling my hand, etc. and he handed me the key.

This process continued all week. Though with each evening, I got a little better. In fact, by Friday, I thought about it for a moment before I went up to the desk and was prepared to deliver my request with confidence. BUT - the clerk was a different guy! “That’s OK,” I thought. “Key?” wiggling my hand. “Cinco, Uno, Tres, please?” I said with complete confidence. “Oh, Room 513?” The clerk cheerfully responded with perfect, unbroken English!

“WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN ALL WEEK???” I thought!!! I wasn’t sure if I should hug him, or strangle him!!! It turns out that he was from Texas and had recently moved into the area.

Now - WHY do I tell you this story in such great detail? Just for laughs? (It wasn’t very funny at the time!) I’ll give you two reasons. And they both come from Genesis Chapter 11. You guessed it; The Tower of Babel.

Number Uno: Yes, the Bible is true. The evidence is all around us. It’s in the air, in the math, in the science, and even in our languages! We wrestle with this evidence in the form of foreign languages every day. (Some of us wrestle with languages more than others.)

Number Dos: The little things you do in life affect the lives of others for years to come; maybe billions of people, thousands of years to come! You are not just a little person in a sea of billions of others.

You were put here for a specific purpose, and your purpose matters to those billions of other people, AND even more importantly, to God!!!

*Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Jer 1:5*

Jay A Auxt