

# Pentecostal Freedom: To Speak Up and Lean Toward the Other

Ken Wilson, 06.09.19

What happened on Pentecost? Group mystical experience. **Sound** of a violent wind (I imagine sound, minus the blowing) small flames of fire appear over each person—and then they all start speaking in languages they haven't learned, but are recognized by native speakers from Jewish diaspora in Jerusalem for festival.

Hard to make sense of mystical experience as an outside observer. So Luke gives us two different **reaction shots**. In film, a reaction shot is used when something so amazing or horrible happens, filmmaker can't depict it directly, so they convey it by showing a reaction to the thing—someone looking terrified or amazed.

If we read further in ACTS 2, what happened to **Peter** is a reaction shot. Under influence of Spirit, he got his SPEAK UP voice back: *Peter standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: these people aren't drunk, it's only 9am...this is the work of the Spirit poured out on all flesh as Joel the prophet foretold...Jesus of Nazareth, whom you saw teaching and doing marvelous deeds, was crucified, but God raised him from death, declaring his innocence, and this is his Spirit poured out!*

June is PRIDE month, and Pentecost is Peter's coming out day. But let's wind it back to night Peter lost his voice.

The night Jesus was arrested, taken to high priest for initial interrogation. Peter (with John) follows along to courtyard, within eye/earshot of Jesus. Female slave recognizes Peter as a disciple of Jesus and says so—out loud, perhaps accusingly. Peter denies knowing Jesus—to save his own skin. Sometimes speaking up takes courage we don't have.

All it takes to scapegoat a person or group is a minority of people allied with worldly power (and fearful majority who are silent). Peter was swept into that contagion, against his will but in line with his short-term interests.

Next, Jesus is crucified—Roman form of lynching—as were thousands of other Jewish men in his lifetime. But rumors circulated of his resurrection, buttressed by an empty tomb. Jesus appears to his disciples over the course of 40 days to reassure them he’s alive, vindicated by God ...

On 40<sup>th</sup> Day after resurrection, he gives final instructions—to go to Jerusalem and wait for the power of the Spirit to fall on them. And he lifts off—**ascends**, surrounded by a low fog-cloud, disappears. If we were to translate this into modern physics—we’d say he leaves our 4 dimensional space-time frame, enter into a 5<sup>th</sup> dimensional space. Flatland—life in 2 dimensions (length-width) but a third dimension (height or depth) is infinitely close.

Ancients had a different view of “the heavens”; 7 levels, from air-filled space around us to the space, just beyond sight (where God/angels) Much closer than “pie in the sky by and by” ... Wherever Jesus went in his ascension, people expected him to be nearby even though he wasn’t visible. And he made his personal presence known 10 days later on Pentecost.

We hear Peter speaking several times before Pentecost but never in public, **never when there’s any social cost** for his speaking. He’s always among friends, often behind closed doors.

But on Pentecost, Jesus—just beyond reach of ordinary senses, but nearby—**sends his Spirit...and Peter gets his voice back...**he’s able to **speak on** behalf of Scapegoated one to a crowd, not knowing if they would turn on him like an earlier crowd did.

Remember Pilate, who condemned Jesus is still governor, Herod is still client King of Rome, religious politics are same, crowds are as fickle as ever ... none of that has changed, but Peter has.

**SO Spirit enables us to speak up when speaking up is called for.**

I host a monthly dinner, **Parent-Allies & Friends**. Describe. As we’ve gotten to know each other, it’s clear that we’ve all had to find our voice in different ways, to speak up on behalf of our loved ones in the face of accusations of a scapegoating crowd.

Gay members have story of coming out first to themselves, then to close disapproving family members, then to a larger circle. A process that took a lot of courage and wisdom and often, time.

Parent allies have a similar story to tell—gaining their own voice to speak up on behalf of their kids with other disapproving family members, entire church communities, disapproving pastors.

This is a SPEAK UP moment in our country. On same weekend in June 2015, when Supreme Court announced right for gay people to marry, an **A.M.E church in Charleston, SC had 9 funerals**. Nine members of the church, including the pastor were meeting for a Bible Study. A white man came to the study for the first time. When group bowed their heads for opening prayer, he stood up and started shooting—spouting off his White Supremacy rhetoric.

IN 2018, when White Supremacists marched on Charlottesville, NC, the POTUS defended them as good people. **Many of us are part of extended families that don't see a problem.** There are times we need to speak up, even when it's awkward. We don't have to win any arguments, just speak up: "White Supremacy/hate crimes on rise. I'm distressed about it." (Self-define)

Many times in course of our lives when we need to speak up and it's hard and we need some Spirit help. I grew up in a family where you **learned not to express need or ask for help**. Recently, having some acute distress (trouble sleeping/nightmares) and I needed some help from a group of friends—Pastor colleagues beyond our church. But they didn't know it. They were used to me being the together/go-to guy. So my subtle signals weren't getting through. I had to wave my arms, say, "I'm hurting I need some help!" Once I did, they were great. Why did I wait so long to speak up? Because speaking up sometimes is a BIG DEAL

How big a deal? The power that does this for people is described as loud rushing wind sound...tongues of fire landing over each individual person...finding your voice to speak in this way is akin to connecting with the God Jesus knows and reveals.

That's one reaction shot: mealy-mouthed Peter growing some ovaries and finding his SPEAK UP voice.

Second reaction shot: 120 Jewish women & men from Galilee, speaking in languages of the pilgrims from around the Empire...

2 forms of speaking in tongues—sounds with meaning unknown to speaker...and sounds with meaning unknown to speaker but known to someone else. First is pretty common, latter rare.

### **Story visiting B & S in hospital story**

Helped me see Pentecost story from the perspective of those who heard their native tongue spoken by non-native people. When you are in a foreign land, and hear someone speak your native language—your heart melts. You feel known, loved.

That's what the Spirit does—makes whoever the outsider is, feel loved and known. To speak another language is an **act of empathy**—to enter another culture, another way of life.

We're all in our own worlds shaped by our own experiences—we each inhabit our own mini-culture. To know another person as we would want to be known, is to find someone willing to enter our world, our frame of reference, to meet us there. Nature of love.

Parents in Parent Allies group are doing that for their kids.

But this isn't some specialty parental skill for parents of LGBTQ kids. All parents have to enter the world their children inhabit.

(Isaiah, Lamb of God...)

This is what it means for one human being to love another human being. And the love between is the Spirit (Augustine)

Here's a mundane example: names. Grew up in racist Detroit 1950's—names: Tom, Dick, Debbie, Nancy, Jane, Matthew, Michael. "Clyde" was unusual. Shaped my brain. Have to work harder to learn names that are a little different (Caroline)

**Love is the lean into the unfamiliar world of the other.**

## **QUIET REFLECTION**

**[Spirit coming to people, filling them, influencing them.]**

Take a minute to identify-name-describe an issue you are facing right now in your life, where you feel stuck. Could be a relationship that feels stuck. Could be a decision you're facing, don't know way forward. Could be a situation, feel a need for a fresh perspective.

**Resist the temptation to mull over that thing. Just name it or describe it. Write it down.**

**Now picture your current response-perception about that issue, situation, relationship, as if it were a dried-out sponge.**

**Ask Spirit to come in form of moisture-water to soften the sponge, soak it good, fill it up with water.**

**Going forward 2 things:**

1. Fold up 3X5 card and place it in basket as a way of asking God to take care of it
2. If you want to over next week, take a minute every day to picture your response as dried up sponge, see that same filling with water-softening