

Don't Downplay the Power of Pentecost

Pentecost is

Sunday, May 23. Here are four reasons we should celebrate the Spirit's outpouring.

I've often

wondered why we tend to ignore the historic events of Acts 2. We celebrate

Christmas for weeks, and we pack as many people as possible into our churches

on Easter Sunday. But

in our smug evangelical subculture, Pentecost is just an add-on, if it's

noticed at all. We can take it or leave it.

Many

pastors will make no mention of the Holy Spirit this Pentecost Sunday, May 23.

“Pentecost turned boring religion into an amazing adventure, and it transformed ordinary people into bold missionaries. It can do the same for us today.”

It's

no surprise that many American churches are not Pentecostal in the biblical

sense. If we haven't blatantly denied the supernatural power of God, we've

downplayed it, muted it, limited it or downgraded it. It's just a blip on the first

century screen that has no meaning for us today. That's tragic

because

Pentecost is vitally relevant for many reasons, including these four:

Pentecost empowers us.

I've often heard ministers say that if the power of the Holy Spirit were removed from the church, most Christians would never know the difference. Would you?

Was there a time in your life when you were supernaturally plugged into God's power? Can you tell the difference now? Or has your Christian life been a tedious journey of self-effort?

Many Christians view Pentecost as just a symbol—or a nice image they've seen in a stained glass window. Don't reduce the Holy Spirit's work to an event in history. The Lord wants to make Pentecost personal in every Christian's life. The early church could not fulfill its mission without the wind and the fire—and neither can you. Every believer needs to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

In some paintings of Pentecost, the fire resting on the heads of the disciples has been depicted to look like tiny flames from Bic lighters or birthday candles. I doubt the Spirit's power looked so puny. When His anointing flows through us we receive power to share our faith, heal the sick, cast out demons, speak His inspired message and receive His divine direction. Don't minimize the Spirit's potential in your life. Dare to catch on fire!

Pentecost

interrupts us. The Bible tells us that the wind of the Spirit blew into the upper room “suddenly” (Acts 2:2)—and His arrival was not on anyone’s timetable. Jesus Himself said the Spirit is unpredictable. Like an invisible wind He blows where He wills (John 3:8). We cannot control Him. Yet Jesus expected His early followers to wait for His interruption.

Waiting for the Spirit is not convenient, and patience runs contrary to human nature. We would rather run our lives and ministries ourselves, using our good ideas and clever church-growth strategies. We’d rather do things on our schedule. Thankfully the early disciples resisted that temptation. They waited for the suddenly—and the result was the most explosive, effective and fruitful ministry strategy the church has ever known. Effective work for God today must follow the same model.

Pentecost

unites us.

When the Holy Spirit was poured out in the upper room, the New Testament church was born and Jesus redefined who can be anointed for ministry. Under the Old Covenant, only Jewish males from the tribe of Levi could serve around the altar of sacrifice. But when the Spirit came, the oil of His anointing was poured on men and women—and Peter told them that all races and all ages would be empowered to preach the gospel.

The wind of the Spirit always breaks down barriers of race, gender, age and even economic class. He dismantled old traditions and ushered in a revolutionary new day of reconciliation. After Peter was anointed by the Spirit, he found himself in an Italian house, leading dozens of Gentiles to Christ in the house of Cornelius. Wherever the fire of Pentecost spreads, barriers of race, culture, gender, age and class are dismantled.

Is your church truly Pentecostal? It isn't if you aren't crossing barriers and reaching the people who have been sidelined or oppressed in your community.

Pentecost propels us.

There is nothing static about Pentecost. Although Jesus told His early followers to "stay in the city until you are clothed with power from high" (Luke 24:49, NASB), He never intended for them to linger there after the fire fell. Once they had been baptized in the Spirit they were energized with hot zeal. They could not sit still or keep their mouths shut.

From that moment the book of Acts becomes a blur of noisy commotion. The newly ignited saints darted back and forth through Jerusalem like spiritual pyromaniacs, spreading the fire of God as they healed lame beggars, baptized new converts and miraculously broke free from prisons. After Philip the evangelist took the gospel to a Samaritan village, he was

literally picked up by the Spirit and carried to Azotus in an instant.

Pentecost was an accelerant—it seemed to speed up time, and it gave Jesus' followers an uncanny mobility. Pentecost turned boring religion into an amazing adventure, and it transformed ordinary people into bold missionaries. It can do the same for us today.

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