

Why Pentecost Will Make You Louder

The global church will celebrate Pentecost this Sunday, May 28. We usually emphasize spiritual gifts when we talk about Pentecost, or we focus on the sensory experience of the Spirit's presence.

I know the Spirit's gifts are important, and I love the feelings, too. But we shouldn't minimize the fact that the Holy Spirit's infilling is what gives us the power to preach the gospel to others.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He told His timid followers in Luke 24:49 to stay in Jerusalem until they had been "clothed with power." One of those disciples was Peter, who just a few weeks earlier had denied Jesus three times.

Peter caved under the pressure of the fear of man. Yet when he was filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, this wimpy defector became a courageous apostle. He stood in front of a huge crowd and preached a sermon that resulted in 3,000 conversions. The Spirit gave Peter unusual courage to speak.

The Spirit crushes our fears and gives us an uncanny grace to stand for Jesus. In Acts 4:31, Luke writes: "And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness."

The Spirit not only shook the ground, He also shook those early disciples to the core, freeing them from the fear of man. They couldn't stop talking about Jesus. That is what should happen when Christians are filled with the Spirit.

This happened to me when I was just 18 years old. I had been a shy kid in high school, but the Holy Spirit rocked the core of

my being and put a holy fire in my heart that I couldn't contain. I went to college and began sharing my faith with classmates and even teachers.

If I went into a convenience store I would witness to the clerk at the cash register. If I went to the beach I would walk up to strangers and tell them about Christ. If you knew how timid I was in high school you would have been amazed to see me sharing my faith publicly.

Before graduating from college, I even walked into a bar near my campus. I had never been in a bar before, and honestly I'm not sure if I was old enough to legally enter that place! But I sat down beside a man at the counter and said, "How is your relationship with God, sir?"

The disheveled man looked up from his shot glass with a frown. "I come into places like this to get away from people like you," he said. I smiled back and told him how I had become a Christian. I would never have been able to share Christ in such a bold way before I was baptized in the Holy Spirit. Jesus transformed my introverted nature.

You may think my visit to that bar sounds obnoxious. But bold steps of faith like that helped me overcome my insecurities. Eventually, after years as a quiet journalist, I surrendered to a call to preach. Since then I've taken the message of Jesus to 39 countries.

Do you consider yourself a timid person? Do you believe God can empower you to the point that you can witness to people without worrying about what they think?

Many Christians forget that everyone in the upper room was empowered, not just Peter and the other apostles. The flame of God rested on every head, and everyone spoke in tongues. Pentecost is not just for professional ministers. The Holy Spirit can make anybody bold.

You may feel crippled by insecurities, inferiority and a low level of confidence. Join the club! Most preachers in the Bible were reluctant!

- Moses made excuses about stuttering because he didn't want to speak publicly;
- Gideon gave God multiple reasons why he should be disqualified;
- Jeremiah complained about the responsibility of being a prophet;
- Jonah bought a one-way ticket to the other side of the Mediterranean Sea so he wouldn't have to deliver his unpopular sermon in Nineveh;
- Even the apostle Paul struggled with fears. He told the Corinthians: "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling" (1 Cor. 2:3);
- Timothy led the church in Ephesus, a dark city full of idolatry. He wrestled with fears, but Paul told him: "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline" (2 Tim. 1:7).

Paul also gave Timothy the secret of boldness. He instructed him to "kindle afresh the gift of God" (2 Tim. 1:6). The New International Version says it this way: "Fan into flame the gift of God." He was urging Timothy to plug back into Pentecost. God gives us His Spirit to empower us. He enables us to break out of our shyness so we can share the love of Jesus with others without inhibitions.

Don't let timidity muffle your sound. Break free from fear. Rekindle the flame. Ask God to turn up your volume. This Pentecost, stir up the Spirit's fire so you can become louder for Him.

If you'd like to dig deeper into the ministry of the Holy Spirit, you can read Lee Grady's 28-day devotional on the book of Acts on the YouVersion app. Just download the free Bible app and search for "Rekindle the Flame."

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