Our Pentecostal Heritage Can Help Us Move Forward

By Tim Enloe

7/01/15

My earliest childhood memories center around an Assemblies of God church in Harrisburg, PA. I am thankful for the solid role models God has placed in my life—primarily my parents—but also pastors, youth leaders and many others. My Pentecostal heritage has not been perfect, but the positives have greatly out-weighed any negatives. I am grateful to those who went before me and planted the churches I have called home, built the Bible College I attended and established the denomination that facilitates our calling today.

Every church and ministry exists because of the sacrifice of others who have gone before. We have all built upon the foundations laid by others; whether it be their groundbreaking apostolic ministry, financial sacrifice, faithfulness to God or mentoring of our current leaders; we are their debtors. Our present ministries have much deeper historical roots than we realize.

In diverse cultures around the planet, our Pentecostal pioneers had a handful of transcendent practices that well-served their callings. Remembering, re-examining and renewing these same practices today will undoubtedly position us to move forward in our respective ministries. There were certainly some temporary methods or structures based upon culture, chronology, or geography that have expired; however the five transcendent practices mentioned below are just as relevant and critical today as in the days of the original Apostles.

**Emphasis on Participatory Prayer**

Our forefathers had little systemic or financial support; they planted churches and spearheaded new ministries often with nothing to rely upon but God; so they prayed. Fervent prayer—both personally and corporately—brought about countless miracles. Today we may be tempted to enjoy the fruit of their early labors while not continuing the biblical practice of prioritizing participatory prayer times in our regular services. Do we give enough time for our people to actually pray in the House of Prayer?

There is a direct correlation between regular corporate prayer/altar time and the amount of miraculous, supernatural power expressed in our churches. Acts 4:24ff shows us that more prayer = more miracles. We all know the importance of prayer, but may we make a renewed commitment to model it consistently in our services—fulfilling the commandment of Jesus that His house would be defined as a House of Prayer.

**Reliance on the Holy Spirit’s Gifts and Power**

It is a fact; some churches are downplaying the ministry of the Holy Spirit today. It is most certainly because of fear; likely the fear of having to deal with human excess or pride, or perhaps the selfish fear of leader embarrassment. Paul warned the Galatian church of the error of beginning with reliance on the Spirit and trying to finish by relying on the flesh (Gal 3:3). The people we serve need the full, healthy expressions of Acts in their lives. It is entirely possible to have healthy, consistent expressions of the Spirit’s gifts and power if we take some time and teach with a positive, enabling tone. Spiritual leaders nurture what they teach. We must once again lead the way by relying and facilitating authentic Holy Spirit gifts and power.

**Culture of Participation**

New Testament church life is thoroughly participatory in Acts. In fact, the Pentecostal groundbreakers of the early 1900’s met a deep need of the mainline, formal churchgoer. They created an atmosphere where everyone could interact with the presence of God—rather than merely watch His representative perform distant ceremonies. This happened again during the Charismatic renewal of the 1960’s-1970’s and again in recent years. We need to watch our people carefully during every stage of our services—are they merely an audience or are they spiritually engaged and participating? Then pray to ask God what to tweak in order to enable greater spiritual participation.

**Commitment to the Word**

Today, our secular culture seems to have no tolerance for biblical standards or truth. Paul warned Timothy about this—and reminded him that he was not to operate in a spirit of timidity. Our communities still need the bold, unpopular-to-the-flesh proclamation of God’s Word. We cannot round the corners that our forefathers so accurately and righteously sharpened. God help us to continue to throw life-preservers of truth to the drowning instead of anesthetizing them with spineless, Word-less speeches. We must continue to be true to the standards of scripture while still expressing genuine love and compassion.

**Passion for the Lost**

I have yet to meet a pastor without a passion for souls, but I have met many who are so overwhelmed and distracted that this passion gets put on the back burner. Honestly, I have encountered this in my own priorities. Our Pentecostal forefathers were driven with urgent conviction that every person is eternally lost without Jesus, but that Jesus is here now to save. May we recommit ourselves to the urgency and priority of the lost.

Why is it so important for us to reflect upon and renew our Pentecostal practices? The world desperately needs to powerfully encounter their Creator God. The more we conform to the Book of Acts model espoused by our forefathers, the better equipped and empowered we will be to move forward in mission.