

Eugene Barron, Littleton, Colorado tells of driving down a two-lane highway where someone had thrown garbage onto the road. Most of it had been scattered off the road except one plastic cup. This cup was positioned right in the middle of road. In fact, it was in the center of the two yellow lines. The road was straight enough that Barron noticed the cup long before he got to it.

Every time a car passed by the cup, it would simply roll to the opposite side without moving from the center. When another car from the other direction came by, the force of the wind would blow the cup to the other side. When two cars passed at the same time the cup went wild. **It did not know which way to go.**

Many of us are like that paper cup--we are blown by each prevailing wind. Wouldn't it be great to be so focused, so determined, that you made each moment of every day focused, meaningful, powerful? I want to show you from the story of the first Pentecost, the church's birthday, how you can have Pentecostal power at work at home, at work and in your church family.

Most of you know the story well. On the day of Pentecost, the followers of Jesus were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And suddenly they were aware of something like tongues of fire resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues.

But here is what is even more important. Jerusalem was filled with devout people from many nations, and when they heard the followers of Jesus sharing their testimony, each of the foreigners heard them tell about the great acts of God in their own language. And they were amazed, for they knew that those who were doing the testifying were uneducated, unsophisticated Galileans. **And they asked, "How can this be?"**

Something spectacular, life-changing, world-shaking happened on the day of Pentecost. Wouldn't it be nice if we could tap into that? Wouldn't it be nice if we could appropriate that burst of power for our own lives?

First of all, we see in this story a miracle of COMMUNICATION.

People from different nations heard the followers of Jesus in their own tongue. We need to make one thing perfectly clear. Jesus' followers were not speaking in unknown tongues at Pentecost. Just the opposite. They were speaking in the exact tongues of the people who were listening. **The communication was not restricted to a few. It was opened up to as many people as possible.**

This is important. So often Christians speak in code. If you are not part of the group, you have difficulty understanding what's being said. You hear the words, but they are not words with which you can relate. Pastors particularly can be guilty of this. Perhaps you have heard a pastor speak for thirty minutes on sin and never define what sin is. Or what particular sin he or she is talking about. That is why we use examples, anecdotes, analogies. Some people may wonder why I use so many stories. I want everyone in this room to understand exactly what I am talking about. I want the message to be understood by the youngest member of our congregation and the oldest. And so, I use lots of stories. Because everyone can understand a story. The miracle of Pentecost is a miracle of communication.

Pastor Bob Malcomb was on a mission trip in Belarus, where his team was building churches. His translator and guide were named Eger. Eger told Pastor Malcomb that the Russian words, "Dos-Vee-Don-Ya" and "Pa-Ka" were old-hat. He needed to get with the times and say good-bye the modern way. They were designing seven churches and at the end of meeting with the pastor of each church, Pastor Malcomb used the new phrase he had learned, "**Val- EE-Et-Suda.**" He could tell by the look on their faces they were quite impressed with his Russian. **However, the last pastor took him aside and said, "Robert why do you keep telling each pastor to 'Get lost' at the end of the meeting?"**

When you are communicating in another language, you must be very precise. But even in our own language, the better we communicate, the more effective we will be. Mis-communication can cause embarrassing situations. You may

remember the story about the couple who were going out for the evening. They called a taxi and put the cat out for the evening.

The taxi arrived, and as the couple walked out the front door, the cat shot back in. They didn't want the cat shut in the house, so the wife went out to the taxi while the husband went upstairs to chase the cat out. The wife, not wanting it known that the house would be empty explained to the taxi driver, "My husband's just going upstairs to say goodbye to my mother." A few minutes later, the husband climbed into the cab. "Sorry I took so long," he said, "***Stupid old thing was hiding under the bed and I had to poke her with a coat hanger to get her to come out!***" Mis-communication can be embarrassing.

A few years ago, radio broadcaster Mort Crim and his producer were taping a documentary in Cairo, Egypt. Their visit came not long after Egypt's President, Anwar Sadat, had been assassinated. They hoped to include in the documentary an interview with Sadat's widow. The producer made a routine phone call to their station back in the U.S. mentioning that he thought they "had a good shot at Mrs. Sadat tomorrow." Within minutes, the Egyptian police were at their door. Evidently, the phones were being tapped by Egyptian security forces. **The Egyptians, unfamiliar with American slang, had been alarmed by the comment that they "had a good shot at Sadat's widow."**

Mort Crim and his producer had some fast explaining to do to keep from being carted off to jail. You never know who might be listening to your words, or how your listeners might interpret what you say. **The miracle of Pentecost was, first of all, a miracle of communication.**

Even more important, it was a miracle of CONNECTION.

The followers of Jesus connected with their audience. Have you ever heard a speaker speaking, and his language is eloquent, and he has good stories to tell, but somehow his words zing right by you? Communication experts say that is a problem of "connection." They tell us that this is the most important part of the communication process: **Does the speaker connect with the audience?**

Sometimes we communicate the best when we say nothing at all. Pastor Ed Young, in his book *Romancing the Home*, suggests that **husbands learn two techniques for listening to their wives:** the "**hold the bucket**" technique and "**the mirror stance.**" Men are fixers, so when women talk about their problems men usually want to offer solutions. But women often talk about their problems in order to sort through their feelings and look at the problem from all angles. They don't want a solution as much as they want understanding and empathy. The best thing for a husband to do when his wife has a problem is to "hold the bucket": just let her express her emotions without offering any advice or judgment. Or, a husband could use "the mirror stance": just reflect his wife's feelings back to her. Re-state whatever she says in his own words. This allows her to clarify her emotions and to know that she is understood. Both of these forms of listening will make a woman feel loved and respected.

Can you see how powerful this concept of connection is?

If you want to be more powerful in your communication, #1: you need to stop talking and LISTEN. You need to walk in his or her shoes. That way when you speak you are not simply mouthing words. You are connecting at a profound level with another human being. As writer Stephen Covey puts it: "We seek first to understand, then to be understood." This is what God did in Jesus Christ. God put on our shoes. God walked where we walk. God built a connection.

It doesn't always work, of course. There were some who heard the disciples testifying on the Day of Pentecost and thought they were drunk. They didn't hear anything at all that was meaningful. And they were probably people who had no difficulty understanding the disciples' words. They simply weren't connected. **The miracle of Pentecost was as much about listening as it was about speaking. Yes, the power of communication depends on speaking, but it also depends on SPEAKING.**

A Southern mom was talking with her young son about why all their relatives from the North "talk funny." "They have a different accent," she explained. "Everybody talks in different ways," she continued. "To them, we sound like we talk very slow, and all our words are drawn out." His eyes got big, and he asked, "You mean they hear funny, too?"

Not everybody who listened to the apostles on that first Pentecost understood what they were saying. Only those who were connected. Pentecost is about communication. And it is about connection, listening as well as speaking.

Finally, the Miracle of Pentecost is about COOPERATION.

You know what happened following the gift of the spirit at Pentecost. They were wildly successful in reaching their GOALS. Daily, people were added to the church. They grew closer to one another. They shared all things in common. They ate together, and they prayed together, and they sang together and they witnessed together. They were a team in every sense of the word.

In the summer of 1995, a movie, Apollo 13, commemorated the 25th anniversary of the famous space flight. Starring Tom Hanks, the movie captured the imagination of Americans as it played in sold-out theaters across the country. More than simply a retelling of history, the movie inspired viewers with its sense of the exhilaration and pride that comes from working together toward a goal worth achieving. The flight of Apollo 13 was beset by obstacles. An explosion on board forced a change of plans to land on the moon and shifted the mission into a frenzied endeavor to return the astronauts home safely. On the ground, mission control teams worked frantically to come up with alternatives that could replace damaged equipment. In the spacecraft, the three astronauts pooled talents, experience and energy to create a focused cohesive unit with one mission in mind. Only with the cooperation of everyone involved were the astronauts able to navigate their crippled capsule back to earth.

In short, they COOPERATED WELL with one another. *It has been shown time and time again. WHEN PEOPLE WORK AS A TEAM they can achieve amazing things.*

There's a wonderful story about Jimmy Durante, one of the great entertainers of the 20th century. He was asked to be a part of a show for World War II veterans. He told them his schedule was very busy, and he could afford only a few minutes, but if they wouldn't mind his doing one short monologue and immediately leaving for his next appointment, he would come. Of course, the show's director agreed happily. **But when Jimmy got on stage, something interesting happened.** He went through the short monologue and then stayed. The applause grew louder and louder, and he kept staying. **Pretty soon, he had been on fifteen, twenty, then thirty minutes.** Finally, he took a last bow and left the stage. Backstage someone stopped him and said, *"I thought you had to go after a few minutes. What happened?"*

Jimmy answered, "I did have to go, but I can show you the reason I stayed. You can see for yourself if you'll look down on the front row." In the front row were two men, each of whom had lost an arm in the war. One had lost his right arm, and the other had lost his left. **Together, they were able to clap, and that's exactly what they were doing, loudly and cheerfully.**

Want to know how to build a great business or a great family or a great church? **Learn the meaning of these three words: *communication, connection, cooperation.***

In fact, if these 3 signs are ACTIVE IN OUR LIVES, so is the Holy Spirit's PRESENCE active in our lives and in the life of our church.

Listen to them again: **COMMUNICATION, CONNECTION, & COOPERATION.**

With the "GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT," God will allow each of these TRAITs to make you the GREATEST TEAM WORKER He has called you to do be! Amen.