

Grounded: in the Body in Time & Place, in Scripture

# "Wisdom Cries Out": Towards a Feminist Pentecostal Theology of (Dis)ability

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## Meet the author

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## Chapter overview

In the wisdom literature, a feminine sophia is depicted as crying out in the public square or marketplace (e.g. Prov 1:20). This is an embodied cry, as in, it comes from the depth of her being. Similarly, the Spirit still cries out today in vocalizations from bodies who are often relegated to the social margins.

In a Spirit-led church that prioritizes prophetic prayer and worship, Christians together practice encountering the voice of God. This chapter draws on research done within Australian Pentecostal churches to re-examine Pentecostal practices or spiritualities. It notices how the worshipping body becomes the site of the Spirit speaking.

Because many Australian churches appeal to wider contemporary culture by emphasising a young and ideal body type on stage, this can sometimes hide the fact that disability, aging, and finally death is also a part of Christian life.

Drawing on the feminist theological idea of “power-in-vulnerability” allows us to note ways men and women with disabilities can model leadership, even if not on the platform. This decenters a normative able-bodied pastoral model often provided by Pentecostals. But it does not seek to abandon the insights that the young and healthy provide. Instead, it argues for a Pentecostal pneumatology of consensus.

Pentecostals draw on Acts 2 as a biblical model for today. This is an available, direct and unmediated bodily experience of God’s Spirit. All the voices cried out together at the birth of the church in Pentecost event. Similarly today, as each person cries out their embodied truth, we can see the church grow into its fullness.

## General Study Questions

### Question 1

What do you think when you hear the word "Pentecostal"?

### Question 2

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When you read Acts 2, what stands out from the passage for you?

### **Question 3**

What do you think it might have felt like to be at the Pentecost event in the upper room (Acts 2:1-13)?

### **Question 4**

Read through Peter's address to the crowd that day (Acts 2:14-21). What do you think the role of the preacher was in this context?

### **Question 5**

Does that contrast your experience of preachers in your own church? In what ways, if any?

### **Question 6**

Have you ever felt that you are not particularly represented by or included in the centre of what is happening in church?

### **Question 7**

Have you ever felt like you had things to say but you weren't asked or involved?

### **-Question 8**

Can you think of a Christian who has influenced you but who is rarely asked to lead at church?

### **Question 9**

In what ways have you heard God's wisdom cried out in unexpected ways?

## **Academic Questions**

### **Question 1**

The lingual diversity in the Acts 2 passage allows us to see a picture of multi-directional communication (v1-12). Yet Western churches are often monolingual. Discuss.

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## Question 2

Acts 2 continues with a sense of togetherness in the church's life outside the walls (v42-47). How can worship foster this communal life in Western contexts given a Neoliberal focus on the individual?

## Question 3

How important is being relevant to our digital cultural context with its focus upon the body via social media platforms that have particular views of "success"? Can we think of that as a language?

## Question 4

How important is it to amplify the voices of people who may not fit into that picture, and who therefore may be overlooked and marginalised?

## Question 5

How can we better attend to those with disability in the church context?

## Question 6

How can we amplify the wisdoms of people who may be unexpected leaders without unintentionally tokenising or diminishing their struggles/pain?