

## UNDERSTANDING THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF PENTECOSTAL SPIRITUALITY AND ITS APPLICATION TO EVANGELISM IN INDONESIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Pentecostal spirituality possesses unique characteristics that emphasize direct experiences with the Holy Spirit, including manifestations of spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues and healing. The Pentecostal Church has rapidly grown in Indonesia, attracting many people with its dynamic spiritual approach that aligns with local cultural values. However, the application of this spirituality in evangelism faces challenges, especially in the context of a multicultural and multi-religious society. Overly expressive approaches may be perceived as foreign by communities with different cultural backgrounds, necessitating adjustments in evangelistic methods to enhance acceptance. This study employs qualitative methods to explore the distinctiveness of Pentecostal spirituality and its implementation within the Indonesian context. The findings indicate that while this spirituality holds significant appeal, the church must maintain a balance between preserving its spiritual identity and adapting to reach a broader audience. By understanding the social and cultural context, the Pentecostal Church is expected to be more effective in its evangelistic mission in Indonesia.*

**KEYWORDS** *Pentecostal Spirituality, Evangelism, Multicultural.*



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### INTRODUCTION

The Pentecostal Church is one of the denominations that is experiencing rapid development in the Christian church landscape in Indonesia. This hallmark of Pentecostal spirituality centers on direct experience with the Holy Spirit as well as the manifestation of various spiritual gifts, such as speaking in tongues, healing, and prophecy. This spirituality is not just a theological aspect, but also reflects a real, dynamic, and experiential expression of faith that strengthens the church's closeness to God. Pentecostals believe that this manifestation is evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit that is manifest in their lives, creating a lively and meaningful atmosphere of worship. In Pentecost worship, the congregation is actively and emotionally involved, feels God's real presence, and experiences the impact of faith in daily life.

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In multicultural and multireligious Indonesia, Pentecostal spirituality has its own attraction. The Pentecostal approach that prioritizes deep spiritual experiences is in line with the tendency of Indonesian people to appreciate the mystical and supernatural aspects of religious life. The Pentecostal Church offers a form of spirituality that is relevant to Indonesian cultural values, thus attracting the attention of many people who are looking for a more intense relationship with God.

However, the application of Pentecostal spirituality in evangelism in Indonesia faces a number of challenges. In a culturally and religiously diverse society, approaches that are too expressive or different from existing traditions can be an obstacle to reaching a wider community. Although Pentecostal spirituality is able to attract attention and lead many people to a new experience of faith, there are obstacles in the acceptance of local culture. Pentecostal worship traditions such as the use of tongues or healing prayers with physical manifestations are often considered foreign, or even less accepted, in societies with different religious or cultural backgrounds.

In addition, the perception of several other Christian groups views the practice of Pentecostal worship as excessive, which is a challenge for Pentecostal churches in preaching the Gospel. Pentecostal churches need to maintain a balance between maintaining their spirituality characteristics and adjusting to be accepted by the wider society. In some churches, adaptation and adjustment are carefully carried out so that this characteristic of spirituality is preserved, but relevant in the Indonesian social context.

The proclamation of the Gospel as a manifestation of the Great Commission is an absolute necessity for believers. All people have the right to hear and receive the good news and the Gospel is the good news itself, so the preaching of the Gospel has a very wide reach.<sup>1</sup> However, it is important to consider that effective preaching of the Gospel in Indonesia requires an approach that takes into account the uniqueness of spirituality and the existing socio-cultural context. Gospel preaching is not only about conveying the message of faith, but also how it can be received by people outside the church. Therefore, Pentecostal churches need to understand relevant strategies, respect local wisdom, and prioritize a contextual approach so that the preaching of the Gospel is more effective.

It is in this context that research on the peculiarities of Pentecostal spirituality and its application in the preaching of the Gospel in Indonesia is very important. By understanding how this spirituality works and the form of adaptation required, it is hoped that Pentecostal churches can be more effective in their mission to reach the people of Indonesia.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative method with a literature study and phenomenon analysis approach to understand the peculiarities of Pentecostal spirituality and its application in the preaching of the Gospel in Indonesia. Through literature studies, researchers examine written sources, such as books, journals, and scientific articles, that relate to the history, characteristics, and influence of Pentecostal spirituality. This approach provides a strong theoretical and theological foundation in understanding how Pentecostal spirituality differs from other Christian traditions,

especially in terms of manifestations of spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues and healing. In addition, this literature study allows researchers to compare the results of previous research and enrich their understanding of the impact of Pentecostal spirituality on the preaching of the Gospel in a diverse Indonesian society.

Meanwhile, a phenomenon analysis was conducted to explore how Pentecostal spirituality is applied in field practice and how society responds to it. The researcher observed related phenomena, such as the way worship and evangelism are carried out by Pentecostal congregations in Indonesia, as well as the adaptations needed to face various cultural challenges. This approach helps researchers understand how Pentecostal churches reach a wider community without losing their spirituality characteristics. The focus on the analysis of this phenomenon allows research to observe the responses and perceptions of society, as well as the forms of adjustments made by the church to overcome social and cultural barriers. The research data was obtained from various secondary sources and analyzed descriptively.

Data collected through literature will help identify the main concepts of Pentecostal spirituality, while phenomenal data are obtained from observations of the practice of evangelism in the context of Indonesian culture. This approach is expected to provide a more in-depth picture of how the peculiarities of Pentecostal spirituality can be effectively applied in the proclamation of the Gospel in Indonesia, as well as various adjustments that need to be made by the church to reach a wider community amidst cultural and religious diversity.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Peculiarities of Pentecostal Spirituality**

Spirituality is a term that is quite well known and appears in various aspects of life, often related to spiritual aspects and religious values. Although the term is often associated with religion and belief, the meaning of spirituality is fundamentally broader. In Latin, spirituality comes from the word *spiritus*, which means breath, spirit, or life (Ballanggiku, 2020). This meaning shows that spirituality is closely related to personal experience, as a real state that people experience in their daily lives (Katu, 2022). Thus, spirituality becomes a reflection of human relationships with a higher dimension, apart from mere rituals or religious doctrines.

In Christianity, spirituality has many different definitions and understandings, depending on the traditions and denominations that exist within it. Each church has a unique approach to spirituality, but it has one common goal: to strengthen a personal relationship with God. According to Junifrius in his book *Pentecostal Mission Theology*, the foundation of Pentecostal spirituality is rooted in personal life and direct experience with God, based on a strong commitment to live according to His word (Gultom, 2018). For Christians, spiritual experiences are an important part of the walk of faith, and they must be experienced and lived by themselves in order to have deep meaning.

Pentecostalism is a movement in Christianity that emphasizes the power and work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. The term Pentecost itself refers to

events in Acts 1 and 2, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the apostles, giving them the ability to speak in languages they had not previously understood. This event was the beginning of the rapid development of the church, along with the zeal of the apostles in spreading the Gospel and performing signs and miracles as a result of the power of the Holy Spirit. The Pentecostal movement sees the work of the Holy Spirit as a major force in every aspect of spiritual life, including in service, healing, and witness of faith.

In the 20th century, the Pentecostal movement experienced a very rapid development and became a continuation of the early church movement in the time of the apostles (Sutoyo, 2018). This movement is known for its dynamic, open, and flexible nature, both in dogmatic and liturgical aspects. Pentecostalism became a great force that even permeated various other denominations, including the Catholic church and some Protestant churches. This peculiarity makes Pentecostal spirituality easily accepted by various circles because it is not so tied to a formal structure, but rather focuses more on direct and real spiritual experiences with the Holy Spirit (Katu, 2022).

In Pentecostal spirituality, the concept of God's power and the revelation of the Holy Spirit is at the core of faith (Alanna & Laura, 2020). According to Allister McGrath in his book *Introduction to Christian Spirituality* and R.P. Spittler in *The Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement Dictionary*, Pentecostal spirituality focuses on three main things: truth, holiness, and God's real power in the lives of believers. In the Pentecostal tradition, closeness to God is manifested through a life that is led, empowered, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Concepts such as "baptized in the Spirit," "possessed by the Spirit," and "filled with the Spirit" are important descriptions of the deepening relationship between the Pentecostal church and the Triune God.

Pentecostal spirituality has several distinctive features that set it apart from other Christian traditions. Some of these key characteristics are a faith-centered focus on the Holy Spirit, the use of tongues or glossolalia, the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and spiritual gifts such as healing, prophecy, and miracles. These manifestations, which are often accompanied by emotionally powerful experiences, create a lively and meaningful atmosphere of worship. Pentecost also often emphasizes aspects such as spiritual warfare, divine miracles, and personal testimony, all of which form a passionate spirituality and focus on direct experience with the power of God.

One of the unique characteristics of Pentecost is the emphasis on the experience of faith in reality rather than doctrinal knowledge. For Pentecostals, direct experience with the Holy Spirit is more valuable than purely rational cognitive understanding. This is different from other traditions that tend to prioritize doctrine as the main basis for faith. Therefore, Pentecostalism became a more pragmatic and experiential theological movement, where worship became the main means of theology. This view, while often a criticism for non-Pentecostal scholars, reflects a hallmark of Pentecostal spirituality that favors the powerful experience of faith over the cognitive aspects of theology.

Therefore, pentecostalism is not only a belief, but also an experience that moves believers to live in the power of the Holy Spirit, bringing God's strength and

work manifestly in daily life. In the midst of cultural and religious diversity in Indonesia, Pentecostal spirituality continues to develop as a form of faith that focuses on the power and work of the Holy Spirit, attracting a lot of attention because it is considered to provide practical answers for those who want to experience faith firsthand.

### **The Development and Attraction of Pentecostal Spirituality in Indonesia**

Today, Pentecostal churches have grown rapidly in Indonesia, featuring a variety of denominations based on Pentecostal spirituality. Some of them include the Pentecostal Church in Indonesia (GPdI), the Pentecostal Movement Church (GGP), the Pentecostal Messenger Church (GUP), and the Central Pentecostal Church of Surabaya (GPPS).

There are also churches that are Pentecostal but do not directly use the name "Pentecostal," such as the Church of the Congregation of God (GSJA), the Full Gospel Bethel Church (GBIS), the Jesus Church (GIA), the Indonesian Bethel Church (GBI), the Indonesian Bethany Church, the Indonesian Tiberias Church, and the Indonesian Christian Church (JKI). In addition to these churches, there are also church organizations such as Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International (FGBMFI), Inter-University Student Fellowship (Perkantas), Indonesian Student Service Institute (LPMI), Christian Student Fellowship (PMK), and Christian Student Fellowship (PSK) which play a role in expanding the influence of Pentecostal spirituality.

The Pentecostal movement is not limited to Pentecostal churches alone, but also develops in the form of the Charismatic movement in several other denominations. Some examples of denominations that have also adopted the Charismatic element of the Pentecostal movement are the Catholic Church, the Indonesian Mennonite Church (GKMI), the Baptist Church, and several other non-Pentecostal churches. In fact, several Indonesian Christian churches (GKI) in Semarang are rumored to hold worship services in a Pentecostal-style atmosphere at certain times. This shows that Pentecostal spirituality has an appeal that crosses denominational boundaries, reaching out to various other church traditions in Indonesia.

In terms of the number of congregations, Pentecostal churches or the movement known more widely as Pentecostalism have shown tremendous development in time

brief. Although it is only about a century old, this movement is predicted by some experts to soon surpass Catholic and Protestant churches in terms of the number of congregations. In Indonesia, Pentecostal churches are even considered one of the main pillars in Christianity, side by side with Protestants and Catholics. Protestant theologian Th. Sumartana illustrates this in his writings by saying that there are three major forces in Christianity in Indonesia: the Roman Catholic Church, Protestant churches, and the Pentecostal movement or the rapidly growing Charismatic group (Supatra, 2019).

Indonesia, which has a high cultural and religious diversity, the existence of Pentecostal churches requires efforts to create harmony and cooperation across groups. Unity in a multi-religious country like Indonesia requires awareness to



continue to foster harmonious relations between religious communities. A positive and proactive attitude in building an honest, open, and creative dialogue is essential to increase mutual understanding. In this way, each group is expected to understand and respect each other's existence.

However, before pursuing interfaith and cross-group dialogue, it is important for each group to deepen their understanding of their respective identities and beliefs. For Christians, this means understanding a Christian identity that is not limited to just one denomination such as Catholic, Protestant, or Pentecostal. Christianity in Indonesia encompasses a diverse internal plurality, and together they form a mosaic of Christian faith that is rich in differences but remains in one faith. Knowing plurality within the Christian body itself will help enrich dialogue and strengthen Christian identity in a diverse society.

### **Challenges of Applying Pentecostal Spirituality in Gospel Proclamation in Indonesia**

Although Pentecostal spirituality is growing rapidly in Indonesia, its application in the preaching of the Gospel faces significant challenges. The first challenge arises from the cultural and religious diversity in Indonesia, which has a society with very diverse ethnic, religious, and traditional backgrounds. Each community holds its own traditions and beliefs, which are often difficult to accept overly open or expressive forms of evangelism, such as supernatural healing practices and the use of tongues (Sarumaha et al., 2021; Setiawan, 2022). These conspicuous forms of preaching can be seen as foreign and even cause misunderstandings or are considered to threaten the wisdom of local culture. Therefore, an approach to evangelism that is not sensitive to the local cultural context can potentially cause resistance and is not well received.

The next challenge lies in people's perception of Pentecostal spiritual practices. The gifts of the spirit, which include manifestations of healing, prophecy, and speaking in tongues, are often considered excessive or inappropriate by traditional Christian churches. This skeptical perception stems from a fundamental theological distinction between traditional churches and Pentecostal churches, where the churches of the past have been able to traditional tend to prioritize a more formal and rational approach. This condition requires Pentecostal churches to adapt in delivering the Gospel message more sensitively and to respect local wisdom, without having to lose the unique identity of their spirituality.

In the era of globalization, the Pentecostal movement also faces the challenge of religious and cultural pluralism that is getting stronger. The world's openness to various belief systems and worship practices requires the Pentecostal church to adapt in a way that not only maintains its identity, but also adapts its communication and interactions to the diversity of existing beliefs. This challenge is increasingly complex with global issues that are in the spotlight of the wider community, such as social justice, environmental crises, and human rights. The Pentecostal church's response to these issues will affect their image in the eyes of the wider community, especially in the midst of a generation that is increasingly critical of social issues.

In the face of these challenges, the Pentecostal movement has shown impressive flexibility and adaptability (Sidabutar & Marbun, 2022). Some

Pentecostal denominations have begun to explore more contextual approaches to worship and methods of communication with contemporary culture. This change can be seen in a more inclusive service style, the use of music relevant to the tastes of the younger generation, and a more open teaching approach. These efforts have made Pentecostal churches more inclusive and open to dialogue across faiths and cultures.

In addition, the challenges in the Postmodern era are also in the spotlight, where skepticism about absolute truth claims is increasing. Many people question religious authority and want a more inclusive approach and respect for individual diversity. This challenge is particularly relevant for Pentecostal churches that are rooted in absolute faith and specific spiritual experiences. There needs to be an adjustment in the way they deliver and defend their doctrine to be more relevant to the current context of society. In an era that respects individuality, religious communication needs to be more open to various views and ways of religion. The Pentecostal Church, which previously may have tended to be more homogeneous in its beliefs and practices, was expected to interact with different groups and value their perspectives without sacrificing core doctrinal values (Tarore, 2020).

Another major challenge is maintaining doctrinal integrity amid the need to adapt to modern ways of communication. Not only do Pentecostal churches need to maintain their core teachings and beliefs, but they also need to convey their teachings in a way that is easily acceptable to diverse audiences. Personal experiences with the Holy Spirit are at the heart of Pentecostal spirituality,<sup>11</sup> but they need to be delivered in a relevant and contextualized manner in order to reach the wider community with a more inclusive and adaptive approach.

### **Strategies for Adapting Pentecostal Spirituality in Gospel Proclamation**

There are some strongly developed opinions in society and even Christians themselves that Pentecostal churches in practicing the preaching of the Gospel sporadically and tend to *be offensive*. This assumption is not entirely wrong, because there are those who do so. This is certainly based on the urgency of the mandate of the Great Mandate. The main basis of the preaching of the Gospel is a life that is a blessing (inspiration) for others. The real form of life that is a blessing (inspiration) is reflected in the willingness to restore others who are pessimistic in looking at life (Lumoindong, 2018).

In an effort to deliver the Gospel effectively, Pentecostal churches in Indonesia have developed adaptation strategies that take into account local cultures and values (Setiawan, 2022). The challenges in evangelizing in Indonesia are so closely related to cultural and religious diversity that Pentecostal churches feel the need to take a more sensitive approach and respect local wisdom. Various adaptation strategies implemented include adjustments to worship styles, non-confrontational approaches, social services, and openness to the culture of the local community.

One important form of adaptation is the **contextualization of worship and teaching**. Pentecostal churches try to adapt their worship style to be more in tune with the cultural background of the community, such as using regional music and local languages in worship. This is done to create a more familiar and relevant

atmosphere for the local community, so that the message of the Gospel can be received more openly. In addition, the church also recognizes that aggressive approaches to preaching are often ineffective in communities of different faiths. Therefore, Pentecostal churches prefer a non-confrontational approach, which is based on dialogue and mutual respect for the beliefs of the surrounding community. With this approach, the church seeks to build harmonious relationships, which encourage people to receive the message of the Gospel without feeling threatened or offended.

In addition to contextualization and dialogical approaches, Pentecostal churches also use **social service** as an evangelistic strategy. This ministry includes various activities, such as health, educational, or economic assistance, that not only help meet the physical needs of the community but also demonstrate God's love in real life. By making a positive contribution to society, the church hopes to establish good relations and increase acceptance of the gospel message. This approach emphasizes that preaching is not just religious teaching, but also concrete actions that show concern for the welfare of the community.

**Openness to local culture** is also an important principle in the strategy of the Pentecostal church. In a society that has great respect for its traditions and culture, an evangelist needs to show respect for the local culture, for example by learning the local language or understanding local customs. If evangelists are unable to respect or accept the culture of the people they reach, then efforts to proclaim the Gospel can be rejected or even considered a form of insult. Therefore, openness to culture not only strengthens relations with society, but also paves the way for a better reception of the Gospel message. In accordance with the principle in Galatians 5:6, faith expressed through love is an important basis in this approach, where Appreciation for culture does not sacrifice the integrity of the faith but rather adds to the value of evangelism.

Through these strategies, the Pentecostal church seeks to answer the challenge of evangelism in pluralistic Indonesia. Adaptation to local values, a dialogical approach, social services, and openness to local cultures are steps taken to ensure that the message of the Gospel is well received by the wider community. With the help of God, the Pentecostal church seeks to carry out its mission in a relevant and loving way, so that its impact is not only felt within the church, but also by the entire surrounding community.

### **Implications of the Application of Pentecostal Spirituality to the Proclamation of the Gospel**

The application of Pentecostal spirituality in the preaching of the Gospel in Indonesia has brought various significant impacts to the development of the church and congregation. By highlighting a deep and personal spiritual experience, Pentecostal churches can connect the congregation with God in a more intense and meaningful way. This powerful spiritual experience motivated the congregation to be more zealous in carrying out the task of evangelism and ministry, and to strengthen their commitment to the faith and their calling as followers of Christ. This spiritual approach encourages the congregation to participate more actively in



the life of the church, both in worship activities and in social services in the community.

Another positive impact is the significant growth for Pentecostal churches in Indonesia. The dynamic and Holy Spirit-centered approach to gospel preaching attracts many people who feel emotionally and spiritually connected. This method has proven effective in reaching many circles, both inside and outside the church, who are interested in an immediate and tangible experience of faith. The growth of this church shows the strong appeal of Pentecostal spirituality, which combines spiritual experience and intimacy with God in a supportive community. However, this development also requires the church to be wiser in dealing with the diverse cultural backgrounds and beliefs of the pluralistic Indonesian people.

The Pentecostal Church needs to pay attention to the necessary adjustments so that the preaching of the Gospel does not cause cultural conflicts or negative perceptions. In the context of a society that has strong values and traditions, overly expressive approaches to worship, such as speaking in tongues or healing practices, can be considered alien or even disturbing. Therefore, the church needs to organize a way of spiritual delivery and expression that respects the local culture, so that the message of the Gospel can be received openly and respectfully by the community. This adjustment does not mean reducing or changing the essence of Pentecostal spirituality, but rather how to communicate it to suit the needs of the people in Indonesia.

Overall, a deep understanding of the peculiarities of Pentecostal spirituality and its application in evangelism in Indonesia can provide a clear picture of the role and growth of Pentecostal churches in the midst of cultural and religious diversity. The Pentecostal Church has a great job in maintaining a balance between maintaining the distinctiveness of the faith and respecting the local culture. With the right strategy, the church can become more inclusive without losing its spiritual identity. This adaptive approach is expected to strengthen the relationship between the church and the wider community. Creating a space for effective evangelism, as well as expanding the impact of the gospel in the daily lives of Indonesian people.

## **CONCLUSION**

Pentecostal spirituality in Indonesia not only reflects personal experiences with God, but also plays an important role in social and cultural contexts. The movement emphasizes the importance of intimate relationships with the Holy Spirit, which has an impact on the transformation of individuals and communities. Despite facing various challenges, such as rejection from certain groups and the need to adapt to different cultures, Pentecostal churches continue to strive to spread the message of the gospel effectively. An inclusive and adaptive approach allows this spirituality to remain relevant and contribute positively to the development of faith in Indonesia.

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