

THEN PETER STOOD UP

A DIALOGICAL NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF PETER'S PREPARATION FOR SPOKESPERSON AT PENTECOST

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Abstract

Dialogical Narrative Analysis (DNA) asks, in brief, what work a story does in the context in which it is told and on the teller of the story itself. In applying DNA to Peter, this article assumes the premise that Peter's meaning-making, or construction of the dialogical self in dynamic relationship with Jesus, positioned him to be the spokesperson who narrated the events of Pentecost. Therefore, this article seeks to understand how Jesus' naming and accompanying statement to Peter that "on this rock I will build my church" and the unfolding narrative of Peter's discipleship uniquely prepare Peter for this role. This article is not about Peter's Pentecost speech itself, rather, it is about Peter's preparation to be the speaker. The article examines the movements of faith formation in the story Jesus told Peter about who Peter was in relationship to the Godhead, and then connects this first story with the act of Peter's storytelling at the inauguration of the era of the church, tracing the change process that the identity narrative given by Jesus works in Peter.

Introduction

In his book, *Letting Stories Breathe*,¹ Arthur W. Frank introduces Dialogical Narrative Analysis, or DNA, as the method one engages with socio-narratology, a form of inquiry that falls under the umbrellas of narrative inquiry and ethnography. Ethnography is the study of culture, interactions, and meaning, as these elements naturally unfold within a given context.² Such study takes place through interviews and observations over time and can be at least somewhat of an immersive experience for the researcher. Narrative research analyzes stories for their "content, themes, and structure," and has generally

¹ Arthur W. Frank, *Letting Stories Breathe: A Socio-Narratology* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010), 13, 71–85.

² University of Virginia, "Ethnographic Research," *IRB-SBS*, <https://research.virginia.edu/irb-sbs/ethnographic-research> (15 December 2022).

been focused on personal narratives, or how individuals narrate and make sense of their own experiences.³ While ethnography seeks to create thick descriptions⁴ that provide rich interpretive contexts for subjects' actions and words, narrative analysis often examines specific storytellers for their effect on the narrative. Socio-narratology blends these two methods by studying the narrative itself as a dynamic and contextual actor, asking, in effect, "what work does the story do?"⁵ This question breaks away from looking at the narrative or story in question through the lens of the storyteller him- or herself—though the storyteller plays a critical role in how the story is formed and delivered, and thus received and retold—and borrows from ethnography's thick description to view what the story itself does in the context in which it is told. DNA then is the line of inquiry that one pursues to practice socio-narratology. "Dialogical narrative analysis studies the mirroring between what is told in the story—the story's content—and what happens as a result of telling that story—its effects."⁶

Though not a stringent methodology, DNA nevertheless holds five commitments. These are, first, to recognize any one voice as a dialogue between voices.⁷ This first commitment looks at how "a story is built up in conversation through a process of turns and talk, in which each speaker adds to what becomes the emerging story."⁸ Frank describes the result of this commitment as many voices finding expression within one voice.⁹ DNA's second commitment is a corollary to the first and that is to remain suspicious of the single voice or monologue, which Mikhail Bakhtin calls dialogue's opposite.¹⁰ The third commitment is to "extend the dialogue further," either into possible trajectories of action, belief, or community, or into a re-telling of a narrative that encompasses new voices.¹¹ The fourth commitment comes from Bakhtin's own obsession with the unfinalizability of dialogue.¹² As a methodology based on a story's ongoing shaping and reshaping of a social context, DNA is both experiential and it is never done. That is, an experience or dialogue that will turn the trajectory or give nuance to the narrative is always possible and ever at hand. Fifth, though a research methodology, DNA seeks not to reach a finished point at which a narrative is pulled apart and analyzed in disparate pieces, but "to open continuing possibilities of listening

³ James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, eds., *Varieties of Narrative Analysis* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2012), 2–3.

⁴ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 24–28.

⁵ Frank, *Letting Stories Breathe*, 67.

⁶ Frank, *Letting Stories Breathe*, 71–72.

⁷ Arthur W. Frank, "Practicing Dialogical Narrative Analysis," in *Varieties of Narrative Analysis*, 34.

⁸ Frank, "Practicing," 34–35.

⁹ Frank, "Practicing," 35.

¹⁰ Frank, "Practicing," 35.

¹¹ Frank, "Practicing," 36.

¹² Frank, "Practicing," 36.

and responding to what is heard. . . . It seeks to show what is at stake in a story as a form of response.”¹³

In applying DNA to Peter, this article assumes the premise that Peter’s meaning-making, or construction of the dialogical self in dynamic relationship with Jesus, positioned him to be the spokesperson who narrated the events of Pentecost. Therefore, this article seeks to understand how Jesus’ naming and accompanying statement to Peter that “on this rock, I will build my church” and the unfolding narrative of Peter’s discipleship uniquely prepares Peter for this role. Though Peter’s Pentecost speech is, of course, touched upon, this article is not about the speech itself. Instead, it is about Peter’s preparation to be the speaker. This article will first examine the movements of faith formation in the story Jesus told Peter about who Peter was in relationship with the Godhead and then connect this first story with the act of Peter’s storytelling at the inauguration of the era of the church. Frank’s work provides invaluable instruction in methodology, while Sharon Daloz Parks’ work on the construction of the dialogical self in the presence of a mentoring community¹⁴ provides a framework from which to ask the questions DNA’s commitments require.

Peter Meets Jesus

The character of Peter is introduced to the reader of the New Testament in the Gospels. Matthew’s and Mark’s accounts are almost identical, Luke’s differs slightly, though the setting remains similar, and John’s account is entirely new. In Matthew, Jesus is walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee and sees Peter fishing with his brother Andrew (4:18). Matthew notes two additional details in the first verse of his introduction. First, while he calls Peter by this name, he notes parenthetically that Peter’s other name was Simon. Matthew also clarifies that Peter and Andrew were fishing as a profession rather than a hobby. Jesus walked by these two adult brothers at work in the family business. Jesus called to them both, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men!” (4:19).¹⁵ “Immediately they left their nets,” that is, the tools of their profession, “and followed him” (4:19). Mark’s Gospel also has Peter and Andrew fishing in the Sea of Galilee, though Mark simply calls him Simon with no clarification (Mark 1:16–20).

Luke also has Jesus positioned by a shore, but in Luke, it is the Lake of Gennesaret, and instead of actively fishing, the fishermen, including Peter and Andrew, were cleaning their nets (5:2). Luke’s introduction consistently uses the name Simon to refer to him, thus so will this paragraph. Luke’s Gospel does not have Jesus simply call

¹³ Frank, “Practicing,” 37.

¹⁴ Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

¹⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all scripture is taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

out to Simon like in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. Rather, Jesus gets into Simon's boat, instructs him to go out on the water, and teaches the gathered crowd from the boat (5:3). Only when he has finished teaching is Jesus recorded as turning to Simon again. Jesus instructs him to go to deeper water and let down the now-clean nets. Simon responds first as a knowledgeable worker in his profession, followed by a statement of active faith. "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing," the fisherman who has just finished cleaning his nets after a night of fruitless endeavor explains. "But at your word, I will let down the nets," concludes the soon-to-be disciple (5:5). The nets filled to the breaking point, requiring a quick response from the other fisherman on the shore. Even so, the boats of Simon, as well as the additional boats, filled to the sinking point with fish (5:6–7). Simon's response then is an entreaty from his knees: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man" (5:8). Instead of departing, Jesus invites Simon into a journey of becoming that will change the trajectory of his life. "'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.' And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him" (5:8, 10–11).

John's account takes place "in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing" (1:28). In leading up to the calling of the disciples, including Peter, John dedicates significant space to John the Baptist's identifying of Jesus as the Son of God, as proven by the anointing of the Holy Spirit (1:32–34). Gary M. Burge notes that through John the Baptist, the author of John is making sure the reader sees that the Spirit's anointing came and remained on Jesus. This is in contrast to Old Testament temporary anointings for the sake of completing a specific task. Jesus' permanent anointing is thus an identity element, confirming that he is indeed the son of God.¹⁶ It is in this understanding that the day following this testimony, John the Baptist stood with his disciples, saw Jesus passing, and announced him to be "the Lamb of God" (1:36). Andrew heard John the Baptist's pronouncement, followed Jesus as a result, and found his own brother (here called Simon Peter), and invited him to also follow Jesus, saying, "We have found the Messiah" (1:41).

While Luke emphasizes Peter's response, John does not mention one. John's text simply states, "He [Andrew] brought him to Jesus." Again, there is silence from Peter and Jesus talks next, naming Peter: "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas' (which means Peter)" (1:42). D. A. Carson notes that in John's Gospel, Jesus naming Peter from the very beginning of their relationship connotes Jesus' "declaration of what Peter will become," not because of Peter's vision or initiative, but because of "what Jesus will make of him."¹⁷ Thus, whether in the company of fishermen or

¹⁶ Gary M. Burge, "The Gospel of John," in *A Biblical Theology of the Holy Spirit*, eds. Trevor J. Burke and Keith Warrington (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 105.

¹⁷ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 156.

disciples, in a boat or on land, noted as Simon, Peter, or Simon Peter, Peter's story with the permanently Spirit-anointed Jesus begins.

In describing how to practice DNA, Frank notes the necessity of “practicing *phronesis*,” that is, looking for the stories among the whole that “call out as needing to be written about.”¹⁸ In the Gospels, there are many themes or collections of stories that call out. Even imposing the limitation of those stories only involving Peter and Jesus raises questions of power, power encounter, healing, identity, courage and cowardice, and many more. For the sake of this article, I turn to Richard R. Niebuhr's framework of shipwreck, gladness, and amazement and theologian Sharon Daloz Parks' interpretation of these movements as they apply to faith formation.¹⁹ I will use these as the boundaries with which to select among the stories that “call out.”

Shipwreck

Parks uses Niebuhr's framework of shipwreck, gladness, and amazement as a metaphor or story outline through which to view experience as it relates to the process of maturing in faith.²⁰ As Niebuhr poignantly states, “Believing belongs to experience. It does not generate itself.”²¹ Therefore, these metaphors are necessary to make sense of the categories of experiences from which belief emerges. The first of these, shipwreck, perhaps counterintuitively, involves a loss of faith. This loss need not be accompanied by dramatic events, though it may be. It is simply the erosion, sudden or gradual, of the foundations of life as the person has perceived them. As Parks notes, “In shipwreck, what has dependably served as shelter and protection and held and carried one to where one wanted to go comes apart. What once promised trustworthiness vanishes.”²² Indeed, Peter's shipwreck is quickly identified as the night and following two days in which his colleague, Judas, betrayed the beloved leader, friend, and mentor on whom their hopes and future rested, to his death and Judas' suicide. We see the graphic unraveling of Peter's stability as he first jumps to protect Jesus with his strength, cutting off the ear of the servant of the Sanhedrin in the Garden of Gethsemane, then, as the night wears on, is reduced to denying any affiliation with Jesus under the comparatively non-threatening questions of a slave-girl. The rooster crows. Peter has broken allegiance with the one for whom he said he would die. Jesus meets Peter's eyes. By the next day, Jesus will have been murdered. Peter's shipwreck is complete. Again, Parks is eloquent:

¹⁸ Frank, “Practicing,” 43.

¹⁹ Richard R. Niebuhr, *Experiential Religion* (New York: HarperCollins, 1972), 42–43, cited in Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 28.

²⁰ Niebuhr, *Experiential Religion*, 42–43, cited in Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 28.

²¹ Niebuhr, *Experiential Religion*, 78.

²² Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 28.

The power of the experience of shipwreck is located precisely in one's inability to immediately sense the promise of anything beyond what has been secure and trustworthy. Until our meaning-making becomes very mature, in the midst of shipwreck there is little or no confidence of survival. The first time we are shipwrecked is, after all, the first time; how could we know that even this might be survived?²³

You Are Peter

Before this night, Peter was learning a new storyline that began with the pivot from fishing for fish to fishing for men at the call of Jesus. Peter had experienced power encounters (Mark 1:21–28; 5:1–13; Luke 11:14;), divine healings (Matt 14:34–36; Mark 5:25–34; Luke 4:38–40;), miraculous multiplication of food (Matt 14:15–21; 15:32–39; Mark 6:30–44), the transfiguration (Matt 17:1–8; Mark 9:2–8; Luke 9:28–36), the resurrection of the dead (Mark 5:21–24, 35–42; John 11:1–44), and teachings on the kingdom of heaven (Matt 5:3–12; Luke 11:1–13; 16:20–23); in short, the manifestations of the kingdom of heaven breaking in on the earth. Peter had been strengthened (Luke 22:31–32), rebuffed (Matt 16:23), and empowered (Matt 10:1–20; 14:16; Luke 8:22–25) in the mentoring community of the disciples in the presence of Jesus. Even en route to Jerusalem for Jesus' crucifixion with Jesus foretelling the events of that night Peter and the other disciples refused to believe it. No one anticipates shipwreck.

During the disciples' journey to Jerusalem, Peter had confessed his faith in answer to Jesus' questions: who do people say that I am; who do you say that I am (Luke 9:18–20; Matt 16:13–15)? Here, Peter names Jesus "the Christ, the son of the living God" (Matt 16:16; Luke 9:20). Jesus, in turn, calls him blessed, explains that it is the Father in heaven who has revealed this to him, and names him Peter (Matt 16:17). "I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." Jesus continues with an extended promise: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt 16:17–19).

Notably, in this conversation, Peter identifies Jesus by the name Jesus already bears, though it has not been used up to this point in their relationship. Inherent in this name is a promise of relationship that confers identity. That is, Christ is identified as the son of the living God, a sonship that is unending. Thus, as previously noted, Jesus is identified first by John the Baptist as anointed by the Holy Spirit (John 1:32–34) and now by Peter as belonging to the Father in heaven. In this same conversation, Jesus also names Peter. But in contrast to Peter's naming of Jesus, Jesus gives Peter a new name.

²³ Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 31.

This name also comes with a promise of lasting relationship, a name complete with a narrative of dynamic action and of promised victory as Jesus builds *his* church on Peter. In describing the Greek use of the word “name,” James Shelton explains, “The Greek word for ‘name’ (*onoma*) could mean ‘to have a reputation,’ because to know a name was to know the person.”²⁴ In the case of Jesus naming Peter, Peter had not yet become the rock to whom his new name referred. Jesus was conferring a promise of Peter’s becoming, a promise in which the weight of potential rested in the dialogical relationship with Jesus. Leon Morris explains it thusly: “The giving of a new name is an assertion of the authority of the giver. . . . Jesus’ renaming of the man points to the change that would be wrought in him by the power of God.”²⁵ It is notable too that the vignette immediately following Peter’s naming has Jesus showing the disciples that he must die. Peter protests what must surely seem like a contradiction to the promise Jesus had just made to build his church with Peter. Jesus’ answer is a rebuff that leaves no room for negotiation: “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me” (Matt 16:23a). Jesus continues, explaining the cause of the hindrance: “For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man” (Matt 16:23b).

There is a long history of controversy regarding on what, specifically, Christ is promising to build his church: Peter or Peter’s confession.²⁶ Patrick Schreiner compares Matthew 16 to Daniel 2, interpreting “this rock” as the kingdom of God. In this case, the emphasis is neither on Peter nor his confession itself, but on the kingdom realized in Jesus, with whom Peter is in close enough proximity and relationship to make his confession.²⁷ This article takes the position that it is Peter, the man, who makes the confession and on whom Christ will build his church.²⁸ As Schreiner states, “From the context, it seems the thrust of this passage is the revelation of the Messianic Savior and Peter’s relationship to him.”²⁹ Peter’s relationship with Jesus is the most important thing about him. Whether confessing Christ’s identity as the Messiah (Luke 9:20; Matt 16:16), or recklessly and assertively misinterpreting what this messiahship means (Matt 16:22), Peter does so in the context of the dialogical relationship with Jesus. Whether

²⁴ James B. Shelton, “The Name of Jesus in Luke-Acts with Special Reference to the Gentile Mission,” in *Proclaiming Christ in the Power of the Holy Spirit: Opportunities and Challenges*, eds. Wonsuk Ma, Emmanuel Anim, and Rebekah Bled (Tulsa: ORU Press, 2021), 12.

²⁵ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 140–41.

²⁶ T. S. Ferda, “The Seventy Faces of Peter’s Confession: Matt. 16:16–17 in the History of Interpretation,” *Biblical Interpretation* 20 (2012), 422; Henry Andrew Corcoran, “Viewing Biblical Narratives through a Literary Lens: Practicing Narrative Analysis on Matthew 16: 16–20,” *Christian Education Journal* 7:2 (2010), 306.

²⁷ Patrick Schreiner, “Peter, the Rock: Matthew 16 in Light of Daniel 2,” *Criswell Theological Review* 13:2 (Spring 2016), 101, 104.

²⁸ Ferda, “The Seventy Faces,” 445–50; Michael Patrick Barber, “Jesus as the Davidic Temple Builder and Peter’s Priestly Role in Matthew 16:16–19,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132:4 (2013), 944.

²⁹ Schreiner, “Peter, the Rock,” 107.

Jesus is saying he will build his church on Peter or Peter's confession, the church is built by God in the context of dynamic relationship.

Corcoran notes that Peter's confession, as the "first unambiguous declaration of Jesus' identity by a disciple in Matthew,"³⁰ presents a narrative turning point in the story. "With Peter's confession, Jesus' task as teacher of the disciples shifts from demonstrating his messianic identity to clarifying its nature."³¹ It is the nature of the suffering Messiah that Peter immediately objects to. Whether Jesus is promising to build his church on Peter or Peter's confession, it is critical to note that here, the confessor is not yet ready to stand by the implications of his own confession. Peter's faith is not yet mature or robust enough to bear the weight of identification with the name that he himself has declared to belong to Jesus. At this point in the story, Peter's confession is a brief, though accurate, "flash in the pan," to use the colloquial expression. Jesus' identity has been named by Peter, and now Jesus will take Peter and the other disciples on a journey of deepening understanding as to the nature of that name.

DNA continually asks the observer of the story, what does the story do? What are the story's effects on the environment? Peter's dialogical relationship with Jesus allows ample space for the trying on or practicing of different storylines. Here, for example, Jesus names Peter and confers a promise that seems to come with stature and power. "Jesus is going to build his church on me," Peter may have thought, and following that story's assumed trajectory, immediately protests Jesus' foretelling of suffering and death. Indeed, R. T. France notes Peter feeling "let down" and "shamed" by the narrative of the Messiah's apparent public failure.³² However, Peter misunderstands the terms. Prestige, stature, and visibility are not the effects or the work of Jesus' story. Jesus corrects Peter. Jesus tells Peter both where his storyline is branching away from Jesus' story (Matt 16:23b) and what the corrective is (Matt 16:24–28). In this case, the corrective is the opposite of what Peter had assumed. France notes, "As long as Peter holds such a view, the 'rock' on which the church is to be built proves instead to be a stumbling block."³³ But Peter and Jesus are still in relationship. Neither the promises of Jesus' name nor of Peter's name have been revoked. In the mentoring community that is Jesus' band of disciples, dialogue is safe. Parks explains how dialogue in the setting of a mentoring community functions as a valuable tool in the process of meaning-making or growing up in faith:

When one speaks and then is heard—but not quite, and therefore tries to speak yet more clearly—and then listens to the other—and understands, but not quite

³⁰ Corcoran, "Viewing Biblical Narratives," 307.

³¹ Corcoran, "Viewing Biblical Narratives," 307.

³² R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 634.

³³ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 635.

and listens again—one becomes actively engaged in sorting out what is true and dependable within oneself about one’s world. How one makes meaning is composed and recomposed in this process.³⁴

Here, of course, Jesus does hear and perfectly comprehend Peter. Yet, he does not cut Peter off from the dialogical relationship because of this comprehension. Rather, he points him to what is “true and dependable,” reorienting Peter and the other disciples to the storyline of the kingdom of heaven. In other conversations, too, Jesus’ disciples, including Peter, hear but do not understand, and so listen again (Matt 13; Mark 12:1–12; 13:34–37; Luke 10:29–37; 15:8–32). Their meaning-making happens because of and in the company of Jesus. N. T. Wright says about the stories Jesus told, “His stories, like all stories in principle, invited his hearers into a new world, making the implicit suggestion that the new worldview be tried on for size with a view toward permanent purchase.”³⁵ The story Jesus was telling Peter about his identity in relation to the Godhead and the church was different enough to require active dialogue as Peter “tried on the worldview” this kingdom story encompassed. It was also sturdy and grand enough to outlast the devastating shipwreck of Peter’s temporary loss of self, faith, and of Jesus himself.

Gladness and Amazement

As previously noted, shipwreck, gladness, and amazement are all metaphors of experience. Parks describes the experience of emerging from shipwreck as amazement that shipwreck has been survived, combined with gladness that life still has meaning, even though earlier understandings of this meaning may have collapsed.³⁶ Indeed, shipwreck is not always survived. All of the disciples experienced the wreckage of Judas’ betrayal and Jesus’ death. For Judas, the betrayer, shipwreck became the final word, and he ended his own life (Matt 27:5). “So, gladness emerges in its distinctiveness most fully when it stands contrasted, through memory, with the presence of despair.”³⁷

John’s Gospel records Peter’s emergence from shipwreck into gladness and amazement in dialogue with the resurrected Jesus (21:15–19). Peter has returned to his former profession and is fruitlessly fishing when a stranger appears on the beach (vv. 3–4). In a story mirroring Luke 5:2–11, Peter lets down the nets at Jesus’ instruction, receiving a catch so abundant that it required the men to drag the full net behind the boat rather than pull it in (v. 8). While the other disciples in the boat struggle with the

³⁴ Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 142.

³⁵ N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 77.

³⁶ Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 29.

³⁷ Niebuhr, *Experiential Religion*, 97.

catch, John records Peter's emergence from shipwreck into gladness and amazement: "When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment . . . and threw himself into the sea" (v. 7). Frederick Bruner observes about this passage: "When Jesus reveals himself through his Word and words, he empowers his receivers to respond to him; his self-revelations are rarely ends in themselves."³⁸ Jesus re-enters the dialogical relationship with Peter empowering Peter to respond to him. Though John records several disciples bringing the boat with the large haul of fish to shore, only Peter is recorded as unloading the 153 fish (v. 11). One can imagine the energy, strength, vitality, and perhaps even laughter Peter's immense relief at having survived shipwreck produced. Niebuhr provides a helpful description of Peter's state: "The suggestion of motion, energy, power, together with the directionality of this energy as the felt content of the mood of rejoicing is unmistakable."³⁹ While the joy of emergence from shipwreck is more substantive than a "mood of rejoicing," such a mood is nonetheless recorded in Peter's transformation from the terse fisherman reporting on a failed night's work (v. 5) to ebullient dockhand, perhaps singlehandedly unloading the surprise catch.

Witnessing Peter being pulled back into the dialogical relationship with the resurrected Savior, the reader shares in Peter's amazement that his story with Jesus is not complete. Indeed, as previously noted, within DNA's structure is a commitment to unfinalizability. An experience or dialogue that will turn the trajectory or give nuance to the narrative is ever at hand. Again, Parks is worth quoting at length in her valuable elaboration on Niebuhr's metaphor:

It is gladness that pervades one's whole being; there is a new sense of vitality, be it quiet or exuberant. Generally, however, there is more than relief in this gladness. There is transformation. We discover a new reality beyond the loss. . . . We rarely experience this as a matter of our own making. As the primal, elemental force of the promise stirs again within us, we often experience it as a force acting upon us, beneath us, carrying us—sometimes in spite of our resistance—into new meaning, new consciousness, new faith. . . . There is deeply felt gladness in an enlarged knowing and being, and in a new capacity to act.⁴⁰

It is into this new capacity to act that Jesus draws Peter, again through conversation. Calling Peter by his old name of Simon, Jesus asks, "Do you love me more than these?" Peter, addressing him by the formal title, answers, "Yes Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus responds with a command, "Feed my lambs" (v. 15). This scene is repeated twice more, with Peter "feeling grieved" and appealing to Jesus' knowledge of all things in his

³⁸ Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2012), ebook location 21:6c.

³⁹ Niebuhr, *Experiential Religion*, 98–99.

⁴⁰ Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 29.

third answer: “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you” (v. 17). Jesus replies a third time with instructions to care for his sheep. Then Jesus continues, reminding Peter of and commissioning him into the suffering interwoven in the narrative of the kingdom. The same suffering of which Peter had tried to call Jesus out in Matthew 16 (John 21:18–19). Then, as a benediction on Peter’s story, which was anchored in relationship with the Godhead, Jesus said, “Follow me” (v. 19).

Peter at Pentecost

When a community experiences a common shipwreck, there is an intimacy of having both been immersed in and then of surviving the wreckage. This intimacy of survival can be expressed in a deepening of knowledge and of questioning, an expanded sense of meaning-making that now encompasses and must reckon with the knowledge of the experience of suffering.⁴¹ I suggest that those in the upper room formed such a community as they waited together for the promise of the Spirit (Acts 1:13–14). “The questions that suffering and death pose to us are questions of faith: is there any form of meaning, and faith, that can *without delusion* embrace both our small and great sufferings?” Parks asks (emphasis added).⁴² On Pentecost, Peter stands up and narrates to the gathered crowd a story that provides a resounding yes to the question Parks poses.

DNA’s first commitment describes the many-voiced-ness of stories, assuming that in each voicing or telling of a narrative, many are finding voice through the storyteller, or what Bakhtin calls *polyphony*.⁴³ Frank describes this many-voiced-ness within a single narration as “emphasizing how one speaker’s voice is always resonant with the voices of specific others—people whom the speaker listens to and whose response she or he anticipates.”⁴⁴ Thus, when Peter stands up, he does not do so alone. Standing “with the eleven” (Acts 2:14) he addresses his “fellow Jews” (v. 14, NIV) with a shared narrative that both encompasses their shared history and requires present, active, and individual response. Here, Peter exemplifies DNA’s third commitment of extending the dialogue further, wrapping new voices and possible trajectories into the unfolding narrative.⁴⁵ Indeed, the “yes” of Peter’s narration reverberates throughout the Jewish landscape, with 3,000 Jews from “every nation under heaven” accepting Peter’s message as their own and receiving baptism that day (2:5, 41). DNA asks what work the story does, then stories of faith without delusion do the work of active memory, recomposing the pieces of what the hearers know to be trustworthy into a narrative that both

⁴¹ Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 30.

⁴² Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*, 30.

⁴³ Frank, “Practicing,” 34.

⁴⁴ Frank, “Practicing,” 35.

⁴⁵ Frank, “Practicing,” 36.

includes the present and points to a good future.⁴⁶ Scott Cormode calls these communal narratives “shared stories of future hope.”⁴⁷

Peter is no glib spokesperson defending a passing emotion or an illusion. He has experienced the shipwreck of the world as he understood it and survived, not through his own grit, but through Jesus’ unyielding faithfulness to him. As David Bosch states, “If human distress takes many forms, the power of God does likewise.”⁴⁸ Finally, Peter understands the story, and he cannot now be deluded as to the kind of faith this story entails. Nor will he narrate a fragile story for others. Through the movements of faith formation in dialogical relationship with Jesus, Peter has become solid. The words, “Then Peter stood up” (Acts 2:14, NIV), provide a striking contrast to an earlier Peter. Of the earlier Peter, the following could be said: then Peter reacted with violence (John 18:10); then Peter denied Jesus (Luke 22:56–61); then Peter returned to his profession as a failure (John 21:2–3). At Pentecost, Peter stands up and speaks to the gathered crowd “words of sober truth.”⁴⁹ R. C. Tannehill emphasizes the narrative positioning of the narrator and audience at Pentecost, calling it “a critical situation.”⁵⁰ Tannehill describes Peter and the disciples’ understanding that Jesus was rejected in Jerusalem and that this is a central plot point in the story of Jesus as Messiah; however, the audience of Jews that they are surrounded by has not yet reckoned with this.⁵¹ Therefore, when Peter stands up in the power of the Holy Spirit, it is first to confront a crowd of devout Jewish men gathered in Jerusalem from every nation (Acts 2:5). This is no servant girl or individual bystander inquiring about an accent, before whom a Peter tumbling quickly into shipwreck capitulated (Matt 26:69–73). Everything has now changed for him. George Beasley-Murray comments, “By reason of his devastating experience of fall and restoration to the fellowship of his Lord, Peter is particularly fitted to carry out that aspect of the pastoral office referred to by Jesus in Luke 21:32: ‘Once you have recovered, you in your turn must strengthen your brothers.’”⁵² Peter, now the rock, stands before a crowd of devout men, some of whom are already mocking the move of

⁴⁶ Frank, *Letting Stories Breathe*, 83. See also Laurel J. Kiser, “Who Are We but for the Stories We Tell: Family Stories and Healing,” *Psychological Trauma* 2:3 (September 2010), 243–49.

⁴⁷ Scott Cormode, “The Next Faithful Step: A Shared Story of Future Hope,” *Fuller Theological Seminary*, <https://www.fuller.edu/next-faithful-step/resources/a-shared-story-of-future-hope/> (31 July 2021).

⁴⁸ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 33.

⁴⁹ Jerry Horner, “The Credibility and the Eschatology of Peter’s Speech at Pentecost,” *Pneuma* 2:1 (January 1980), 26.

⁵⁰ R. C. Tannehill, “The Functions of Peter’s Mission Speeches in the Narrative of Acts,” *New Testament Studies* 37:3 (1991), 402.

⁵¹ Tannehill, “The Functions of Peter’s Mission Speeches,” 402.

⁵² George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 407.

the Spirit (Acts 2:13), and lifts his voice in provocative, unapologetic narrative. In doing so, Peter becomes the spokesperson, prophetically⁵³ narrating the events as an unfolding story, rooted in history, pointing to the future, encompassing each one who hears and receives both story and Spirit.⁵⁴



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⁵³ R. C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 30.

⁵⁴ Amos Yong, *Who Is the Holy Spirit? A Walk with the Apostles* (Brewster: Paraclete Press, 2011), 115–18.

THE ORU CENTER FOR SPIRIT-EMPOWERED RESEARCH



**ORU Names Dr. Wonsuk Ma
Executive Director of the new
Oral Roberts University Center
for Spirit-empowered Research**



Oral Roberts University (ORU) recently named Dr. Wonsuk Ma, Dean of the College of Theology and Ministry, as the Executive Director of the new Oral Roberts University Center for Spirit-empowered Research. He will assume his role on May 1, 2023, and a search will begin for a new dean for the College of Theology and Ministry.

Dr. Ma has served for the past five years as the Dean of the College of Theology and Ministry at ORU. During his tenure, Dr. Ma strengthened the college's research infrastructure. He launched a new Ph.D. in Theology program, two journals, and the annual publication of the Empowered21 academic books. He also increased research distribution, including faculty and students in various publications.

The new Center will enhance ORU's global leadership as a Spirit-empowered university with the addition of academic research, publishing, and global networking. In addition, the Center will provide oversight for ORU's Theology Ph.D. programs and partner academically with Empowered 21, a global relational network for the Spirit-empowered movement. As part of this new addition, ORU's world-renowned Holy Spirit Research Center, which houses one of the most extensive collections of Holy Spirit resources, will be renamed the Holy Spirit Resource Center, with a focus on archives and publications.



Opening August 2023