

*We may usefully reflect on what makes it possible for people to listen to each other and what makes listening difficult or impossible. The capacity to listen in ways which transform depends upon trust in the speaker, readiness to be impacted, and willingness to have newness come into one's life. Such speaking and listening is the intended mode of speech in the Bible from the first chapter of Genesis. But the Bible offers many evidences of listening failures not grounded in trust and readiness for newness...Failed speech is linked to the disappearance of trust. Not listening is related to death in a relationship. To fail to listen means to declare the other party null and void. A society which suffers failed speech not only cannot build towers, it cannot believe promises, cannot trust God, cannot be human...*

*Perhaps the miracle of Pentecost concerns a new gift of speech. But we should not miss the hint of the text. The newness concerns a fresh capacity to listen, because the word of God blows over the chaos one more time. In Pentecost, when the ideal speech situation emerges, we are granted both ears to hear and tongues to speak. The new language-situation of the faithful community is when "Although their language may differ in sound, they all speak the same thing, while they cry, 'Abba, Father'" (Calvin).*

*—Walter Brueggemann, Genesis, pp. 103–104*