

■ Here Are Some Insights That May Help Release This Gift:

1. Though God supplies the words when we speak in tongues, we remain responsible to do the speaking (1Co 14:33). Like everything else, speaking in tongues is an act of faith. Though some people are surprised to hear a new language flow out of their mouth at the time they received the baptism with the Holy Spirit, most have to step out and deliberately speak words they feel rising up from their spirit. Remember, we do not concoct strange words in our minds, we release a flow of language that comes from the Holy Spirit. Learning to do this can take time.

2. For some people it can be very hard to release the control of our speech to the Holy Spirit. The process itself may frighten us with the thought that we are going to be taken over by some strange force. Or, we may find the notion of speaking words we don't know humiliating. Or, those who have been taught in the past to reject this gift may have the added obstacle of fear that by speaking they will be yielding to the devil. Pastoral assistance should be sought whenever needed, but under no circumstances should we fall under condemnation or assume God has rejected us. Speaking in tongues is a wonderful gift, but it is only one of the gifts. So, a person who is having difficulty doing this should move forward in God with the expectation that someday this gift will be released in him as well.



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Speaking in Tongues

And the Gifts of the
Holy Spirit

by Pastor Steve Schell

■ What Is The Relationship Between Speaking In Tongues And The Baptism With The Holy Spirit?

When we observe people being baptized with the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts the gifts often mentioned as immediately accompanying this experience are speaking in tongues and prophecy (Ac 2:4; 10:46; 19:6). When these early Christians encountered the power of the Spirit they burst out in inspired speech giving praise and thanks to God. Furthermore, the Apostle Paul clearly expected those who had received this baptism to be able to pray in tongues (1Co 14:5, 18, 23, 26) and for that matter to be able to prophesy (1Co 14:1-5, 24, 31) and express any of the gifts the Spirit chooses to distribute to them (1Co 12:7-11; 14:26).

■ What Is Speaking In Tongues?

Speaking in tongues is the ability to pray and praise God using languages we have never learned (Ac 2:11; 1Co 14:2, 14-17). This gift is primarily intended to be used as part of our private prayer life (1Co 14:4; Eph 6:18; Jude 1:20), however, at times the Holy Spirit may prompt someone to speak in tongues in a church service (1Co 14:18, 19, 26-28) with the intention that the whole service stop and listen to it. In such situations the tongue should be interpreted (1Co 14:27, 28) so everyone understands what was said (1Co 14:7-13). No more than two or three such tongues should occur in any single service and each should be interpreted (1Co 14:27, 28). This use of tongues would be initiated by the guidance of the Holy Spirit and spoken out so all can hear. On the other hand, personal praying in the Spirit should be spoken quietly to oneself (1Co 14:28) if people are present who might be confused or frightened by hearing it (1Co 14:23). An interpreted tongue is likely to sound like a spontaneous heartfelt prayer of thanksgiving (1Co 14:16, 17) or praise (Ac 2:11; 10:46).

■ Is Speaking In Tongues A Gift For Every Believer?

To answer this question properly we need to distinguish between two different uses of this gift. The first use of tongues is as a divinely-assisted form of prayer and praise meant to strengthen an individual believer's spirit. In this case the answer is "yes," God wants all believers to be helped by this precious gift (1Co 14:5, 15, 18; Eph 5:18, 19; Jude 1:20). However, Paul is equally clear that the gift has a different purpose when used in a gathered meeting of believers (1Co 14:18, 19). In that case the Holy Spirit will specifically prompt someone to speak in a tongue with the intention that it be interpreted so all in the gathering will be edified (1Co 14:2-5, 12, 13, 16). This use of tongues seems to fall into the category of "ministry" (1Co 12:4, 5) so that certain individuals are particularly used in this way while others are not (1Co 12:11, 27-30). So the answer to the question above is "yes" and "no." Yes, all are free to pray in the Spirit, and no, the Spirit chooses who and when He wants a ministry of tongues in a service.

■ What Are The Benefits of "Praying in the Spirit"?

According to Scripture there are benefits a believer gains when speaking in tongues in his private prayer and worship.

1. The Holy Spirit helps us pray and praise beyond the limitations of our natural mind. Since none of us really knows all that we ought to say to God, this is a very valuable assistance. By inspiring us to speak words we do not understand, He speaks through our lips the words God wants to hear from us (Ro 8:26, 27; 1Co 14:14). At moments when we are weak or confused the Spirit can speak for us, and amazingly God accepts the words as though they originated from us and answers us accordingly.
2. This gift also builds our faith. Jude (v 20) tells us that "praying in the Spirit" will build us up in

our "most holy faith." Paul says a person who speaks in tongues "edifies (builds up) himself" (1Co 14:14). So, in those moments when we are preparing to serve God or are under attack, this gift will help strengthen us to move boldly and be confident of God's promises.

3. According to Ephesians 5:18, 19 this type of prayer is one way to refresh the power of the Holy Spirit in us. Everyday life can drain us of the consciousness of God's presence, but tongues helps us be "filled with the Spirit" again and again.

4. This gift seems to release the flow of the other gifts of the Spirit (1Co 12:7-11). Ministry in the Spirit requires a person to respond to God at an inner, intuitive level rather than just a rational level. In other words, we learn to listen and follow the tender inner leadings of the Spirit rather than just the reasonings of our own mind. To move in this dimension requires a step of faith; we must learn to respond to the Spirit's leading. Regular prayer in the Spirit seems to sensitize us to the presence of the other gifts (1Co 14:14, 18, 19).

■ What Must I Do To Receive This Gift?

At this point it would be helpful to read the brochure entitled, "How to Receive the Baptism with the Holy Spirit" because this baptism releases to each person the capacity to speak in tongues. Yet, experience proves that not everyone who is baptized with the Holy Spirit can easily function in this gift.

1. Some have had a definite experience of the baptism with the Holy Spirit and have seen other gifts and fruitfulness released in their lives, but have not felt able to speak in tongues.
2. Some have spoken in tongues only at the time of their initial baptism with the Holy Spirit, but have never or seldom spoken since.
3. Some spoke in tongues under heavy pressure and coaching from others but aren't really sure they have been truly baptized with the Holy Spirit because they don't sense any dramatic change inside.