

WHY SHOULD A PERSON ASK FOR THE GIFT OF TONGUES?

The purpose of this handout is to help people who are preparing to be baptized in the Holy Spirit to have a positive and receptive attitude towards the gift of tongues. It also purposes to break through the various fears and questions that inhibit a person from asking for and receiving the gift of tongues.

Very often a person's attitude towards tongues is reflective of their attitude toward God. Thus, in helping someone come to a more positive view of tongues, we are helping them come to a more positive view of the Father, who has only good things for us, His children.

When people were baptized in the Holy Spirit in scripture (Acts 2, 10, 19, etc.), they responded immediately by speaking in tongues and prophesying. That should be our expectation even today when people are baptized in the Spirit. This is by no means an exhaustive study of the gift of tongues. For further understanding the following books are recommended: *Tongues, Interpretation, and Prophecy* by Don Basham. and *Speaking in Tongues: Its Significance For the Church Today* by Larry Christenson.

Why Ask for this Gift?

1. Openness to tongues helps one to come into the realm of power which is the purpose of being baptized in the Spirit.

The apostles at Pentecost had already received the Holy Spirit because Jesus had breathed it into them before His ascension (John 20:22). He had also told them to wait for the "power from on high" (Acts 1:8) which they received at Pentecost, and tongues was part of that power.

Present day Christians and churches are significantly powerless. Being baptized in the Holy Spirit can release the power of the Holy Spirit (received through water baptism and confirmation, or conversion to Christ) to follow Jesus victoriously. If Jesus saw fit to equip the apostles with tongues at Pentecost, we can certainly expect to receive it when we experience Pentecost.

2. Tongues is a weapon of power. As a weapon, tongues can be used in dealing with Satan's attacks or interceding on behalf of someone under Satan's attack. When temptation is strong, praying in tongues can be a way of resisting and allows strength to pour into us from the Lord. When depressed or upset, praying in tongues can get the focus off self and onto God, thus lifting us above the problem, to a more objective position.
3. In I Corinthians 12:30, Paul asks, "...do all speak in tongues..." He is not implying that only some should expect to speak in tongues; he is referring to the ministry of tongues with interpretation which is a type of prophecy. Everyone can

have an individual gift of tongues for his personal prayer and worship life. But not everyone has a ministry of tongues for the community. This is the same with prophecy; anyone can prophesy but only a few will have the ministry of prophesy.

4. "A man who speaks in a tongue is talking not to men but to God... If I pray in a tongue, my spirit is at prayer but my mind contributes nothing... but if there is no one to interpret, there should be silence in the assembly, each one speaking (in tongues?) only to himself and to God." (I Corinthians 14:2, 14:28)

These verses tell us that tongues is prayer to God and that this prayer is not shaped by intellect, but by the Spirit. Tongues is neither an emotional nor an intellectual act (although emotion and intellect may be affected), but an act of spiritual worship.

The human mind is amazing, but also limited - limited in knowledge, linguistic ability, and understanding -- and inhibited by various kinds of prejudice. Praying in tongues is a gift God designed for the express purpose of bypassing our minds and their limitations so we can pray to God totally, freely and purely "in the Spirit." "A prayer with the mind comes upward from the heart, and must then pass through a maze of linguistic, theological, rational, emotional, and personal checkpoints before it is released upwards. By the time it 'gets out' it may be little more than a slender trickle. An utterance in tongues is a stream of Spirit-prompted prayer, praise, and thanksgiving." (Larry Christenson, *Speaking in Tongues*, page 73.)

At times, a person cannot concentrate in prayer very well with his mind, or perhaps he does not know how or what to pray for a particular situation. "We do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." (Romans 8:26-27)

5. "They heard them speaking in tongues and glorifying God." (Acts 10:46; I Corinthians 14:2-3) Speaking in tongues opens up a dimension of worship to God that man cannot duplicate on his own. In private prayer and communal worship, tongues serves as a freeing and unifying experience that brings a genuine sense of God's presence and our communion with Him. In community worship, singing in tongues lifts the whole group out of themselves, allowing the Holy Spirit to make a single voice of praise in the Spirit out of numerous different human voices. Saint Paul was certainly convinced that tongues was valuable and not to be forbidden when he wrote, "...do not forbid speaking in tongues..." (I Corinthians 14:39)
6. "These are the signs that will be associated with believers: in my name they will cast out devils, they will have the gift of tongues-.they will lay hands on the sick,

who will recover." (Mark 16:17-18) Jesus placed tongues with healing and deliverance as a sign of believers. The significance of this fact need not be explained if we really desire to follow Jesus and be His disciples.

7. Experience has shown us that any one who is baptized in the Spirit and wants to, can speak in tongues. -Tongues is especially for the individual ("He who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but he who prophesies builds up the church." I Corinthians 14:4) and we need everything that God has for us to live powerful and effective lives as Christians. We should not say to God, "I will take everything except tongues," or some other gift - we need to come to God when we ask to be baptized in the Spirit earnestly desiring and expecting all that the Holy Spirit has for us.

People are usually prayed with to be baptized in the Holy Spirit in a group situation, so we can expect also that prophecy will be manifested. When a person becomes an active member of a prayer group or community, and loves that group or body, he can ask for and expect to receive other spiritual gifts.

How to Yield to the Gift of Tongues

1. Ask for the gift of tongues specifically, just as you would ask Jesus to baptize you in the Holy Spirit. "Seek and you shall find, ask and it shall be given to you..." (Luke 11:9). "...how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13). The initiative is on our side - God is always ready to give, but will never override our free will - we must ask. The attitude that "I will speak in tongues if God wants me to" is wrong. It is already clear that He wants us to receive all His gifts. What matters is whether or not we want to receive them. God will not make us speak in tongues against our will! Specifically asking expresses our will.
2. Step out in faith and cooperate with the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2:4, we read, "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." To receive tongues, you must begin to speak out funny syllables. Speaking out is the step of faith which gets our vocal mechanism working so the Holy Spirit can follow through with an inspired tongue other than English.

As this new language comes forth, focus your attention on Jesus and on the praise you are giving to Him, not on what is going on around you or on the tongue. Otherwise self-consciousness may inhibit the flow of the new words and syllables.

Tongues develops, deepens, and broadens the more we use it (daily personal prayer and communal worship). There may be a couple repetitive syllables at

first, but use them frequently, in faith, and they will gradually multiply into a language.

The first thought that often comes after a step of faith is, "It is only me." This is a lie. You have asked God for something He promised - He is not fickle - you have received what you asked for. So exercise it in faith just as you would a weak muscle that you want to make stronger.

Two examples might help to illustrate this principle of faith. The first is from the gospel accounts of Jesus healing people. He often said things like, "stretch out your hand, you are healed," or "rise and walk, your faith has healed you." The person had to do something for the healing to "take". That is why we need to "speak" first in order for tongues to "take". The second example is the way the gospels are written. Men, inspired by the Holy Spirit, had to sit down and write. The Holy Spirit did not grab their hands and write for them. The Holy Spirit is not going to reach down, grab our tongues, and "make us" speak in tongues. We must speak out and then be "inspired" with a new language - "given the utterance."

A person yields to prophecy in the same way. In a group (small or large) a person may have a "sense" or an "anointing", along with a word or sentence in his mind. The anointing is conviction that the person ought to speak out the words in his mind. The anointings are often accompanied by physical sensations like warm hands, fast heart beat, "electricity", etc., but the sensation is not the anointing. The word or sentence has to be spoken out in faith for the rest of the message to come out. The message is the Holy Spirit's but the person does have control over the tone, volume, and phrasing of the message.

In receiving and exercising spiritual gifts, it is important to understand that God is a loving Father who wants only good things for His children. If we ask Him for tongues, that is what He will give us, and it must be good for us if such a Father would offer it! He wants us to experience all of the work of his Spirit in us and tongues is a part of that work. Tongues is for all who want to live by the power of the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit draws us together in Christian community, He will bless us, as a community, with all the gifts we need to live the full life of Jesus in power, love, and strength.