

Demystifying Speaking in Tongues

We can't read the Book of Acts and avoid the subject of speaking in tongues. The word *tongues* means *languages*. Basically, the Holy Spirit's powerful presence enabled Jesus' followers to speak to God in languages they had never learned.

Acts 2:4 shows 120 followers of Jesus filled with the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues.

Acts Chapter 10 records Peter's ministry to a group of non-Christians in Cornelius's home. (See Acts 10:46.) These people received Jesus as their personal Savior and then spoke in tongues when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

Then we read about the Apostle Paul's visit to a city in Turkey named Ephesus. There he met twelve followers of John the Baptist who accepted Jesus as their Lord. Subsequently, "When Paul placed hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues" (Acts 19:6 NIV).

Speaking in tongues was a part of the early Christians' experience. What's it all about?

There are two approaches we can take to speaking in tongues. First, pretend it is outdated and can be ignored. Second, accept that we cannot avoid the New Testament examples of speaking in tongues.

Let's choose the second approach and demystify speaking in tongues. It's an absolutely comprehensible and understandable experience available to everyone who follows Jesus.

We Are Human Spirits

The human spirit and the human mind are not the same. The Holy Spirit moves into the human spirit at the new birth. He does not inhabit the mind. When Scripture declares that we are new creatures in Christ, it's speaking of our spirits, not our minds or our bodies.

Briefly, the human spirit is the non-physical eternal person that steps out of the body when it dies. This distinction between spirit and mind is very important when demystifying tongues.

Speaking In Tongues Is An Act Of The Human Spirit Apart From The Human Mind

The Apostle Paul declared, "If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful...I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I

will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind” (1 Corinthians 14:14-15). So the speaking in tongues recorded in Acts 2, 10 and 19 describes people who spoke to God from their spirits while their minds were uninvolved. Speaking in tongues is simply speaking from the human spirit in languages unknown to the mind of the speaker. It’s that simple!

Speaking In Tongues Lets Us Address God From Our Spirits When Our Minds Don’t Know What To Say

Paul pointed out, “Anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God” (1 Corinthians 14:2). You see, speaking in tongues is primarily for addressing God from the human spirit, not for communicating with people. In fact, Acts 2:11 points out that Jesus’ followers declared “the wonders of God” as they spoke in tongues. From their human spirits they were declaring the wonders of God in praise, adoration and love for God.

When the human spirit yearns to describe our appreciation of God and our love for Him, it hits a road block. We feel love for God and want to utter our affection for Him, but our restricted vocabulary prevents us from saying what we feel. As a result, the Holy Spirit makes His unlimited vocabulary available to our spirits, and we speak forth adoration for God that surpasses our mental block.

Tongues Is A Cooperative Language

God’s Spirit yearns to work in and through His children, but He refuses to force His will on us. God works with people who willingly cooperate with the Lord’s desires. For example, we were born again by the power of the Holy Spirit only after we submitted to Jesus’ lordship. We cooperated with the Holy Spirit before He transformed us into God’s children.

So it is with speaking languages He inspires. The Holy Spirit never forces us to speak in languages our minds don’t know. On the other hand, He makes His unlimited vocabulary available for born again believers willing to speak from the human spirit.

Notice the emphasis of Acts 2:4. “Everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, **as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability**” (NLT). The Holy Spirit gave them this ability as the people surrendered their vocal mechanism to Him.

The Holy Spirit’s vocabulary is like His person—infinite. He knows all languages past, present and future. When He fills the human spirit, this unrestricted vocabulary accompanies Him because it’s part of Him.

When the Book of Acts mentions people speaking languages inspired by the Holy Spirit, it doesn’t mean God forced them to speak. They chose to speak. He did not compel them to utter a sound. So tongues is truly a cooperative

language. The Holy Spirit provides both vocabulary and energy to speak from the spirit. Then His people willingly go beyond their understanding and speak to God from their human spirits.

Pouring forth our love for God in languages provided by the Holy Spirit is a miracle that is not mysterious. We belong to the God of miracles who unhesitatingly injects miracles into the lives of all His children.

Jesus promised that Heavenly Father willingly gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask for Him. (See Luke 11:13.)

After asking Father for the Holy Spirit baptism, respond by choosing to speak. The God of miracles will act in your behalf and enable you to praise Him in a language supplied by Him.

