

# **“I Want You All to Speak in Tongues”**

(1 Cor. 14:5)

by Al Mansfield

## **1. Where is the gift of tongues in the New Testament?**

It occurs 27 times in the New Testament:

- a) once in the Gospel of Mark 16:17 “they will speak in new tongues”
- b) three times in Acts:  
Acts 2:4 (Pentecost) “they began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”  
Acts 10:46 “speaking in tongues and extolling God”  
Acts 19:6 “they spoke with tongues and prophesied”
- c) In 1 Corinthians, it occurs 23 times  
Most refer to praying in tongues (plural) ; eight times it’s in the singular: a tongue

## **2. What are the two different functions or uses of tongues 1 Corinthians?**

One is a grace for personal prayer (1 Cor. 14:4) and the other use is a public message for the assembly, which needs interpretation (1 Cor. 14:5).

## **3. Is St. Paul negative about tongues? Does he say that tongues is the least of the gifts?**

No and No. What does Paul say?

- a) He doesn’t want us ignorant or uninformed about spiritual gifts. (12:1)
- b) Tongues is a spiritual gift of the Holy Spirit. (12:9-11)
- c) Tongues will pass away, as prophecy will, when the perfect comes. (13:8-10)
- \*d) Earnestly desire the spiritual gifts. (14:1)
- e) One who speaks in tongues speaks not to men but to God...he utters mysteries in the Spirit. (14:2)
- f) He who speaks in tongues edifies himself or builds himself up. (14:4)
- \*g) “I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy.” (14:5)
- h) He who speaks in tongue should pray for the power to interpret. (14:13)
- i) Pray with the spirit (tongues); pray with the mind also. (14:15)  
Sing with the spirit; sing with the mind also.
- \*j) “I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all...”(14:18)
- k) Tongues are a sign for unbelievers, not for believers. (14:22)
- l) There should be no message in tongues without interpretation. (14:28)
- m) “Earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues, but all things should be done decently and in order.” (14:39-40)

## **4. Why are people encouraged to pray in tongues when they are prayed with to be baptized in the Holy Spirit?**

- a) It’s available and freely given; take advantage of the grace.
- b) Imitate the Scriptural pattern in Acts.
- c) Outward sign of an inward yielding to the Holy Spirit.
- d) It seems to be a doorway to receiving the other gifts of the Spirit.

5. **What good is praying in tongues and how can tongues help your prayer life?**

- a) Tongues is a gift of the Holy Spirit; therefore, good by definition.
- b) A way of “uttering mysteries in the Spirit,” of building ourselves up in our faith. (cf. Jude1:20)
- c) A way of praying when we don’t know how to pray. (cf. Rom.8:26ff)
- d) St. Paul encourages praying and singing with the spirit and with the mind. (1Cor.14-15.

6. **Are tongues actual languages?**

Sometimes yes and sometimes no.

There are many cases in which a person speaking in tongues has been recognized as speaking an actual language (that the speaker did not already know). Obviously, this is not always the case. St. Paul talks about “tongues of men and angels” (13:1). Many scholars and theologians have described tongues as “pre-conceptual utterance” or “non-rational prayer of the heart” (Fr. George Montague). Many of the early Church Fathers speak of “jubilation” or “jubilus”, which was a form of praying and singing aloud without words. Both St. Augustine and St. Jerome mention jubilus as a way of praying in words that cannot be understood.

7. **Do you have to pray in tongues to know you are baptized in the Spirit?**

A short answer would be: “No, but it helps.” Or, to quote Sr. Linda Koontz, “You don’t have to speak in tongues, you get to.”

Experience has shown that tongues is very available and freely given to all who desire it. We should desire it, yield to it and receive it. Praying in tongues is a lot like incense. Incense doesn’t affect validity but adds solemnity and beauty. Ps. 141:2 says: “Let my prayer ascend like incense before you.” Tongues is like adding incense to your prayer.

8. **Why are you told to make sounds? Isn’t this making things up?**

Because we are body and soul, material and spiritual beings, God usually requires our cooperation. Moses had to throw his staff on the ground before it became a serpent. Peter had to climb out of the boat and start walking before he walked on water. God usually requires us to do something before He will act. Mother Angelica says we have to do the ridiculous before God will do the miraculous. Our beginning to make sounds simply indicates an active desire on our part to receive God’s gifts and our trust that He will give them.

9. **Isn’t it better to let God choose your gifts?**

In this question also, the hidden assumption seems to be that God will act apart from our participation or cooperation. In the important decisions of life, such as marriage or a state in life, God doesn’t force or dictate, but uses our own desires as a way to guide us into His plan. So it is with spiritual gifts, which all come from God. There is an interplay between our desire and yielding on the one hand and God’s guidance and revelation on the other. We can use what God has already revealed in Scripture as our guideline.

**10. What is the relation between tongues and other spiritual gifts?**

- a) Tongues is usually (not always) the first gift received.
- b) Tongues is a good preparation for other spiritual gifts.
- c) Learning how to yield to the gift of tongues helps us learn how to yield to other spiritual gifts.
- d) Tongues usually leads to a desire for the other spiritual gifts.

**Final thought:**

When God offers a gift, He always provides a way out, an “excuse” not to accept it. God won’t force us but His word to us is, “**Be open.**”

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