

Do You Know the Holy Spirit? **Lesson Seven: The Spirit's Gift of Speaking in Tongues**

www.cvillechurch.com

Introduction: The Many Beliefs People Have of Speaking in Tongues.

A. Many believe all Christians can have this gift today.

“When the early believers were filled, they spoke in other tongues and **the same holds true today**. Millions of believers worldwide share the exact testimony: when they initially were baptized in the Holy Spirit they spoke in unknown tongues. This is the truth which Pentecostals consistently affirm.” - **The General Council of the Assemblies of God**

“The Gift of Tongues (D&C 46:24): Sometimes it is necessary to communicate the gospel in a language we have not learned. When this happens, the Lord can bless us with the ability to speak that language... **Many faithful members have been blessed with the gift of tongues.** (See Joseph Fielding Smith, Answers to Gospel Questions, 2:32-33.)” www.lds.org
- **The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.**

“Spiritual Mediumship: A medium is one whose organism is sensitive to vibrations from the Spirit World and through whose instrumentality, intelligences in that world are able to convey messages and produce the phenomena of Spiritualism. The phenomena of Spiritualism consists of: prophecy, clairvoyance, clairaudience, **gift of tongues**... and any other manifestation which proves the continuity of life.” - **The National Spiritualist Association of Churches**
www.nsac.org/spiritualism

“This marvelous personal encounter is known as "the baptism with the Holy Spirit," and it is accompanied by the miracle of "speaking in tongues." It wasn't for the disciples alone; **you too can have this experience**--your very own Pentecost.” - **You Can Have a Personal Pentecost by Ernest B. Gentile, Charisma Magazine, October, 2004**

- Some Southern Baptists are now considering the possibility of speaking in tongues today, some even claiming to speak in tongues (e.g., “Pastor Asks Baptists to Craft Policy on Tongues” Charisma Magazine -- December, 2006)

B. Are modern day claims of Glossolalia (Speaking in Tongues) the *real* thing?

1. Many try to make convincing arguments by giving their “testimony” and sharing their experiences.
2. The **only** way to know for sure is by comparing the modern day claims to what the New Testament teaches concerning the speaking of tongues.

I. Examining Modern Day Glossolalia (“Speaking in Tongues”).

A. “**Ecstatic**” speech

1. People who claim to speak in tongues often associate it with religious fervor or excitement and **feelings of ecstasy.**

Ecstasy: 1. rapturous delight. 2. an overpowering emotion or exaltation; a state of sudden, intense feeling. 3. the frenzy of poetic inspiration. 4. mental transport or rapture from the contemplation of divine things. - www.dictionary.com (cf. Random House Dictionary)

2. The New English Bible, which often paraphrases, erroneously describes speaking in tongues in this way: “*For they could hear them speaking in tongues of **ecstasy** and acclaiming the greatness of God*” (**Acts 10:46**).

“Whatever may be predicted of the psychological conditions of speaking with tongues in the New Testament, it is evident that the experience since then **may be classed as ecstasy** or allied phenomena. **In ecstasy there is a condition of emotional exaltation**, in which the one who experiences it is more or less oblivious of the external world, and loses to some extent his self-consciousness and his power of rational thought and self-control.”

– **George Barton Cutten, Speaking with Tongues (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927), p. 157.**

B. Displays a lack of self-control, even hysteria.

“Now, researchers have taken what they say are the first brain scans of people speaking in tongues. The scientists, at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, **found decreased activity in the frontal lobes, a brain area behind the forehead associated with self-control.** ‘It’s fascinating because these subjects truly believe that the spirit of God is moving through them and controlling them to speak,’ said the university’s Andrew Newberg, one of the researchers. The ‘research shows us that **these subjects are not in control of the usual language centers during this activity, which is consistent with their description of a lack of intentional control.**’ The study appears in the November issue of the journal *Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging*” - Nov. 1, 2006, University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine

“Ecstasy, catalepsy, **mass hysteria**, a psychological state in which **the consciously controlling apparatus of the mind is not dominant**, a state in which the primitive reactions find their way to the surface, a state in which speech continues after thought is exhausted and a series of meaningless syllables results.”

– **Stuart Bergsma, Speaking with Tongues (New York: Parker Book House, 1965), p. 9**

“**The modern practice of tongues is exactly the same that Hinduists and practitioners of Yoga have practiced for centuries which they call kundalini.** They have the concept that **this phenomenon is to release “the power of the serpent” that resides in every person...** When the power of the serpent comes out, **frequently the person makes involuntary sounds and their bodies begin to make movements out of their control (as is slain in the spirit).** The Hindu’s Kundalini is the modern speaking in tongues, and **both fall to the floor and roll about out of control...** making sounds of animals, or even laughing uncontrollably, even smelling strange fragrances, having a sensation of light or fire or electricity, visions of heavenly people talking to them, or rhythmic and repetitive chants.” - **“Kundalini and Tongues: The Power of the Serpent” By David Cox**

C. Incomprehensible

1. Small parts of what is spoken are characteristic of speech, yet much of it consists of meaningless syllables that cannot be understood.

“Glossolalia as a speech phenomenon can be classed with other disordered patterns of language and/or speech, the final production being vocalizations in the forms of words or segments of words **which have no denotative or referential sense...** **sound externalized without sense** which sometimes produces the impression of coherent speech.” The terms **“unintelligible,” “meaningless,” and “jibberish”** have also been applied to the entities representing this type of speech.” – **“Behavioral Science Research on the Nature of Glossolalia” by E. Mansell Pattison, M.D., Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation (September 1968)**

“It is a **spontaneous utterance of uncomprehended and seemly random speech in sounds...** The speech itself rises in an effortless flow of unusually complex structure, with the repetition and inflection characteristic of language. It is neither controlled nor directly understood by the speaker, but takes possession of his speech.” – **Morton T. Kelsey, Tongue Speaking (Doubleday and Co., Inc: New York, 1964), p. 1.**

D. Yet, it is claimed to be an *actual* language.

1. **“An Unknown Tongue”**: Many claim the language of glossolalia is an unknown language known *only* to God.

"For me," Bob told us, "the gift of tongues turned out to be the gift of praise. **As I used the unknown language which God had given me** I felt rising in me the love, the awe, the adoration pure and uncontingent, that I had not been able to achieve in a thought-out prayer."

- **“The Miracle Spiritual Language”** By John L. Sherrill, *Charisma Magazine* -- April, 2006

- a. The King James translators erroneously added the word “unknown” before “tongue” (**1 Cor. 14:2**) leading some to mistakenly believe that it is a language unknown to *all* men.
- b. Today’s English Version (TEV) made similar errors: “*they will speak in strange tongues*” (**Mark 16:17**); “*strange sounds*” (**Acts 10:46; 19:6; 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:2**).

2. **“Tongues of Angels”**: Some have taught that the speaking of tongues produces the language that the angels in Heaven speak (**cf. 1 Cor. 13:1**), a language that only God and His angels understand.

“It wasn’t unusual to hear someone talk about speaking in tongues at Oral Roberts University...The late Jamie Buckingham, my longtime mentor, described the first time he spoke in tongues. In his 1976 book *Risky Living* he wrote: “From the very depths of my inner being, I heard the Holy Spirit Himself beginning to speak. ... **I was speaking the language of the angels.** It was an unforgettable moment. Sheer ecstasy.” - **“Holy Spirit, Renew Us”**, by Stephen Strang, *Charisma Magazine* -- June, 2005

- a. However, there is no biblical evidence outside of 1 Corinthians 13:1 that angels have a special language that they speak.
- b. On the contrary, there are many examples in Scripture of angels speaking to men in languages that are *easily understood by men* (e.g., **2 Kings 1:15; Zech. 1:9; Luke 1:26-38; Acts 8:26; Heb. 2:2**)
- c. The context reveals that Paul is using a **hyperbole** – a deliberate exaggeration to emphasize the point (**1 Cor. 13:1; cf. Gal. 1:8**).
- d. Whether a language is spoken by men **or even angels**, such speech is vain and void of love when spoken without consideration of others (when no one can understand it).

3. **Tongue of Adam**: Some believe that glossolalia is the language Adam spoke before “*God confused the language of the whole earth*” (**Gen. 11**).

“They couldn’t finish building the tower because they couldn’t understand each other’s language. This is how mankind began to speak various languages or tongues. Thus, **the day of Pentecost is, in reality, the reversal of tongues** that previously were confused at the Tower of Babel. At Pentecost men once again began to understand one another from a spiritual sense.”

– **“Did You Know Why Various Denominations Speak in Tongues?”** By Lee Warren from **“The Power Latent in Man”** (<http://www.plim.org/tongues.html>)

“In some instances when the saints speak in tongues, the language impressed upon them by the power of the Spirit **is the pure Adamic tongue.**” - **In Search of the Adamic Language** by Ronald P. Millett, *Meridian Magazine* (Latter Day Saints)

- a. However, those present on Pentecost did **not** hear *one* common language, but instead everyone heard the **specific** language which each person was born (**Acts 2:8**).

4. **Primitive Tongues:** Others teach that glossolalia is primitive languages of cultures long dead; yet there is no way to prove or disprove this theory.

5. **“Prayer Language”**

- a. Many teach that to “*pray in the Holy Spirit*” (**Jude 20**), one must “*pray in a tongue*” (**1 Cor. 14:14**).
- b. Through speaking in tongues, it is believed, that the Holy Spirit “groans” on our behalf in prayer to communicate what we cannot put into words (**Rom. 8:26**).

"As I used the unknown language which God had given me I felt rising in me the love, the awe, the adoration pure and uncontingent, **that I had not been able to achieve in a thought-out prayer**. Praise and adoration are basically non-conceptual things, and **glossolalia is non-conceptual prayer. It releases us from our dependence on specifics and step-by-step thought processes into a direct awareness of God...**

Another use of tongues suggested in the Bible is to let us pray even when we have no idea what to ask for in a given situation... Bill approached the girl and placed his hands on the one portion of her body that seemed unhurt, her right arm. **He took a deep breath and began to pray not with his mind but with his lips and tongue only, using the sounds God gave him. He turned the prayer over entirely to the Holy Spirit**, knowing that He loved Carol more than any human could... And he was aware of the strange, brilliant certainty growing stronger each moment: the sure knowledge that Carol was going to be well again."

- **“The Miracle Spiritual Language”** By John L. Sherrill, *Charisma Magazine* -- April, 2006

“Praying in tongues during private devotions is an additional ministry of the Holy Spirit. Many believers today testify that praying in tongues greatly enriches their spiritual lives. **The limitations of intellect are overcome as the Holy Spirit quickens the human spirit** in glorious expressions of worship and adoration. The quandary of limited vocabulary and the inability to express feelings and concerns of the soul disappear as a Spirit-imparted language flows out from the heart.” – **“Questions About Tongues”** *The General Council of the Assemblies of God* www.ag.org

E. Modern Glossolalia is highly subjective and relies on self-authentication.

“But this man, David Wilkerson, used the time on the boat for **prayer in tongues**... in trying to express his gratitude he would reach a language barrier. **English could no longer express what he felt**. It was simply inadequate for the Being he perceived. It was at this point that he would burst through into communication which was not limited by vocabulary. **His spirit as well as his mind would start to praise God.**” - **“The Miracle Spiritual Language”** By John L. Sherrill, *Charisma Magazine* -- April, 2006

“The practice is not self-authenticating so far as its externals are concerned: but **to the participant**, the Holy Spirit bears a witness that is as self-authenticating as one’s consciousness of existence.” – Paul Seely, **“Letters to the Editor,”** *Journal of American Scientific Affiliation*, Vol. XX, No. 3, Sept. 1968, p. 93

1. Rather than be concerned of the similarities with world religions (e.g., Hinduism) and abnormal psychology (e.g., hysteria, frenzy, unintelligible speech), modern day “glossolalists” often retort: **“I know it’s true, because I feel it deep down in my heart.”**

II. New Testament GLOSSA (Tongues).

A. Definition and use of the word

“(1) The tongue, as a member of the body – an organ of speech (2) It means a language or dialect – referring to foreign or obsolete words which needed translation or explanation (3) It means ‘anything shaped like a tongue’ – like the tongue of a shoe or a tongue of land jutting out into the sea.” – **Liddell-Scott Greek Lexicon**

Examples: Romans 14:11 (NASB) For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every **tongue** shall give praise to God."

Revelation 5:9 (NASB) ... Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and **tongue** and people and nation.

Acts 2:3 (NASB) And there appeared to them **tongues** as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.

B. N.T. glossa is set apart from the pagan cult practices of ecstatic utterances.

1. One would have to go **outside** the New Testament to the practices of the ancient pagans to find the word glossa used to refer to ecstatic speech.

Examples: The Thracian Dionysus cult, the Delphic of Phrygia, the Sybils, and other cults in New Testament times commonly spoke ecstatic utterances which they called glossa (“tongues”).

2. Some have wrongly assumed that the “glossa” of pagans was the **same** practice of glossa by the saints at Corinth (e.g., Johannes Behm, “Glossa,” Theological Dictionary of the New Testament).

Note: To understand the nature of speaking in tongues, we must **first** study Acts 2 where it is described in detail. **Then** we are ready to study its proper use in 1 Corinthians 12-14.

3. **Nowhere** in the N.T. is glossa described as ecstatic speech; instead those who spoke in tongues spoke **actual** languages of men (**Acts 2:4-11**).

a. GLOSSA (tongues) and DIOLEKTOS (language) are used interchangeably (**vs. 4-6**).

b. The apostles, known as Galileans to speak *one* dialect, had the ability to speak other languages (**vs. 7-8**).

c. The Holy Spirit, through Luke, made a point to mention that fifteen different nationalities were present, each hearing their language spoken by the apostles (**vs. 9-11**).

d. The saints at Corinth did indeed recognize tongues to be a gift to speak **languages** fluently, previously unknown (**1 Cor 14:10-13, 21; cf. Isa. 28:11-12**).

4. **Consider:** If the Spirit’s gift of glossa was *mere* ecstatic speech like the pagans, then it would not have been seen as a miraculous sign of God!

5. Failure to make a distinction have persuaded some (e.g., Catholicism, Islam) to declare glossa today to be a sign of demon possession!

III. Who Was Promised the Ability to Speak in Tongues?

A. “These signs will accompany those who have believed.” (Mark 16:16-20).

Note: Although some dispute that **Mark 16:17-20** belongs in the Bible, the evidence shows that it **does in fact** belong in the Canon (e.g., the text is found in the Alexandrian, Ephraem, and Bezae manuscripts, and in Christian writings as early as the 2nd century - e.g., Irenaeus, Tatian).

1. Many have used this passage to try to prove that all Christians have the potential to perform miracles, including the speaking in tongues.

“In Mark 16:17, the Scripture says "These signs will accompany those who have believed...." Miracles are for believers to "work." You can work miracles! ... If you are a believer, that means you! The Holy Spirit is within you and in Him are His gifts. The power to work miracles is in you right now if Jesus is your Savior and Lord.” - **"Get Ready to be Taken over by the Supernatural Miracle-working Power of God"** by Patricia King, *Prophetic Words* April 1, 2007

2. Mark 16:16-20 *seems* to suggest that **all** believers will perform miracles:

Mark 16:16 "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. – **This means anyone who believes and is baptized.**

17 "And these signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues. – **Those that have believed and have been baptized!?!**

3. However, the New Testament clearly demonstrates that it required **more** than believing and being baptized to receive miraculous spiritual gifts!

4. The isolation of Mark 16:16-18 from the rest of the New Testament will lead to an incomplete understanding of who may work miraculous signs.

5. Miraculous signs will accompany baptized believers **provided** they have *received the laying on of the apostles' hands* (e.g., **Acts 8:4-24; 19:5-6**)

B. The **three** recorded instances of speaking in tongues in the Scriptures.

1. **Only** the apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost which gave them the gift to speak in tongues (**Acts 2**).

a. This promise was given only to the apostles (**See Lesson 4**).

2. The household of Cornelius received the baptism with the Holy Spirit (**Acts 10:44-48**) which also gave them the gift of speaking in tongues.

a. This was a one time event to show that God approves of Gentiles receiving the gospel for salvation (**Acts 11:15-18**) (**See Lesson 4**).

3. The last recorded incident of speaking in tongues is in **Acts 19:6** where the apostle Paul laid his hands on the Ephesians.

a. Only by the laying on of the apostles' hands could people receive miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (**See Lesson 5**).

4. These examples demonstrate that people who believe and are baptized (**Mark 16:16**) **cannot expect** to receive the gift of speaking in tongues.

IV. The Instructions on Speaking in Tongues at Corinth (1 Corinthians 14).

A. Lest one is puffed up with pride, "speaking in tongues" is actually an **inferior** gift to prophecy (**1 Cor. 14:1-12, 18-19**).

1. Prophecy has great spiritual value for "*edification and exhortation and consolation*" (**1 Cor. 14:3**).

2. The problem with tongues at Corinth is that often they spoke without providing an interpretation, which did not edify the church (**1 Cor 14:4-6**).

B. The text demonstrates that glossa is **not** ecstatic utterances (modern day glossolalia), but instead languages of men previously unknown to the speaker.

1. The tongue speaker speaks only to God **if** "*no one understands*" (**v. 2**).

a. Not by physical preparation, but by the Spirit "*he speaks mysteries*" **because** neither the speaker nor listeners understand.

b. He does not speak languages "unknown" to mankind (See KJV), but languages previously "unknown" **to him** (**v. 2**; cf. **Acts 2:4-8**).

2. The speaker of tongues (languages) who does not provide an interpretation *edifies himself only* (v. 4), **not because** he understands what he is saying, but because he knew the Spirit was speaking through him.
3. Without an interpretation, the “*mind is unfruitful*”, for the one who speaks in tongues does **not** understand the message nor do the listeners (1 Cor. 14:13-18; cf. Mat. 13:19, 23; Acts 8:30ff.).
 - a. Five words understood were of **much greater** spiritual value than ten thousand words that cannot be understood! (1 Cor. 14:19)
 - b. Unless the language given by the Spirit was a language *already known* by the speakers / listeners (e.g., Pentecost – Acts 2), a translation by the interpreter was needed for the mind to be fruitful.

C. The **purpose** of speaking in tongues.

1. **In regard to Christians:**

- a. Edification of speaker (1 Cor. 14:4), provided he could interpret the words he spoke or be given an interpretation (1 Cor. 14:13-15).
- b. Edification of the church, provided there was an interpreter that could explain what was being said (1 Cor. 14:26-28).

2. **In regard to Non-Christians:**

- a. A sign, confirmation, or proof that it was of God (1 Cor. 14:22), that it may cause them to believe in the Lord (cf. John 20:30-31).
- b. Speaking in tongues would benefit unbelievers *only* when it was spoken in a language that unbelievers could understand (Act 2:11).
- c. It was not God’s will for the whole church to speak in tongues **in the worship assembly**, otherwise unbelievers who attend would view them as “*out of their mind*” (1 Cor 14:23).

(1) Similar to when some supposed the apostles were drunk with wine on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:13).

- d. Speaking in tongues needed to be exercised in a proper and orderly manner providing interpretation accordingly (1 Cor. 14:26-27, 40).

D. The rules they were to follow when they chose to use the gift of tongues.

1. Always pray for an interpretation so there may be edification (vs. 12-13)
 - a. This suggests that it was possible for a person to have both the gift of speaking in tongues and the gift to interpret.
2. When praying or singing in a tongue, always use both the spirit and the **mind** (speak so as to understand and that others may also).
 - a. Lest the mind is unfruitful and others are not edified (vs. 14-17)
3. There should be no more than two to three Christians who are speaking in tongues at any worship assembly and each in turn.
 - a. Someone needed to provide an interpretation, otherwise they were to keep silent in the church (1 Cor. 14:27-28).
 - b. “*The interpretation of tongues*” was a gift of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:10), essential for edification (1 Cor. 14:26).
 - c. This gift demonstrates that the speaking of tongues was an actual, intelligible language **translated by the interpreter**.

Note: “Interpret” (from DIERMENOUO): “1. to unfold the meaning of what is said, explain, expound: **Luke 24:27** 2. to translate into one's native language: **Acts 9:36.**”

(Thayer's Greek Lexicon) (cf. **1 Cor. 12:30; 14:5, 13, 27**)

4. “*But all things* [including speaking in tongues – ML] *must be done properly and in an orderly manner*” (**1 Cor. 14:40**).

5. The chaotic scene of modern day “glossolalia” that displays a lack of self-control, **as if** the Spirit “**made** them do it”, is **not** the Spirit at work!

V. Do We Need the Gift of Speaking in Tongues Today?

- **Despite popular belief to the contrary, the ability to speak in tongues was not proof that a person was truly devoted to God's will nor of one's salvation (See Lesson 6).**

A. For a Christian to “*pray in the Holy Spirit*” (**Jude 20**) today, we do not need nor should expect to “*pray in a tongue*” (**1 Cor. 14:14**).

1. As already noted, those who received the gift of tongues from the Holy Spirit *directly* were special cases and one time events (**Act 2:4; 10:44-46**).

2. For anyone else to receive miraculous gifts such as tongues had to receive them by the laying on of the apostles hands (e.g., **Acts 19:6**).

3. Since the apostles have departed and “the perfect” has come (**1 Cor. 13:8-10**), *we cannot or should not expect the gift of speaking in tongues.*

4. **How then can we “pray in the Holy Spirit”?**

a. Modern day “glossolalia” errs by teaching praying in the Spirit is “non-conceptual prayer,” for even tongue speaking that was “unfruitful to the mind” did not bring full spiritual edification.

“Hayford discusses glossolalia in his book *The Beauty of Spiritual Language* and says many Pentecostals don't realize the practical value of tongues—which he said includes ‘**enablement beyond our own capacity**’ in prayer and worship and the ‘**internal upbuilding of the soul...**’ - *Many Pentecostals Don't Speak in Tongues, Charisma Magazine -- December, 2006*

b. Instead, to pray in the Spirit, we must pray in harmony with the Spirit revealed Scriptures (**1 John 5:14-15**).

c. By “*building yourselves up on your most holy faith*” (God's word), you pray in the Holy Spirit (**Jude 20; cf. Rom. 10:17**).

5. Even when Holy Spirit “groans” on our behalf in prayer when we struggle what to say, He does so “*according to the will of God*” (**Rom. 8:26-27**); yet **not** by giving us the gift of tongues.

B. The Scriptures are all we need to build us up (edify) or make us complete spiritually today (**2 Tim. 3:16-17; Acts 20:32**).

1. To suggest we need tongues *in addition to* Scripture for the purpose of “upbuilding the soul” is to deny this truth!

C. There is no indication, **anywhere** in Scripture, that the reception of the gift of speaking in tongues was a sign of one's eternal salvation.

1. Some teach that when a person receives the gift of the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:38**), they will speak in tongues as a sign of one's salvation.

2. However, Scripture reveals that when a person received the gift of speaking in tongues, he still was in need of being baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins (e.g., **Acts 10:47-48; cf. Acts 2:38**).

Conclusion: The Gift of Tongues Served its Purpose in the First Century. Today, Let Us Earnestly Desire to Know the Revealed Will of God as Given in the Bible.