



7 REASONS
Why Every
Christian
Should
Speak in
Tongues

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BBC Supplement

In preparation for encounter weekend

It is left to the teacher of the class to ask relevant questions and arrange the lessons to bring out the best from the material. There are two books in this BBC Supplement, which are designed to prepare the new believer for the Encounter Weekend.

- I. 7 Reasons why every Christian should speak in tongues
- II. Freedom From Bondage

It is hoped that with adequate preparation the new member in the Consolidation Cell Group will come away from the weekend full of the Holy Spirit and free from all spiritual contamination from his previous life.

Introduction

Two things happened to me when I became a Christian. I fell in love with Jesus, and my heart was filled with love and affection for every other believer. I felt that I belonged to a universal family of people who truly loved one another.

My dreams were soon shattered. It soon became apparent to me that all Christians loved one another, and that the Church was divided over many issues, not least among them was the question of the Holy Spirit.

The college friend who had invited me to the crusade where I was saved attended a different church to me. Evidently his church was diametrically opposed to the view about the Holy Spirit held by my church. They believed that speaking in tongues died with the apostles, and viewed with great suspicion anyone claiming to have that experience today.

Soon after I received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and my friend got to know that I spoke in tongues, I began to notice a gap developing in our friendship. I don't think he knew how to deal with me. We were obviously friends, but he found it difficult to cope with my new experience. One thing I think it did for him was to make him search his own heart about the baptism of the Spirit.

It led him to search the Scriptures afresh and see what the Bible really says about the baptism of the Spirit. Once he was convinced it was of the Lord, and for today, he began to seek the Lord. I had the privilege of laying my hands on him to receive this wonderful power from on high, and he, too, began to speak in tongues.

That experience of so long ago convinced me that all the controversies about the baptism of the Spirit, with its attendant divisions are really unnecessary. It is God's will for every Christian, irrespective of church affiliation, to be filled with the Spirit of God and speak in tongues.

The quest for spiritual power and dynamism is a universal heart cry among all Christians. We all want more of God in our lives. We

want to see Him do His work freely through us. We all need this power from on high, call what you may: baptism of the Spirit, second blessing, charismatic renewal, or the fullness of the Spirit.

The bone of contention is glossolalia (the Greek word meaning 'speaking in tongues, or languages), which many claim should accompany the baptism of the Spirit.

Some say it is unnecessary. I know a Christian doctor who rejects tongues as a valid experience for today because he can't understand it. For him, anything he cannot understand with his mind or explain logically should be rejected. "When God can just as easily speak to me in my language," he contended, "why talk to me in gibberish."

Some reject tongues on the assumption that it is unlinguistic. They say tongues do not have the same linguistic characteristics as other languages. They conclude that it is utter nonsense as a language, and cannot therefore be of value in spiritual worship.

Then there are many well-meaning Christians who, while accepting tongues as a valid gift, sit on the theological fence. As far as they are concerned it is just not for them, though they don't mind if others speak in tongues.

For others it's just not their church tradition.

An inter-denominational experience

For many years speaking in tongues has been virtually confined to the Pentecostal churches. Those from other Protestant churches who came into the experience were either forced out of their denominations or left because they felt they could not grow in the things of the Spirit if they remained. They left to join Pentecostal churches, which have had a phenomenal growth since their humble beginnings early in the 20th century.

In 1906 a small band of believers got together in a little mission house in Azusa Street, Los Angeles, California, USA. They were largely people who had met opposition in their churches because they spoke in tongues. Soon they were joined by hundreds of others, many travelling hundreds of miles across the United States to come to this mission in order to be baptized in the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues.

God was moving in other parts of the world too. Tongues had broken out among the Welsh in the 1904 revival. Around this time there were reports of people in Norway and North Germany, and especially in 1910 in Zurich, coming into the Pentecostal experience. Even in Russia as far back as 1855 individuals were coming into this experience. And so the Pentecostal movement started.

Among the traditional churches the story was different. For years Spirit baptized Christians remained in their churches, many too afraid to let it be known that they spoke in tongues. What is now known as the charismatic renewal among the traditional churches got its impetus from ministers who had discovered a new release in their worship and power in their ministry through the Pentecostal experience. In the early sixties a number of ministers got together in Van Nuys, California, to pray and encourage one another in this charismatic experience. Among them were ministers from Episcopal, Methodist, Reformed, Baptist, Lutheran and Presbyterian churches.

Traditional churches that whole-heartedly received the tongue experience were few and far between, and those that did gave little or no room in their normal regular services to the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit. They went on mostly in the

mid-week meetings or house fellowships. Small house fellowships developed all over the world, where people either from the same church or from different churches felt free to enter uninhibited into charismatic revival.

The new Pentecostal movement has broken all denominational barriers. Christians from different backgrounds can worship and praise the Lord in love and unity, bound together by a common experience of the Holy Spirit. The fact that a Christian speaks in tongues can no longer be used to place a denominational label on him. The promise is to “as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

THE PROBLEM OF GOD’S CHOSEN PATTERN

A lady once asked me to pray for her for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but insisted that she did not want to speak in tongues. Somehow it frightened her. She wanted God’s blessing but in her own way. When eventually she looked convinced that all she wanted was the Holy Spirit and didn’t mind how he came, I prayed with her. To her amazement she was immediately baptized in the Spirit with speaking in tongues. As tears of joy trickled down her face, she exclaimed, “I didn’t know it would be as wonderful as this”.

So many people ask, “Do I have to speak in tongues to be filled with the Holy Spirit?” The answer to that question is a categorical “No”. The Holy Spirit is not speaking in tongues. Tongues is an initial sign that the Holy Spirit has come, an evidence that we have allowed Him to set our spirits free and control the very citadel of our personality.

What I would say is that you cannot speak in tongues unless you are baptized in the Holy Spirit. Both the Scriptures and evidence from personal experiences prove this to be true.

God always works to a pattern, though sometimes he may deviate from it for certain individuals. It is God’s pattern that all who are baptized in the Spirit should speak in tongues. If a person claims to be filled with the Spirit but does not speak in tongues, one can only say that choice is his, not God’s.

God will only respond to our faith to the extent we are willing to allow him to. If we believe in the gifts of the Spirit we will get the

manifestations; if we don't believe, we won't see the manifestations.

In exceptional cases God has acted in sovereignty to give someone the gift of tongues without their co-operation. Normally we need to expect Him to fill us and speak through us as a sign of his infilling. "Let it be to you according to your faith".

WHY TONGUES?

Of all the gifts of the Spirit speaking in tongues is the only one that came specifically after the Day of Pentecost. There were healings and miracles and prophecies in the Old Testament. The apostles cast out demons and performed miracles before the resurrection. But no one spoke in tongues before Pentecost. It is a gift exclusively associated with the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Peter associated the gift with the coming of the Spirit in the house of Cornelius. He knew that these first Gentile converts had received the Holy Spirit, because he heard them "speak with tongues, and magnify God" (Acts 10:46).

A study of the Acts of the Apostles where the baptism of the Spirit is recorded shows two interesting phenomena. In every case all who were open and seeking were filled and it is either specified or implied that they spoke the unlearned language of praise and adoration. All the 120 disciples in Jerusalem were filled; all at Cornelius' house were filled; all the 12 disciples Paul prayed for in Ephesus were filled, and so were all in Samaria.

Why did God chose tongues as the initial evidence of the infilling of his Spirit? The Genesis record shows that at his creation man was endowed with the ability to conceive thought and speech. Speaking was an integral part of his make-up. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of"(Mt 12:34). James implies in his epistle that if anyone can tame the tongue he can tame the whole man. The tongue is the citadel of he personality.

"As a man thinks in his heart so is he". When we speak in our language, we are in control. We conceive the thoughts and express them in words. When we speak in tongues, however, it is the Holy Spirit who is in control. "All of them were filled with the

Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:4).

Speaking in tongues is a hedge against the tendency in all of us to elevate the intellect and let it dominate our thinking even in matters relating to God. As we daily use the prayer and praise language of speaking in tongues we allow the Spirit to keep us in the “simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor 11:3).

7 reasons why we should all speak in tongues

1. FOR PERSONAL DEVOTION

Every Christian should speak in tongues daily as part of his devotion and prayer. When Paul said to the Corinthians, “I speak in tongues more than you all”, he was hinting at his daily devotional habit. There are times in our experiences when our hearts are full of love to the Lord for who He is, and we are brimming over with gratitude for his goodness to us, and yet words seem to fail us. We just cannot put into words all that our hearts want to express. That is the time for speaking in tongues.

A young under-graduate from Yale University put it this way, “Now I can say what I really feel deep down”.

There are other times when the Lord seems far away, and praying is a big effort. As we speak in tongues and enter into worship “by force” as it were our hearts are warmed and we know that we have entered into His presence.

It is true that when we speak in tongues no one understands, for “in the spirit he speaks mysteries”, but God understands. Part of this mystery was unveiled on the day of Pentecost, when the 120 were inspired to speak in the “tongues of men”. Acts 2:11 says, “(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!”

2. TO GIVE THANKS

What you also do when you speak in tongues is to give thanks.

“So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding. **16** Otherwise when you are praising God in the Spirit, how can someone else, who is now put in the position of an inquirer, say “Amen” to your thanksgiving, since they do not know what you are saying? **17** You are giving thanks well enough, but no one else is edified (1 Cor 14:15-17).

The gist of Paul's argument here is that if you speak in tongues in church, you may very give thanks and blessing the Lord in a most wonderful way, but, since no one else understands you, they cannot join in your praise by saying 'Amen'. But there is nothing wrong saying it in private.

Charles Wesley has so aptly expressed the feeling we so often have about our inadequacy to fully praise the Lord.

*O for a thousand tongues to sing
My dear Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of his grace!*

With the gift of tongues we can fully praise Him and give Him thanks.

3. TO SING HIS PRAISE

*"Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, **19** speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord," (Eph 5:18-19).*

The Bible first exhorted us to be filled with the Spirit, and then goes on to expound the full outcome of that infilling. We will speak to ourselves in songs and psalms. But what will you do if your heart is full of songs and you have no words to sing?

This is where the gift of tongues also comes in useful. Paul says in 1 Cor 14, "I will sing with my spirit". Without a hymn book or a chorus sheet you can sing to your heart's content in the Spirit. It is a most beautiful sound when a whole congregation sings in the Spirit; the harmony is tremendous.

4. SHUTTING YOURSELF OFF FROM THE WORLD

So often you want to shut yourself off from so many of the worldly conversations that go on around you, but find that it is almost impossible. How can you be physically present in a place and yet not be part of what is going on? By speaking in tongues to yourself. You can speak in the quietness of your heart, communicating with God in the Spirit; your lips won't even move.

“If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. 28 If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God” (1 Cor 14:27-28).

It has a double effect, too. Not only can you keep yourself from being contaminated by what is going on around you, but you can actually affect the attitude of anyone who is trying to get you to lose your peace.

A man was in the habit of constantly trying to get his wife to lose her temper with him. He did this by taunting her and provoking her into an argument.

After some time the wife got the better of him. No matter what he said or did, she remained calm and perturbed. Realizing that his torments were no longer effective, the poor man gave up, and started being nice to his wife. But he was curious to know what had been responsible for such a dramatic change in both his wife, who used to be so short tempered, and himself.

“Each time you came with your taunts I knew I would fall if I didn't hold on to the Lord quickly,” she confessed. “So I used to speak in tongues quietly under my breath.” She then found that no matter what he said, she was calm and unaffected. It was then that the husband made his confession.

He said every time he saw his wife's lips moving, he knew she was speaking in tongues, and then he would feel a gentle breeze of peace sweeping over him. In the end he stopped being aggressive toward her, because he was

completely healed of all the hurts that made him say unkind things to her. Praise the Lord!

5. FOR SELF-EDIFICATION

“But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit” (Jude 20). As you pray in the Holy Spirit by speaking in tongues, you build yourself up. By doing this you recharge your spiritual battery, so that you can have something to share with people who come to you with needs or problems.

One preacher said that he always tries to pray in tongues for at least four hours before going to speak anywhere. He came to the conclusion that he could not build up others unless he had first built up himself. Lots of people ask me what they should do when waiting upon God. I tell them to speak in tongues. This way you are building yourself up as you wait in his presence. There is also a promise: *“but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint”* (Isa 40:31).

Part of the renewing of strength you get from speaking in tongues is an increase in faith. To speak in tongues is an act of faith, because you don't know what you are going to say next. One degree of faith then leads to another.

When a group of us gathered around a young man to pray for deliverance from some spiritual bondage, it seemed for several minutes that we were not getting anywhere. Then I was inspired to pray in tongues. As I did my faith just leapt up, and I felt I could pray successfully for him. When I commanded the evil spirit to come out, it did so immediately. I was so happy that I've made it my habit to speak in tongues quietly before I pray for people.

“Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but the one who prophesies edifies the church” (1Cor 14:4). Self-edification in this way is also important in that it opens you up to the other gifts of the Spirit. Tongues may be one of the smallest gifts, but it opens the door to other gifts and manifestations of the Spirit. There aren't many people today

whom God is using in a ministry of healing and deliverance who do not speak in tongues. Kenneth Hagin says that the more he prays and worships God in tongues, the more manifestation of other gifts of the Spirit he has.

Physically, too, speaking in tongues is edifying. The reference to tongues in Isaiah 28:11,12 points this blessing out. It says *“Very well then, with foreign lips and strange tongues God will speak to this people, 12 to whom he said, “This is the resting place, let the weary rest”; and, “This is the place of repose”—but they would not listen”*. God has promised rest and refreshment of body to those who speak in tongues.

I know quite a lot of people who find that when they are tired and physically exhausted, a few minutes in a relaxing position, and speaking quietly in tongues have brought great release and recuperation. The Holy Spirit, who is constantly refreshing and strengthening our inner man, is able this way to communicate this benefit to our physical body also.

6. HOTLINE TO HEAVEN

To me one of the most precious privileges of speaking in tongues is that you speak directly and exclusively to God. Too often Satan plays havoc in our lives because he can understand and sometimes intercept our prayers to God. He is not only capable of blocking prayers to God, but, like the case of Daniel, he can actually hinder God’s response to our prayers reaching us on time, if at all.

Praying in tongues has been described as the Christian’s hotline to heaven. Why is this? *“For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit”* (1 Cor 14:2).

The human spirit of a Christian is a sacred place; it is the exclusive domain of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Anything that goes on there is out of bounds to Satan. So when you pray in tongues (communication between our spirit and God) Satan cannot interfere. He does not even know what is going on.

Praying in tongues also overcomes the problem of unbelief. Very often we hinder our own prayers because our faith cannot handle what we are asking for. We can pray so much that we may pray ourselves out of faith. When we pray in tongues, however, we cannot get in the way of what God wants to do through our prayers. Paul says, "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful" (1 Cor 14:14). Since we ourselves don't know what we are saying, we cannot hinder with our fears and doubts.

By paying in tongues you can overcome the problem of knowing the will of God in prayer. *"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God"* (Rom 8:26-27). It is so easy to be selfish and parochial in our praying. Once we've prayed for ourselves and our loved ones, we can only then think of people we really know. By praying in tongues, the Holy Spirit is able, through our spirit, to pray for what is really the will of God.

Praying in tongues is not, of course, the only sure way to pray according to the will of God, but it is a good addition. Paul says, "I will pray with my spirit, and I will pray with my mind also".

By praying in tongues we can pray for the unknown. God has so many things he wants to do in the world today. And he wants to do them through the prayers of his people. How then can you pray for something you know nothing about? By praying in tongues. I have often prayed in tongues, sometimes for an hour or so, feeling that I was praying for someone somewhere but not knowing whom or what. When I stopped I felt that the Holy Spirit had used me to pray for someone or something important to him.

A woman in England was awakened in the middle of the night and inspired to pray in tongues. As she prayed her mind went out to a missionary whom she hardly knew. She felt strongly he was in great danger. So she prayed for him fervently in tongues for an hour or so. She then went back to

bed. She quite forgot about it until some years later this same missionary came to speak in her church. He told the congregation how he was in grave danger one night, when the enemies of the gospel in the village where he worked had tied him up and were about to do him some mischief. All of a sudden they ran off in different directions, as if something had terrified them. The missionary said it was a mystery to him how the Lord saved his life that night. Then he said casually, "Someone must have been praying for me".

As he spoke this lady suddenly remembered the night she had awakened and was led to pray in tongues for the missionary. She didn't even know his name, or where exactly he worked. But she distinctly remembered praying for him around the same time that he was talking about. God works in mysterious ways his wonders to perform.

7. A WAY TO FULL SURRENDER

In the teaching of James about the proper use of words, he makes it quite plain that though the natural tongue is such a little member yet it can cause a great deal of trouble. Like the helm of a ship, which, though small, can turn a big ship, the tongue can set the whole cause of a man. So if the tongue can be tamed, the whole body can be controlled.

"We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check" (James 3:2). When the Holy Spirit comes into our lives, he gives the sign of tongues to show that he is now fully in control. For if he can control the tongue, he can control the rest of us. You will find it difficult to speak in tongues daily, and also indulge in loose and frivolous talk.

"My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water"(James 3:12). While we keep our eyes on Jesus and praise Him continually in tongues throughout the day, we will have no room for anything that is not holy, pure, honest and of good report.

If you have been baptized in the Holy Spirit and you don't speak in tongues regularly I will urge you to change your

habit. Speak in tongues daily, in fact, as often as possible. Don't try to work out the mechanics of it to see how speaking in tongues can actually change your life. Just do it. You will discover that the more you exercise this gift, as with all gifts, the more you will develop it and find it more beneficial. I know of nothing else that can bring a Christian into the presence of the Lord as quickly as speaking in tongues.