

“since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification for the church” (1 Cor. 14:12)

- t) Without love, speaking in tongues was worthless.
“If I speak with tongues...but have not love, I have become a noisy gong” (1 Cor. 13:1)
- u) It was not the evidence for being “filled with the Spirit.” (Acts 4:8; 6:3); obedience is the evidence (Eph 5:18).
- v) In the NT, speaking in tongues is never associated with “the baptism of the Holy Spirit.” (see 1 Cor. 12:13).
- w) Not every Christian could speak in tongues.
“not all speak with tongues” (1 Cor. 12:30)

“if the whole body were an eye where would the hearing be?” (1 Cor. 12:17)

- x) All things in the corporate assembly were to be done decently and in order, not in a crazed, uncontrolled, ecstatic and frenzied manner.

“If therefore the whole church should assemble together and all speak in tongues and...unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad?” (1 Cor. 14:23)

“Let all things be done for edification” (1 Cor. 14:26)

“God is not a God of confusion” (1 Cor. 14:33)

“let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner” (1 Cor. 14:40)

“What the Bible Says about Speaking in Tongues”

Selected Scriptures

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God has given all Christians spiritual gifts by which they are to serve His Body, the Church. At the judgment, Christ will hold all Christians accountable for how they managed their gifts, and they will receive heavenly rewards or a lack of rewards accordingly. One of the spiritual gifts named in the NT is “tongues.” Today we examine several biblical guidelines regarding this unique gift.

1. Speaking in tongues was a spiritual gift.

- a) The gift of tongues is one of 19 spiritual gifts mentioned in the NT; it was predicted in Isaiah 28, modeled in Acts (2, 10, 19) and explained in 1 Corinthians 12-14.
- b) It was the supernatural ability to speak a foreign language spontaneously.
“we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God” (Acts 2:11)
- c) Paul spoke in tongues; some of the Corinthians had the gift.
“I speak in tongues more than you all” (1 Cor. 14:18)
- d) It was a real language and not babble or ecstatic speech.
*“they...began to speak with other **tongues** (glossais)...in his own **language** (dialecto)” (Acts 2:4-6)*
glossa means “speech, language” not gibberish.
- e) It was inferior to prophecy and other gifts.
“greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues” (1 Cor. 14:5)

2. Speaking in tongues was a form of public prayer.

- f) It was a form of public, corporate prayer spoken to God; prophecy was revelation spoken to people.

“one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God” (1 Cor. 14:2)

“if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays” (1 Cor. 14:14)

- g) When Jesus’ disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray He gave them the Lord’s Prayer as a model (Matthew 6).
- h) Of the more than 650 prayers prayed in the Bible, none of them is in tongues, but each is in normal language.

3. Speaking in tongues was for a limited number of people.

- i) Speaking in tongues could not be understood unless it was interpreted.
“If anyone one speaks in tongues...let one interpret” (1 Cor. 14:27)
- j) It was meant to be spoken publicly to unbelievers as a sign of judgment.
“tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers” (1 Cor. 14:22)
- k) It was not meant for believers unless it was interpreted.
“prophecy is not to unbelievers, but to those who believe” (1 Cor. 14:22)
“in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind, that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue” (1 Cor. 14:19)
- l) It was to be done by no more than 2 or 3 people.
“If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn and let one interpret” (1 Cor. 14:27)
- m) It was forbidden if there was no interpreter.
“if there is no interpreter let him keep silent in the church” (1 Cor. 14:28)

4. Speaking in tongues was for a limited time.

- n) No one in the OT spoke in tongues; Jesus never did it; it is not mentioned in Paul’s 12 other letters.

- o) Some of the gifts have ceased and are obsolete.
“all are not Apostles...all do not speak with tongues” (1 Cor. 12:29-30)

“God’s household, having been built upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets” (Ephesians 2:22)

“the signs of a true apostle were...signs, wonders and miracles” (2 Cor. 12:12)

“of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning with the baptism of John, until the day He was taken from us—one of these should become a witness with us of His resurrection...to occupy this ministry and apostleship” (Acts 1:21-25)

- p) God predicted tongues would cease.
“but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues they will cease; if there is [a word of] knowledge, it will be done away” (1 Cor. 13:8, NASB)
*“As for prophecies, **they will pass away** (**katargethesontai** = fut. passive = ‘to render inoperative’); as for tongues they **will cease** (**pausontai** = fut. middle = ‘cease in and of themselves’); as for [the word of] knowledge, **it will pass away** (**katargethesetai**). For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes the partial [the word of knowledge and prophesy] **shall pass away** (**katargethesetai** = fut. passive)” (1 Cor. 13:8-10, ESV)*
- q) Tongues did not exist in the church from 2nd century-20th century.

5. Speaking in tongues has recently been misunderstood.

- r) God sovereignly gives the spiritual gifts as He wills not by virtue of our asking and pleading.
“the Spirit...distributes to each one individually as He wills...just as He desired” (1 Cor. 12:11, 18)
- s) It was supposed to be used for edifying others, not self.