

What are tongues? Do I need to speak in tongues?

Jesus said “And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues;” Mark 16:17 “And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” Acts 1:4-5 **This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost** “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.” Acts 2:4-6

Holy Spirit and tongues

“Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.” Acts 8:14-17 There is always evidence when someone receives the Holy Spirit, or else how could they know whether or not the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit?

“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word...For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, “Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? ” Acts 10:44, 46-47

“And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” So they said to him, “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” And he said to them, “Into what then were you baptized?” So they said, “Into John’s baptism.” Then Paul said, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.” When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.” Acts 19:1-6

Conclusion: the biblical evidence that one has received the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues.

Q. But doesn’t it say “Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?” 1 Corinthians 12:30 **Answer:** I believe that this verse is talking about the gift of tongues as in a tongue that is to be interpreted hence “do all interpret?”. But even if you would take this verse to mean all speaking in tongues, it would not mean that all cannot since we are called to “earnestly desire the gifts” but through lack of faith and lack of desire all do not, but all can if they have received the Holy Spirit. Tongues is an evidence and so if you have received the Holy Spirit you can speak in tongues.

Different kinds of tongues

1 Cor. 12:10 says that there are “different kinds of tongues” and that there is “interpretation of tongues” and again in verse 28: “different kinds of tongues” so what are these different kinds of tongues or languages?

The first that we see is in Acts 2:4-6: “when everyone heard them speak in his own language.” When someone speaks in their tongue and people of all different languages can understand what that person is saying. There have been stories of missionaries who have experienced this kind of tongue.

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The second we see in 1 Cor. 14:2“For he who speaks in an unknown tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.” I Corinthians 14:2 This is a personal tongue that no one understands but is used to build up oneself. “He who speaks in an unknown tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.” I Corinthians 14:4, “For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.. Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified. I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.” I Corinthians 14:14-19. If Paul declares that He spoke in tongues more than anyone and God used Him mightily, this shows that we should be desiring to speak in tongues as much as we can, but when the church is gathered together and we are all speaking in tongues, sure we may be building up ourselves but we are not building up and equipping one another with teaching or prophecy which is more profitable.

“In the law it is written: “With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; And yet, for all that, they will not hear Me,” says the Lord. Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe. Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind?” I Corinthians 14:21-23

If we are going to speak in tongues in front of unbelievers we should inform them about tongues before or after. Paul says: “I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.” I Corinthians 14:5. Paul says “says unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification” so here is a **third kind of tongue** that is to be interpreted to build up the church. “Therefore let him who speaks in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret.” I Corinthians 14:13

Rules for a tongue to be interpreted: “How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.” I Corinthians 14:26-28 If it’s not a tongue to be interpreted, don’t blab it out loudly and in turn disrupt the church, this does not mean that you can’t speak in tongues in the church setting but speak quietly “to yourself and to God” **Conclusion:** “For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. “Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order.” I Corinthians 14:33, 39-40. There might be more kinds of tongues but these are the ones I am aware of.

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