

THE SPIRITUAL GIFT OF TONGUES

Tongues are a spiritual gift from God, through which a Christian begins speaking a language that is not known to him or her. This can be an earthly language known to others or a “heavenly dialect” known only to God and those He gifts with interpretation.

The gift of tongues first appears in Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost. Luke describes the event in verses 4 and 6, saying the Apostles: “were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability... at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.”

Tongues are considered one of the “miraculous” gifts, not given to every Christian. In 1 Corinthians 12:30, St. Paul writes: “Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?”. Not everyone has these gifts, but is only given them as a way of promoting the common good.

Scripture tells us that this gift blesses the common good by being a sign of God’s presence in unexpected places. This happens with Peter’s speech in Acts 2, when people were surprised that God’s Spirit was present in a follower of the crucified messiah. It also happens in Acts 10 when a Roman is baptized, showing that God was present in Gentiles.

The Bible also tells us it can help us pray. St. Paul says: “if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unproductive” (1 Cor. 14:14). So, it may be a gift given to help a person pray more deeply, but it may not increase our knowledge of God.

People with this gift...

- Should be open to God doing things in a way that seems out of the ordinary
- Should discern when the use of a gift is appropriate.
- Should be humble, remembering that those with this gift are not inherently better or worse Christians.
- Should have an active prayer life.
- Should long for a deeper connection with God.
- Should be committed to building up others in the faith.
- Should put tongues in proper perspective, seeing it as an instrument for building up believers in the faith.

*“If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal”
- 1 Corinthians 13:1*

Putting your gift into action...

If you are gifted with tongues, God has given you something with great rewards and potential dangers. While it can lead to confusion and pride, it can also deepen your prayer life and build up the church. It requires maturity, self-discipline, and spiritual discernment to exercise properly.

You can do this by...

- Maintaining a healthy prayer life.
- Asking God for humility and self-honesty.
- Inviting God to fill you with His Spirit.
- Striving to be open and honest with God.
- Regular participation in worship.
- Asking for the gift of interpretation to help you understand when tongues are used.
- Earnestly seeking God’s direction in your life.