



SPIRIT FILLED

TEN FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT **TONGUES**



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Church.

At Church, we are proud of our Pentecostal heritage. Following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit during the Azusa Street Revival in the early twentieth century, Spirit-filled believers worked together to create a fellowship of churches that is now known as the Assemblies of God. Today, this global movement includes more than 80 million believers worldwide, and is dedicated to being a Spirit-empowered fellowship that reaches the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We are honored to provide space for the free movement of the Holy Spirit. Our desire is to establish a safe place for everyone, and we believe a large part of this is being open to questions. This booklet provides the answers to many commonly asked questions about the experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Whether you are seeking clarity or earnestly desiring the baptism in the Holy Spirit, we partner with you in prayer.

Trusting the Lord with you,

TED ROBINSON

Lead Pastor | Church.



1 Can a person be filled with the Holy Spirit without speaking in tongues?

First, let us examine the Scriptures. On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fell upon the assembled believers and “all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues.”¹ Later, as Peter was preaching at the house of Cornelius, “the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message” and they were “speaking in tongues and praising God.”² Again, as the apostle Paul was ministering to the Ephesian disciples, “the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.”³ It is evident also that Paul himself was filled with the Holy Spirit⁴ and spoke in tongues.⁵ These Scriptures clearly show that speaking in tongues is the **initial physical evidence** of being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

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 prophecy of Joel 2:28–29, cited by Peter in Acts 2:16–17, links today’s Spirit-filled believers with those who were filled with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The Spirit’s fullness, evidenced initially by the phenomenon of speaking in other tongues, is the common experience we celebrate with joy.

There are those who give testimony to a dynamic and life-changing encounter with the Holy Spirit who have never spoken in tongues. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that they are filled with the Spirit in the New Testament sense of the term. There is an essential link between that experience and speaking in other tongues.

**Speaking in tongues is a
precious promise written in God's
Word and fulfilled in our lives.**

We affirm and teach these truths because they are based upon the pattern from God's Word. We do not look upon speaking in tongues as a proof of superior spirituality. It simply is a precious promise written in God's Word and fulfilled in our lives. To ignore it is to miss a great blessing and come short of the New Testament pattern.

All who are hungry for the "filling" should be encouraged to trust the Lord for the overflowing evidence of that "filling"; namely, speaking in other tongues.



Does Paul teach that tongues are no longer needed?

Examining 1 Corinthians 14:19

It does seem almost contradictory that the apostle Paul should make the following statements in successive verses: "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue."⁶ The seeming contradiction evaporates, however, when we examine the chapter more fully. Paul was addressing a specific problem in the church at Corinth; namely, spontaneous utterances in tongues in an assembly of believers without accompanying interpretations. He equated this with disorder and confusion.⁷ He purposely exaggerated ("five intelligible words... than ten thousand words in a tongue") to make his point. His exaggeration was not made to invalidate the benefit and use of tongues, but to bring order to

the church. Actually, he encouraged the exercise of the spiritual gifts of tongues and interpretation of tongues by explaining in some detail how they should operate.⁸ Also, he placed great value on tongues in the believer's devotional life.⁹

When biblical truths fall into obscurity and neglect, people often seek explanations. When speaking in tongues is no longer experienced, they ask the reason, and critics have answered by isolating this particular statement and giving it an unsound meaning. **Paul was not opposed to tongues.** He said he himself spoke in tongues more than all.¹⁰ His point was that if someone speaks in tongues in a public assembly, it is essential that there be an interpretation so the listeners will be instructed.



Do people play a role as to whether or not tongues and other gifts will operate in the church?

Human availability has always been an essential part of the unfolding of God's plan. Throughout Scripture there is an obvious blending of God's sovereign purposes and people's availability in implementing those purposes. While this interrelationship is impossible to fully comprehend, it is consistently recorded in the Bible.

Spiritual gifts operate only with human availability.

While the gifts are supernatural both in source and operation, they require willing and obedient hearts through which they might find expression. Jesus commanded His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they had been "clothed with power from on high."¹¹ It was not until they had placed themselves at the Spirit's disposal that they were "filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other

tongues as the Spirit enabled them."¹² Perhaps this interrelationship between the Holy Spirit and human availability can best be expressed by the following progression. Believers must:

1. Have a clear understanding of the biblical base for promised gifts
2. Be touched in their hearts with a desire for the gifts to flow
3. Be willing to submit to the inner sense that the Spirit is seeking expression
4. Offer their hearts, emotions, wills, and voices to the Holy Spirit, by which those gifts may operate

The key is obedient availability coupled with a sincere desire to please God.

¹¹ Luke 24:49 ¹² Acts 2:4



4 Is it possible for an interpretation of tongues to run contrary to the teachings of the Bible?

If the Holy Spirit has authentically inspired the interpretation, it will never contradict the teachings of the Bible. **If the interpretation is contrary to Scripture, it is out of order and must be ruled so.** The Bible is the measure by which all utterances must be judged.

For example, in a church service some years ago a prophetic word was spoken that included the phrase “[Jesus] bones were broken.” The Scripture tells us, “Not one of his bones will be broken.”¹³ The contradiction was clearly evident. The utterance was unbiblical and had to be judged as wrong.

The Scriptures cannot be contradicted.¹⁴ They are complete and cannot be added to.¹⁵

The apostle Paul did not hesitate to establish guidelines within which the gifts of the Spirit must operate. He stated that any utterance, message, or gift expression must line up with Scripture and be judged by it.¹⁶ He declared that God’s messenger, whether speaking with a prophetic word or

speaking in tongues followed by interpretation, must rule his own spirit¹⁷ and submit always to the guidelines of scriptural truth.¹⁸

Yes, spiritual gifts are divine in their origin, but they are entrusted to people, and they must operate in a way that is consistent with biblical teaching. Good order, established by anointed leadership, is God's way.¹⁹



¹³ John 19:36; Psalm 34:20 ¹⁴ Psalm 119:89; Matthew 5:18, 24:35; 1 Peter 1:25

¹⁵ Revelation 22:18–19 ¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 14:29 ¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 14:32

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 14:37; 1 John 4:1–3 ¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 14:33, 40

5 Is speaking in tongues the only evidence of the infilling of the Holy Spirit? Does Spirit baptism result in observable changes in attitude and behavior?

The first physical evidence of being filled with the Spirit is speaking in tongues, the one outward sign consistently seen in Scripture. However, the Baptism is not a goal but a gateway. It is a door to Spirit-filled living. It marks a beginning, not an end. Speaking in tongues is the initial evidence and is to be followed by all the evidences of Christlikeness that mark a consistent Spirit-filled life.

The apostle Paul described this wonderful life in the Spirit in Galatians 5:22–23. He wrote, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

It is a life to be lived, not just an experience to be remembered. Some have missed this essential distinction. They have been satisfied to recall that

wonderful moment when the Holy Spirit came in His fullness and they magnified the Lord in other tongues. Failure to progress beyond that point is a tragedy.

**The Baptism of the Holy Spirit
is not a goal but a gateway.
It is a door to Spirit-filled living.**

The question is not only, “Have you been filled?” but, “How have you lived since you were filled?” The apostle Paul wrote, “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”²⁰ The baptism in the Holy Spirit is the introduction to a victorious Christian life in the Spirit; anything less falls short of God’s purpose in bestowing this marvelous gift.

²⁰ Galatians 5:25



6

When tongues are exercised publicly according to Biblical standards,

Should there always be an interpretation? Who should give the interpretation?

In 1 Corinthians 14, the apostle Paul clearly taught that public speaking in tongues in the assembly of believers is in order only when followed by an interpretation. It was because of this disorderly practice at Corinth that Paul wrote such statements as “speaking into the air,”²¹ “stop thinking like children,”²² “will they not say that you are out of your mind?”²³ and “keep quiet in the church.”²⁴

It was this disorderly practice that prompted Paul to stress the superiority of prophecy—not to interpreted tongues, but to uninterpreted tongues.²⁵

Final responsibility for giving an interpretation of tongues in a public assembly rests with the one who gave the utterance in tongues. The speaker either must be assured that someone else in the assembly will provide the interpretation, or he must be prepared to do so himself.²⁶

²¹ 1 Corinthians 14:9 ²² 1 Corinthians 14:20 ²³ 1 Corinthians 14:23 ²⁴ 1 Corinthians 14:28

²⁵ 1 Corinthians 14:5 ²⁶ 1 Corinthians 14:13, 27–28

7 For whose benefit and for what purpose are the utterances in tongues followed by interpretations?

Tongues with interpretation serve two purposes: to provide a sign for unbelievers that they might believe and to edify the church body. Tongues with interpretation declares the mighty works of God, exalts His name, and prompts the believers to worship Him in spirit and in truth. It also calls for commitment to the church's mission.

Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers.

1 CORINTHIANS 14:22

In 1 Corinthians 14:22 and following, Paul wrote that tongues are a sign primarily for unbelievers in a public assembly. When properly interpreted, they proclaim God's majesty and glory. The unbeliever will be drawn by this empowered expression.

Some confuse speaking in tongues with the gift of prophecy. Paul drew a distinction between the two. He indicated the purpose of the spiritual gift of prophecy is to strengthen, encourage, and comfort.²⁷ Thus prophecy is primarily for the benefit of believers. Paul pointed out, however, that unbelievers who hear a prophetic word may also be convicted and turn in repentance to God.²⁸

OH PRAISE THE FATHER PRAISE THE SON
HOLY SPIRIT MAKE US ONE



8 What is the difference between speaking in tongues at Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues in a public setting?

Also, what is the advantage of “praying in tongues” in one’s private prayer life?

There are at least four uses or purposes of unknown tongues, according to the New Testament:

1. The initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit²⁹
2. A gift to edify the church when the tongues are interpreted³⁰
3. A sign for unbelievers that they might believe³¹
4. A God-given provision for effective prayer and praise³²

In all these cases, tongues is the same in essence, but different in purpose. The misunderstanding concerning these distinctive uses and purposes has brought great confusion among Christians.

Scripture records that the early believers, upon being baptized in the Spirit, began to glorify God in languages unknown to them but imparted by the Holy Spirit. Tongues is the same evidence today when believers are baptized in the Spirit. All believers, when they are baptized in the Spirit, will speak in

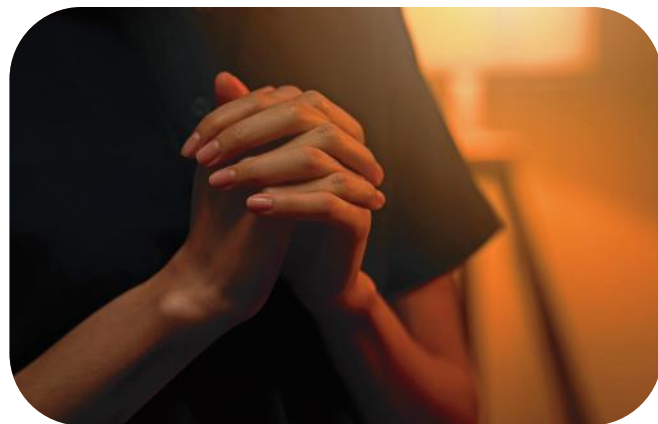
tongues. However, not all will exercise the spiritual gift of tongues in the church assembled for worship. All will have the evidence, but not all will exercise the public gift of tongues which requires the additional operation of the gift of interpretation of tongues.³³ First in a public worship service someone is moved to speak in tongues; then someone is moved by the Spirit to give an interpretation of the utterance. Operating in this realm, the Spirit provides an effective and powerful means of corporate adoration and worship of God. The purpose of the gifts of tongues and interpretation is to edify or build up the church.³⁴

**When Paul placed his hands on them,
the Holy Spirit came on them, and
they spoke in tongues and prophesied.**

ACTS 19:6

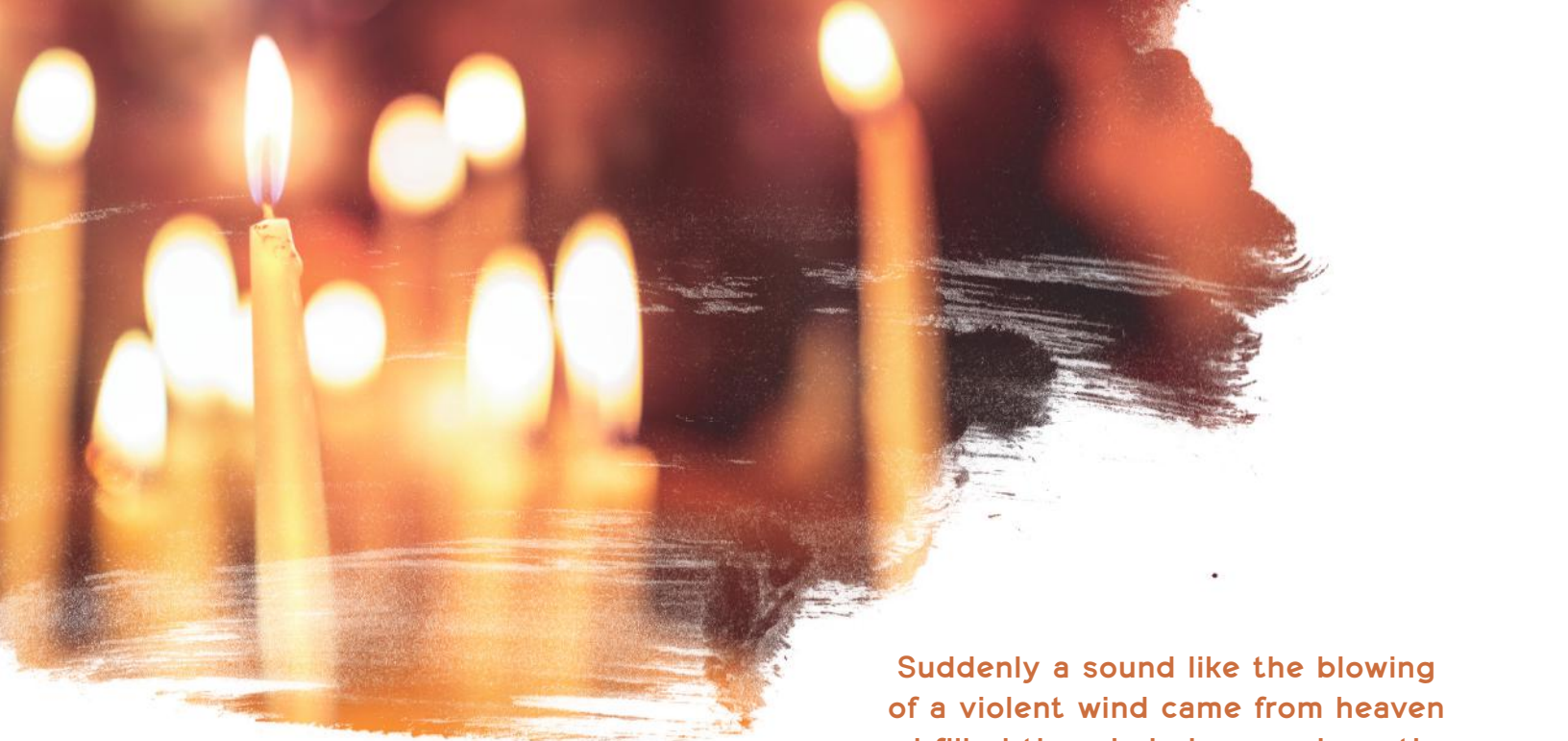
Praying in tongues during private devotions is an additional ministry of the Holy Spirit. Many believers today testify that praying in tongues greatly enriches their spiritual lives. The limitations of intellect are

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. It is as if heaven and earth, time and eternity, God and man all compress together in a glorious act of worship.



²⁹ Acts 2:4, 10:46, 19:6 ³⁰ 1 Corinthians 12:10 ³¹ 1 Corinthians 14:22

³² 1 Corinthians 14:2, 14 ³³ 1 Corinthians 14:12, 13 ³⁴ 1 Corinthians 14:2-12



Suddenly a sound like the blowing
of a violent wind came from heaven
and filled the whole house where they
were sitting. They saw what seemed
to be tongues of fire that separated
and came to rest on each of them.

ACTS 2:2-3

In the first outpouring recorded in the New Testament, there were tongues of fire and the sound of a violent wind. Why does that not occur today?

On the Day of Pentecost, “a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven” and “they saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.”³⁵ This preceded and provided a dramatic setting for the first outpouring of the Spirit. However, this happened only once. These phenomena did not recur and there is no evidence that they were intended to recur either in apostolic times or in our day. The single phenomenon dramatically expressed on the Day of Pentecost and consistently present whenever early believers were baptized in the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues.

Does this mean that in our day the outpouring of the Spirit will be void of any demonstrations other than speaking in tongues? No. Some testify of deep

groanings in their spirit, or surges of inexpressible joy; some feel strong emotions of exhilaration. For many, it is as if the deep inner wells of their spirits have suddenly been thrown open, and a torrent of praise bursts forth in exaltation to the Lord. Their hearts overflow with love for Jesus Christ.

While the ways in which the fullness of the Holy Spirit comes will vary according to the personality of the individual and the creativity of the Spirit, unknown tongues is the one accompanying phenomenon which unites Spirit-filled believers from every land and every generation.



10

Why do Pentecostals emphasize speaking in tongues when this is mentioned only a few times in the New Testament?

Pentecostals who are well rooted in Scripture do not emphasize the baptism in the Spirit and speaking in tongues to a greater extent than other doctrines such as the New Birth (salvation) and water baptism. They emphasize all the teachings of the New Testament, giving to tongues the same priority that it has in Scripture.

The goal is balance. Admittedly, some have failed to keep that essential balance. The Pentecostal movement suffers wherever there is an imbalance in teaching and practicing all that is in the New Testament.

God has brought the Pentecostal movement into being in order to help the Church rediscover the doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the accompanying gifts of the Spirit. In obedience to that charge, Pentecostals have placed a high priority on this particular doctrine. However, much of the supposed imbalance is more imagined than real.

**THEREFORE, MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS, BE EAGER TO PROPHECY,
AND DO NOT FORBID SPEAKING IN TONGUES. BUT EVERYTHING SHOULD
BE DONE IN A FITTING AND ORDERLY WAY.**

1 CORINTHIANS 14:39–40





Next Steps

- 1** Pray for understanding as you seek the baptism in the Holy Spirit.
- 2** Study how the scriptures in this book can empower your ministry.
- 3** Pray to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit (*next page*).
Once you've asked and received, practice the Spirit's power as the first apostles did by praising God in a new language. Start by praising Him aloud in whatever words come to you. Tell Him how much you love Him. Thank Him, worship Him, and yield your voice to Him. Then allow Him to give you new words of praise you've never heard before, and use them. This can be a rewarding experience of communication with God that builds your faith. Continue praying daily in the language the Holy Spirit has given you.
- 4** Tell your pastor about your experience.

READING LIST:

- ☐ **PSALM 34, 119**
- ☐ **MATTHEW 5**
- ☐ **LUKE 24**
- ☐ **JOHN 19**
- ☐ **ACTS 2, 9, 10, 19**
- ☐ **GALATIANS 5**
- ☐ **1 PETER 1**
- ☐ **1 JOHN 4**
- ☐ **REVELATION 22**

At this moment, I come to You. I thank You that Jesus saved me. I pray that the Holy Spirit will come upon me and empower me for a deeper witness. Lord Jesus, baptize me now in the Holy Spirit.

I PRAY TO RECEIVE THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT BY FAITH IN YOUR WORD.

May the anointing, the glory, and the power of God come upon me and into my life. I ask that I would be empowered for service and use me for kingdom advancement from this day forward. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for baptizing me in Your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Resources for Further Study

- ▶ ***Who is the Holy Spirit?*** by Doug Clay
4-week video study available at MyHealthyChurch.com
- ***The Word and The Spirit*** by David Hertweck
- ***The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Perspective*** by Anthony D. Palma
- ▶ **EnloeMinistries.org**



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