

Four Truths About Speaking in Tongues

Most Christians know the church was founded on the Day of Pentecost and many liturgical churches celebrate the day. But many ignore or overlook what happened that day—the Baptism in the Holy Spirit was given, including speaking in tongues.

There were many foreign visitors in Jerusalem that day and they heard their own languages. But this practice died down over the centuries until the modern Pentecostal movement that began with the Azusa Street revival of 1906 and which has swept the world.

Nevertheless, speaking in tongues has continued to be misunderstood and even controversial in many circles.

There are some genuine misconceptions about what speaking in tongues looks like and what purpose it serves the believers. No doubt Christians are divided about whether this gift has ceased or not, and there are even debates about when the proper time is to speak in a prayer language. Instead of debating with one another about tongues, I think it is best if we look at the four truths that are pertinent to this gift that I write about in my new book *Spirit-Led Living in an Upside-Down World*, which releases May 16.

1. Speaking in tongues is neither unbiblical nor outdated. Although not all Christians believe the same thing about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and its accompanying evidence of speaking in “other tongues,” nothing in New Testament Scripture restricts or confines speaking in tongues to being only a first-century exercise.

The benefits of receiving a supernatural prayer language are profound. When we do not have the words to express our need, we can use our prayer language—a language understood by the

Spirit, who speaks through us to the Father, and understood by the Father, who empowers the Spirit to work in our lives to give us victory.

2. Speaking in tongues is not a transcendental experience. There is really nothing weird about praying in a language we have never learned. As Jack Hayford puts it: "The ways of God in dealing with His redeemed children may be supernatural in the source of His operations, but they are not weird in their ways of working. To speak in tongues is not to resign the control of one's mind or indulge one's emotions to a point of extraction. The exercise of spiritual language does involve a conscious choice to allow God's assistance to transcend our own linguistic limits, but it does not surrender to any order of a mystical, trance-like trip beyond oneself."

3. Speaking in tongues is not a status symbol. There have been some abuses of tongues, including those who act as if they are spiritually superior to those who have never spoken in tongues.

The Bible doesn't tell us tongues are to be used to impress other believers with the spiritual maturity of the one who speaks. The Bible tells us, "Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what shall I profit you, unless I speak to you by some revelation or knowledge or prophesying or doctrine?" In another place, the apostle Paul says, "So tongues are for a sign, not to believers, but to unbelievers."

4. Speaking in tongues is not a substitute for spiritual growth. Using our prayer language and speaking in tongues will not cause us to grow spiritually even if we do it seven days a week and 24 hours a day.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is available to all believers, not a select few. Just as we receive new life in the Son of God by a definite act of personal faith, so we receive supernatural power in the Spirit of God by an act of conscious

faith.

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 For more information on my new book, *Spirit-Led Living in an Upside-Down World*, visit .