

Personal Prayer Language: 4 Benefits

My life was transformed many years ago when, as a young man, I was filled with the Holy Spirit. I had read in the book of Acts about people who were baptized in the Spirit and noticed that they always spoke in tongues—whether it was the disciples in the upper room on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, the Gentile believers who met in the house of Cornelius in Acts 10 or the 12 Ephesian disciples who prayed with the apostle Paul in Acts 19.

It intrigued me that Paul, an intellectual who was trained as a rabbi, told the Corinthians: “I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all” (1 Cor. 14:18). Paul himself was filled with the Holy Spirit right after his dramatic conversion—and his personal prayer language helped him throughout his life and ministry. Never once did Paul denigrate the gift of tongues; instead, he saw it as a valuable *charisma*, the Greek word for “gift.”

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That is not how speaking in tongues is viewed by many Christians today. Some church leaders even teach that what New Testament believers experienced at Pentecost doesn't happen anymore—as if we no longer need the Spirit's miraculous power. Others simply ignore the gift of tongues, either because it has never been a part of their experience or because they associate it with fanaticism.

Ironically, the same people who dismiss tongues as “gibberish” or “emotionalism” forget that Paul, who wrote 25% of the New Testament, not only spoke in tongues himself but also told his followers, “Do not forbid to speak in tongues,” in 1

Corinthians 14:39b. This unusual gift was one of the secrets of his power. So why wouldn't we want what he had?

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I see in the Bible four primary benefits of speaking in tongues. If you are not enjoying all of these blessings, they can be yours if you will ask Jesus to fill you with the Holy Spirit:

– Praying in tongues is spiritually edifying. Paul said, "One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself" (1 Cor. 14:4a). In this modern era we fully understand the need to recharge a battery. I often compare speaking in tongues to plugging a phone into an electric charger. How much more do we need to recharge ourselves spiritually! Over the course of my life, in times when I felt weak, drained and empty, I have sensed the Spirit refilling me with boldness, zeal, joy and peace when I prayed in tongues. What sincere Christian wouldn't want that?

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