

The Explosive Blessings of a Personal Prayer Language

I teach at a ministry school in Pennsylvania twice a year. Recently, after one of my classes, a 22-year-old guy from Maryland asked if I would pray with him. He had heard me share about being baptized in the Holy Spirit at age 18, and he wanted the same experience. He was especially intrigued by the idea of speaking in tongues—something He had never done even though he was comfortable around other classmates who had this spiritual gift.

This young man, Eric, understood that he already had the Holy Spirit. But he knew that Jesus offers us more—that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a second experience in which the fullness of God’s divine power saturates us and anoints us for supernatural ministry.

I explained to Eric that when I had prayed for this blessing many years before, God did not force anything on me. We don’t *have* to speak in tongues, and God certainly doesn’t make us move our mouths against our will. We open our mouths, but it is the Spirit who gives us this unusual heavenly language.

Glossolalia (the Greek word for spiritual tongues) makes no sense to our natural minds—it actually sounds like gibberish—but the Bible says praying in the Spirit strengthens us profoundly (vv. 2, 4).

I laid hands on Eric in the back of the auditorium. I asked Jesus to fill him with divine power and release the Holy Spirit’s language as a manifestation of the overflow. Nothing happened at that moment, but I told Eric to remain expectant. I’ve learned that oftentimes the release of the Spirit comes easier when people are not distracted by crowds. Some people are just self-conscious.

I encouraged my new friend to go home and pray some more. A couple days later I received an email from this brother letting me know that a small miracle had occurred in his life. He wrote:

Thank you for praying for me to speak in tongues. That night was interesting because phrases started to pop into my head. I was determined. I began speaking the phrases, and by the next night I was speaking in tongues as I was falling asleep. Now, every moment that I am not worshipping, praying, eating, or speaking to someone, I am practicing this gift. Praise God!

Many of us fall into the trap of downplaying the phenomenon of speaking in tongues, even after we have received the gift ourselves. We may consider it divisive (and it certainly can be when it is abused), or we're embarrassed because it seems weird or fanatical to our unbelieving friends or family members.

Yet when I read the apostle Paul's comments about tongues, I realize *glossolalia* was a key component of the New Testament church. No one can deny that. This strange gift not only played a fundamental role on the Day of Pentecost when the church was born, but it also fueled Paul's personal zeal. He wasn't bragging when he wrote: "I thank my God that I speak in tongues more than you all" (1 Cor. 14:18). He most likely prayed in tongues for hours at a time. He knew he couldn't carry out his extraordinary ministry without a private devotional life that was soaked in supernatural prayer.

That's also why he wrote: "Do not forbid speaking in tongues" (v. 39). He knew even though some people may be tempted to misuse this gift (and that is usually why people restrict it), we must never shut it down.

Eliminating the gift of tongues can have a direct impact on the miraculous flow of the Spirit's anointing in the

church—you might as well flip a circuit breaker and turn off all the lights. The gift of tongues does not make us holier than anyone else. In fact, if we don't exhibit love and Christian character along with it, it becomes a useless gift comparable to a noisy gong (1 Cor. 13:1). But when stewarded properly and tempered with humility, this seemingly insignificant grace of the Holy Spirit becomes an invisible atomic weapon.

I am not saying we should showcase tongues in church gatherings, scream at people in tongues or make people feel like misfits if they haven't experienced the gift. When the Corinthians put tongues on the platform and turned their meetings into chaotic circus sideshows, Paul rebuked them sternly. But the same apostle who warned his followers not to flaunt tongues in public also spent countless hours praying in tongues privately.

He did so because it is a vital source of spiritual power that we must not neglect. {eo}

*The preceding is an excerpt from **J. Lee Grady's** book, Set My Heart on Fire (Charisma House, 2016). Copyright © 2016 by J. Lee Grady. All rights reserved.*

J. Lee Grady was editor of Charisma for 11 years before he launched into full-time ministry in 2010. Today he directs The Mordecai Project, a Christian charitable organization that is taking the healing of Jesus to women and girls who suffer abuse and cultural oppression. Author of several books including 10 Lies the Church Tells Women, he has just released his newest book, Set My Heart on Fire, from Charisma House. You can follow him on Twitter at @leegrady or go to his website, .