

Listening

Prayer Tool: How to Speak in Tongues

What?

Begin to hear God through the spiritual gift of tongues. This prayer tool will show you how.

Why?

"We enter the heavenlies by means of a heavenly language that condescends to the use of our feeble, stammering tongues to express the inexpressible." Richard Foster

Bible references:

"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." Acts 2:4

"For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit." 1 Corinthians 14:2

A quick introduction to Praying in Tongues

One of the ways we can really develop in listening prayer is, rather ironically, by speaking. Speaking in tongues is an amazing and unique way we can activate our prayer lives and in particular, our ability to hear God.

While still viewed as a controversial gift amongst some in the church - particularly in reaction to the charismatic renewal of the last 50 years - the reality is that many generations of Christians have received this 'gift of the Spirit' from the birth of the church up until today.

Speaking in tongues doesn't make you a better Christian (or person, for that matter) but it is a gift that is for everyone. And it could make us more effective in praying and hearing God.

The first time we hear someone 'speaking in tongues', or we read about it, feels weird. But if we step back from our rational sensibilities for a moment and think about the fact that we are first and foremost Spirit beings with bodies - not as we

are prone to think, the other way around – then maybe it's not so far-fetched after all!

Our spirit is where the real 'us' is anchored – we groan and ache in our spirits, we experience joy and love and connection in our spirits – and all of these emotions and connections release a response in us that doesn't always sound like English.

The Holy Spirit wants to reside in this tender part of the core of who we are and release a unique love-language between us and our Heavenly Father. While often awkward and strange at the start, once you get used to the transition, it becomes the most natural thing in the world.

To everyone else of course, 'speaking in tongues' will sound like gobbledygook, and in some respects that's what the Bible says; in relation to other people, it is.

However, the Bible also tells us that when we speak in tongues we are uttering "mysteries in the Spirit". In other words, we are, in our own way, we are bringing our hearts a little bit more into harmony with Heaven. When we speak in tongues we are allowing and releasing our spirit into the Spirit of God, inviting His Spirit to pray through us.

While this type of prayer is an exaltation of the spirit to God, whereby less control is exerted from the conscious mind, it's important to point out that when speaking in tongues, we are never out of control.

Learning what to Pray

The testimony for hundreds of Christians down through the ages, of such an intimate spirit-to-Spirit language, is when they aren't sure how to pray for something or someone in English, when they pray in tongues their minds are often informed with a Heavenly wisdom revealing to them what they ought to pray.

At other times, even if they don't become informed but they pray intentionally in tongues, sometimes things just happen!

One such testimony is from Jackie Pullinger, a heroine of the faith, who has given her life to rescuing those caught in addiction and gang culture in the back streets of Hong Kong. After Jackie became aware of the gift of speaking in tongues, every day she spent 15 minutes praying in the Spirit.

Before praying in the Spirit, she told God she didn't know how to pray and asked God to pray through her and to lead her people who want God. While she honestly admits finding this a struggle initially, the results – in her own words – were "remarkable":

"After about six weeks I noticed something remarkable. Those I talked to about Christ believed... This time I was talking about Jesus to people who wanted to hear. I had let God have a hand in my prayers and it produced a direct result. Instead of my deciding what I wanted to do for God and asking His blessing, I was asking Him to do His will through me as I prayed in the language He gave me."

Do it: How to Speak in Tongues

1. **Ask for the gift!** The Bible exhorts us to 'eagerly desire' these gifts. (1 Corinthians 14:1)
 2. **Receive by faith.** Everything we receive as a gift of grace from God we activate in our lives through faith.
 3. Try to avoid a mind-control scenario, where your mind alone controls your mouth.
 4. **Allow the core part of you to worship God.** Maybe begin by saying the name of Jesus or allowing yourself to sing a 'song of your heart', any sound that naturally flows out of your spirit unto the Lord. As you do this, notice if a sound or syllable begins to rise up from your heart and out of your mouth – as it does, keep saying it.
 5. **Don't worry** if it sounds choppy, repetitive and awkward initially. Often like a child learning to talk it can be one or two words, syllables or sounds for a period of time. Just rejoice that you have a couple of words and keep saying them.
 6. **Ask for increased faith** to keep going.
 7. **Don't overthink it!**
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