



FAITH

COMMUNITY CHURCH



TO GOD BE THE GLORY

THE GIFT OF TONGUES

In the Bible, the gift of tongues was a supernatural ability to speak in a language that had not been learned by the one speaking it. As we look at tongues, two issues stand out.

First, if tongues are to be practiced today, how are they to be done in a way that is Biblical and honoring to God? The Bible outlines a few details for us. First, Biblical tongues were not gibberish but as is clear in the original language, tongues were real languages. The miracle of tongues was not that someone would be able to babble, but that one could speak a language that they didn't know to someone else, who could then hear God's truth, when they couldn't have without this supernatural gift. There was a language barrier in the early Church, and tongues broke that language barrier so God's truth could be proclaimed. People in cults around the world get caught up in emotion and babble, but Biblical tongues is undeniably a miracle from God. Think about it, people who didn't speak the language would be able to hear the Gospel truth because of this miracle. The Bible tells us that Biblical tongues were a sign to nonbelievers so they could hear God's truth when they couldn't otherwise hear it. In the early church tongues were done in an orderly way; they were interpreted by someone with the gift of interpretation so the rest of the body could be blessed with the message, and they were to speak one at a time with only two or three speaking in a given service (1 Cor. 14:27).

If tongues are for today, then these things must be adhered to. These are the guidelines. I personally have never seen tongues done in this Biblical manner. I've heard people babble before, I've seen things done with a lot of disorder and without an interpreter, and I've seen what people call tongues done numerous times, but never Biblically. On top of that, all spiritual gifts are to edify the church body, not any individual person. Also Biblically speaking, tongues did not serve as a private prayer language, but were a means by which one might serve and edify the body of Christ.

The second issue is this: are tongues for today? We believe that they are not for today, and that they ceased when the Apostles died off and when God's Word was completed. We believe that the gift of tongues was a miraculous, revelatory gift, and that the age of miracles and revelation ended with the Apostles.

Phil Johnson says it like this, "...contemporary tongues-speakers do not speak in understandable or translatable dialects, the way the apostles and their followers did at Pentecost. Not one single tongues speaker has ever gone to a foreign mission-field and miraculously been able to preach the gospel in the tongue of his hearers. They must go to language school like everyone else. No modern worker of signs and wonders can really duplicate apostolic power. Even the most vocal advocates of the gift of prophecy admit that no modern prophet can legitimately claim to have infallible authority. No modern faith healer can actually produce instant, visible healings that are like the healings we see in the New Testament. No modern faith healer is opening the eyes of people born blind, and no one is able to make a truly lame person walk much less raise the dead. That's why the healing lines at their healing meetings are screened."

Clearly the "sign" gifts such as tongues, interpretation of tongues, and miracles are not practiced the way they were during the time of the Apostles because those gifts were for that specific time period as the church began and as the Apostle's ministry and authority was confirmed. What we see today is not the same thing.

I personally have friends who are "charismatic" who speak in tongues, and while we disagree, that's OK. I can hold to my convictions and still show the love of Christ to them. That said, this is something that we hold to as a church. We do not practice speaking in tongues. May God give you wisdom and discernment if you are struggling with this issue. May it be our goal to live fully in the Spirit, whose goal is to help us live our lives for the glory of God.