

Why Every Christian Should Want to Pray in Tongues

UNDERSTANDING THE PRACTICALITY OF PRAYING IN TONGUES

BY GREG TRAINOR, Catholic Lay Evangelist

Growing up Catholic, I never really had any teaching concerning the gift of tongues. I had been incorrectly told in religion class that this was a gift that died out with the Apostles. In fact, I never knew that anyone today received the gift until I was at the beach for a Saturday night keg party during my senior year in high school.

A bit of a ruckus developed at the party and I went to see what the commotion was about. Two of our classmates had been to the local charismatic prayer group and been baptized in the Holy Spirit. Some of the guys were chiding them to demonstrate this newfound phenomenon of praying in tongues so that all could hear. They were refusing, saying that they had been instructed it would be best not to pray in such a way in front of those that didn't have the gift. After some more chiding and few "Chicken!" calls from the crowd, they began to pray in tongues. This, coupled with the advice of the guy waiting in line behind me to get at the keg of beer, comprised my entire theological formation concerning the gift of tongues.

During the year that Lydia and I dated and were engaged, we worked with autistic adults. Lydia used to pray over her students in tongues. I asked her one day: "Do you really think that putting your hands on them and making those mumbling sounds is going to make a difference?" She answered: "Oh, I *know* it does!" But my asking was much more of a challenge than an inquiry. Later, when I really wanted to learn what tongues was all about, Lydia showed me the value of the gift in the Word.

When I came back to the Lord as a young adult, one of the desires deep within my heart was that I wanted to be able to pray better. I never suspected that the gift of tongues would be such a valuable part of what I desired.

Answered prayer.

The Word of God gives us a wonderful promise concerning prayer: "And we have this confidence in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in regard to whatever we ask, we know that what we have asked him for is ours." (1 John 5:14-15) It sounds so simple and easy doesn't it? Ask anything according to the will of God and you will have it.

But I think that we all know why this isn't as easy as it sounds: it isn't always that easy to know the will of God. Even in your own life, it can be a struggle to discern the will of God concerning a career move, buying a house, or a relationship. It is even more difficult to know the perfect will of God in praying for a family member, friend, or acquaintance. Even more so, it is difficult to know the will of God when praying for total strangers when they come up for prayer in a service or when you meet them on the street.

Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness.

God understands that we have difficulty praying according to his will. For this reason, he has given us the Holy Spirit to assist us in prayer:

"In the same way, the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because it intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will." (Romans 8:26-27)

Our weakness in prayer is our difficulty in knowing God's will. For this reason, the Holy Spirit will pray through us in "inexpressible groanings." These are the strange sounds of praying in tongues. Though these sounds are unintelligible to the natural mind, they are a prayer of the Holy Spirit that is perfectly in accord with the will of God.

Tongues: the perfect prayer.

Certainly, the Holy Spirit knows the will of God: "Among human beings, who knows what pertains to a person except the spirit of the person that is within? Similarly, no one knows what pertains to God except the Spirit of God." (1 Corinthians 2:11) I put it this way: the Holy Spirit knows the perfect will of God because the Holy Spirit is perfectly God.

The principal difference between praying a prayer formed in your own thoughts and allowing the Holy Spirit to pray through you in the gift of tongues is that the Holy Spirit is

the author of the prayer in tongues. When the Holy Spirit prays, the prayer is always 100% in accord with the will of God. It is a very practical and powerful prayer.

Tongues as a gift of prayer is only one way in which this wonderful charism (gift of the Holy Spirit) functions. A longer study of the gift of tongues and how it functions would reveal that it is even more wonderful than I have the space to discuss here!

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The power convinced me.

What really convinced me of the value of the gift of praying in tongues were the powerful results that I saw it bring. I remember being an usher at one of Fr. DiOrio's healing services at the O'Connell Center (basketball arena) in Gainesville. Father had a Word of knowledge concerning a lady in blue slacks who had one leg that was three inches shorter than the other. Finally, a woman stood in the upper deck and said that it was her. She was in the next section of the stadium away from mine. Father said that we were going to pray and her leg would grow.

Children began running to see this happen. The other ushers and I (wanting to be like the disciples, I suppose) began to chase the children away. Father DiOrio stopped us, saying: "Let's wait for all of the children in those sections to get a good look. When they see this miracle, it will be the strongest catechism lesson of their life!" After the children were settled, he said: "I want everyone in the coliseum with the gift of tongues to begin praying." At that very instant, her leg grew to the same length as her other leg. This is just one of many concrete examples that I saw of the power of God moving when others prayed in tongues.

I have witnessed the power of this prayer countless times when praying over people myself. I have seen blind eyes open, deaf ears hear, crippled people walk, short legs grow, and many other wonderful things when the healing anointing of God flowed when I began to pray in tongues. I have come to discover that this gift of prayer that seemed so strange to me in the beginning is really very practical and powerful.

In writing to the Corinthians, St. Paul wrote: "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you." (1 Corinthians 14:18) Paul understood the value of this gift of the Holy Spirit. Paul encouraged them to open to the gift of tongues:

I would like every one of you to speak in tongues...(1 Corinthians 14:5a)

With all prayer and supplication, pray at every opportunity in the Spirit. (Ephesians 6:18a)

Understanding what the Word of God says about the gift of tongues helped me to see how useful it would be to me in my Christian walk. What I once thought of as silly and others often dismiss as emotional I came to as a very useful gift available to every Christian. God intends this charism to be a useful tool in the life of every believer.

How do I get the gift of tongues?

How do you get the gift of tongues? The answer to that is simple: ask God for it! It pleases God to give you the things of the Spirit:

For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. What father among you would hand his son a snake when he asks for a fish? Or hand him a scorpion when he asks for an egg? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

With this in mind, the answer becomes all the more obvious. With any gift of the Holy Spirit, you simply need to ask the giver of the gift to give it to you. Use whatever words come to you naturally. Ask Jesus to set you ablaze with the grace and power of Pentecost. Ask him to give you the gift of praying in tongues. Then all you have to do is wait. You can't accomplish this on your own, it is a grace poured out from heaven.



Greg & Lydia Trainor have worked full-time as Catholic lay missionaries since 1986. www.preachJesus.org