

# WHY CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS SHOULD PRAY IN TONGUES.



“Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” **(John 7:38)**

**By Paul Christensen**

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## Initial Comments

For a start, I want to make a distinction between **speaking** in tongues and **praying** in tongues. There are two different environments involved. Speaking in tongues is done in the church environment, in the public meeting. It has to be followed by an interpretation (1 Corinthians 14:13). This is what is commonly called the **gift** of tongues. The message spoken out in tongues with the following interpretation is usually equivalent to **prophecy**. Often, the speaking out in tongues is in the form of an **intercession** to God for the release of the prophetic word in the meeting. I saw this take place in a meeting where the preacher walked up the middle aisle at the start of the meeting, praying in tongues. Then he said, **“Let the Word of God come forth!”** Immediately a wave of prophecy went across the meeting, resulting in the glory of God coming down in a sovereign move.<sup>[1]</sup> There are other times when a tongues message has been given, and the interpretation has been a direct translation of what was spoken in the “unknown” language. These have been acknowledged by those who happened to be bi-lingual and heard the tongue in their native language and heard the interpretation in English. These have been relatively rare and happened for **a specific purpose**. Also, there have been events where a missionary has needed to get the Gospel message across to people in a foreign country, and

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<sup>[1]</sup> This took place at a weekend conference at Paki Paki Maori Marae (Hastings, NZ) where the key speaker was Clarence Hunt of the Palmerston North Open Door Mission.

not knowing the language, has asked the Lord for help then spoken tongues in faith as The Holy Spirit prompted. The result was that he spoke their language and got the Gospel message across and souls got saved as a result. This is also rare, but it shows that when the situation warrants it, The Holy Spirit is able to accommodate in a supernatural way in order to save souls who would not have been saved in any other way.

**Praying** in tongues is quite different. It is not the specific gift of tongues described in 1 Corinthians 12:10. I believe that it is described under the term “**diverse tongues**” found in the same chapter. This is the ability of praying and praising in tongues that comes with the **baptism with The Holy Spirit.**<sup>[2]</sup>

This ability to pray in tongues **is not for the public meeting.** Paul is quite clear about that in his teaching to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 14:6, 19. He says that if a person wants to pray in tongues, then he needs **to do it to himself or at home** (v. 28) and not in the church meeting where no one will be edified and outsiders will think he is mad. But if he wants to speak in tongues **in the meeting**, he needs to be sure that there is an interpreter present who can give the message in a language that **everyone can understand** and be encouraged, exhorted, and comforted.

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<sup>[2]</sup> I have no problem with the term “baptism with the Holy Spirit” because Peter used the words of John the Baptist to link the falling of The Holy Spirit on the household of Cornelius, when he described the event to the other Apostles in Acts 11. Whether this is an event subsequent to conversion is a matter for debate, which is not within the scope of this article.

## Tongues Are Not An Inferior Gift

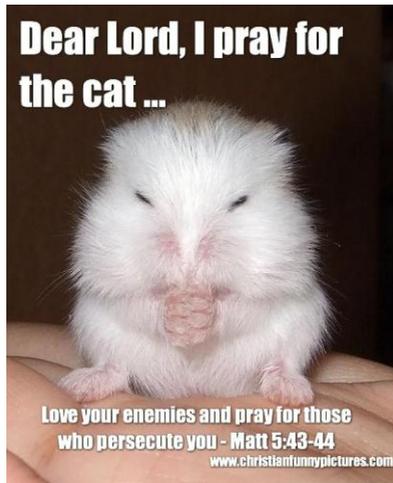
Some have said that tongues are an inferior and relatively unimportant gift because Paul prefers prophecy before it in the church meeting. It may be that those people's faith and relationship with God centres around their local church and that all Spiritual Gifts must be manifested in the church meeting. Therefore they might have no conception of prayer outside of the use of their understanding.

But Paul says that he prays with his understanding **and his spirit** (tongues); and sings with his understanding **and his spirit** (tongues) (1 Corinthians 14:15). He doesn't say that he does this in church, so we can safely assume that he did it in his private fellowship with God.

In reality, there are no "inferior" gifts. All the supernatural gifts are of the same quality, because they come from the same Holy Spirit. It is just that The Holy Spirit manifests the specific gift for the particular situation that needs it. It is the same as a torque wrench being the most suitable tool for a mechanic to perform a specific task on the engine of a motor vehicle. He could use a crescent spanner to do the job, but it would not perform the same function as the more suitable tool. When doing indoor painting, most painters use a roller to get a smooth finish. Others could use a paint brush, but it might not give the same professional finish, so the roller would be the most suitable tool; but this doesn't mean that the paint brush is not an inferior tool, because for painting around window

frames, a roller wouldn't do the fine work that makes a paint brush necessary for the job.

Therefore, sharing a verbal "love letter" from God requires **the most suitable gift** – prophecy. Tongues would not be the most suitable, unless it is accompanied by **interpretation**. But this does not mean that tongues are inferior. In its right place and time, tongues can be the most suitable manifestation.



## Why Is It Important To Pray In Tongues?

I am concentrating on praying in tongues, because it is an ability that **all believers** can have, while not all believers have the gift of tongues to be able to manifest it in the public church meeting. This goes along with Paul's question: "Do all **speak** in tongues?" (1 Corinthians 12:30). Notice that he did not say, "Do all **pray** in tongues?" When he said, "I thank God I speak in tongues more than you all" (1 Corinthians 14:18), I believe he was referring to his **private prayers** in tongues.

1. **Tongues are a major evidence of being filled with The Holy Spirit.** Some believe it is the essential evidence, but because some can manifest other Spiritual Gifts without having the ability to pray or speak in tongues, it is not correct to say that a person cannot be filled with The Spirit unless he can pray in tongues. But, it would be difficult for a person to show proof that he is truly Holy Spirit-filled if he does not manifest any of the Spiritual Gifts at all. This is why it is advisable for any believer to be encouraged to receive the ability to pray in tongues because it is the easiest manifestation to enter into.

2. **Tongues bring a deeper function in prayer.** Our native language<sup>[3]</sup> is not sufficient to express everything in our hearts toward God. We can pray to a certain degree using our understanding, but often we get to a place where we still feel that we want to keep praying, but we run out of words to express the burden on our hearts. Without tongues, the prayer has to stop. But when a person prays in tongues, there is a continued flow from the spirit to the heart of God. Therefore when there is a switch from the understanding to tongues, the prayer not only continues but is on a deeper level of communication with God.
  
3. **Prayer In Tongues Is In The Direct Will Of God.** This is because when we pray in tongues, we are praying from our spirit, which is at a deeper level than our understanding. When we pray from our understanding, we cannot know for certain that we are praying according to the will of God, and this uncertainty can dilute the necessary faith to receive what we are asking for. James says that a person who is double-minded is like a stem swinging in the wind. The Scripture says that if we are to receive from God, we must pray in faith, nothing doubting (James 1:6). This is where tongues are the more suitable tool for ensuring that we are praying according to the will of God. The Scripture says that The Holy Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:10). Ephesians says not to be unwise, but understanding what the will of God is (Ephesians 5:17). Tongues achieve this.

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<sup>[3]</sup> Not all readers of this article may have English as their first language.

4. **Tongues Enables The Believer To Intercede In A Powerful Way.** When a believer receives **the spirit of intercession**, tongues are the only effective way to allow that spirit of intercession to flow out to God. Often God will put that spirit on us and **we might not know** the actual circumstances, but as we pray in faith, using tongues, then the intercession **activates The Holy Spirit** to meet the need of the person or situation we are praying for. Often, when the spirit of intercession flows through us, the tongues languages can be quite different and **more intense** than our usual fellowship/praise language.<sup>[4]</sup>

5. **Tongues Activate The Other Spiritual Gifts.** We have already seen how praying in tongues can activate the Gift of Prophecy in a church meeting. It can also activate a **Word of Knowledge** or a **Word of Wisdom** to come to a believer in his private prayer time. He can then ask God **to show him** how to use the revelation given to him – whether it is for intercession, or for sharing with the person connected with the word. I had the experience once when I was asked to minister at a home group meeting, where everyone there was unknown to me. I gave some teaching for around 30 minutes and then I sensed that I needed to pray in tongues. I asked the group if I could pray in tongues out loud, and they gave me their permission.<sup>[5]</sup> After praying for two or three minutes, the

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<sup>[4]</sup> See my article “The Spirit Of Intercession”, published through the GFM ministry, August 2017.

<sup>[5]</sup> It is interesting that it was the first time they had heard of a Pentecostal person asking permission to pray out loud in tongues in their presence.

Lord told me to put a “hot seat” into the middle of the room and to give a Word of Prophecy to each person who chose to sit there. As each person sat down, I put my hand on his shoulder and a word came for him. The excitement among the group grew as each word was seen as totally accurate for each person, until I asked the Lord to give one man a financial miracle. That’s when they started laughing and yahooing. I was told later that the man was a businessman with financial issues, facing bankruptcy. They knew that I, as a stranger among them, would have no knowledge of that. I believe that my prayer in tongues activated the Prophetic Gift in me to enable me to give an accurate word for all the people in that gathering. This had never happened in that way before that time, and has never happened to that degree since.

- 6. Praying In Tongues Makes Us More Sensitive To Hearing The Voice Of God.** This is because we enter into a deeper spirit-to-Spirit fellowship with God. This is in accordance with Paul saying that tongues edify the believer (1 Corinthians 14:4). I don’t believe that praying in tongues makes a believer better developed in his sanctification. I don’t think that is what Paul meant. But we receive a much stronger assurance that we are progressing in the will of God, and that we are not straying from the path of righteousness. But we are able to better distinguish the voice of God from that of the world, the flesh and the devil. Jesse Penn-Lewis, in her book, *“Warfare on the Saints”* wrote that nine out of every ten impressions come from the world, the flesh and the devil, so we have to take special care that we are hearing the right

voice. Praying in tongues gives us greater sensitivity and discernment. The Scripture says that through experience and use, we develop the discernment between good and evil (Hebrews 5:14). Experience with the use of tongues achieves that.

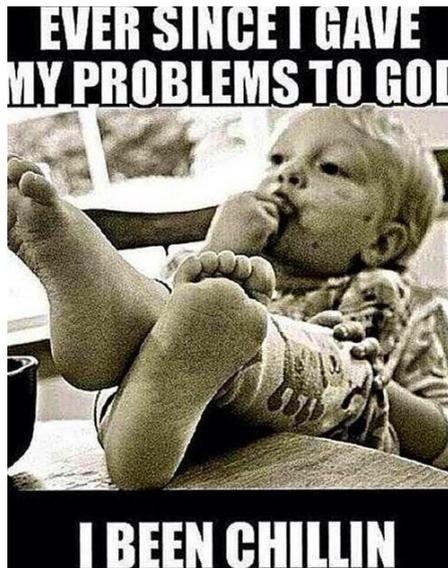
## 7. **Praying in Tongues Enables Us to Have Deeper Insight Into Scripture.**

Many who have received the ability to pray in tongues have reported that the Bible has become a different, more-alive book to them. Where previously they had difficulties understanding passages of Scripture, when they are able to pray in tongues, they have **received revelation** that has made the passage understandable and meaningful to them. The thought came to me 'out of the blue' one day that informed me that **the reason why** I have been able to retain sound doctrine and not gone astray into questionable teachings and beliefs is because I have been praying in tongues for the last 50 years. It is because I have been **praying from my spirit**, which is linked to The Holy Spirit that has kept my mind open to sound and correct insights into what the Bible teaches, and to distinguish what is written **for** me and what is written **to** me.

## 8. **Praying in Tongues Increases Our Assurance of Authority Over Satan.**

This is essential for the deliverance ministry. It activates the Gift of Discerning of Spirits to enable the believer to recognise if there is a demon spirit influencing the behaviour of the person seeking counselling and help. Often, in prayer meetings where

believers are praying in tongues together<sup>[6]</sup>, where a believer is suffering demonic influence, the demon could manifest, exposing it to the ministry of deliverance. It is interesting that it was the result of the Pentecostal Revival with the manifestation of tongues that demonic influence in believers was discovered and recognised, and the deliverance ministry was born.



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<sup>[6]</sup> This is appropriate because a believers' prayer meeting is not a public meeting where outsiders could attend. Every person involved is in unity about the verbal praying in tongues together.

## Some General Comments About Tongues

What has convinced me that tongues are a genuine manifestation of The Holy Spirit is that a whole chapter of the New Testament was written to describe the two different functions of tongues, and which one to be used in Church, and which is for private fellowship with God. Important and fully-accepted doctrine by the churches has had fewer verses to support it.

The devil hates tongues because praying in tongues does him damage. It reminds him that he is a defeated foe and he is deeply discouraged by knowing that believers are praying in tongues and receiving strength and a clearer appreciation of their authority against him. He will do everything he can to discredit the manifestation of tongues by deceiving theologians into believing that tongues, along with other gifts, ceased at the end of the Apostolic Age, or causing some 'spooky-spiritual groups' to extremes, causing uninitiated folk to be frightened of it and therefore rejecting it for themselves.

There is the teaching that every person who accepts Christ as Saviour is automatically filled with The Spirit. There are Scriptural references that seem to support it. There are others, using the references in Acts<sup>[7]</sup> that the baptism with The Spirit is

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<sup>[7]</sup> Acts 10:44-46; 19:6

subsequent to conversion. This is because the references we have are of believers receiving the baptism with The Spirit and the gift of tongues for the first time. In a sense both groups are right, and if people from either group have not yet received tongues, then the first group can be encouraged to receive the ability to pray in tongues, while the second group can be encourage to receive the baptism with The Spirit along with tongues. If the result for both groups is that the believers can pray in tongues, what is the difference between the starting points? It is the finishing point that matters.

One visiting healing evangelist<sup>[8]</sup> spoke about the way believers should speak or pray in tongues. He said that they should not pray just from their mouths, and that the “ra ba ba ba” type of tongues isn’t really tongues at all. What he said was that believers should speak right from down in their belly and put expression into their words. This revolutionised the way I prayed in tongues and I was able to use my faith to extend my “vocabulary” with new words that better expressed the burden and desire of my heart. It enabled my languages to change according to whether I prayed in fellowship, praise, or intercession. I remember assisting a group to enter into tongues and I told them they needed to speak from their belly. One guy started speaking in tongues and sounded like a Japanese guy with constipation. He then said that his stomach hurt! I corrected him by saying that he needed to speak from the burden of his heart and to speak in a relaxed way. The way I encourage people to pray in tongues for the first time is to tell them to think of someone who really needs prayer and to find

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<sup>[8]</sup> Harry Greenwood, the Irish evangelist prominent in the 1970’s.

words to express the burden they have for that person, but not to use their native language, and to make up expressive words to allow the flow of intercession to happen.

The Holy Spirit does not force us to pray in tongues. We have the choice when and where we want to use our prayer language. We see this in 1 Corinthians 14 where Paul says if believers want to pray in tongues then wait until they get alone with God. He says that the spirit of the prophet is in the hands of the prophet (1 Corinthians 14:32). This means that the prophet has complete control over when and where he decides to prophesy. It is the same with tongues. The spirit of the tongues speaker or prayer is in the hands of the believer who has complete freedom of the use of the ability.

The fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23) is the foundation for praying in tongues. Love, joy, peace, kindness, gentleness, patience, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control are the catalysts for using the prayer language. Could it be that those who are compelled to 'blurt out' in tongues anywhere and who say they cannot control it may have a counterfeit, because they are not able to exercise self-control? If tongues are spoken publically in a 'spooky-spiritual' manner then that does not show kindness or gentleness to outsiders and so The Holy Spirit would not be supportive of driving potential converts out the door.

What is the difference between speaking nonsense, and speaking genuine tongues that God can understand and appreciate? If it is done in faith based on Scripture, is done with self-control, gentleness, kindness, and accompanied by love,

joy and peace, then it is genuine. If not, then one cannot guarantee that the “tongues” is actually genuine. It could be counterfeit nonsense. Of course we have to be careful and discerning, because an immature or inexperienced believer starting out in tongues for the first time could make mistakes and this doesn’t mean that his tongues are fake. But a believer who knows better and has been corrected a number of times and refuses to be teachable about it, then his manifestation may cease to be genuine.<sup>[9]</sup>

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<sup>[9]</sup> This is a hard saying which many Pentecostal and Charismatic believers would have difficulty in receiving.

## How To Receive The Ability To Pray In Tongues

In this section I am going to come from the angle that a person is to receive the gift of tongues, because the process is much the same as receiving the baptism with The Spirit, except tongues is the word used. That would not be a problem because those who believe that the baptism with The Spirit with tongues would accept that receiving tongues would include the baptism with The Holy Spirit anyway. I don't think that God is too worried out the terminology that is used, because the outcome will be the same - the believer will be filled with The Holy Spirit with the ability to pray in tongues.

- 1. You have to fully believe and accept that the ability to pray in tongues is God's will for you.** There is absolutely no point in continuing unless the believer has arrived at that point. This is why the first part of this article has been written – to encourage you to believe that it not only could be the will of God for you, **but it is the will of God for you.**
- 2. Once you have accepted that it is the will of God for you, you need to ask for it.** “Everything by prayer and supplication make your requests be known to God” (Philippians 4:6) “If we ask anything according to the will of

**God for us, we will receive it” (1 John 5:14) “If we ask anything we must ask in faith, nothing doubting” (James 1:6).**

3. **Then you need to accept and receive the ability.** It is one thing to ask and ask for something, but you have to hold your hands out and receive the ability from the hands of God. **“If you ask, you will receive”** (Matthew 21:22). **“He who asks, receives”** (Matthew 7:8).
  
4. **You now need to do something you couldn't do before.** You now have the ability to pray in tongues. You don't have to have any special emotions, senses or feelings in order to pray in tongues. If you are expecting some sort of sensual experience, you might receive a counterfeit because the devil is always around to give you one. Faith is not dependent on sensual experiences, but on God's written Word. If the Word says that because you asked and received the ability, then you have it whether you feel like it or not. Now you have to activate your faith by speaking out in tongues. You have to do it. The Holy Spirit will not move your mouth and tongue for you. You have to start making up the words as “seed faith”.<sup>[10]</sup> It is like priming an artesian water pump. These have a hole in the top where you pour water in and pump like mad. The water you pour in brings the water level up, and the pumping causes it to flow. Before long, there is a continuous flow that requires a lot less effort in the pumping. It is the same with tongues. You have to “prime the

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<sup>[10]</sup> 3 Keys to the seed faith principles (Inspirational Ministries)  
<https://inspiration.org/christian-articles/seed-faith-principle/>

pump” with your made-up words. Then what happens is that the flow happens from inside you and the language becomes fluent to the point where you lose the consciousness of making up the language because it is flowing out of you so smoothly that you haven’t time to think fast enough to make up the words. The words are just coming out of you, and the language may be quite different to what you did to start it off.

When someone has a problem with getting started, I give them some of my words to give them the idea. Once they get used to speaking my words, I tell them to start speaking and not stop. Every time, they very quickly are speaking a language quite different from mine, because The Holy Spirit has taken over and is flowing out of them like a river of living water.

Here are some words you can try:

Karabundu nemundai katbunda rebequi nimundarndai quiundu sabatia.<sup>[11]</sup>

Speak those words until you can speak them without hesitating. Then put the article down where you can’t see it, ask the Lord to guide your tongue and then launch out speaking as fast as you can without stopping. As you do that, think of someone you need to pray for, and let the words express the burden on your heart. Speak from your heart inside you to give you expression. Put expressive emphasis on some of the

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<sup>[11]</sup> Interpretation: **The love of the Lord is beyond measure and He pours it out on His beloved children.** This is consistent with the principle that “public” tongues have to be interpreted.

words to really express what you want to say to God about who you are praying for.

It will seem awkward at first, but as you persevere, you will find that you will become accustomed to it. But remember, you are entering into a deeper spiritual level with God so you can expect opposition from the enemy to try and talk you out of it. He may use doubts in your minds, because you don't know what you are praying because you are using pure faith. He may bring others along who might try and tell you that it is nonsense and try to talk you out of it. The enemy can be very persuasive at times. Even after praying in tongues for 40 years I went through a time when I was attacked by doubts and I had to hold on to God in faith until the doubts went away. What defeated the enemy's doubts was that I told God that He had written a whole chapter on tongues in 1 Corinthians and so I am going to believe what He has written there against all opposition. The enemy gave up soon after and I have had a certainty about it ever since.

So, what is the difference between praying in tongues and praying meaningless nonsense? It involves what you believe you are doing. If you, having gone through the steps of faith, then you are believing that you are speaking in a language that God understands. **Without faith it is impossible to please God.** The just shall live by faith (Romans 1:17). I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me (Galatians 2:20). Faith brings God into close fellowship with us. Truly our fellowship is with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3).

You don't have to 'be good enough' to be able to start praying in tongues. Even an apprentice builder can use a hammer and ruler and other tools to build a house. A beginning mechanic can use the tools to repair a motor vehicle. As he gains knowledge and experience, he uses the tools more effectively. It is the same with any gift of the Holy Spirit, including tongues. Tongues are a starting point. It is a 'tool' to enable us to grow in grace and to develop our ability to use the other gifts. We need the ability to pray in tongues to 'jump-start' us on the way to Holy Ghost ministry.

Once you have read this, pass it on to someone else who might be encouraged by reading it.



Read also:

*A New Look At The Baptism In The Holy Spirit, Tongues  
And Prophecy*

*Do You Know Where You Stand With Christ?*

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*– We look forward to hearing from you soon –*



Paul Christensen

This booklet's purpose is to build up the faith of believers to know that it is God's will for them to pray in tongues and to receive the ability.

I am an elder of St Aidan's Presbyterian Church in Conifer Grove, Auckland NZ. At present, I am assisting with the ministry of the church along with the other elders and very capable preachers as part of an elder-run church.

I received the gift of tongues as a 19 year old young Christian very soon after my conversion to Christ. After seeking and pleading fruitlessly for three weeks for the gift, I got a prophetic word from a book I was reading, "Why are you pleading for something I gave you 2000 years ago? Just accept it!" I did that right away, and before long I was speaking a fluent language.

A few years later, I saw people being prayed for to receive the gift at one altar call after another, where the group would stand around the "victim", with one half saying, "Hold on brother" and the other half saying, "Let go brother." I could see that it was not working, so I asked the Lord for a better way to get believers to receive the gift. I believe that He showed me, and whenever I have used the steps of faith, people have received the gift. I believe that it has become a ministry for me.

I have been praying in tongues for 50 years now, and have seen God do some amazing things in my life. When I left the Pentecostal movement and started fellowshipping in a traditional church, I couldn't stop praying in tongues. That way I knew that it came from The Holy Spirit and not through a particular church.

If you are seeking the gift of tongues, I commend this booklet to you in the hope that you will receive!