

# OpenTheo

## Tongues



### **Charisma and Character** - Steve Gregg

In "Tongues", Steve Gregg discusses the role of speaking in tongues in the Holy Spirit life of believers. While some consider it a sign gift, Gregg argues that tongues may not be as important as other spiritual gifts. He notes that interpretation is crucial to understanding tongues, but emphasizes that this gift is not necessary for all believers. He also addresses objections to speaking in tongues and explains the biblical basis for its practice.

### **Transcript**

Tonight we're continuing in our series on Charisma and Character, the normative work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. We're still in the Charisma section of this series, the charisma being the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And when we have talked a bit about those for a few more weeks, we will go on to talk about character, which is the fruit of the Spirit.

And tonight, as I mentioned last week, we will be talking about the gift of tongues. It is the first of the gifts that we're going to focus on specially. We talked about the gifts sort of generally last time, sort of an introduction to the subject of the gifts, looking primarily at 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12.

We will in time take individual gifts. Hopefully we'll take all of them that we have any biblical material to help us with. There are some gifts, after all, that the Bible really tells us nothing about except their names.

And it would be kind of hard to build a whole Bible study around that, when the most we know about the word of wisdom is that there's something called the word of wisdom. Nowhere is the Bible clear in explaining what is meant by that. We might have theories and traditional ideas about that, as charismatic people sometimes do, but we really can't claim that the Bible tells us anything more about the gift than that it exists and has that name.

So there are some gifts we will not take separately, but we will take the ones that the Bible has the most to say about, so that we might gain as biblical as possible an

understanding of the gifts that God has about. And tonight I want to talk about tongues. As I say, not because it's the most important of the gifts.

It isn't. On the other hand, it's not the least of the gifts either. There are some people who have said that tongues is the least of the gifts.

In fact, of course, people who say that often are people who do not speak with tongues and do not want to speak with tongues, and in many cases don't even believe in the gift of tongues for today. This would generally be the same people who feel like the sign gifts of the Holy Spirit are not for our time, that they were needed in the early days of the church, when it was being established by the apostles, and it was sort of characteristic of the apostles to have supernatural signs and wonders in their ministries, but with the passing of the apostles was also the passing of supernatural signs. And since some of the gifts that Paul lists when he talks about the gifts are signs, he mentions the gift of miracles and healings and prophecies and things like that, there are those who feel like, well, those gifts of the Spirit that Paul lists that we would recognize as sign-type gifts, that is so sensational that a person would have to acknowledge that something supernatural was at work, those gifts are no longer with us, but the rest of the gifts are, namely the gift of teaching, the gift of giving, the gift of serving, the gift of showing mercy, the gift of administration, and some of these other gifts.

Most people would argue that those gifts will be with us until the end, but some of the more sensational gifts will not. And among those, quote, more sensational gifts, the more striking gifts, the more sign-functioning gifts would be the gift of tongues. And a lot of people are very uncomfortable about the gift of tongues.

Some of this may be the fault of those who promote the gift, because speaking in tongues was not a common phenomenon in evangelical churches in modern history until about 100 years ago. And while there were, in fact, revival movements in England and other parts of the world where speaking in tongues would occur occasionally, there was no movement in the church until about 1900 that focused on or that capitalized on the gift of tongues. In revival movements throughout history, there have been some speakers in tongues, but the Pentecostal revival, as it's sometimes called, the Azusa Street revival in Azusa Street, Los Angeles, where the official birth of the modern Pentecostal movement is pinpointed, was a movement characterized by tongues and other phenomena, healing, prophecies, and so forth.

But for the first time in modern history, tongues became very prominent. In fact, it became the official doctrine in many of the Pentecostal denominations that tongues was an essential element of the spirit-filled Christian life. It remains to this day in many Pentecostal denominations a tenet of faith.

Even in some of the more tame Pentecostal denominations, we might say, it remains with them a tenet of their faith that tongues is an essential evidence, the initial

evidence, they say, of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And the way that one can know that he's baptized in the Holy Spirit, according to such people, is by the fact that he or she speaks with tongues. Now, obviously, this implies that anybody who does not speak with tongues is not as full of the Holy Spirit as they ought to be.

And while if we were not being challenged by somebody who claimed to be more full of the Spirit than we are, we might admit we're not as full of the Spirit as we ought to be. But if somebody claims to be more so than we are, then we get defensive. At least some do.

And they say, well, how dare you say that you've got some normative thing of the Spirit that I lack? And after all, D. L. Moody didn't speak in tongues. Billy Graham hasn't spoken in tongues. I'm not sure that he hasn't, but I mean, people usually bring up these names and say, well, these people are certainly not people who emphasize or mention or whose ministries are characterized in any way by speaking in tongues, and probably people who did not speak in tongues, and yet you're going to tell me that they weren't filled with the Spirit? And frankly, I'm not sure how the Pentecostal can graciously answer that if his view is that tongues is the initial evidence of being filled with the Spirit.

Now, I am not of that opinion myself. I do not believe that tongues is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Spirit. And in that, I am not Pentecostal in my doctrine on this.

But those who get threatened or indignant by persons trying to push tongues as a norm upon them, sometimes they react overmuch, and they come back with irrational reactions. And they say things, well, tongues isn't even for today, or tongues is the least of the gifts. This is what I used to hear all the time when I first, I guess, became acquainted with the gifts of the Spirit.

And when I was talking with people who did not believe in the gifts of the Spirit for today, it was very common for people to say, well, tongues is just the least of the gifts. To me, that never seemed to make sense. For one thing, the Bible nowhere says that tongues is the least of the gifts.

And secondly, even if it were, so what? Am I going to tell God that that gift isn't good enough for me? I'm sorry, God, I will not accept that gift. That's not one of your better gifts. I will only receive the best gifts and not the worst or the least.

Now, I would confess that if the Bible said tongues was the least of the gifts, it would certainly justify a low emphasis on tongues as opposed to emphasis on other gifts that were greater. But the Bible does not say that tongues is the least of the gifts. I'll show you where the Scripture is that leads some people to say that it is.

There's only one place that could possibly give that impression if somebody is not reading carefully. And that is in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Now, in 1 Corinthians chapter

12, we saw last time that Paul listed nine gifts of the Spirit.

And in fact, tongues and the interpretation of tongues were listed last. But it's not that alone that causes some people to say tongues is the least of the gifts. Later in the same chapter, 1 Corinthians 12, Paul says in verse 28 and following, And God has appointed these in the church.

First, apostles. Second, prophets. Third, teachers.

After that, miracles. Then, gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Then he goes on.

Are all apostles, are all prophets, are all teachers, are all workers of miracles? Do all have the gifts of healing? Do all speak of tongues, do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts, and yet I show you a more excellent way. Now, it's true that Paul does say earnestly desire the best gifts. And we'll talk in a moment about what he considered to make a gift a best one, or a desirable gift as opposed to some other that is less desirable.

We'll look at his follow-up on that in a moment. But I would point out to you that it is certainly this passage that gives people the impression that tongues is the least of the gifts, because in verse 28, Paul lists a number of the gifts again, as he did earlier in the chapter. This time giving some kind of a sequence that he says first, second, third, and so forth.

First, apostles. Second, prophets. Third, teachers.

After that, and he stops numbering them, miracles. Then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. So, he numbers the first, second, and third.

But then he just says, and after that comes these others. Now, one thing is evident. He never says that any of the others are the least.

He simply doesn't list them as the first, second, or third. He doesn't say they're the least, any of them. He does mention tongues last.

But, on the other hand, there's a lot of gifts that aren't even in this list. Had he added some of the other gifts that are not mentioned, he might have put them after tongues for all we know. One thing I think we could deduce is that after he stops enumerating them, he ceases to put them in some kind of an ordinance.

But even if he did, if we wished to impose that on this verse, it still would not follow that tongues is the last gift he might have named. It is the last gift he did name, but he could have named more. There's more gifts than those he named there.

He does not say tongues is the least. Now, he does say, in 1 Corinthians 14, that

tongues, without an interpretation, is less valuable in the church, in terms of edifying the church, than is the gift of prophecy. And throughout chapter 14, he draws contrast between tongues and prophecy, generally pointing out how prophecy is more desirable than tongues.

But the reason he gives throughout that chapter is simply that when you speak in tongues, no one can understand what you're saying, and therefore no one can be edified except you. Whereas if you prophesy to people in their own language, they can be edified, and that makes the gift more desirable, if it brings edification to the church. But in that same discussion, he mentions that tongues, with an interpretation, removes that distinction.

He says, for example, in 1 Corinthians 14, and verse 5, I wish that you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied. For he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless, indeed, he interprets, that the church may receive edification. Now, the whole issue with Paul is that the church may receive edification.

If a person simply speaks in tongues and another person simply prophesies, it's clear that the person who prophesied has said something intelligible to the audience or to the congregation, and therefore may minister to them some knowledge of God through this means. And it's interesting, too, that Paul was not mystical. He did not assume that you pick up spiritual edification by osmosis in the congregation, that if you just start speaking in tongues, even though no one can understand it, they somehow pick up vibes, or they somehow pick up some kind of penetrating spiritual blessing.

It's clear that Paul indicated that spiritual blessing comes through the mind. If you can't understand the words, you cannot be edified. And I would say that this is something for us to remember as we talk about tongues or the gifts in general, because many times those who emphasize these gifts emphasize that tongues, you know, that bypasses the mind.

That's a spiritual thing, not a mental or soulish thing. And spiritual is better than mental. And from that they go on to imply that mental and rational and logical approaches to Scripture simply are dead letter.

But what is really spiritual is that which is divorced from rational thinking and analytical theology and so forth. And what is really spiritual is just to pick up the vibes, just to pick up the impulse, just to pick up the goose bumps or something, to get the feeling. But that is not at all Potinian.

Though Paul says, I wish that you all spoke in tongues, he says, better still. If you could all speak intelligible words, everyone could get edified. Now, it seems clear he doesn't wish that everyone spoke in tongues in the church, because he goes on later in this chapter to say only two or three per meeting are allowed, and only if there's an

interpreter.

So, when he says, I wish that you all spoke with tongues, he does not imply that all would do so in the church. There must be a use for tongues outside the church. And we'll talk about that as we go through this study tonight and find out what really is tongues for.

And the Bible gives three parts to that answer. But I want to say that tongues by itself is never called the least of the gifts, but it's clearly said to be of less use in edifying the body of Christ than a gift which communicates something to the listeners. Because if information, truth, from God is communicated to the mind, and the mind can understand it and process it, then that is useful.

If the mind cannot process it, it is not useful to the congregation. Thus, I would seek to divest you of any notions you may have picked up, if you happen to be of charismatic ilk, that somehow understanding theology, understanding truth is secondary and maybe even dispensable, if you really are just having a good time in the church meeting. If you laugh a good bit and fall down and do carpet time for 20 minutes, and if you shake and rattle and roll, then you've had a great meeting and come home edified.

Not necessarily. You might have had a great time, but according to Paul, you haven't been edified if nothing was communicated to you. Nothing intelligible is communicated in words you can understand.

And of course, words you can understand aren't magical either, it's just that they communicate truth. And truth is beneficial to your spirit. It's the truth that will make you free.

And therefore, teaching and prophesying and other intelligible gifts that communicate truth are capable of doing something for you, spiritually, which listening to somebody else speak in tongues, all by that itself, it cannot. Now that doesn't mean there's no benefit to some people. In some situations, in speaking in tongues without interpretation, we'll talk about that in a moment.

But Paul says, if in verse 13 of chapter 14, he says, Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. The gift of interpretation apparently is a sister gift to the gift of tongues. It is a complimentary gift.

If you're going to minister to the church, you should hope that you not only can speak in tongues, but that if you do speak in tongues, you can also interpret. Now, if you can't, there's always the possibility that someone else will interpret, and Paul makes that clear too. We'll look at his whole teaching on this as we go through this tonight.

I'm simply summarizing some initial understandings we want to get across. Speaking in tongues, by itself, does not minister to the congregation. And therefore, Paul says,

interpretation should always be present if tongues are spoken in the congregation.

And if an interpretation is given, then that is, if it's an interpretation, it must be understandable. It makes the message, or the words that were spoken in tongues, understandable to the persons who heard the message in tongues. And it is the interpretation, more than the tongue itself, that edifies.

But if you speak in tongues and interpret, Paul implies in verse 5 of chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians, that tongues is not less important than prophecy if an interpretation accompanies it. Because the only thing that makes prophecy better than tongues is its understandableness. And with an interpretation, tongues becomes understandable, and therefore is no less than prophecy in such a case.

Now, by the way, if we were going to say that the least of the gifts is the one that's listed last, then we have to look at all the times that Paul lists the gifts, and he does so three times in 1 Corinthians 12. In one verse, as we saw a moment ago, 1 Corinthians 12, 28, he lists tongues last. But in the other two times he lists them, which is verses 8 through 10, and again he lists several gifts in verses 29 through 30, he lists interpretation after tongues.

He lists tongues and then interpretation of tongues. Now, if being positioned last on the list renders a gift the least important, then that would suggest that interpretation is less important than tongues, which we, of course, could not allow. Because Paul indicates that it is the interpretation that makes tongues of value if it's in a public meeting.

There are other venues for speaking in tongues, but in the meeting of the saints, tongues should not be spoken without an interpretation. Now, it is therefore fallacious and irrelevant, too, even if it were true, to say that tongues is the least of the gifts. Even if it were, should we reject it if we had evidence in Scripture that God would like us to have this gift? We should not say to God, I'm sorry, God, this is not a prestigious gift, and therefore I do not want to have it.

Let me show you some beginning Scriptures, and we'll move through, I hope, everything the Scripture has to say on this subject, which doesn't take long because Scripture doesn't say very much on it. Outside of 1 Corinthians 12 through 14, there's very few references to tongues. Essentially, we have Mark chapter 16 and a few instances, three, in the book of Acts.

And apart from that, the gift of tongues is not really mentioned by that name in Scripture, though it may be alluded to by other names. Look at Mark chapter 16, if you would. This is the very first, not only in the way our Bible is organized, but also chronologically, historically, the first mention of tongues in the New Testament.

It's from the lips of Jesus. Of course, it does fall in that portion at the end of Mark that

some manuscripts omit and which they do not consider to be genuine, but the King James and the New King James, which follow the Textus Receptus, will have these verses and should. By the way, these verses are not found in a couple of important early manuscripts, and that is why some translations do not think they're genuine.

However, these verses are quoted from by Irenaeus, whose writings predate our earliest manuscripts of Mark. So, even though the earliest manuscripts of Mark that we have do not contain these verses, earlier writings than those by Irenaeus do quote them. So, it's clear that they were in Irenaeus' Bible, even if they were not in later versions that were produced in which some modern translations follow.

In Mark chapter 16, verse 17, Jesus said, These signs will follow those who believe. And they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues, they will take up serpents, and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them. And they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.

Now, this verse, along with another one that we looked at a moment ago, 1 Corinthians 14.5, are the principal verses of proof for the doctrine that everyone ought to speak in tongues, and that being baptized in the Holy Spirit is a guarantee that you will speak in tongues. This doctrine of the initial evidence, taught by some Pentecostal groups, that if you are filled with the Spirit, you will speak in tongues. And that's the only way you'll know you were filled with the Spirit.

It is not based on any clear statement to that effect in the Scripture, but the closest you can come is this verse and 1 Corinthians 14.5. We saw in 1 Corinthians 14.5, I wish that you all spoke with tongues. Which gives the impression that tongues would be a normative thing for all Christians to do. Though, interestingly, the way Paul words it, it sounds like perhaps not all Christians do.

I wish you did, but perhaps not all do. It may not be universal. When Paul says, I wish, it doesn't necessarily mean that he's communicating some divine mandate, but rather what his preference is.

He says in the same book, 1 Corinthians chapter 7, I wish you'd all stay single. But that's not a divine mandate that everyone must. He says, I say this by permission, or by concession, not as a command from God.

So, Paul sometimes tells us what he wishes without implying that this is something God requires. Now, when Paul says, I wish that you all spoke with tongues, it certainly implies that maybe not all of them do, because he wishes they did. But his wish does not necessarily translate into a mandate that all must.

Furthermore, in this verse, Mark 16, 17, and 18, those signs which follow believers include they shall speak with new tongues. Some have felt that speaking in tongues is



therefore a necessary sign that one is a believer. Now, this would prove more than that tongues is the evidence of the baptism of the Spirit.

It would actually prove that tongues is an evidence of salvation. If these signs must follow all believers, if this means that every believer should speak with tongues, and this sign will accompany their conversion, then we don't have here a proof that tongues is the initial evidence of the baptism of the Spirit, but rather that tongues is necessary for salvation. I don't believe either of those things to be the case.

And if we were to say, well, this is teaching that every believer must demonstrate the genuineness of his faith by speaking in tongues, we could add that every believer must, by the same token, show the genuineness of their faith by drinking poison, and by handling serpents, and by casting out demons, and by laying hands on the sick and seeing them recover. Because all of these are listed along with speaking in tongues as the signs that follow those who believe. And yet, Paul says not all have the gifts of healings, not all have the gift of tongues, and it's clear that not all Christians drink poison or pick up snakes.

There are some churches that are trying to redress that, and in the Ozarks, people who are trying to correct that deficiency in their congregation, they are trying to make everyone handle snakes and drink poison, and some of them survive it. But I'll tell you, in a church like that, you'd know who the real believers are. You'd know you weren't with a mixed multitude for very long.

That's one way to thin out the phonies. But that is not, in my opinion, what is implied here. What I understand Jesus to say is this, that where there are believers, there will be signs of the supernatural among them, such as these, healings, demons being cast out, tongues, and other supernatural things.

A Christian probably accidentally drinking some poison or getting bitten by venomous snakes and not being harmed by it. In other words, there will be supernatural attestation to the genuineness of the thing in which they believe. These signs follow those who believe.

In verse 28, in verse 20 of the same chapter, Mark 16, 20, they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. There were signs that accompanied the preaching and the believing of the word, but the list that is given here does not mean that every individual must do all these five things. It simply, I think, means that these kinds of things, signs including these, are the kinds of things one can expect to find where the gospel takes hold in a believing community.

In other words, a believing community should never have to rest its faith entirely on head knowledge alone. It should not be necessary for us to believe in a supernatural God

by hearsay merely. There should be evidence of the existence of a supernatural God in the midst of those who profess to believe in a God like this.

And it does not mean that every individual cast out demons or heal the sick or speak with tongues, though those are the kinds of things that often exist in the believing community and are marks and signs of the genuineness of the Christian message. Now, what I'm trying to say is the verses that sometimes are taken to prove that everyone should speak with tongues don't necessarily say that that is the case. I don't expect everyone who hears this to agree with me, but I'm telling you why I don't think they necessarily do.

Now, I said last week that those who think that the sign gifts passed away with the completion of the New Testament writings often say, well, the reason the sign gifts were necessary was things like prophecy and tongues and interpretation and word of wisdom, word of knowledge. These were things that the Holy Spirit spoke directly to the church at the time before the church had a complete New Testament. But with the completion of the New Testament, we now have the whole counsel of God.

God has nothing more to say, and because He has nothing more to say, He has canceled our subscription on communication from Him directly. And the church needs nor is entitled to hear directly from God anymore, although not only Christians, but even pre-Christians, the Jews in the Old Testament, had prophets and had supernatural aid from God and communication from God, but Christians in the New Dispensation, we simply aren't entitled to that. Somehow our birthright includes fewer things than the birthright of the Jews under the Old Covenant.

And the God of the Old Covenant doesn't reign in the New Covenant. He doesn't, or He's changed personality-wise. He just doesn't care to talk directly to people anymore.

This, to my mind, is without biblical warrant and also strange to suggest that God's character and personality have somehow changed since He gave us the last jot and tittle in the New Testament writings. Furthermore, it cannot be established that gifts like the gifts of tongues fulfilled the same function that the New Testament has come to fulfill. You see, if indeed tongues with interpretation and prophecy and these kinds of gifts fulfilled the needs of the church that are now met by the presence of the New Testament, then this argument might make some sense.

But the New Testament does not do for us the same things that the gifts were there to do. The apostle Paul, when he had the prophet Agabus come to him, was told that he would be bound by the Jews when he came to Jerusalem. I dare say, if Paul had had the complete New Testament in his hands, he would have never gotten that information from it.

Well, I guess if he had the whole book of Acts, he would. But the fact is, he would not

have received this personal guidance as he did from a prophet on this occasion, though he had a complete printed New Testament. And unless we want to argue that God doesn't care to give us that kind of information anymore, God doesn't care to give us guidance directly anymore about the particulars of where we should go and should not go.

Remember it says Paul wanted to go into Asia, but the Holy Spirit forbade him to go there. So he tried to go somewhere else, and the Holy Spirit said, no, don't go there. Now, that's not the kind of information that one gets by reading the New Testament.

He doesn't tell you what country to go to and not to go to there. And therefore the New Testament does not replace these gifts in its function. Furthermore, there is no evidence whatsoever that the gift of tongues was ever used to reveal doctrine or to add to the orthodoxy or the pool of knowledge of the church.

Tongues had a different information content than do the scriptures themselves. Therefore, as I said, to suggest we don't need these gifts anymore now that we have the New Testament is to suggest, I think mistakenly, that the New Testament now gives us the same kind of information and functions in our life the same way that these gifts used to in the church. And there is simply no biblical evidence to support that notion.

Furthermore, those who say the gifts have passed away have some serious things to explain. Like why it is that for hundreds of years after the death of the apostles, the gifts were known in the church. The gift of healing was common in the church up until about the 400 and 500 A.D. And throughout revival times all over the world, throughout history, there have been tongues speaking and prophesying and things like that back before the Reformation.

Hirulamo Savonarola, the reformer in Geneva. No, it wasn't Geneva, was it? Was he? I think he might have been in Geneva. I don't remember now where he was, but he was a Catholic because he was pre-Reformation.

But he prophesied, he worked miracles, he healed the sick, and he was orthodox, generally speaking, in his theology. We can't argue, well, that was demonic. All of the things he did, he did in the name of Jesus, and they glorified Jesus, and his life glorified Jesus.

He was a prophet. What I'm saying is there never really has been any lengthy stretch of time in the church where the gifts were absent. But there have always been, since the time of the apostles, some churches which were dead, or some churches which were simply content not to have the gifts.

Because of this, the gifts were not present, they were not expected, and they never showed up. And where this prevails for a generation or two, it's easy to develop a

theology that, well, these are not for our time. Why? Because we haven't seen them for a while.

But to read church history, one finds out that there never was a theology until the past century or so that suggested the gifts passed away with the apostles. Anyone who knew church history knew otherwise. They never passed away.

They've been with the church forever, since the time of Christ. There is no evidence in the Bible that doctrine was revealed through tongues. The New Testament, of course, serves us to inform us of Christian doctrine and the commands of God and counsel for behavior and so forth.

I mean, basically, orthodoxy and what is normative belief and practice for the church is what the New Testament gives us. But it does not give us specific, you know, go here, go there, and then go over here. You know, that kind of information.

It doesn't give us moment-by-moment, step-by-step stuff, except in the sense that it gives us general principles, which help us in much of our decision-making. There's actually very few things, very few decisions we have to make that we can't get all the guidance we need from the Bible for. But there are some.

There are some times when God might want us to know specifically what we're supposed to do, and the New Testament doesn't say in terms of where to go or who to meet or what to say to certain people. And yet we find in the book of Acts, God speaking to Paul in dreams and visions and to Ananias to go and lay his hands on Saul. And there's a conversation between the man and Jesus and so forth.

I mean, in the Bible, God is a communicator. He doesn't just drop information. He communicates back and forth.

Paul said that when he was praying in the temple in Jerusalem, Jesus said, Depart from here, I'm sending you to the Gentiles. They won't receive your testimony here in Jerusalem. And Paul said, No, Jesus, don't you know, they will receive my testimony because they know about my background here.

This is just the place that will receive my testimony. And Jesus said, No, they won't receive your testimony. Get out of town, I'm taking you to the Gentiles.

Or Ananias, when God said, Okay, go and find Saul of Tarsus in the house of this man and lay your hands on him. And he's seen a vision of you coming and just go do this. And Ananias said, But Lord, I've heard of this man Saul.

He's come here to wipe us all out. And Jesus said, But no, no, listen to me now. You know, I said, Go do this.

He's a chosen vessel unto me and I'm going to show him all the things he must suffer. There's a two-way conversation going on here. Now, I'm not trying to suggest to you that everyday Christian living is characterized today or ever was characterized by two-way conversations like that.

I don't think Ananias had those kinds of conversations with God every day. I don't think Paul did. I'm not sure Jesus did when he was on earth.

But they did sometimes. Occasionally, God could speak and listen and speak back and respond and receive response. And I mean, this is the kind of God that is in the Bible.

And he is not the kind of God that many Christians think is the God we serve. He's not a God who cares to communicate directly or converse with us in the mind of some. He's just given us the book and says, Listen, you want to know anything? Read the book.

Well, I definitely am one who believes in reading the book. In fact, someone once asked me, Would you rather be without a Bible or without the Holy Spirit? I thought, Well, that's not really a fair question. I'm spoiled.

I have both. And I would not wish to give up either. And if I really were forced to give up one or the other, I would give up the Bible before I'd give up the Holy Spirit.

Why? Well, the church existed for centuries without a canon of scripture, but not without the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that makes the church the church. There are churches in many countries, China, for example, where there aren't as many Bibles as there are Christians.

But there's as much Holy Spirit. There's enough to go around for all the Christians, and that's what can survive and flourish. The Holy Spirit is, of course, more important than the printed Bible.

But that doesn't mean we should have to take our pick. Fortunately, we live at a time where we don't have to make that choice. Unfortunately, there are Christians who say, Well, I'd just as soon have the Holy Spirit, and I'll leave my Bible on the shelf.

That's not really a choice. Who do you think inspired the Bible? It was the Holy Spirit. And it is simply the case that the Holy Spirit has given us more advantages to know His mind and to hear His voice than those who don't have Bibles.

The Bible is the principal way in which we hear from God today. But it is not the only way. And if you would ask me for percentages, I really suspect that that would differ.

You know, how much do you get from God and how much do you get directly from the Bible? In my case, it's way more from the Bible than by direct communication from God. I'd have to say, Now, I suspect that other people may have different experience, because

no two people have exactly the same dynamics in their relationship with God. But I certainly receive, I would say, it would be no exaggeration to say 90-something percent of all the guidance I receive from God is directly from Scripture.

Because I don't need to go beyond that for most guidance. More than 90 percent of the decisions I make can be made on the basis of what the Scripture says. And I need nothing more.

But there is a small percentage there which the Scripture cannot directly answer and where the Holy Spirit does speak. And I believe in the Holy Spirit speaking to us today. I've had on occasions the Holy Spirit speak to me in dreams or through prophets or through other ways.

And I've spoken in tongues. I believe in all those things. But just so we might have a balance here, I certainly believe the Bible is for us the most sure way of getting a word from God, because we've got it already in the Scriptures.

Yes. Absolutely. The times when God spoke to me in my spirit from His Spirit, when I didn't have my Bible open and so forth, when I really got a word from God, almost all the time it was a Scripture He got me.

He gave me a Scripture that was relevant. Even when it's a word directly from God, it's almost always a Scripture. And I guess He probably does it that way because He knows that I'll trust it more if it's Scripture.

If it's not, I have to wonder, is that really God or isn't it? If it's Scripture, it's not so questionable. Not questionable at all to me. Okay, now let's look at the gift of tongues, therefore.

I'm going to suggest to you that like all the gifts, it is with us until Jesus returns. That doesn't mean that every Christian will speak with tongues, though I'm not sure that it couldn't happen. That is to say, I'm not one who says that all Christians couldn't speak with tongues.

Whether they should or must is another issue. But I suspect that tongues might be a general gift to all the members of the body of Christ who wish to exercise it. I'll tell you why I say that.

The reason I say that is that in five cases in the book of Acts, we read of people being baptized in the Spirit. In three of those five cases, we are told that they spoke with tongues, the people who were filled with the Spirit. Apparently they all spoke with tongues.

They didn't all heal. They didn't all prophesy and they didn't all teach. But they all spoke with tongues.

Now, there are two instances in the book of Acts. They would be chapter 8 and chapter 9 in Samaria. And then Saul, when he was baptized in the Spirit, respectively.

It does not mention that they spoke with tongues, and they may not have. But the only two times where it does not say that they did speak with tongues give evidence that they might have. One of the times when it does not mention whether or not they spoke with tongues is in Acts chapter 8. And that's where Philip's converts were ministered to by Peter and John, who came down to Samaria and laid hands on them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

They were not told whether they spoke in tongues or not. There was this man named Simon Magus, Simon the Sorcerer there. And he saw something that occurred when they received the Spirit that so impressed him that he offered money for the ability to have the same ability to pass such things along to people.

We are not told what he saw. Did the people fall down? Did they roar like lions? Did they giggle? What did they do? Well, we have no way of suggesting any of those possibilities from Scripture because there is no precedent for that. But if we are judged by the majority of cases in the book of Acts, we might say it's likely they spoke with tongues.

That is the most, of all the possible things, in the whole range of supernatural things that Simon might have seen when the Spirit was given, what is the most likely one? Well, statistically tongues would be the most likely since that is the one thing that seemed common. In the other cases where it does mention supernatural phenomena, it always mentions tongues. In Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost, in Acts 10 when the Spirit fell on the house of Cornelius, and in Acts 19 when Paul ministered to 12 men in Ephesus, in every case it mentions supernatural phenomena and tongues is always mentioned.

Sometimes prophecy is mentioned along with it, but always tongues. Now, we don't know what the supernatural phenomena was in chapter 8 in Samaria, but the chances are good that it was the gift of tongues. We can't be dogmatic, and so I won't be.

But I suspect that it may have been. In the other instance where we are not told that someone spoke with tongues when they were filled with the Spirit is Acts chapter 9. That's when Paul received the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands of Ananias in the city of Damascus. And there too we are not told that Paul did or did not speak with tongues.

There is no mention of any supernatural thing except the scales falling from his eyes and him receiving his sight. He received a healing at the same time. And he may not have spoken with tongues for all I know.

But we know in 1 Corinthians 14 he said, I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all. Therefore, I suspect since he spoke in tongues at a later time in his life, there is a

good possibility he may have spoken in tongues from the beginning when he received the Spirit. This could not be proven, and we could not be dogmatic, but it is certainly not unreasonable to suggest.

Therefore, even the two instances in the book of Acts where people are not said to have spoken in tongues when they received the Spirit, even those two cases, there is good reason to suspect that they might have. And where it does mention the people speaking in tongues, it suggests that they all spoke with tongues. And that is not the case with some of the other things that were going on among them.

And my impression, therefore, is, and I can only give my impression because we can't be sure, the Bible is not explicit, is that speaking in tongues is a rather general kind of gift. It is a gift that may be available universally to all Spirit-filled Christians, but that is not the same thing as saying it is the necessary evidence of being a Spirit-filled Christian. Because I am of the opinion that speaking in tongues is something that you can do or not if you are filled with the Spirit.

And we will talk about that and the reasons for my thinking that as we go through this study. I better move through some of my points more. In addition to people rejecting tongues today because they say, well, that was necessary before we had the New Testament, another reason they explain that we don't need tongues today is that the Apostles were all Galileans and they didn't speak all the languages of all the people they were supposed to go to.

Remember Jesus said, go into all nations and make disciples. These guys were all of one nationality. How could they go and preach in all these different language groups, but with the supernatural assistance of God by the gift of tongues? And it is argued, therefore, that God gave tongues to the Apostles so they could reach out to all these different language groups.

It is a shame for the people in Wycliffe that God decided that they didn't need the gift of tongues anymore and they now have to study to learn the language. But the Apostles, they needed it more than we do, I guess. I guess those languages that happened to be reached during the life of the Apostles were more important to be reached than the languages, the thousands of languages that still are unreached.

I do not understand the reasoning of those who say, well, they needed tongues then because they had to preach to so many unknown languages and ethnic groups that they didn't know the language. Well, what's the difference between then and now in that respect? The only difference now is that we're aware of more languages that we don't know than they were aware of. Furthermore, they didn't need the gift of tongues to do that because they could speak Greek and the whole civilized world spoke Greek.

That's why on the day of Pentecost, although all the people from 15 different countries



heard the Apostles in the upper room and the others speaking in their own dialect, yet Peter got up and spoke in one language and they all understood him and 3,000 were converted. What language was that? Greek. Greek was the lingua franca, the official language of the entire Roman Empire.

Sure, they all had their own dialects as well, but everyone knew Greek. And because of that, it was not necessary to learn every individual language or even to have the gift of tongues to communicate the gospel to people from all over the world. They all knew one language already.

At least there's a second language. So tongues was not needed for that. It was probably needed for that less than it is now.

And furthermore, we never read that tongues was ever used for that. We do read on a few occasions of people speaking in tongues, but we never read of them using it to preach the gospel to people who couldn't otherwise understand it. Therefore, this is just far-fetched speculation.

When persons say, well, they needed it then to preach the gospel, we don't need it now. Every part of that argument is fallacious and certainly unbiblical. Not one shred of biblical evidence could be brought forward to support that notion.

Now, another thing that is argued, and I'm not sure why it should be important, but those who are opposed to tongues today often say, well, tongues in the Bible always refers to speaking human languages. Where do they get that? Well, on the day of Pentecost, it's clear that the people from all these different countries understood their own languages. Therefore, it was speaking languages of human groups.

And therefore, it must have been only used for communicating with people of their language. That's what they argue. Pentecostals, however, have long suggested that there are some languages that they speak in tongues that are not current in any society, that are not human languages.

Sometimes Pentecostals speak about a heavenly language. And sometimes that's a synonym in their jargon for tongues is the heavenly language. Do you have your heavenly language yet? And heavenly language to them suggests something other than an earthly language.

It's not a language spoken by any of the inhabitants of the planet Earth. It is a language of heaven, which even if all the peoples on the Earth were gathered to hear you speak it, no one would understand it. Now, which view, frankly, I'm not sure why either of those would be important, except I guess the view that tongues is always an earthly language may support the notion that tongues is always used for communicating to people of a foreign language.

Whereas if there's a heavenly language, obviously it wouldn't be used to communicate with people. It must have some other use, and I'd like to suggest it does. But as far as whether there are heavenly languages in addition to human languages, there's a couple of verses that might guide us here.

It is true that on the day of Pentecost, as far as we know, all the languages that were spoken by those in the upper room were human languages. But in 1 Corinthians 13 verse 1, Paul said, Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. Now, this statement, though I speak with the tongues of men or of angels, has suggested to the minds of some people that Paul believed that there are tongues of men as well as tongues of angels, languages that only the angels speak and that men do not.

But it is in contrast to tongues of men. And this is one of the reasons, perhaps the main reason, this verse, that some argue that there are heavenly languages as well as earthly languages. Now, while I would like to weigh in on the side of those who believe in heavenly languages, I must confess that this verse doesn't prove as much as they wish, because the likelihood is that Paul is using hyperbole here.

He does, at least in the other illustrations he gives in the next verses, though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains and have not love, I am nothing. He seems to be trying to depict ultimate 100% giftedness, the extreme in the ability to exercise every gift. If I had all faith so I could remove mountains, even that would count for nothing if I didn't have love.

And in that context, it is if I could speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but had not love, I am just making a lot of noise. Now, that is not necessarily saying that he believed that he could speak in the tongues of angels, any more than he thought he could know all mysteries or have all knowledge. This is an instance of hyperbole where he has sort of been an exaggerated example.

If he had every gift to the nth degree, but didn't have love, then it wouldn't make any difference. The gifts are worthless without love. Now, having said that, I'd like to suggest that to prove that there are languages of angels that human beings speak from this verse.

Because we could always say Paul might just be resorting to hyperbole and he might not really believe that tongues of angels are within the realm of possibility for humans to speak, even in tongues. But there's another verse that may be significant in deciding this question. And that is in chapter 14, verses 1 and 2. 1 Corinthians 14, verses 1 and 2. Paul says, Pursue love and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God, for no one

understands him. However, in the spirit, he speaks mysteries. Now, that statement, no one understands him, certainly rules out the likelihood that Paul thought that speaking in tongues must always be an intelligible language to the listeners.

He that speaks in a tongue is not speaking to men. He's speaking to God. And no one understands him, even if they hear him.

Without the gift of interpretation. That's why the gift of interpretation is necessary. Because it takes supernatural gift.

Otherwise, you could just get, you know, somebody who knew the language to come in and translate. But that the gift of interpretation is just as much a supernatural gift as speaking in tongues is, is clear. And the need for the gift of interpretation indicates that the tongue itself is unintelligible to all the listeners.

Because in the first place, it's not addressed to them. And no one would understand it. Now, this could mean that even though tongues are only human languages, God will use a human language that isn't spoken or understood by anyone in the room.

But that seems hardly something that we would be required to suggest. If Paul argues that the man's not speaking to humans, then why must he speak a human language? If no one understands him, then how can we be sure that it's a human language if no one can understand it? Maybe it's not a human language. Maybe it's a heavenly language.

Maybe Paul really did believe in tongues of angels as well as tongues of men. I don't know. And I frankly, this has never been a big issue to me.

But it is to a lot of people because they want to press the point that tongues necessarily is a human language because it's only used to speak to human beings. And again, this is usually taught by those who would suggest, and we don't need to do that anymore. We don't need to talk to people anymore of other languages, so we don't need to give to tongues anymore.

That, however, is not, in my opinion, biblical teaching. Okay, we already argued that tongues is not ever said to be the least of the gifts. So this is one of the common arguments against tongues, it's the least of the gifts.

We saw the scriptures that claim is based on and saw that they don't say that. Here's another one. Look at 1 Corinthians 12.

What I'm running through right now, in case you're wondering, is a number of objections that are sometimes raised to tongues by people who don't believe in it or by people who simply want to diminish the emphasis on it. And by the way, that may be a good thing to do at times. There can be people who overemphasize it.

But in 1 Corinthians 12, 29, Paul says, Are all apostles, are all prophets, are all teachers, are all workers of miracles, do all have the gifts of healings, do all speak with tongues, do all interpret? The answer to all those questions, these are rhetorical questions, and the implied answer is no. Not everyone is an apostle, not everyone is a prophet, not everyone is a teacher, not everyone speaks in tongues. Now I said a moment ago that I personally think that tongues may well be a somewhat general gift that is available to all Christians.

I cannot prove that, but I said that is the impression I get from the book of Acts. It does not mean that everyone must speak with tongues, or that every spiritual Christian does speak with tongues, but it does not change the fact that I believe that this gift may be available to all Christians. But some would say, no, you are wrong there.

Paul said, do all speak with tongues, and the answer is implied no. I am aware of it. I am aware of what Paul said.

Not all do speak with tongues. However, the particular context suggests that he is asking whether all people have the same function in the body of Christ. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Apostleship is not a specific gift, it is a calling.

It is a vocation. It is an office in the body of Christ. Likewise, are all teachers? Let me ask you something.

Can every Christian teach? I hope so. The writer of Hebrews said, for the time that you ought to be teachers. You have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God.

You ought to be teachers, you have been Christians long enough. What if, I mean, are not all parents supposed to be able to teach their children the word of God? Does not Deuteronomy 6 place that obligation on all parents to teach the word of God to their children day in and day out? I hope all can teach, but are all teachers? No, that is a different thing. Teaching is one thing, being a teacher is another thing.

Teaching is something you do, a teacher is something you are. The same thing is true of prophets and prophecy. Can a person prophesy and not be a prophet? I think so.

I think so. Paul said, you may all prophesy, but he said not all are prophets. God could speak through anyone, even an ass.

Even through a non-Christian, even through an enemy of his. Saul, pursuing David, fell among the prophets and prophesied. Balaam prophesied.

He was not a believer. If he was a believer, he was not a man of God. Anyone might prophesy, but that does not make them a prophet in the church or a prophet of God.

What I am trying to draw attention to here is the difference between doing something, an activity, like prophesying or teaching or even speaking in tongues on the one hand, and having that be your calling and vocation. I am a teacher. I am a prophet.

I am an apostle. I am a tongues speaker. I am an interpreter of tongues.

Now, am I going too far to suggest that there might have been people in the early church who would call themselves, I am an interpreter of tongues, and that is my gift, and that is what I do. No, Paul made reference to such people in 1 Corinthians 14. Let me show you this.

In 1 Corinthians 14, verses 27 and 28, 1 Corinthians 14, 27 and 28, Paul said, If anyone speaks in a tongue, he is talking about in the church, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. Look at verse 28. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church and let him speak to himself and to God.

If there is no interpreter, if the church does not have an interpreter, obviously there were certain persons in the body of Christ who were known to be interpreters. That was their gift, their calling, their function in the body was to interpret messages in tongues. And if one of them was not around, then the person should not speak with tongues in church.

Now, what I am suggesting to you is that in 1 Corinthians 12, 29 and 31, Paul says, Are all apostles, are all prophets, are all teachers, are all workers of miracles, do all have the gifts of healings, do all speak with tongues, do all interpret? He is not asking whether everyone can teach, can prophesy, can speak with tongues, can interpret. He is asking, does everyone have the same vocation, the same calling, the same function as their principal function and contribution to the body of Christ? No. Certain people are called to be prophets.

Others besides them might, on occasion, prophesy, but that does not make everyone who does so a prophet. You might teach one-on-one or in a small group. That does not mean that you have the gift of teaching necessarily.

You might be a teacher, but that might be something you do not as your vocation. You might have another calling. So, when Paul says, Do all speak with tongues, I think the question he is asking, and answering by implication, is, does everyone have this function as their ministry to the body of Christ? To speak with tongues in the congregation, with an interpretation, to edify the body? No, not everyone does that.

I like to say, by way of testimony, that I have spoken in tongues myself for 26 years, but I have never spoken in tongues in public. And, you know, there are seasons in my life where I speak in tongues more, and seasons where I do less. There are times where I will go weeks without speaking in tongues, and other times I do it every day or every time I pray.

But, though I have spoken in tongues a great deal, I have never spoken in tongues in church. Do you know why? Because I am not one of those who speaks in tongues, in the sense that Paul gives here. I do not have that as my ministry to the body of Christ.

I have another calling. And not all do have that calling or any other one calling. But that is a separate question than the question of, can every Christian speak with tongues? It is parallel to, can every Christian teach somebody else? I hope so.

I hope so. Now, that does not mean that for everyone to speak in tongues would be as important as for everyone to teach. Frankly, I would rather everyone taught than everyone spoke in tongues.

And so would Paul, frankly. He said, I wish you all spoke with tongues, but more that you would all prophesy. Because then the church could be edified.

The fact is, though, Paul did not imply that there is some restriction on the activity of speaking with tongues in some context or another on any particular Christians. He wished that all would speak with tongues. But he would prefer they prophesied.

He would not mind if they did both, I suppose. Okay. Now, there are some things that have been said and taught by those who promote speaking in tongues, largely the Pentecostals, that have made non-Pentecostals recoil with some of these actually unbiblical and irrational objections to tongues.

The reason that there are so many irrational objections to tongues is it is a reaction to irrational claims in favor of tongues made by people. Like, for example, the claim that everyone must speak with tongues and that that's the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. To say that goes way beyond anything Scripture says and therefore should not be said.

It is true that in virtually every case in the book of Acts where people were baptized in the Spirit, it would appear they spoke in tongues or probably did. But that's not the same thing as establishing a doctrinal norm. It's one thing to say, well, we have five instances on record out of probably thousands of cases that existed in the first 30 years of the church of people being filled with the Spirit.

There must have been thousands of cases, but we have five of them on record. And it may be that in all five of those people spoke in tongues. We don't know for sure that they did, but maybe they did.

But even if they did in all five of those cases, that doesn't mean they did in all the cases that are not recorded, nor does it mean that has to happen in every similar case. We would require to establish that doctrine a teaching in the didactic or the teaching portions of Scripture that say, here is a doctrine. You must speak with tongues to demonstrate that you're filled with the Holy Spirit.

We have no such teaching in Scripture. Therefore, it is irresponsible for people to say it. And of course, it only puts people on the defensive unnecessarily who don't speak with tongues and who may be filled with the Spirit but don't speak with tongues.

But of course you say, well, I believe you have to speak with tongues as the initial evidence of being filled with the Spirit. Suddenly you're saying that all those people who don't speak with tongues aren't filled with the Spirit. And some of them may resent that.

And I don't blame them. Because they may well be every bit as filled with the Spirit as you are. In fact, speaking in tongues is not even evidence that you are filled with the Spirit.

Because people can speak with tongues without being filled with the Spirit. Witch doctors speak in tongues in Haiti. And, you know, tribal people in animistic religions are known to chatter in tongues.

Speaking in tongues has its counterfeits, just like prophecy has its counterfeits. You can be a false prophet or a false speaker with tongues. And therefore, speaking in tongues isn't an evidence of the Holy Spirit at all, any more than prophecy is.

Because a person might prophesy without having the Holy Spirit. They might even prophesy without being a Christian. The same is true of tongues.

So to argue that somehow tongues is the barometer of spirituality and of being filled with the Spirit is simply extra-biblical nonsense. And the fact is that even when Christians are speaking in tongues with a legitimate spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit, that doesn't guarantee that they are spiritual people. I know a lot of people who speak with tongues, but they don't walk in the Spirit.

And their lives are not exemplary. Examples of what the Holy Spirit requires or expects of Christians, and there are people who never have spoken in tongues one word, but their lives are consistent examples of spirituality and walking in the Spirit. So, I mean, tongues is simply not even relevant to the issue of spirituality.

It is a gift that has a function. We'll talk soon about what that function is, but it is not relevant to the question of how spiritual a person is. My former pastor Chuck Smith used to say, Speaking in tongues will not make you better than anyone else, but it will make you better.

And I believe this is true. Paul said those that speak in tongues edify themselves, and that's good. It's not as commendable as edifying others, but being edified yourself is an improvement over not being edified.

And we'll see what Paul says and try to make sense of that in a moment. Another thing that Pentecostals sometimes have said is that the devil can't understand you when you

Speak in tongues. So, you should always, you know, every day pray in tongues because the devil can't understand you.

I'm not sure why I would be concerned about whether the devil can understand my prayers. I'm not talking to him. I'm not sure if he's allowed to listen in even when I pray in English.

I'm not sure how good the devil is in English even. Judging from some of his prophets of hard rock music, he may not know English very well at all. But anyway, I don't think that we could say on the basis of any scripture that the devil doesn't understand tongues, especially since the same people say that this is the tongues of angels.

And if they believe the devil is an angel, why wouldn't he know the language of angels? Maybe he does, maybe he doesn't. I don't know, and I don't care. Because when I'm talking to God, I'm talking to someone who's a lot stronger and bigger than the devil.

I'm not real superstitious about the devil. I believe in the devil. I believe he's a nuisance.

But I don't believe he's all that formidable to a person who's walking in the spirit. I mean, if you're walking alert, if you're conducting the normal warfare that a Christian naturally does when they're in the spirit, I don't really think the devil has to be a major problem. He'll throw up some attempt to deceive you, attempt to stumble you once in a while, but your eyes will be open.

You'll step over the trip wire and you won't get caught very often. And I'm just not big on the devil. Frankly, I think too many Christians are more impressed with the devil than they are with Jesus.

And when I'm praying, I don't care if the devil listens in. Hey, come on, listen to me. You might as well learn what I'm going to do to you, what God's going to do to you through me, through my prayers.

I don't have any particular interest in praying in a language the devil doesn't understand, nor am I aware of the ability to do so. I don't know that speaking in tongues, the Bible certainly doesn't say that speaking in tongues is praying in a language the devil doesn't understand, although that's sort of a Pentecostal tradition. Another Pentecostal tradition which arises out of the urge to see everyone speak in tongues, even those who are not inclined, and possibly to not have to wait all night to give the evidence of being filled with the spirit, a very common in some Pentecostal circles is the repeat after me syndrome.

I've actually seen tracts published by Pentecostals who say, okay, here's the steps to salvation. Repent of your sins, believe in Jesus, and be filled with the spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. And they say, here's what you pray.



They've got the sinner's prayer, and then they have the gobbledygook prayer. And you've got the sinner's prayer in an intelligible language, and then say this real fast, and if that doesn't work, say it backwards. I'm sort of parodying it a little bit.

And for some reason, it's always Shondala something or another. A friend of mine, a fellow elder with me at the Calvary Chapel in Santa Cruz years ago, he said, you know, a lot of people tell me the first thing they're going to ask Jesus when they go to heaven, I know what I'm going to ask him. I'm going to ask him, what does Shondala mean? I've heard people say it so much, I just never knew what it meant.

Now I'm going to find out what does Shondala mean. Well, Shondala seems to be a very characteristic word in these Pentecostal tracts. If you can't speak in tongues, at least say Shondala ten times fast.

And if that doesn't work, say Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers or something. And you know, this idea that you have to sort of prime the pump. You know, if you can start out phony, it'll turn genuine.

You know, the pump may have some bitter water in the pipes, but if you run it long enough, some clean water will come up, is the idea, I think. So even though they know that it's not genuine for you to say, she sells seashells by the seashore, still, if you say it, especially best yet, if you get tongue-tied and can't say it correctly, maybe that'll be the beginning of priming the pump and letting some of that water get out. And eventually, if you keep it up and you don't get embarrassed, maybe some real tongues will emerge.

I find no scriptural warrant for this. I don't know of anything in the Bible that, A, shows somebody coaching recipients of this gift to say it. Nor do I even find them telling the recipients that they are going to do it.

In every case that we read in the Book of Acts of people speaking in tongues, there's not one lick of evidence that the people speaking in tongues knew they were going to do so before it happened. They were never told about it, as far as we can tell. It's just something that happened.

They got filled with the Spirit and they began speaking in tongues. I've heard many modern testimonies from people who had never heard of tongues. They later did.

They later realized that what they were doing was something biblical, but who, in a moment of just devotion of God and exuberant worship, and they were praying alone, it may be, and never heard anyone speak in tongues, never done it themselves, never expected to, and they just found themselves uttering syllables that made no sense to them, and feeling a little awkward about it, but just feeling like it was the right thing to do, and continuing later on, realizing there is such a thing as the gift of tongues. Now, in my own understanding, there's a bit of a balance here between making it happen, and

waiting for it to happen sovereignly, which is, to my mind, possibly another unnecessary extreme. The Apostle Paul made it clear that speaking in tongues is within the power, and refraining from speaking in tongues is within the power of the person possessing the gift.

And I don't mean to prove that by the verse, the spirit of the prophets, the subject of the prophets. I don't necessarily think that verse proves that point anymore. But I will show you a verse which indicates that it is within the person's power to speak or not to speak, once they have the gift.

In 1 Corinthians 14, we read this verse a moment ago. In the church, only two or three persons should speak in tongues in sequence, and only if there's an interpreter. And he says, in verse 28, 1 Corinthians 14, 28, that if there's no interpreter, let him keep silent in the church.

This is the man who wanted to speak out in tongues, but let him keep silent. Apparently he has the power to do that. And let him speak to himself and to God.

In other words, tongues doesn't only have the function of speaking to other people. You can speak to God. Or you can just be silent.

You may have the ability to speak or to refrain from speaking. It is in your power. It is my opinion, although of course I'm capable of being self-deceived like anybody else could be, but it is my opinion that right now, if I wished, I could begin speaking in tongues instead of English.

I've done it many times, and I suspect I could do so right now. But I won't. I don't think gifts are for display, and I can't imagine any good that would come of my doing so.

Besides, it would be embarrassing. Because, first of all, what I teach is that there's no use in it unless there's an interpretation. I have no conviction that there would be an interpretation following, and there's no need for me to do it, so I won't do it.

But I want to say this, that I'm convinced I could right now if I wished. And if I felt really the urge to do it, I'm also convinced that I could refrain from doing it. Because Paul says I would have to.

If there's no interpreter, I'd have to refrain, even though I want to speak out. It's clear that Paul speaks about speaking in tongues as if it is within your power to do or not to do it. Now, what is the balance here? The balance, I suspect, is found in the first reference in the book of Acts to speaking in tongues, which is Acts 2.4. It says, They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke with other tongues as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance.

They spoke, but the Holy Spirit gave them utterance. There was no one there coaching

them, saying, now say it like this. The Holy Spirit gave them utterance.

But they spoke. The Holy Spirit didn't speak. They spoke.

They apparently began to feel this impulse to utter something. And they began to utter, and it turned out the Holy Spirit gave them utterance in languages they didn't know. Now, I presume they could have resisted the impulse.

Because that's simply in the nature of the gift, as Paul describes it. You can resist it. You don't have to do it.

And I am of the opinion that we should neither force or coax or coach people to speak with tongues, nor should, that is, we should leave room for the Holy Spirit to give utterance, nor do I think we should encourage them to just expect it to happen spontaneously and supernaturally against their will, or without their cooperation. The early Christians in the upper room, the 120, they spoke, and the Holy Spirit gave the utterance. That is the balance.

And I believe that when people do not speak, there is no utterance for the Holy Spirit to give. And if they do, He can, if they are filled with the Spirit. And that is why I believe some people are genuinely filled with the Spirit and never have spoken in tongues.

And may never. And that does not inhibit or disqualify them for being filled with the Spirit. It's just something they've never done.

But, I said earlier, I suspect that they could. I'm not saying they're negligent. I'm not saying they're doing anything wrong.

I'm just saying I suspect that if they wish to, they could, if they have been filled with the Holy Spirit. But I also believe if they wish not to, they cannot. It's just like teaching.

Teaching is a gift of the Spirit. I could stop teaching right now. Well, maybe I couldn't.

But, well, that's one gift the speaker doesn't have control over, is teaching. Because I know I can't stop. But other gifts you can stop.

Okay, yes. Groans and utterances. Let me get to that.

It's in the outline. It's coming up. I appreciate you bringing it up because I think it may be relevant.

It may be and it may not be. But I'm going to bring it up. Okay.

Thanks, Claude. In fact, let's do that. Some of this kind of thing.

What is tongues for? Well, let me first of all define what tongues involves. It would appear that speaking in tongues is speaking a language that you have not learned. It

may be that in every case it's a human language.

But even if it is, you haven't learned it. If you are speaking a language that you studied and learned, you're not speaking with the gift of tongues. Some people are multilingual.

In fact, when Paul says, I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all, non-charismatic people generally say, well, all Paul is saying is that he's multilingual. He could speak Latin. He could speak Greek.

He could speak Hebrew. He could speak Aramaic. And he spoke a lot of tongues.

But in the context where he says that, he's talking about the gift of tongues. And for him to speak a language that he knew by having studied or grown up with it is not a supernatural gift. That's not the gift of tongues.

By definition, the gift of tongues requires that you speak a language that you do not know. And not only do you not know it before you speak it, but you don't know it while you're speaking it or afterwards even, unless you have the gift of interpretation. Which is why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14 and verse 13, Therefore, let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.

He doesn't understand what he's saying. If the gift of tongues came with a built-in factory installed understanding of what you were saying, you wouldn't have to separately pray that you could have the interpretive gift as well. It's clear that when you speak in tongues, you don't know what you're saying.

This is a supernaturally endowed gift. It involves saying things that you don't understand. Now, in the nature of the case then, it follows that if you speak in tongues, you might feel awkward.

You might even wonder whether you're really speaking in tongues. Because if you don't understand it, how in the world are you going to know if this is just an emotional experience, an ecstatic experience, or if this is the real thing? In fact, non-charismatic commentators, when they write about Acts or 1 Corinthians, when they bring up the subject of tongues, they refer to tongues as an ecstatic gift. Anyone ever heard that expression that tongues is an ecstatic gift? What they mean by that is they see tongues as something that happens when you get real emotionally agitated, happy in the Lord, and you just kind of bubble over with all kinds of chatter.

The Bible nowhere says there was any ecstasy involved in speaking in tongues or any feeling whatsoever. The Bible doesn't in any sense connect an emotional experience with the phenomenon of speaking in tongues. Now, I'm not saying there was none, but the Bible doesn't connect those things.

I think that the commentators who say that must be basing it on the fact that modern

speakers in tongues are most often found in Pentecostal churches, and Pentecostal churches often are heavily weighted with emotionally unstable and emotionally demonstrative people who go wild and who certainly experience something of an ecstasy, although sometimes they look like they're being tortured. In my experience, in some places, I don't frequent those kinds of churches, but I have been in them more often than I wish I could have. I mean, I guess I'm glad I went there so I could see it, but I wouldn't want to go there again.

I have been in churches where the people literally... I haven't been where they rolled on the floor, swung from the chandeliers, but I've been in churches that just, you know, equivalent things. Screaming in tongues at the top of their lungs as they run up and down the aisles. It makes your skin crawl.

I mean, you just feel demonic power present in cases like that sometimes. I can't say everyone, but that's a subjective thing. But I'll tell you, when I have been in those kinds of Pentecostal churches... By the way, I've been in Pentecostal churches where that wasn't happening and where I didn't sense any demonic power, but I have certainly been in places where the Pentecostals were screaming out in tongues.

And like I say, it didn't look ecstatic to me. It looked like they were being tormented by demons, and good chances they were. But I think observers who don't speak with tongues and are trying to analyze it, they look at the Pentecostals, or they might even look at the counterparts in voodoo and in witch doctoredom and so forth and say, well, these people get all worked up emotionally, and then something irrational and unintelligible comes out of their mouth.

Well, that's possibly true too often in such cases, but there's no evidence that the people in the Book of Acts were worked up emotionally or that any emotion was attached to it at all. I myself, although one could argue that I don't have the genuine gift of tongues for this reason, but as far as I know, I do, and I don't get emotional when I speak with tongues. I get no more emotional when I speak with tongues than when I speak in English.

Everyone knows I'm not a very emotional person when I speak in English. And honestly, tongues is anything but an ecstatic experience for me, and yet I have no reason to doubt, I mean, biblically, that the gift I have is other than the real gift. I mean, I wouldn't be 100% dogmatic that it is.

I could be deceived. But I believe it's the genuine gift, and I don't see anything in the Bible that would say you have to have an emotional ecstatic experience. Therefore, speaking in tongues is not something that stirs your emotions or that your intellect necessarily is engaged in understanding.

In fact, in my experience, and not only my own personal, but my experience in talking

and dealing with a lot of other people who speak in tongues, certainly the first time they speak in tongues, almost everyone says they felt silly. They doubted that it was the real thing. You've even heard my testimony.

When I got baptized in the Spirit, the guy who was coaching me, trying to get me to speak in tongues, he said, you know, go ahead, speak it out, brother, speak it out. So I tried to accommodate him and said some things, which I, looking back, I have my doubts that it was really tongues. But I mean, I will say one of the most common things I've ever heard people testify is that when they first spoke in tongues, they doubted that it was genuine.

And they felt awkward about it. And I can see how that would be. The Bible itself says you don't understand it.

Therefore, you have no way of verifying that it's a real language at all. The words make no sense to you. For all you know, your rational mind is telling you, maybe I'm just making all this stuff up.

You know, interestingly, a book I read years ago called *They Speak With Other Tongues*, I forget all the details because it's been many years, 25 years since I read it, but I remember reading there were some studies done by linguists upon Pentecostal people because of an interest in speaking in tongues as a phenomenon. There were recordings made of Pentecostal speaking in tongues. And there were also recordings made by people who were told just to make up sounds and do their best to sound like they were speaking in tongues, but people who didn't believe in it and were not spiritual Christians.

And these tapes were played for an audience of linguists, and they were to vote which ones were real languages and which were not. And as I recall, in every case, when the tapes were played of Pentecostal speaking in tongues, the linguists judged, they said, we don't know this language, but it has the syntax and the phrasing and so forth of real language. Whereas when it was people faking, they spotted it right away that it was fake.

And you know, this is of course extra biblical, anecdotal, this doesn't prove anything, but it's a study that was really done. That although the Pentecostals were speaking in something they didn't understand, yet what they spoke sounded to trained linguists as if it was some kind of a language, and they could spot phony tongues real quick, even though these were not people with discerning of spirits or whatever. These were just men going by their linguistic training.

Well, okay, what is tongues for then? There are three uses of tongues that Paul acknowledges and basically takes for granted in his writing on the subject in chapter 14. You should be informed that chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians is the only chapter in the Bible in which we find what could be called teaching on the subject of tongues. And even

there, we don't have anything like systematic teaching on it.

The book of 1 Corinthians was written as a corrective to abuse of tongues and other things that were being abused in the church. And therefore, we find Paul not sitting down and giving a point-by-point detailed teaching on a subject, but rather speaking where there was a deficiency or a wrong emphasis among the people and correcting that. So what we have from Paul on this is nothing like a clear teaching, but we have to kind of piece together what he and his listeners had as shared knowledge on the subject from what he does say.

For example, we find him saying in 1 Corinthians 14.22, 1 Corinthians 14.22, Therefore tongues are for a sign not to those who believe, but to unbelievers. But prophesying is not for unbelievers, but for those who believe. Now Paul said that tongues were a sign for unbelievers.

This is certainly not exhaustive of what tongues is used for. In fact, this is the only reference in Paul's writings to tongues ever being a sign for unbelievers. However, we do read in one place in the book of Acts of tongues functioning this way, and that was on the day of Pentecost.

Unbelieving Jews in great numbers overheard the Christians in the upper room speaking in tongues, and it was a sign to them that something supernatural had happened. They said, we come from 15 different language groups, and yet we all hear these Galileans speaking in our own language, speaking the wonderful works of God. And therefore, it was a sign to them.

These were unbelievers, and it was a sign to them. Now note, the only way this could possibly be a sign to skeptical unbelievers would be if, in fact, it was earthly languages which they understood. It would not impress a skeptical unbeliever if they chattered in some unknown language and someone professed to give an interpretation.

This would not in any sense be convincingly supernatural, since no one could verify that the interpretation had anything to do with the chatter, or that there was anything supernatural about the chatter in the first place. But if somebody who had never learned a language spoke fluently in a known language to an unbeliever who knew that language, this would serve as a sign just like healings and miracles and other things serve as signs. And Paul indicates that tongues has that function.

It certainly isn't its only function, but it has that function. In Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost, and Paul mentions it being a sign for unbelievers. I have also heard of cases, though I cannot verify them historically, I can't guarantee they are true, but I've heard testimonies from people who I have no reason to doubt their integrity or what they've said, who they spoke in a foreign setting in tongues, a language they themselves did not understand, but which was understood by their unsaved hearers.

I don't have time to go into all the stories because we're running low on time. We have more biblical points to make rather than a bunch of anecdotal stuff. But I do believe that this can still happen, just like I believe healings can happen and people can still rise from the dead and things like that.

I believe that tongues can be a sign to unbelievers, but it's only one function of tongues and probably not the principal one. In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul acts as if the principal function of tongues is to the church, so that the church might receive edifying. We saw that in 1 Corinthians 14 and verse 5. I wish that you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied, for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with a tongue, unless he interprets, that the church may receive edification.

The edification of the church is the main thing that Paul presumes to be the value of tongues. And one thing he makes clear in this verse and in several verses in this chapter is the only way the church can be edified by tongues is if it's accompanied by the twin gift of interpretation. Now this means that when tongues is a ministry to edify the church, it is not a known language to those present.

It is not an understood language. It may be an earthly language, but it is not intelligible to the listeners. That's why you need to have an interpretation.

The very emphasis on the need for interpretation tells us that Paul did not expect the audience to automatically understand it. Now here's a difference between tongues as a sign to the unbelievers and tongues as a ministry to the gathered congregation. It can only be a sign to unbelievers if it is a language they understand, like on the day of Pentecost.

But when it's a ministry to the church, it does not have to be, and Paul assumes it normally won't be a language they understand, and therefore the gift of interpretation is needed so that it can be rendered intelligible to the church. So we have these very different uses of tongues. In one case, the necessity is to an unbeliever he must understand the language for it to function as a sign to him.

In the other case, to the church, it can happen frequently, two or three speakers in tongues every meeting, but there has to be an interpreter because without it, no one will understand it. Now if it is used as a ministry in the church, what is the information content of speaking in tongues in the church? Well, I think there is something on that. In 1 Corinthians 14, let me see here.

Okay, let's start at verse 14. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. Notice he's talking about praying in a tongue, not prophesying in a tongue or preaching in a tongue, but praying in a tongue.

Who is the tongue directed toward then? The same person that our other prayers are



directed toward, God. A tongue, its information content is not a message to the church. It is a prayer to God.

Read on. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. Now I've always understood this to mean that I don't understand what I'm saying.

And I'm convinced that that is the case, that in the genuine gift of tongues, the speaker does not understand what he's saying. But Paul might be saying something different than that here. When he says, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful, he may mean that I am not producing any fruit in the body of Christ.

My understanding is not employed to bring fruit in the body of Christ when I'm speaking in tongues. I'm getting blessed, I'm praying to God, he hears me and understands, he appreciates it, but my understanding is on hold, and therefore it's not producing any fruit. Well, it could be.

If I were speaking a language understandable to the church, my understanding could be producing fruit in the lives of those who hear and understand what I'm saying. In any case, he goes on, verse 15, what is the result then? I will pray with the spirit and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit and I will also sing with the understanding.

Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, and quite clearly he means here in tongues by what he goes on to say, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say amen at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified. Now, he goes on, I thank God that I speak with tongues more than you all, yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding than I might teach others also than ten thousand words in a tongue. Now, Paul is saying that when a person speaks in the church in tongues, he is praying and giving thanks.

He says you're giving thanks, but no one understands, no one can say amen. The idea is you should have an interpretation so they can say amen. Now, what he is suggesting here is that the church can be edified without you speaking directly to the church.

Listening to some people's prayers is very edifying. And saying amen to them. I mean, a lot of the hymns we sing are quite edifying.

A lot of them are simply posed as prayers addressed to God. The same is true of the Psalms. Why is that edifying for you to read how somebody else prayed? Well, because the spirit bears witness and really those inspired prayers sort of give words to your deepest heartfelt thoughts and longings and feelings toward God.

The psalmist or the hymn writer puts it so well, the very thing that you never would have thought to say it that way, but that's really what you wanted to say. And you can say

amen to that. And it's very edifying.

A person who speaks in tongues and the interpretation is good, you should not expect it to sound like a prophecy. He's not speaking to men, but to God. He's praying.

He's giving thanks to God. But others can say amen if they can understand what he's saying. And that's where the interpretation comes in.

Now, Paul restricted this function in the church to only a few as we saw earlier. In 1 Corinthians 14, verses 27 and 28, he makes it clear that even if tongues is happening in the meeting, it should be restricted to a few people, one at a time, and only with an interpreter. This is a rule quite generally violated in Pentecostal and some charismatic circles.

Paul said if you speak in tongues, let it be two or three at the most, not everybody, and one at a time, not all at once, and only with interpretation, not without. Now, invariably when you read that, someone says, well, what about when the whole church sings in the Spirit, sings in tongues? Or sometimes in our church, they all pray in tongues simultaneously and so forth. What do you think of that? I think it's unbiblical.

With the possible exception of singing. After all, singing is a little different than prayer. It overlaps in its meaning.

But to sing out and not be concerned about what the content is of what someone else is saying, not needing to understand them. I don't know. I have mixed feelings.

Paul doesn't specify about singing in tongues. He does mention singing in the Spirit, but he doesn't specify that only two or three are allowed to sing in the Spirit. But I would say Paul shows throughout his discussion a concern for orderliness.

And I would say if the effect of corporate singing in tongues...