



#12 - What's the deal with speaking in Tongues? I thought tongues ceased. [or] I thought tongues was a supernatural translation tool.

Key Definitions:

Glossolalia Glossolalia or speaking in tongues, according to linguists, is the fluid vocalizing of speech-like syllables that lack any readily comprehended meaning, in some cases as part of religious practice in which it is believed to be a divine language unknown to the speaker. (from Wikipedia)

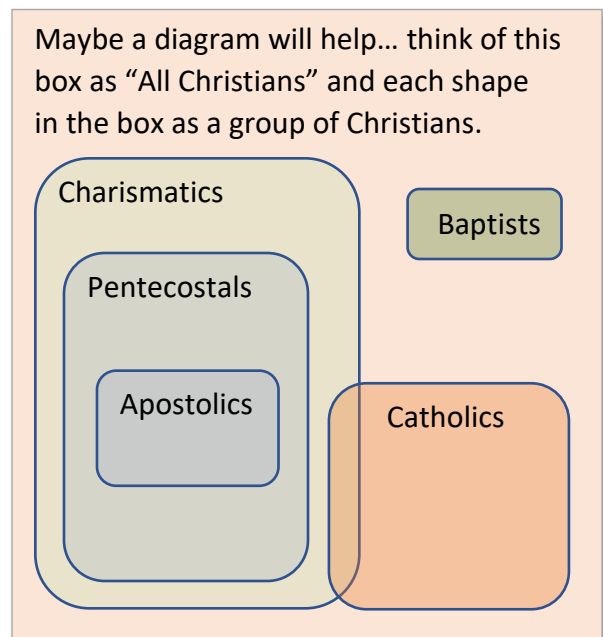
Charismatic Emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, and modern-day miracles as an everyday part of a believer's life. According to Pew Research Center, Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians number over 584 million as of 2011, which is 8% of the planet or more than 1 in every 13 people. (from Wikipedia – the Charismatic Christianity entry)

Pentecostal Places a special emphasis on a direct personal experience of God through the baptism with the Holy Spirit, especially as described throughout the book of Acts starting on the day of Pentecost, in Acts 2, marking the birth of the New Testament church. (from Wikipedia – the Pentecostalism entry)

Pentecostals differ from Charismatics in that Charismatics believe in and emphasize the gifts of the Spirit, but Pentecostals believe that the experienced indwelling of God's Spirit is an essential part of the New Testament plan of salvation.

Checking out the diagram:

- All Apostolics are Pentecostal.
- All Pentecostals are Charismatic.
- So if you are paying attention... then all Apostolics are Charismatic.
- Some Catholics are also Charismatic.
- But no Baptists are Charismatic, and they aren't Catholic either!!!



Key Players (Who's Who in the Tongues Debate):

Pro-Tongues / Pro-Glossalia	The Tongues-Haters
<p>Pentecostals You must have the Holy Spirit to be saved, and tongues is the only sign given in scripture for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost and we are told to expect it.</p> <p>Romans 8:9 NKJV <i>But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.</i></p> <p>Mark 16:17 NKJV <i>And these signs will follow those who believe: ... they will speak with new tongues.</i></p>	<p>Tongues is a Translation Tool For those against speaking in tongues, the newest argument is that tongues is a miraculous translation tool for connecting with other nations.</p> <p>The belief is that “tongue talkers” in Acts 2 and Acts 10 translated Peter’s words so the rest could understand them.</p> <p>People who follow this strongly believe that the tongues speaker ALWAYS knows what they are saying. Glossolia is gibberish and ridiculous and dangerous, or possibly from demon-possession.</p>
<p>Non-Pentecostal Charismatics (which most just call Charismatics 😊) Tongues is a great idea and part of God’s plan. Don’t forbid it. But not every real Christian will speak in tongues.</p> <p>1st Cor 12:30 NKJV Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?</p> <p>1st Cor 14:39 NKJV Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.</p>	<p>Tongues Have Ceased This group argues that tongues worked in the early church until the perfect thing, the Bible, was completed, but then we are told that tongues would cease at that point.</p> <p>For this group, modern day Glossolia is gibberish or from demonic influence.</p> <p>1st Cor 13:8-10 NKJV <i>Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease...; ¹⁰ But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.</i></p>

The Keys to Understanding the Tongues Questions:

- The New Testament talks about Tongues in two different ways.
- The first is the sign of tongues, where tongues is used as a prayer language.
- The second is the gift of tongues, a specific supernatural message from God to be interpreted.
- Check out the booklet included in this section on Tongues, or at least the chart on page 21 of this section.

Tongue-Hater Arguments

Tongues Have Ceased

- Used to be a very popular argument, particularly with Baptists, but rarely brought up now that approximately ¼ of Christians and maybe 8% of the planet has claimed an experience of speaking in tongues.
- Based on the passage in 1st Cor 13 (see below) where tongues are promised to cease when the perfect thing comes (1st Cor 13:8-10). So when the Bible was completed, tongues was no longer necessary...
- Uh, lots of people speak with tongues?
- And why does the New Testament contain instructions on tongues (i.e. 1st Corinthians 14) if it ceases with

When answering the Tongues question, what level will you reach?

Padawan

- Knows the difference between a Charismatic and a Pentecostal?
- Which chapters in Acts mention people speaking in tongues? (Acts 2, 10, 11 and 19)
- Which chapters in the Epistles give instructions and details on tongues? (1st Cor 12 to 14)

Jedi

- Definition of Glossolalia?
- Can generally explain the two arguments of Tongue-Haters.
- Can find the passages in Corinthians that are used by both and figure it out.
- Can figure out which passages show tongues as a sign and which show tongues as a gift.

Jedi Master

- Knows the outline of 1st Cor 12 through 14 by memory.
- Knows what each salvation account in Acts covers – including tongues and baptism (Acts, 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 19, 22)
- Can describe each tongue-hater argument, what the scriptures say and answer it from memory.

the New Testament. Why put it in the instruction manual if the instruction manual causes it to stop?

- And if that is what 1st Cor 13 is talking about, why hasn't knowledge stopped? And why can't we see Him face to face? This is about the return of Jesus, not the completion of the New Testament.

Tongues is a Translation Tool / Missionary Gift

- This argument is the new kid on the block. No major denomination teaches this, or for that matter, directly and officially opposes tongues any more. Only the Christian cults (especially the JW's, the Mormons and the 7th Day Adventists) and other individual leaders among Evangelical Christians, publicly oppose speaking in tongues. John MacArthur is probably the most well-known Christian leader against speaking in tongues. He believes the translation tool argument.
- This argument claims that a Christian speaking in tongues is a miraculous learning of a foreign language for missions and outreach, and that the speaker always understands what they are saying. So when tongues came in Acts 2, it was to translate the words of Peter to the rest of the crowd. The same is claimed in Acts 10, in that Peter preached to a few, and then others translated when the Holy Spirit came upon them.
- Pause, and scratch your head. It's okay. Now turn back to Acts 2 and Acts 10 and see if you can find any hint that anyone said something and then it was translated by another person. Go ahead, we'll wait.
- And if you always know what you are saying, then why does 1st Cor 14 tell us that those with the gift of tongues should pray to interpret? (v13)
- If you always know what you are saying when you speak in tongues, then read 1st Cor 14 out loud replacing the word 'tongues' with the phrase 'a language you understand' and see how many times you giggle.

The Bible Shows Not Everyone Will Speak in Tongues

- Based entirely on 1st Cor 12:30, this argument is again tied to the failure to see the difference between tongues as a sign and tongues as a gift.
- Ironically, this argument almost always comes up as a last straw attempt by someone who is against any kind of speaking in tongues.

All the Passages that Connect to Tongues:

Speaking in Tongues as a Sign / Connected with Salvation

Mark 16:15-17 NKJV

(The first Commission after the Resurrection)

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶ He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷ And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues.

Luke 24:46-49 NKJV

(Also the first Commission, recorded in the 3rd person)

Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ And you are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

John 3:5-8 NKJV

Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'
⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

(↑ This one's controversial, but only to those who hate tongues 😊. I don't hate tongues, and neither does the Bible, so a reference to knowing where the Spirit moves only by the sound it makes intrigues me. And it's my booklet, so there.)

Acts 1:4-8 NKJV

(The third Commissioning, on Mount Olivet in Bethany)

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; ⁵ for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” ⁶ Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷ And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. ⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Acts 2:1-16 NKJV

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

⁵ And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. ⁷ Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, “Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?” ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” ¹² So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “Whatever could this mean?”

¹³ Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."

¹⁴ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.

¹⁵ For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel...

Joel 2:28-29 NKJV

And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. ²⁹ And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

Acts 2:37-41 NKJV

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

³⁸ Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

⁴⁰ And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."

⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

Acts 8

(No direct reference to tongues when the Samaritans receive the Holy Spirit, but it was a supernatural and clearly identified experience separate from belief, other miraculous signs or baptism. Logically, Pentecostals conclude that the Samaritans received the Holy Ghost just as it happened in Acts 2, 10 and 19. No mention if and where the Ethiopian Eunuch received the Holy Ghost.)

Acts 9

(Paul receives the Holy Spirit, but no mention of whether he spoke in tongues or if he was baptized in Jesus name. But maybe you should check out 1st Cor 14:18 and Acts 22:16 to see if you can learn more about Paul's baptism and whether he speaks in tongues.)

Acts 10:44-48 NKJV

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. ⁴⁵ And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.

Then Peter answered, ⁴⁷ "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" ⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

Acts 11:15-17 NKJV (Peter retelling what happened in Acts 10)

And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. ¹⁶ Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷ If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?"

Acts 16

No mention of whether anyone received the Holy Spirit that night of the miracle earthquake. The emphasis has shifted in Acts from salvation accounts to missionary journeys and the miracles along the way.

Acts 19:1-6 NKJV

And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples ² he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."

³ And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." ⁴ Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."

⁵ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. ⁷ Now the men were about twelve in all.

Romans 8:9 NKJV

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

Speaking in Tongues as a Prayer Language

Romans 8:26 NKJV

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Jude 1:20-21 NKJV

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹ keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Speaking in Tongues as a Gift / a Message to be Interpreted

1st Corinthians 12:1, 4-11, 27-31 NKJV

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant...

⁴ There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶ And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. ⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: ⁸ for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills...

[Discussion on Unity and Diversity in the body.
The Ear is not a Wrist...]

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

What's More Important than Tongues? (Hint: it rhymes with dove)

1st Corinthians 13:1-2, 8-13 NKJV

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. ² And 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, but have not love, I am nothing...

[yes, love is much more important than tongues, prophecy and spiritual gifts!!!]

⁸ Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part. ¹⁰ But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

¹³ And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Instructions on Messages in Tongues and Prophecy (along with personal notes on praying and singing in tongues)

1st Corinthians 14:1-40 NKJV (Yeap, the whole chapter...)

[Prophecy and Tongues]

Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. ² 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. ³ But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. ⁴ He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. ⁵ I wish 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.

[Tongues Must Be Interpreted]

⁶ But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching? ⁷ Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? ⁸ For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle? ⁹ So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. ¹⁰ There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them is without significance. ¹¹ Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me. ¹² Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel.

¹³ Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. ¹⁴ For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. ¹⁵ What is the conclusion 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. ¹⁶ Otherwise, 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? ¹⁷ For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified.

¹⁸ I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all;
¹⁹ yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

[Tongues a Sign to Unbelievers]

²⁰ Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.

²¹ In the law it is written:

“With men of other tongues and other lips
I will speak to this people;
And yet, for all that, they will not hear Me,”

says the Lord. **[more on this O.T. reference on p15]**

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. ²³ Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? ²⁴ But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. ²⁵ And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.

[Order in Church Meetings]

²⁶ How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. ²⁷ If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. ²⁸ But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. ²⁹ Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. ³⁰ But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. ³¹ For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. ³² And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. ³³ For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

³⁴ Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. ³⁵ And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.

³⁶ Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached? ³⁷ If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. ³⁸ But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.

³⁹ Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. ⁴⁰ Let all things be done decently and in order.

(Note: if you are interested in understanding what Paul is getting at in 14:34-35, you can find more information at 99BibleVerses.com)

Misc Passage that I Cannot Easily Fit Elsewhere

Isaiah 28:11-13 NKJV

For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people, ¹² *To whom He said, "This is the rest with which you may cause the weary to rest," And, "This is the refreshing"; Yet they would not hear.* ¹³ *But the word of the Lord was to them, "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little," That they might go and fall backward, and be broken And snared and caught.*

(A strange reference quoted by Paul in 1st Cor 14:21. This passage in Isaiah talks about how Israel failed to build upon what was revealed to them. They should have matured, but act as babies, so God will speak to them through the captivity of a foreign people who speak another language. Paul references this passage in 1st Cor 14:21 to tell us that tongues is a sign to babies in Christ that the Spirit of God is doing something.

We are warned to be mature in our understanding and babies in our malice. In other words, I believe this passage encourages us to be wise, yet be innocent and open and without attitude to the moving of God through different people's lives.)

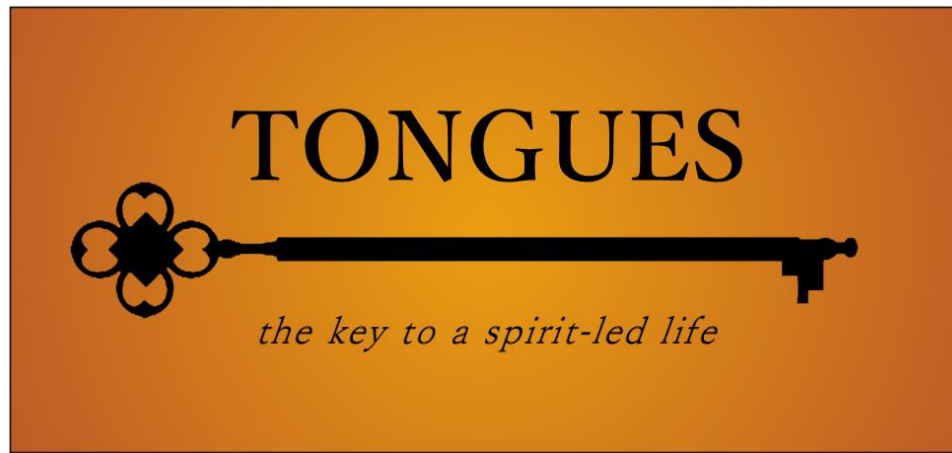
Concluding Thoughts on the Tongue Hater Arguments

Most of the issues brought up by tongue-haters have to do with confusion on the separation between tongues as a sign, a prayer language and gift. And none of their arguments answer the scriptures on how and why the New Testament gives instructions on tongues if it has ceased, or if the speaker understands what they are saying. Their arguments are really nonsense, and they especially fall apart when you turn to 1st Corinthians 12-14 and let the Word speak on Tongues.

If you do find yourself in an intense conversation with someone against “tongues”, try to work your way out of the argument, that rarely helps. I have had more success asking them to turn to 1st Corinthians 14 together and answer a couple simple questions in this order:

- When someone speaks in tongues, do they understand what they are saying? Clearly, according to The Bible, no they don't.
- Does your church agree with and follow 1st Corinthians 14:39? Do they forbid tongues?
- If Paul can brag about speaking in tongues more than anyone in the Corinthian church, is it acceptable for us to at least acknowledge and celebrate speaking in tongues a little? Yes, clearly.
- Is the Bible anti-tongues? Or is it just clearly teaching that there are guidelines and restrictions on tongues, in particular when giving a message in tongues? No, the Bible is pro-tongues. It does give guidelines and rules on the gift of tongues.

We are clearly taking an exhaustive approach to question #12, but just for fun, I am including a reformatted copy of my booklet on Tongues to wrap things up. Between these notes, and the Word of God, you have everything you need to really knock question 12 out of the ballpark...



1st Corinthians 14:13-15 NLT

So anyone who speaks in tongues should pray also for the ability to interpret what has been said. ¹⁴ For if I pray in tongues, my spirit is praying, but I don't understand what I am saying. ¹⁵ Well then, what shall I do? I will pray in the spirit, and I will also pray in words I understand. I will sing in the spirit, and I will also sing in words I understand.

Speaking in Tongues (also called **Glossolalia**) is probably one of the strangest teachings in the New Testament. Many wonder and ask questions about the concept that you can utter sounds as God's Spirit prompts you. But this is very scriptural and normal in the early Apostolic years. With the Pentecostal revival of the 20th century, it has become normal once again in most Christian denominations, with over 20% of American Christians¹ acknowledging that they speak in tongues, and at least 100 million people praying in tongues world-wide.

Some Christians are against tongues completely, and they cite verses in 1st Corinthians 12 through 14 to support their position, but the scriptural position is that tongues are clearly something mysterious in which the speaker does not understand what they are saying. Tongues are clearly something that Paul tells us is part of the church. 1st Corinthians 14:39 could not be clearer, "So, my dear brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and don't forbid speaking in tongues."

The real question, the better question, is how should we understand tongues, and is it something that every Christian should expect in their walk with God?

¹ Chavis, Mark. 2012, Spiritual Experiences in American Congregations. Duke University.

The confusion comes because the Bible talks about several different purposes for tongues. Mark and Acts describe tongues as a sign that God's Spirit is active, specifically that a new believer has received the Holy Spirit:

Mark 16:16-17 NLT

*Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned. ¹⁷ These miraculous signs will accompany those who believe: They will cast out demons in my name, **and they will speak in new languages.***

Acts 10:44-46 NLT

*Even as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon **all** who were listening to the message. ⁴⁵ The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too. ⁴⁶ **For they heard them speaking in other tongues and praising God.***

This same experience is also mentioned in Acts 2 and Acts 19, both mentioning tongues as a sign of the Holy Ghost moving. Although tongues is not specifically mentioned in Acts 8 and 9, the supernatural nature of the accounts and other verses lead to the reasonable conclusion that God worked similarly in the people of Samaria and in Paul when He filled them with the Holy Spirit. The salvation accounts in Acts beg us to realize that receiving the Holy Ghost is a supernatural experience, and tongues is the only sign given that we are told to expect.

Mark and Acts shows us tongues as a sign, but the Epistles reveal a different side of tongues. We find tongues is also a prayer language that Christians should expect to use. It is done as many worship together (see Acts 2, 10 & 19) as well as done alone (1st Cor 14:28). Paul celebrates tongues as very positive (see 1st Cor 14:13-15 and 14:18) and even a way to sing to God. Tongues even gives us the amazing ability to pray in the Spirit for things we don't even know about!

Romans 8:26 NLT

And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.

We're also commanded to pray in the Holy Ghost as a way to build our faith.

Jude 1:20 NLT

But you, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We turn to 1st Corinthians 12 through 14 to find the instructions on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are not given equally in the church, but God decides who receives which gift:

1st Corinthians 12:7-11 NLT

A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. ⁸ To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge... ¹⁰ He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy... Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. ¹¹ It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.

Note the change in language, not a sign we should expect, but now we are talking about specific gifts that God gives to different people.

The gift of tongues is very different in that a specific message is given in tongues by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of being interpreted and received. The gifts of tongues and interpretation are linked in 1st Corinthians 14, even to the point that no one should proclaim a message in tongues unless they believe someone present has the gift of interpretation.

1st Corinthians 14:27-28 NLT

No more than two or three should speak in tongues. They must speak one at a time, and someone must interpret what they say. ²⁸ But if no one is present who can interpret, they must be silent in your church meeting and speak in tongues to God privately.

IS TONGUES A TRANSLATION TOOL FOR MISSIONS?

For those against speaking in tongues, the newest argument is that tongues is a miraculous translation tool for connecting with other nations. The belief is that “tongue talkers” in Acts 2 and Acts 10 translated Peter’s words so the rest could understand them. This argument plainly states that the tongues speaker knows what they are saying.

There is no hint of this in Acts 2 or Acts 10, and this idea is directly contradicted by 1st Cor 12 and 14. We are told that one person is given the ability to speak in tongues, while another is given the ability to interpret.

We are even told to pray for the gift of interpretation if you have the gift of tongues (1st Cor 14:13-14). This makes no sense if you know what you are saying. **This is not a translation tool but a specific message from God.**

Did you catch the other part of this passage? Messages in tongues are limited to 2 or 3 in a service, while praying in tongues, in the Bible, can be done by hundreds together or alone, but each is praying directly to God. Reading 1st Corinthians 14:2-5, you will learn that speaking in tongues is edifying to the speaker, but an interpreted message or a prophetic message edifies the church.

1st Corinthians 13:1 gives us a hint on the different kinds of tongues, “If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn’t love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.” We understand that tongues is different for different people, and Pentecostals report many confirmed instances of people speaking known languages (but unknown to them) when receiving God’s spirit.

I was praying with a new Christian from the Ivory Coast. My high-school French caused some communication barriers, but she asked to be baptized in Jesus name in water like it was done in the book of Acts. When she came up out of the water, she received the Holy Ghost and began to speak in Spanish praising God.

A Spanish speaking Christian confirmed that she did not know Spanish, and we understood that this was the sign to us that God had moved powerfully in her life. Even with a language barrier between us, language is no barrier for God.

1st Corinthians gives us another surprising aspect of tongues, in that a message in tongues is not perfect. Yes, you read that correctly... tongues is not perfect, not because His Spirit could be flawed, but because His Spirit is acting through imperfect vessels (you and me). 1st Corinthians 13:8-12 tell us that these gifts will cease when the time of perfection comes. When is this? When the perfect one, Jesus, returns. Then these partial things will cease. 1st Cor 14:26-33 speaks more about the imperfect nature of the gifts, in that people can exercise them incorrectly. So Paul gives instruction and restrictions on their use. We are told at most 2 or 3 messages or prophecies, and we are even to judge their content. Scripture clearly teaches these gifts are from God and we should not forbid their use (1st Cor 14:39-40), but the gifts of the Holy Spirit should be in submission to the Word of God and Apostolic leadership as well (1st Cor 14:37-38).

We see all three functions of tongues clearly presented in scripture. Tongues is a sign we are told to expect when someone receives the Holy Ghost. This sign is confirmed in multiple accounts of receiving the Holy Ghost in Acts. We see tongues as a prayer language and as part of our worship and singing. Then we see the special gift of tongues connected with the gift of interpretation, when God wants to speak a message to edify the church.

A quick summary of the function of tongues in scripture...

Tongues as a Sign & Prayer Language	Gifts of Tongues & Interpretation
<p>Mark 16:17, Acts 2, 10, 19, Rom 8:26 Jude 1:20, 1st Corinthians 14:13-18</p>	<p>1st Corinthians 12:7-11, 29-30 1st Corinthians 14:13-14, 26-33</p>
<p>A sign we are commanded to expect</p> <p>Mark 16:17 NLT <i>These miraculous signs will accompany those who believe: They will cast out demons in my name, and they will speak in new languages.</i></p>	<p>Only certain believers will do this</p> <p>1st Corinthians 12:11 NLT <i>It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.</i></p>
<p>Dozens and hundreds at once</p> <p>Acts 2:4 NLT <i>And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.</i></p>	<p>At most 2 or 3 in a service</p> <p>1st Corinthians 14:27 NLT <i>No more than two or three should speak in tongues. They must speak one at a time, and someone must interpret what they say.</i></p>
<p>Described as part of our prayers & worship</p> <p>1st Corinthians 14:15 NLT <i>Well then, what shall I do? I will pray in the spirit, and I will also pray in words I understand. I will sing in the spirit, and I will also sing in words I understand.</i></p>	<p>To deliver a specific message from God to edify the church</p> <p>1st Corinthians 14:28 NLT <i>But if no one is present who can interpret, they must be silent in your church meeting and speak in tongues to God privately.</i></p>
<p>Absolutely Apostolic and Biblical!</p> <p>1st Corinthians 14:39 NLT <i>So, my dear brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and don't forbid speaking in tongues.</i></p>	<p>Absolutely Apostolic and Biblical!</p> <p>1st Corinthians 14:39 NLT <i>So, my dear brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and don't forbid speaking in tongues.</i></p>

Some Frequently Asked Questions about Tongues...

In the King James, the word “*unknown*” is in italics when referencing tongues. Doesn’t this mean that it wasn’t in the original Greek? Does this show us that the speaker does understand what they are saying when they speak in tongues?

It is absolutely true that “*unknown*” as a word is not found in the Greek text. Words in italics were added by the translators to make the meaning of the Greek and Hebrew text clearer to us. But you don’t need the word “*unknown*” to realize that the speaker does not understand what they are saying. Read any of the following verses in 1st Corinthians 14 and ask yourself if the speaker knows what they are saying:

v1-2, 13-15, 18-19, 27-28, 39

It is unscriptural and even comical to claim the tongues speaker understands what they are saying. It is a mysterious utterance.

1st Corinthians 13:8-12 speaks of tongues ceasing when the perfect thing comes. When the New Testament was completed, wouldn’t that be the perfect thing?

No. It also mentions that we see dimly now but later we will see Him face to face with full knowledge. We clearly are not yet there. This references the return of Jesus. If the completion of scripture triggers the end of tongues, then why does the Bible contain instructions on tongues? And why does the Bible contain the command to not forbid tongues? (see 1st Cor 14:39) Clearly tongues is part of the Apostolic age and very Biblical for today.

1st Corinthians 12:28-31 asks if all speak with tongues. Doesn't this clearly imply that some don't speak with tongues?

Hopefully you have seen how the Bible speaks of tongues in two very different ways. This passage focuses on the gift of tongues, a specific supernatural gift to be interpreted (note 12:4, 12:10 and 12:31). This is different than tongues used privately in prayer or song (1st Cor 14:14-15)

or as evidence of the indwelling of God's Spirit (Acts 10:44-46).

Otherwise if all tongues are the same, then God broke His own rules in Acts 2, 10 and 19 when many spoke in tongues while we are told to limit messages in tongues to two or three at the most (1st Cor 14:26-27).

God doesn't break His own rules. The gifts of tongues and interpretation are specific and not every Christian will receive them, but the sign of tongues is for all Christians (Mark 16:17, Acts 2:4, Acts 10:44).

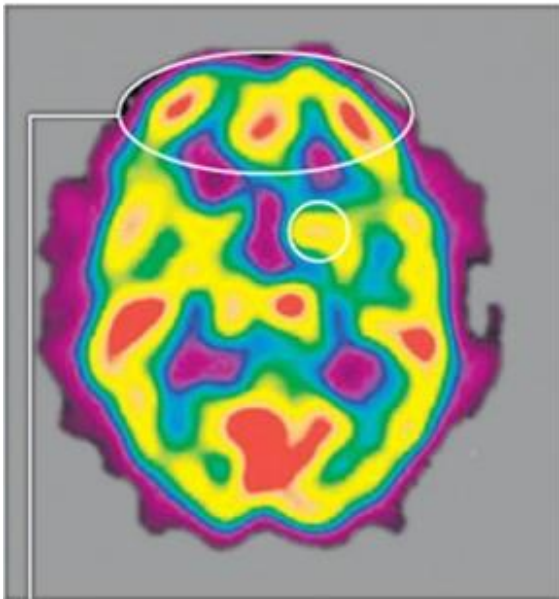
Although not part of this Bible Study, I couldn't help adding this...

Dr. Andrew Newsberg, an associate professor of radiology, psychiatry and religious studies, published a study² on speaking in tongues in 2006. His team recorded multiple brain images of Christians singing, speaking, praying and also speaking in tongues and compared the brain activity for each function.

Evidence for a Religious State

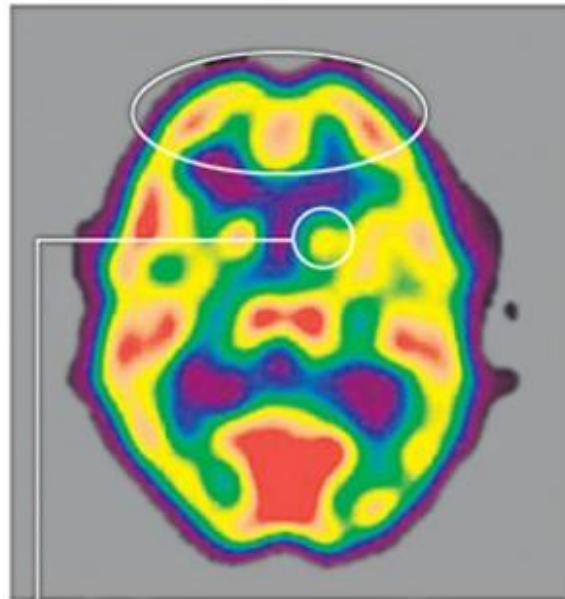
Scientists found notable changes in brain activity when people speak in tongues. The brain scans below show blood flow in the brain (blue lowest, red highest).

SINGING GOSPEL SONG



Frontal lobes Involved in the willful control of behaviors; more activity when singing than when speaking tongues.

SPEAKING IN TONGUES



Left caudate Involved in motor and emotional control; less activity in those speaking in tongues.

Source: Andrew B. Newsberg, University of Pennsylvania

Dr. Newsberg commented in the published article, "Our finding of decreased activity in the frontal lobes during the practice of speaking in tongues is fascinating because these subjects truly believe the Spirit of God is moving through them and controlling them to speak. Our brain imaging research shows us that these subjects are not in control of the usual language centers during this activity, which is consistent with their description of a lack of intentional control, while speaking in tongues."

² Newsberg Andrew et al. 2006, The measurement of Regional Cerebral Blood Flow During Glossolalia: a preliminary SPECT Study. November issue of Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging.

*For if I pray in tongues, my spirit
is praying, but I don't understand
what I am saying.*

*¹⁵ Well then, what shall I do?
I will pray in the spirit, and I will
also pray in words I understand.
I will sing in the spirit, and I will
also sing in words I understand...*

*³⁹ So, my dear brothers and sisters,
be eager to prophesy, and don't
forbid speaking in tongues.*

1st Corinthians 14:14-15, 39 NLT

I hope you have enjoyed this Bible study booklet. Tongues is a mysterious and sometimes controversial topic in the church world, but it is very Biblical and very much a part of God's plan for the New Testament church. I created this short study to explore the different passages on the sign of tongues, praying with tongues and the special gifts of tongues and interpretation. Hopefully this booklet blessed you. Please visit my website for more Bible studies – available as booklets and PDF downloads.

In His service, Scott Lynn

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