



Spiritual Gifts and the Kingdom of God

Living A Spirit-Filled Life

Why are we studying spiritual gifts? Because they are the means our King gives us to serve Him and do the work of His kingdom.

The Kingdom of God

Did you know that the central message that Jesus spoke about was the Kingdom of God (KOG)? See Mark 1:14-20. The good news of God (the gospel message) involves **repentance** (*a complete change of attitude and action; a complete change of mindset and method of living*) and entry into the Kingdom of God.

The lifestyle of those in the Kingdom was obvious—they became fishers of men. This implied that they left what they were doing before in order to become this new kind of person. See Mark 4:30-32. The KOG may start small in a person's life and be barely noticeable, but it grows and grows until it becomes quite noticeable—like the largest tree in the garden—a tree that is a blessing to others. See Mark 9:1-7 for this analogy.

The KOG is supernatural. It involves a genuine, deep friendship with God. It is a relationship in which listening to what Jesus tells us is the highest priority. See Mark 10:13-16. The KOG belongs to those who prefer to be a child of a wonderful Parent (as opposed to those who think they are already an adult and have everything figured out and under control).

How does one live in the KOG?

This is a complex question, but the generalized answer is “by living a life that is empowered by the Holy Spirit.”

In each of the Gospels Jesus is described as one who would baptize (empower) us with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:7-8, Luke 3:16, John 1:32-33).

Baptize refers to being completely soaked/water-logged. Baptism in the Holy Spirit, then, implies submersion in the Spirit of God, being water-logged or drenched with God Himself. What might this imply? If we're completely submerged in God, then we'll become more and more like Him.

As we allow the Holy Spirit to soak more and more of our lives we discover something else that Jesus has given to us (Ephesians 4:7-13). He gives us spiritual gifts. Why? So that we may minister his grace and love to others.

The different types of spiritual gifts found in the New Testament

→ Leadership Gifts (See Ephesians 4:11 & 1 Corinthians 12:28)

- Apostle (Romans 1:1, 16:7)
- Prophet (Acts 11:27-28, 13:1 & 21:9)
- Evangelist (Acts 6:7, 8:26-40, & 21:8)
- Pastor-teacher (Acts 13:1)

→ Ministry Gifts (See Romans 12:7-8)

- Serving (Acts 6:1-5 & 9:36-41, 1 Timothy 3:13)
- Teaching (Acts 18:24, Titus 2:3-4)
- Encouraging (1 Thessalonians 5:14, 2 Thes. 3:12, Hebrews 3:13, Jude 3)
- Giving (Acts 4:34-37, 2 Corinthians 8:4 & 9:1)
- Leading (1 Timothy 3:1, Acts 15:13f, 1 Corinthians 12:28)
- Mercy (Acts 9:27, James 1:27)
- Helps (Acts 13:5, 1 Corinthians 12:28)



→ **Revelation Gifts** (See 1 Corinthians 12:8-11)

- Wisdom (Acts 16:1-7 & 15:5-22)
- Knowledge (Acts 5:1-10, 9:1-18, & 10:19)
- Discernment (Luke 13:10, John 1:47, Acts 16:18)

→ **Power Gifts** (See 1 Corinthians 12:8-11)

- Faith (Matthew 8:5-16, James 5:17-18)
- Healings (John 9:35-36, Acts 3:1-11)
- Miracles (Acts 6:8 & 8:6)

→ **Edification Gifts** (1 Corinthians 12:8-11)

- Prophecy (Acts 21:10-11, 1 Corinthians 14:1-5)
- Tongues (1 Corinthians 14:18)
- Interpretation (1 Corinthians 14:13 & 27)

→ **Speaking in tongues** (three types)

1. The spiritual gift used when Christians gather (1 Corinthians 14:1-13)
2. The evidence that one is baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4 & 10:44-46)
3. The only gift that is said to personally edify (1 Corinthians 14:4)

The Background of 1 Corinthians

In the book of 1 Corinthians we find the second category concerning speaking in tongues. Throughout the book of 1 Corinthians it is evident that Paul is addressing several issues/problems that he has become aware of in the Corinthian church (see 1:10-11 for information he received from Chloe's household and 7:1, 8:1, 12:1 & 15:1 which indicate he is answering a letter he received from the church).

The issue of tongues arises in one of the "question sections" (See 1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40) Notice that both this section and the one prior to it (8:1-11:34) deal with matters involving public worship services. The issue in chapters 8-11 is the connection between idol feasts of worship and the Christian worship service of the Lord's feast (supper). The issue in chapters 12-14 is the use of spiritual gifts in the public worship service.

The young Christian church in Corinth was inappropriately using the gift of tongues. It seems they were simultaneously speaking in tongues at church (14:27) when non-believers were present (14:23-25), as well as when those who did not yet speak in tongues were present. This was upsetting to these two groups of people and brought confusion to the service (see 14:33).

In essence, Paul says, they were not acting in love (13:1). This is why all of chapter 13 is inserted between chapters 12 and 14, which focus on the issue of speaking in tongues. For much of this section Paul argues that prophecy in the native tongue of the church would be a more effective and loving manner in which to edify one another than simultaneous, uninterpreted tongues. He does this by comparing the positive effects of prophecy with the negative effects of uninterpreted tongues. However, he does place interpreted tongues on par with prophecy in value for the church.

A key to understanding:

Something to keep in mind as we try to apply these truths today is that this is a corrective passage about tongues, not a directive passage. It is correcting an abusive situation, not laying guidelines for the proper use of tongues as if no abuse had occurred. The proper use for tongues today can only be inferred from the material we are given.



The Gift of Tongues

Now that some of the background information is understood, what can be learned about the proper use of speaking in tongues in a church service?

1. 13:1 and 14:1 show the necessity of using this gift in a loving manner.
2. Connected with this idea is that all the spiritual gifts—including tongues—have a clearly defined purpose for church services: They are done for the common good (12:7) and they edify (14:5 & 14:12). **Edify** means *to build up, or to make strong spiritually*.
3. 12:10, 14:5 & 14:26-27 teach that tongues is to be interpreted at church.
4. 14:39-40 says tongues in church should not be forbidden, but should be done in a fitting and orderly way.
5. 12:30 shows that not everyone will have the gift of using tongues to **publicly** edify the church. (Notice this context has nothing to say about the private use of tongues or about tongues as a sign that one is baptized in the Holy Spirit).
6. When a person speaks in tongues they do not know what they are saying and—without interpretation—neither does anyone else (14:2 & 14:14). They are speaking mysteries with their spirit to God.
7. Prophecy is for strengthening, encouraging, and comforting the church. By implication, it can be said that interpreted tongues has the same result (14:3-6).
8. 14:4 indicates there is a place for the private use of tongues. This usage has a positive effect on the believer and can be used for self-edification. In fact the edification is so beneficial that Paul wishes that everyone spoke in tongues. (Again this is not implying that some people are not allowed to have this spiritual gift from God, but that some in the church don't *yet* have it, 14:23-25).
9. 14:6-12 does not teach that uninterpreted tongues is sinful or harmful to the person doing it (they are probably being edified by doing so—14:4). Rather, the beneficial effect is not transmitted to the entire group because no one knows what the speaker is saying. This is why the tongues speaker is exhorted to interpret what they are saying (14:13).
10. It is also possible (and perhaps a pattern) that some church members are regularly and routinely used by God to bring the interpretation of the gift of tongues (14:27-28).
11. 14:15 & 14:18 are written for the context of the church service. Paul urges all to pray in the Spirit (pray in tongues) while at church, but also to pray with their mind (pray in their usual language). He uses himself as an example and says this is what he does at church.
12. 14:16-17 shows us that a person speaking in tongues is giving thanks *to* God, and 14:2 also indicates the message in tongues is a prayer to God.
13. 14:6 may provide a list of possibilities of the categories of interpretation for the message in tongues given in the church: revelation, knowledge, prophecy and instruction, although these were primarily done in the native language of the church (Greek).
14. 14:26-33 provides a model for high congregational involvement in every church service. This is quite different from the present day pattern of only a few being involved.
15. 14:26 says everyone has something to contribute. It also provides a list of spiritual gifts/activities that *must* be done at church. Why? Because it is these things that strengthen the church.



16. 14:27-28 show the need for bringing order out of the chaos in the Corinthian church. The “rule of two or three” found here is *corrective and not directive*. The point is not that an exact number of tongues messages are to be given, (the church has not sinned or come under the influence of the devil if 5 or 6 messages are given), but that the spiritual gifts can only edify when carried out in an orderly fashion.
17. 14:28 allows for quiet speaking in tongues (to one’s self) at church.
18. 14:29-33 continues the exhortation to orderliness. It also brings up the important directive that the content of all spiritual utterances should to be evaluated.
19. Finally, it is clear that these utterances given by the Holy Spirit are completely under the control of the one speaking. There is no indication of the believer being in some sort of frenzied, out of control state of being. (This is not to say anything about people’s different modes of expression because of their personality).