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How Does the Holy Spirit Work?

"Opportunity is often missed because we are broadcasting when we should be tuning in." - Anonymous



Christians everywhere talk about the Holy Spirit and how it generates influence, strength and peace in their lives. We all want more of it because we all see it as a way to continually draw closer to God through Jesus. But how does the Holy Spirit work? Does the Holy Spirit give us miraculous powers in the same way it did back in New Testament times? How do you know the Holy Spirit is working in your life? Stay with us as we look into this common yet little-understood phenomena of Christian life.

When did the Holy Spirit begin its begetting work for Jesus' followers?

Baptism of the Spirit introduced: Luke 3:16-17: John's audience is a wide cross-section of the Jewish population. This included the Pharisees, the average person who was trying to live up to the Law, those that weren't trying but were curious nonetheless, those working with the Roman government, and others. John prophesies to this mixed crowd the fact that all will not accept the coming Lord - some will need to be cut down and some will be destroyed. It is in this context that the baptism of the Spirit is introduced, a brand new concept at this time. **Next, we jump to the risen Lord appearing to his disciples:** Luke 24:47-49 **The risen Lord's eleventh and final appearance:** Acts 1:4-9: Jesus gave his Apostles a very specific instruction to stay in Jerusalem until something important happened. We can assume they would have been very confused.



What observations can we make so far about this coming baptism of the Spirit?

- It was typified in the rituals of the Law, shown by its arrival on Pentecost. (*Pentecost is the Greek name for the Jewish harvest festival known as the Festival of Weeks in Exodus 34:22 and Deuteronomy 16:10, occurring 50 days after Passover. This was a day of ritual and sacrifice commemorating God giving the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai fifty days after the Exodus.*)
- It was clearly prophesied by John the Baptist even before the *beginning* of Jesus' ministry.
- It was to be a critical event - the risen Lord labeled it as a "new beginning" for the disciples. Jesus talked to them specifically about this event.
- It was to be a one-time event - the risen Lord emphatically instructed their whereabouts. Jesus focused them on this event on the day of Pentecost. This never happened again.

Is speaking in tongues a sure sign of the Holy Spirit in your life?

Let's review the event that changed Christianity forever: Acts 2:1-3: So, what happened here?

Prophetic timing: The day of Pentecost had arrived.

Obedience: The Apostles were where they were supposed to be - Jesus had told them to stay in Jerusalem and wait there for the promise of the Father.

Sound: There was a sound like a rushing mighty wind.

Immersion: It filled all the house where they were sitting. This indicates their complete immersion, their baptism by the Spirit. So *that's* what was meant by being "baptized by the Holy Spirit!"

Acts 2:3: *And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.* Acts 2:4: (NASB) *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*

There was definitely a sequence: The Spirit came upon them, and they then spoke in tongues. What does that mean? We can all agree that it was a miracle, but what was actually happening? What was the miracle?



Introduction, Speaking in Tongues Study, [Nightline ABC online](#)

- (*Interviewer*) *Those outside the church often say it's nothing more than gibberish. But some Christians claim that it is the purest form of prayer, beyond the constraints of normal language. It is an ancient practice mentioned in the Bible. St. Paul called it "speaking in the tongues of angels." Jesus' apostles were first said to do it at Pentecost.*

Acts 2:5-8: So, the original speaking in tongues in the Scriptures was prophesied by John, reinforced by Jesus, and then defined very clearly. How could they spread the Gospel in the



multi-cultural city of Jerusalem with different languages? The miracle was that the Gospel was being heard in their own language. Speaking in tongues was speaking somebody else's human language. This would be unmistakable proof of something supernatural happening! Is it still an unmistakable proof of the Gospel today?

Is all speaking in tongues the same as that done at Pentecost?

There are two other New Testament accounts where speaking in tongues is a recorded event: Acts 10:30-47: Now the Gentiles had the ability to be called into the family of Christ. Peter's reaction was remarkable - "we can't keep these people from being baptized!" The Gentiles were able to speak in languages they didn't know and others could understand them.

 **Speaks through them, Speaking in Tongues Study, Nightline ABC online**

- *We say things in our own English language but speaking in tongues is a heavenly language that we're going to God and Jesus intercedes for us.*
- *(Interviewer) They say they have no control over what comes out of their mouths, that they're swept up in a rush of ecstatic religious feeling and that the Holy Spirit is speaking through them.*

In today's speaking in tongues, what happened to the scriptural version of tongues where the speaker suddenly could speak in foreign human languages?

Acts 19:1-8: They were communicating with those who did not know the Gospel. Ephesus was a great city with many languages spoken there, just like Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. This was a Greek-oriented environment where the Temple to Diana was located. To be able to speak other languages would have been very important.

What do the only three recorded events of speaking in tongues in the New Testament have in common? 1. Day of Pentecost (Gospel went out to Israel.) 2. Conversion of Cornelius (Gospel went out to the Gentiles.) 3. Jewish Christians at Ephesus (Gospel went out to the rest of the earth.) Newly spirit-begotten individuals, the preaching of an Apostle to a Jewish or Jewish-Christian audience, and the speaking of human languages for the purpose of expanding the Gospel.

So should we be striving for this as an evidence of a high level of spirituality?

1 Corinthians 14:1-5: Apparently there was a problem of order in the Corinthian church. They were given some of these miraculous spiritual gifts but weren't using them correctly. Just speaking another language without an interpretation isn't teaching anyone or edifying the church.

It makes perfect sense to see this as referring to the same speaking in a foreign language - without someone to interpret, it is just noise! Could this be talking about a language of angels?

Can Christians speak in the language of angels?

1 Corinthians 13:1: Aha! The *tongues of angels*! What did he mean by that? **Let's go back to an event the Apostle Paul recalls before he wrote his two letters to the Corinthians: 2**

Corinthians 12:2-4: The Apostle Paul is talking about his own experience, a unique heavenly vision. He wasn't even sure if he was actually there or if it was a dream. He saw and heard unspeakable glory. Did he hear the language of angels? This is the only recorded event of such a thing happening. The only evidence we have of angelic language being witnessed by a human being is the Apostle Paul through this apparent vision, and he tells us that those unspeakable words are not to be uttered. How does this fit into modern day speaking in tongues?

 **Knows what needs healing, Speaking in Tongues, Nightline ABC online**

- *It's almost as if I am able to tap into God's heart and what He wants. You can feel Him all around you and you can feel Him speaking through the words you are saying.*
- *(Interviewer) It almost sounds like a foreign language, but actually those speaking in tongues are not saying anything in a known language.*
- *With the gift of tongues, I can trust the holy spirit to figure out what needs to be healed. He will use what sounds like gibberish like any other language sounds like gibberish.*

Is that something the Scriptures tell us we *should* be doing? Or is it something we *shouldn't* be?



Let's examine the Apostle Paul's reasoning surrounding his one-time comment about speaking in a tongue other than an earthly language. **Here is the context immediately before he says *tongues of angels* back in 1 Corinthians 13:1: 1 Corinthians 12:28-31:**

- Several gifts of the spirit are here listed.
- A divide between the greater and lesser gifts is established.
- The path of spiritual gifts is shown to be a lesser path, as a more excellent way exists.
- Paul is absolutely teaching by giving his personal experience: *I show you a still more excellent way.*
- 1 Corinthians 13 follows his personal experience. He is *not* telling us to speak in the tongues of angels.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3: The Apostle Paul had experience with all of these items, but he advises that without love, none of these gifts are meaningful. The gifts are secondary to the true call of God.

Nowhere else in Scripture is it even alluded to that any Christian had or has access to the tongues of angels outside of Paul's experience, and he even said it was unlawful for a man to utter. Speaking in tongues today appears to be out of context with scriptural guide-lines and understanding.

Romans 8:26-27: How does the Holy Spirit work? It helps us when we don't even know what to ask. *Groanings* are not tongues. It is not a language, but an internal expression of deep need.

Here is the only other use of *groaning* in the New Testament: Acts 7:34: *I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their **groaning** <Strong's 4726>, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.*

It is expressing how God understood the internal strife of his people. When we have that internal turmoil, the Spirit helps us to bring that expression before God. It isn't a language.

Do the gifts of the Spirit ever stop?

Let's see where speaking in tongues fits as to the Gospel message: 1 Corinthians 14:1-2: In other words, because no one is understanding, only God can hear. The purpose of the gift was to spread the Gospel to others. 1 Corinthians 14:9-11: The Apostle addresses a misuse of speaking in tongues. 1 Corinthians 14:13-14: If you were to pray in a foreign language but you don't understand what you are saying, your mind is unfruitful. It isn't even helping you. 1 Corinthians 14:19: (NASB) *however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.* 1 Corinthians 14:22-23



So, what do we observe so far? According to the Bible:

- Speaking in tongues was always the speaking of another human language.
- Speaking in tongues was a gift - and a "lesser" gift at that.
- Speaking in tongues was always implemented for the furtherance of the Gospel.
- No one in Scripture is ever recorded speaking some heavenly language.
- The "groanings of the spirit" are not at all connected with the gift of speaking in tongues.
- Speaking in tongues was not to be done without an interpreter, as disorder would prevail.
- Paul absolutely discouraged this practice unless it was to communicate with non-believers.



Study tells what not why, *Speaking in Tongues*, Nightline ABC online

- *What happens in the brains of Buddhist monks and Franciscan nuns praying is noticeably different than what happens to "tongue speakers." There was a stark contrast to the monks and nuns who in prayer were very intensely focused; in those individuals their front lobe activity increased.*

When we pray, we are focused on communicating. Those speaking in tongues are not actually communicating; it is an emotional response.

1 Corinthians 13:8-11: So, this miraculous gift, along with others, were just there for a time - but love never fails! *Perfect* here means "complete." Once the Gospel was put in place and written down, the need for tongues and prophecy through instantaneous spiritual knowledge ceased. Now we have the Bible as the written word that would be passed from person to person, generation to generation, and across all languages.



1 Corinthians 14:26-29: The Apostle is very firm in his instruction that our fellowship be orderly and a pure example of those who truly follow Christ, not only in his teaching, but also in his style of living.

What are the purposes for the Holy Spirit in our lives?

God's spirit was and is a witness - a proof or record of His plan being carried out

Acts 5:32 2 Corinthians 1:23: *Moreover I call God for a **record** <3144> upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.*

The Holy Spirit is part of the recorded history of the miracles of Christianity.

God's Spirit tell us what to do and shows us the way

Luke 12:12: This is if our hearts and minds are focused on the word of God and we are actively seeking the will of God.

God's spirit builds our hope

Romans 5:5: Our hope is strange in comparison to the rest of the world. Our hope is heavenly. God's power and influence in our lives makes that hope not just an idea or a fantasy, but a real, concrete goal for which we strive.

God's spirit dwells within us, therefore making us God's own

1 Corinthians 6:19: Our lives are not to be governed by the things that we *want* to do, what we *want* to say, the things that we *want* to think, the places we *want* to go. Our lives are to be governed by the influence of God's power because we no longer own our own will. We gave our will over to God to be a follower of Christ. That's why Christianity is looked upon as "stewardship." When you are a steward, you are taking care of someone else's goods. With Christian stewardship, we have given our lives to God through Jesus. We give God everything we have and He in turn allows us to use it for Him. That is the lot of a Christian life.

God's spirit gives us specific direction in our lives

Acts 16:6: It's like our GPS, but we have to be listening in order to know where to go. The Holy Spirit is a mechanism by which we are able to listen and understand the will of God in our lives. It works not through how we feel emotionally, but how we understand the scriptural principles. We aren't supposed to walk outside of those principles. The Holy Spirit won't keep guiding us down that road.

God's spirit teaches us

1 Corinthians 2:13: The things we have been given to learn, the book we have been given to learn from doesn't come from human cleverness. It has the keys to living a spiritual-oriented life. That doesn't bring what I like, it brings what I must do.

God's spirit brings prophecy to light

2 Peter 1:21: This gives us great comfort. The power and influence of God was working through the prophets of old. We need to focus on how important it is that we apply God's word.

We know there are a lot of different points of view on this subject throughout Christianity, so we urge you to review 1 Corinthians 14 and the Apostle Paul's instructions.

***So how does the Holy Spirit work?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions,
Think about it...!***