

**What Is the Spiritual Tongue?**

Passages: Acts 2; 1 Cor 12; 1 Cor 14

*Memory Verse*

“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.”  
(Romans 8:26)

<b>Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]</b>	<b>Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]</b>	<b>Good Works [Behavior]</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The primary function of speaking in tongues is self- edification.</li><li>2. The secondary function of speaking in tongues is the edification of others.</li><li>3. All who have the Holy Spirit are able to speak in tongues.</li></ol>	God is Spirit.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ask God to sanctify us.</li><li>2. Set our minds to seek God first.</li><li>3. Pray with a focus.</li></ol>

*Overview*

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. What Is the Spiritual Tongue?
- B. The Gift of Interpretation of Tongues
- C. The Value and Significance of Speaking in Tongues

**Life Application**

Rely on the Power of Prayer in the Holy Spirit

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** When we pray in tongues, God’s Spirit helps and edifies us.

### *Spiritual Teachings*

**Important Note:** *After receiving the Holy Spirit, some students may still have doubts, questions, or a lack of understanding regarding the Holy Spirit, leading them to question if they still have the Holy Spirit, or wonder why they don't feel His joy or movement in their prayers. In these cases, it is important to be sensitive to your students' needs; take time to answer questions that they might have, and encourage them with the teachings contained in this lesson, as students at this age need a lot of encouragement. While such doubts can happen in a life of faith, it is important that they are addressed in order to truly experience God in their prayers. Over time, when they can fully submit to the Spirit by obeying God's word, their prayers will inevitably change. After you have spent time encouraging your students, you can pray together to help them put into practice what you have discussed.*

#### **A. What Is the Spiritual Tongue?**

The Bible mentions two types of spiritual tongues. First, the tongues given to everyone at the point of baptism in the Holy Spirit; and second, the gift of "different kinds of tongues" (1 Cor 12:10–11). After we have received the Holy Spirit, when we pray, we speak in tongues. It is both amazing and joyful when we receive the Holy Spirit and begin speaking in tongues.

But what does it mean to "speak in tongues"? This refers to the ability to speak by the movement of the Holy Spirit in a language that has not been learned. Usually, the person speaking in tongues does not understand what is being said. Speaking in tongues is a mysterious phenomenon. We cannot fully understand how our tongue moves and vibrates on its own.

There are two basic functions of speaking in tongues. One function is for the edification of others, but the primary function is self-edification. 1 Corinthians 14:4 says, "He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself." When we pray in tongues, we speak to God. Speaking in tongues also confirms that we have received the Holy Spirit.

Have you ever wondered why God chose speaking in tongues to be the physical manifestation of receiving the Holy Spirit? Speaking in tongues allows us to experience the power of the Holy Spirit. We cannot force our tongue to vibrate the same way it does when we speak in tongues through the Holy Spirit. In addition, the inexplicable joy we feel when we pray in the Spirit definitely cannot be reproduced through human efforts. God knows exactly what we need, and He wants us to let the Spirit intercede for us. When we speak in tongues, we can feel assured that we have God living inside us.

#### **In summary:**

- When a person speaks in tongues, the Holy Spirit is giving them utterance (Acts 2:4).
- Generally, no man understands a person who is speaking in tongues (1 Cor 14:2; Acts 2:13).
- Speaking in tongues edifies the speaker (1 Cor 14:4).

#### **B. The Gift of Interpretation of Tongues**

The secondary function of speaking in tongues is for the edification of others. When God intends to deliver a message in tongues through an inspired speaker, He will move someone who can understand the tongues to interpret the message to the listeners. This is the gift of interpretation of tongues (1 Cor 12:10). A person with this special gift can explain the meaning of the message given in tongues. This is a special gift from God that is for the "profit of all" (1 Cor 12:7), that is, for the edification of the church.

#### **C. The Value and Significance of Speaking in Tongues**

Sometimes we may wonder why we speak in tongues when we cannot understand it. Only on rare occasions will someone be able to interpret tongues through a revelation from God. However, when addressing the believers in Corinth, Paul wished that they “all spoke with tongues” (1 Cor 14:5). This tells us that the gift of speaking in tongues is something believers should seek. Paul even gives thanks to God that he speaks in tongues (1 Cor 14:18). Let us study the value and significance of speaking in tongues.

**1. To confirm that we are God’s children**

Speaking in tongues is the evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit. “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God” (Rom 8:15–16). Therefore, when we pray in tongues, we can be assured that we are God’s children.

**2. For our spiritual edification**

Just as our physical body needs to be kept strong and healthy, so does our spirituality. A Christian should have fellowship and communion with the Lord Jesus Christ on a daily basis. Paul writes, “He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself” (1 Cor 14:4). When we speak in tongues in our prayers, it will make the Spirit within us strong and stimulate our faith. This is important, because without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6).

There are times when we want to serve God (e.g., when we are called upon to meet a challenge, to respond to a need, or to pray for someone in distress or sickness), but we feel inadequate or weak in faith at that moment. It is then that the Holy Spirit is ready to strengthen our faith as we call on Him. The Holy Spirit will always encourage and support our faith when we ask for it.

**3. To intercede for us**

The Holy Spirit will intercede for us, especially when we are not walking in the Spirit and instead gratifying our sinful nature. Paul says, “[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” (Rom 8:26). Many times, even if we don’t have the words or strength to pray, the moment we kneel down to pray, the Holy Spirit will help us pray by interceding for us with “groanings which cannot be uttered.”

**4. To pray in God’s will**

During the quiet and peaceful times in our lives, we may not know what we should pray for. Other times, we run out of things to pray about, so we find it difficult to concentrate. But the Holy Spirit knows all things, and He is able to help us in those times. Paul wrote, “Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Rom 8:27). Praying in tongues gives us the assurance that the Holy Spirit is interceding for us according to God’s will. Jesus Christ taught us to pray for God’s will to “be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt 6:10). When we pray in tongues with the Holy Spirit, we pray for God’s will, and for His kingdom.

**5. To pray for one another and for the church**

If we seek to build up other members and the church, we need the Holy Spirit’s guidance to know how and what to pray for. Paul prayed for the church constantly, and he often asked believers to pray for him. God wants us to pray for one another and, through intercession, to bring the blessing and protection of the Lord Jesus Christ into the lives of others. “[If] one

member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it” (1 Cor 12:26). When we pray in tongues, we are unified in one body that is Jesus Christ.

**6. A sign for unbelievers**

- “Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers” (1 Cor 14:22).
- “And these signs will follow who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues” (Mk 16:17).

The Greek word for “sign,” *semeion*, is often used in the context of miracles and wonders. It is a particularly fitting word to use in connection with speaking in tongues because speaking in tongues testifies to unbelievers that a person has received the Holy Spirit, and that God abides in them (1 Jn 3:24).

We can see the testimonial power of speaking in tongues in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. The Jews there were drawn in great numbers to the disciples when they began speaking in tongues. At first, the listeners were amazed and perplexed but soon understood that the disciples had received the baptism of the Spirit. The spiritual tongues of the Spirit served as evidence that the prophecies concerning the Holy Spirit had been fulfilled (*Doctrine*, 223).<sup>1</sup> As a result, many believed, repented, and were baptized (Acts 2:5–7, 37–41).

*Check for Understanding*

---

**True or False**

1. **The Holy Spirit gives a person utterance when he speaks in tongues.** (True; Acts 2:4)
2. **Only highly spiritual people can understand a person who speaks in tongues.** (False—No man understands; 1 Cor 14:2)
3. **Speaking in tongues edifies the speaker.** (True; 1 Cor 14:4)
4. **When we pray in tongues, the Holy Spirit makes intercession for believers.** (True; Rom 8:26–27)

**Short Answer**

5. **What is the gift of the interpretation of the tongues?** The gift of being able to understand and interpret the message being spoken in tongues. This occurs when God intends to deliver a message in tongues through an inspired speaker.
6. **What is the significance of speaking in tongues?**
  - To confirm that we are God’s children
  - For our spiritual edification
  - To intercede for us
  - To pray in God’s will
  - To pray for one another and for the church
  - A sign for unbelievers

*Life Application*

---

<sup>1</sup> Shun Dao Hsieh, *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Taiwan: True Jesus Church, 2014), 223.

### **Rely on the Power of Prayer in the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is key in putting to death our fleshly desires and sinful nature. We are weak, so our spiritual life cannot be fruitful without the Holy Spirit. It is vital that we ask God to give us understanding and to lead us in the way we should go. Praying in the Holy Spirit will help us yield to His guidance and live according to the Spirit. But first, why is it so important that we strive for holiness?

A Christian's faith must be accompanied by action. If we say we are Christians, we need to pursue holiness because holiness is directly related to our salvation (Rom 6:12–14). Without holiness, we cannot meet God the day He returns (Heb 12:14). Our goal in our walk with God is to be controlled by the Holy Spirit, so that we do not act according to our flesh, but according to the Spirit (Gal 5:16). But if we want to live a sanctified life, we need to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit, especially when we feel inadequate or weak in our faith. We may feel like we cannot fight our temptations or trials on our own, but our God has not left us helpless.

God has given us His will in the Bible, and the Holy Spirit to help us follow it (Rom 8:26). The Holy Spirit gives us the strength to put to death our fleshly desires and sinful nature. This means prayer is the foundation of every Christian life. Our victory over sin is guaranteed when we rely on the Holy Spirit. But learning to rely on the Spirit through prayer is not an easy thing to do. How can we begin to rely on Him?

#### **1. Prepare our hearts**

If our heart is not ready or prepared for prayer, our prayer may not be fruitful. So, how do we ensure we have a fruitful prayer? Before we pray, we can find a passage in the Bible and spend some time meditating on it. Let's read Joshua 1:8. "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

The word of God is our most powerful weapon when fighting against lust, pride, and temptation. It helps us to act in accordance with God's will, has the power to change us, and gives us strength (Heb 4:12). But to understand it, we must ask Jesus to come into our heart as we read. This is not something we can do in a hurry.

Being focused on God's presence is a practiced discipline. But when we have the desire to focus on Him, His presence will fill us! Furthermore, when we have finished meditating on God's word, we are filled with His love, and the desire to want to be more like Him. By meditating on God's word, we can focus our minds on God. In this way, we can prepare our hearts for a fruitful prayer.

#### **2. Pray with a focus**

When we pray, it is vital that we pray with a focus. When we are discouraged or lose heart in prayer, we need to pray in the Spirit all the more, because the Holy Spirit intercedes for us "with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom 8:26). Let's go over two examples of different focuses, or goals, that we might have for our prayers.

First, take a moment to reflect on Matthew 12:36: "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment." Here, Jesus is teaching us that we need to make a commitment to watch what we say. As we meditate on this verse, we should search our hearts deeply and ask ourselves the following questions:

- Why is it important to turn from speaking idle or foolish words?
- Am I ready to set aside my idle words?

- Am I determined to ask the Holy Spirit to help me watch my words and speak only with truth and love?

A second focus we may have is to ask for God's cleansing, such as when David asked for God's forgiveness. Let's read Psalm 51:2: "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." When meditating on this verse, we must ask ourselves:

- Do I have a desire to confess, repent, and turn from sin?
- Have I made a commitment to shun evil and learn to do what is right?
- Am I able to identify the things around me that can easily corrupt my body and spirit?
- Do I have the strength of will to ask God to help me cut these from my life?
- Am I ready to submit to the Holy Spirit and put off my old self?

After spending some time meditating on a Bible verse, we now have a focus for our prayer. Our prayer can be more effective with a goal in mind, and we can submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit more easily. During such prayers, the Spirit will search our hearts and strengthen us according to the will of God.

Let's now put these steps into practice. Try picking two verses that you are going to meditate on during this week before you kneel down to pray. Share your verses with the rest of the class.

### *Memory Verse*

---

"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."  
(Romans 8:26)

### **Meaning**

1. The Holy Spirit is more than just evidence that we are the children of God. The Spirit also gives us spiritual strength. It is important that we pursue the strength that the Spirit offers us because only with His help are we able to overcome the temptations of this world and our own weaknesses that threaten to pull us away from God.
2. There are times when we have no idea what to pray for, or even how we should pray in certain situations. But even in times like these, we should still kneel down to pray because the Holy Spirit Himself will intercede for us on our behalf. He serves as the mediator between us and God, and speaks for us in a language that we cannot understand.

### *Conclusion*

---

Praying in tongues has many wonderful purposes. Although we may not understand what we are saying, God's Spirit is helping and edifying us when we pray in tongues. Let us remember Paul's encouragement to pray "always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Eph 6:18). By fully relying on the power of the Holy Spirit, we can put to death our sinful nature and live according to the Spirit.

Lesson 5 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. Why is it important that we pursue the fullness of the Holy Spirit in our prayers?  
*The Holy Spirit gives us strength to overcome temptation. He also intercedes for us as our mediator between God and man, even when we ourselves do not know what to pray for.*
2. What are the two basic functions of speaking in tongues? Provide a Bible verse for each.  
*For self-edification (1 Cor 14:4), and for the edification of the church (1 Cor 12:7).*
3. Name four ways speaking in tongues is valuable and significant.
  - a. *To confirm that we are God's children*
  - b. *For our spiritual edification*
  - c. *To intercede for us*
  - d. *To pray in God's will*
  - e. *To pray for one another and for the church*
  - f. *A sign to unbelievers*
4. Why is it so important that we pursue holiness and ask the Spirit to sanctify us?  
*Holiness is directly related to our salvation. Without holiness, we cannot meet God the day He returns. But if we want to live a sanctified life, we need to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit, especially when we feel inadequate or weak in our faith.*
5. What are two steps to having a fruitful prayer?  
*Prepare our hearts beforehand by meditating on God's word. Pray with a focus that is drawn from our meditation on the Bible.*
6. How will you live a life of holiness? What changes do you need to make in order to live this out?  
*Personal answers.*