

**FAITH
COMMUNITY
CHURCH**

WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

PART 1 - THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. The Holy Spirit is an integral but distinct Third Person of the Trinitarian Godhead.

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, and as such is co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father and Christ the Son. In simple terms, the Holy Spirit should be considered “God” and is worthy of our worship and praise. 2 Cor 3:17 refers to the Spirit as “the Lord”. The Holy Spirit possesses intellect (John 14:26), will (1 Cor 12:11) and emotion (Eph 4:30).

2. The Holy Spirit only came upon a selected few.

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit only came upon people like prophets, kings and priests. It resulted in the Holy Spirit coming upon the few who served the many. He came upon selected ones to fulfil a task or assignment, but He does not dwell in them apart from a select few leaders, such as King David, who cried out in:

- **Psalm 51** - *“Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me...”*

3. The Messianic Hope

The Old Testament Jewish hope was to see a Spirit-filled King ruling over Israel. That’s the concept of the kingdom of God. But this can never happen until we see Spirit-filled subjects. This came to pass on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out and a new era began.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

4. The Holy Spirit is at work all the way from the Old Testament to the New Testament and continues to work into the modern age.

The Holy Spirit has a role that is distinct from the Father and the Son. At the most basic level, the Holy Spirit can be described as the *executive member* of the Godhead or the most active agent of the Godhead. Throughout Scripture we see the Holy Spirit executing God’s will on earth. Whenever God desires something to be done on earth, it is usually the Holy Spirit that gets it

done. He can be described as the *most active agent* of the Godhead because it is not that the Father and the Son are not actively at work in the world. After all, Jesus' incarnation was a very active involvement in the world by the Son for a critical period of human history. However, we want to make the distinction that it is the Holy Spirit's distinct role to execute God's will on earth and therefore seems to be more actively involved in human life.

5. The Church is the Temple of the Holy Spirit

In the Old Testament, the presence of God resided in a *place*, the tabernacle/temple of God (Exodus 40:34-38; 2 Chronicles 7:1-3).

In the New Testament, we see two major shifts occur.

The first major shift occurred in the incarnation of Jesus. In Jesus was and is the fullness of God. Jesus was and is Immanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:23). In Jesus the temple moved from a *place* to a *person*. The presence of God no longer inhabited brick and stone but took on living flesh (cf. John 2:19).

The second major shift occurred when Jesus ascended to heaven and the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church on the Day of Pentecost. From that point onwards, the church became God's dwelling place, his living temple, on earth. The temple had shifted from a *place* to a *person* to a *people*. This new temple is the church, the body of Christ, which comprises both Jews and Gentiles who are filled with the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Christ) to do His will on earth. The new Body of Christ was filled with the Holy Spirit and anointed with power. The Great Commission of Jesus Christ is now propelled by the Great Compulsion of the Holy Spirit.

PART 2 - THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TODAY

There are many ways the Holy Spirit actively works in the world and in human life. These are some of the most important as revealed in Scripture:

a) Revelation (John 14:26, 15:26; 1 Cor 2:10-13; Eph 1:17-20)

The Holy Spirit bears witness to the Son, just as the Son reveals the Father. The Holy Spirit teaches us the truth of God's Word and reveals to us the will of God.

b) Regeneration (John 3:5-8; Romans 8:11; Titus 3:5)

The Holy Spirit is responsible for bringing new life to believers. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is the same Spirit that makes us new creations in Jesus (Romans 8:11; 1 Peter 2:9).

c) Conviction (John 16:7-8)

The Holy Spirit brings the conviction of the truth of the Gospel which leads to faith in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit convicts us in three key ways (not necessarily an exhaustive list):

- Conviction of sin: He convicts us of our unbelief in Jesus and our rejection of Him
- Conviction of righteousness: He convicts us of the righteousness of Christ which is proven by His resurrection from the dead
- Conviction of judgement: He convicts us of the judgement of Satan and the world, which stands with him. Everyone who aligns themselves with him also stands judged and condemned.

d) Empowerment (Acts 1:8; Numbers 11:17; Exodus 31:2-5)

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit seems to come upon or fill a person to grant them the ability to fulfil their God-given task. In Exodus 31:2-5, the Spirit empowers Bezalel with creativity and skill to build the tabernacle. In Numbers 11:17, the Spirit empowers the elders with the ability to lead and serve the people of Israel. In Acts 1:8, the Spirit empowers Christians with the ability to be witnesses of Jesus Christ. Therefore, one of the key roles of the Holy Spirit is the empowerment of Christians to fulfil their God-given task.

e) Sanctification (Gal 5:16-26)

The Holy Spirit guides believers to walk according to the will of God and empowers the believer to deny the flesh and sin.

f) Intercession (Rom 8:26)

According to Romans 8:26, the Holy Spirit intercedes to God on behalf of the believer. In context, “our weakness” seems to refer to the limitations we face as we wait for Jesus’ return. Therefore, the Spirit helps us express our deep desires and aching for Him to God.

Note that this is slightly different from Jesus’ intercession for the saints in Heb 7:25. Jesus’ intercession is by His death and resurrection. By His death, He is the perfect sacrifice for sins, and by His resurrection he stands as our eternal high priest who “advocates” for us before the Father (cf. 1 John 2:1).

g) Seals the Believer (Eph 1:13, 4:30)

The Holy Spirit is the undeniable marker of a regenerated believer. The Holy Spirit’s presence in our lives assures us of our inheritance in Christ.

PART 3 - THE ACTIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. REGENERATION

- **1 Corinthians 12: 13** - *“For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”*

Here, it is referring to the work of the Holy Spirit in REGENERATION.

- The disciples experienced this in **John 20: 22** - *“And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”*

At the point of our conversion, we are made to drink of the Spirit by our confession and repentance (human action) and we were baptised by the Spirit into the Body of Christ (divine action).

This is a personal Spirit regeneration that all believers experience.

2. FILLING OF THE SPIRIT

- **Acts 2: 1 –4** - *“When the day of Pentecost came...All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them...”*

This is the baptism or infilling of the Holy Spirit that empowers us for divine service. There are two views on what constitutes the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which are outlined in Appendix A.

In brief, regardless of whether you call it “baptism of the Spirit” or “infilling of the Spirit” we are referring to the same thing – the filling of the Spirit for the purpose of empowerment.

We want to affirm 4 key elements of salvation and sanctification:

1. Faith in Christ
2. Repentance of sins
3. Water baptism
4. Being filled with the Holy Spirit

Regardless of one’s view, we want to affirm that all four elements are essential for a believer’s life and are necessary for living a life of power and obedience to Christ.

In Eph 5:18, we are commanded to “be filled with the Spirit”. Unlike baptism, which is a one-time occurrence (Eph 4:5), filling is something that can happen over and over again. The word filled (*pleroo*) emphasises a continuous action and is a command, it literally means to keep on being filled.

As mentioned earlier, in the Old Testament, the Spirit seems to fill people to grant them abilities to fulfil a specific purpose (Exo 31:3-5, Deut 34:9, Mic 3:8). In the New Testament however, the filling of the Spirit propels believers to become more Christlike and empowers them to fulfill His mission (Acts 1:8).

Many Christians today may be saved (regenerated) but are still relying on their own strength to live the Christian life. To be filled with the Spirit means that we live a directed life that is empowered by the Holy Spirit, not ourselves. The Holy Spirit is the one who enables us to serve Christ and produces spiritual fruit in and through us (Gal 5:16-25).

It is also important to note that while the filling of the Spirit can be observed through tangible sensations or spiritual manifestation (i.e. tongues), it is not solely validated by these measures. We have confidence that we can be filled by the Spirit because God commanded it in his Word (Eph 5:18) and He has promised to answer anything we ask that is in accordance with His will (1 John 5:14-15). Therefore, by faith, we ask Him to fill us with the Holy Spirit and trust that God will answer. What is important for a believer is not whether we experience these manifestations, but whether we’re being yielded to the Spirit and living in obedience to Him.

3. THE DISTRIBUTION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

According to 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, the Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts among believers for the edification of the church, the body of Christ.

We believe that the Holy Spirit is still active in the post-apostolic age through the bestowal of spiritual gifts for the edification of the church and preaching of the gospel.

In this regard, we do not hold to the cessation of spiritual gifts in the post-apostolic age. We do not understand "perfection" as it appears in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 as referring to the full canon of Scripture. Those who hold to this interpretation assert that now that the full canon of Scripture, the Bible, has been formed, there is no longer a need for the gifts of tongues, prophecy, and other spiritual and supernatural gifts. An alternate interpretation, which is the position held by FCC, is that the word "perfection" refers to the second coming of Christ. From this perspective, the distribution and activation of spiritual and supernatural gifts will only cease when Christ returns and makes all things new.

1 Corinthians 13: 8 – 10 – *"Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears."*

Some of the spiritual gifts are outlined in the following passages:

- a. Romans 12:6-8
- b. 1 Corinthians 12:7-11
- c. Ephesians 4:11-13

We do not believe these lists are exhaustive but rather, are indicative of the numerous ways the Spirit continues to work through believers for the mutual edification of the church.

As such, at FCC we encourage all believers to seek and ask for the spiritual gifts. By faith, we must desire for God to use anyone of us to operate in any of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as the situation demands. In particular, we should be more open to allowing God to use us in supernatural ways that we perhaps aren't used to for the sake of others in the Body. For, if we believe that God still uses people in supernatural ways to edify His Church, then as believers we should eagerly desire to be used by God to bless and edify others in love by the supernatural empowering of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 1: 7 – *"Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed."*

On this note, we do not believe in the emphasis of one gift above others. This is not the point of 1 Corinthians 14. The apostle is not seeking to rank the spiritual gifts, rather, he is teaching an important principle - the best gift is the one that is most needed in that situation.

For example: If a person is sick – which gift do you hope to see manifested? Of course, the gift of healing! It is no point if someone comes and brings a message in tongues or even a prophecy!

This is the fundamental principle at the heart of 1 Corinthians 14. Believers should not desire the most spectacular gifts but instead desire the gift that will best edify other believers in that situation.

Therefore, we encourage all believers, by faith, to desire for God to use them to operate in any of the gifts of the Holy Spirit as the situation demands. In particular, we should be more open to allowing God to use us in supernatural ways that we perhaps aren't used to for the sake of others in the Body. For, if we believe that God still uses people in supernatural ways to edify His Church, then as believers we should eagerly desire to be used by God to bless and edify others in love by the supernatural empowering of the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION

FCC is an independent charismatic church that is fully committed to intentional disciple-making. A key part of this is through the filling of the Holy Spirit and the exercise of spiritual gifts.

We hold tenaciously to the Word of the Living God. We seek to be fiercely biblical in all our beliefs and behaviour.

We believe that a key part of follow Christ and living in obedience to His will is to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps us follow Christ faithfully and empowers us to live according to His will. He sanctifies us to live holy lives, bear witness for Christ to preach the gospel, and exercise the spiritual gifts for the edification of the church.

EXCURSUS: THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

There are two primary views concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

One view is that there are two baptisms of the Holy Spirit that every believer should experience; the first baptism is for salvation and regeneration, and the second is for the purpose of empowerment.

The second view is that there is one baptism in the Holy Spirit at the point of salvation for the purpose of regeneration and empowerment. The ongoing empowerment of the Holy Spirit may come in subsequent and ongoing infillings of the Spirit, but according to this view, these would not be considered “baptisms” in the strict sense of the word.

There are 3 groups of texts we need to deal with to understand the theological landscape of this topic:

- a. Luke 3:16 (Acts 1:4-5 reiterates promise in gospel accounts)
- b. 1 Cor 12:13
- c. Acts 2, Acts 8, Acts 10, Acts 19

A. Luke 3:16c, “He [Messiah] will baptize you **with** the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

It is commonly understood that Jesus Christ is the baptizer and the element believers are being baptized into is the Holy Spirit. The contention lies in whether Luke 3:16 and 1 Cor. 12:13 refer to different baptisms.

Note: “with” is the Greek word **ἐν**. This is the same word used in 1 Cor 12:13.

B. 1 Cor 12:13, “For we were all baptized **ἐν (by, in, with)** one Spirit ...”

There are two primary interpretations of this passage that depend on the interpretation of the word *ἐν* (usually translated as by, with, in):

Interpretation #1: This should be translated as "by," (NIV) which indicates that the baptizer is the Holy Spirit and the element that believers are being baptized into is the church. This baptism is distinct from the baptism in Luke 3:16 where Jesus is the baptizer. The baptism referred to in Luke 3:16 is for empowerment, whereas the baptism referred to in 1 Cor. 12:13 is for regeneration.

Scripture	Who is Being Baptised?	Who is the Baptiser?	Into What Are We Baptised?
1 Corinthians 12:3	We All Are	Holy Spirit	Body of Christ, the Church
Luke 3:16	You Are	Jesus Christ	Holy Spirit

Interpretation #2: This should be translated as "in," (ESV) which indicates that the element is the Holy Spirit and the result is membership in the Body. The baptizer, therefore, is still Christ, as indicated in Luke 3:16. With this interpretation, Luke 3:16 and 1 Cor 12:13 refer to the exact same baptism.

Scripture	Who is Being Baptised?	Who is the Baptiser?	Into What Are We Baptised?
1 Corinthians 12:3	We All Are	Jesus Christ	Holy Spirit
Luke 3:16	You Are	Jesus Christ	Holy Spirit

C. Acts 2, Acts 8, Acts 10, Acts 19

In each instance, the Holy Spirit falls upon believers in a different way.

Notably, an argument can be made that in each case there was a time gap between the believer's regeneration and "Spirit baptism".

There are 2 primary ways this time gap is reconciled by believers:

Option 1: the accounts in Acts are **a pattern for all New Testament believers**

This time gap shows that there are two baptisms believers should seek for and should experience. Believers who hold to this interpretation also interpret Luke 3:16 and 1 Cor. 12:13 as referring to two distinct baptisms of the Holy Spirit. As such, the gospels, Acts, and epistles support and confirm the pattern of two Spirit baptisms that is available for all believers.

Option 2: the accounts in Acts are **unique to the early church**

The time gap is due to the unique purpose of the Holy Spirit at this point in church history in birthing the church. In each instance, there is a specific and unique reason for the time gap between water baptism and Spirit baptism. This time gap is not the normative experience for New Testament believers today. Subsequent encounters with the Holy Spirit are seen as **infillings** with the Holy Spirit, which are not the same as a **baptism** in the Holy Spirit.

Briefly:

- i. Acts 2 – Holy Spirit was birthing the church and witnessing to the Jews. Validating the authority of the apostles as His messengers and witnesses of the gospel.
- ii. Acts 8 – Holy Spirit was including the Samaritans into the Church. This is why Peter and John had to physically go down and lay hands on the Samaritan believers. This was a sign of their acceptance by the apostles and the Holy Spirit into the Church.
- iii. Acts 10 – Holy Spirit was including the Gentiles into the Church. The Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles to demonstrate their inclusion into the Church.
- iv. Acts 19 – the Holy Spirit was given to the Ephesian Christians after their baptism (John's baptism) to distinguish between John's baptism and Jesus' baptism.

CONCLUSION

We acknowledge there are genuine believers in the Church who hold to either view who have had genuine encounters with the Holy Spirit. Regardless of where you land on this issue, we do not want to discount other people's genuine encounters with the Holy Spirit that have enriched their faith and witness. Rather, we want to affirm the result of being baptised and filled with the Holy Spirit that brings new life and greater empowerment to live this new life in obedience to Christ. Regardless of whether one refers to the filling of the Spirit as a "baptism" or "infilling," what is important is the outcome which should be a greater submission to the Lord, marked by holiness and obedience, which does not preclude the manifestation of supernatural gifts.

Excursus: The Gift of Tongues

This section seeks to answer four questions on the gift of tongues:

- a. What is the gift of tongues?
- b. Is the gift of tongues for everyone?
- c. What are the spiritual benefits of the gift of tongues, if any?
- d. How should the gift of tongues be exercised in our corporate gatherings?

A. WHAT IS THE GIFT OF TONGUES?

The Greek word for “tongues” is *glossa*, which can be translated as “language” or a reference to the physical tongue. There is some contention over whether tongues primarily manifest as a human language, a heavenly language, or as either depending on the individual and circumstance.

Brief Biblical Overview on the Nature of Tongues

There are a few instances where the gift of tongues was given and exercised.

a) Acts 2:4-8

The Day of Pentecost is the first occurrence of the gift of tongues being given to and exercised by the church. On this occasion, the type of tongues that were witnessed are described as *diakletos*, which usually refer to known languages or dialects. Therefore, the kind of tongue that was being exercised on this occasion was most likely foreign human languages. The other occurrences of tongues in the book of Acts recorded in Acts 10:46 and Acts 19:6 do not describe the kind of tongue being manifested. As such it is unclear whether the kind of tongue was in the form of human or angelic utterance.

b) 1 Corinthians 12-14

There are two details in reference to tongues that may imply that the kind of tongues being exercised was a heavenly language.

i) 1 Corinthians 13:1

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

Some have taken Paul’s mention of angelic tongues to validate the manifestation of tongues as a heavenly language that is incomprehensible to humans.

While possible, this verse alone is not adequate evidence for this assertion. Given the context of Paul’s speech, he appears to be using hyperbolic language to demonstrate a

point. Therefore, Paul could simply be using speaking in a heavenly language as an example of extreme spirituality.

ii) 1 Corinthians 14

1 Corinthians 14:5 - *I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified.*

Throughout 1 Corinthians 14, Paul prohibits the use of tongues in the corporate worship gathering unless there is an interpretation of tongues. This begs the question – is there a difference between the interpretation of tongues and the translation of tongues?

In Acts 2, the crowd who heard the tongues being spoken required no interpretation. This was because the tongues spoken were most likely known human languages or dialects. The situation appears to be different in the Corinthian context, since Paul assumes that the tongues being spoken are incomprehensible to human ears and only truly understandable by God (1 Corinthians 14:2), and therefore requires interpretation. There is some strength to this argument. After all, if it were a foreign human language, he would call for a translator, not an interpreter. Therefore, there exists the possibility that the kind of tongues being exercised in this context may have been a heavenly language, in contrast to a known human language.

There then exists the possibility that both kinds of tongues – foreign human language and heavenly language – may manifest within the church. FCC does not insist on one form over the other but leaves the possibility for both to be exercised by the Spirit as He wills.

B. IS THE GIFT OF TONGUES FOR EVERYONE?

This question of course echoes that of the Apostle Paul in:

- **1 Corinthians 12: 29 – 30** – *“Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?”*

These are rhetorical questions to which the answer is “No.”

However, if we take this as proof text that tongues is not for all then we are ignoring the balance needed in the teaching of Paul in **1 Corinthians 14: 5** – *“I would like every one of you to speak in tongues...”*

The word “*wish*” here is the strong Greek word “*thelo*” which means “*to desire, to will, to intend.*”

Therefore, while the context of 1 Corinthians 14 is to correct the overemphasis on the gift of tongues, we should not lean to the other extreme and underemphasise the gift of tongues. The Apostle Paul clearly sees tongues as personally beneficial for the believer despite its potential misuse in public worship.

It is important to realize the overall thrust of **1 Corinthians 12 – 14**:

- **Chapter 12** – The Gifts of the Spirit is the subject and Paul emphasizes that we can each be used in different ways as we eagerly desire to be used.

- **Chapter 13** – The Spirit of the Gifts is the theme and how all the gifts must be exercised in the spirit of love.
- **Chapter 14** – The Language of the Spirit is the issue and Paul calls for order in the exercising of the gifts of tongues and prophecy. And he differentiates between the public and the private use of tongues.

In public usage of tongues to bring a message from God to the Body of Christ, it needs to be interpreted so that the Body can understand.

But if it is a private usage for prayer or praise before God, it is for the purpose of personal edification and therefore need not be interpreted because God understands what we are saying.

Therefore, we believe that the gift of tongues is a God-given provision and resource for our personal praise, prayer, worship and intercession. We encourage believers to desire it and ask for it, but to never demand it nor demand that other believers have it. As Paul asserts in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, the Spirit distributes His gifts according to His will for the edification of the church.

C. WHAT ARE THE SPIRITUAL BENEFITS OF THE GIFT OF TONGUES, IF ANY?

While we do not hold an elitist view of those who speak in tongues and do not believe that if a believer does not exercise this gift their spiritual walk is somehow hindered, but we wholeheartedly believe that the gift of tongues, like any of the gifts of the Spirit, is beneficial and good to have. Therefore, it is good if you have it and it is good for you to desire it.

I. It spiritually strengthens you

- **1 Corinthians 14: 4** – *“He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself...”*

The word “edify” means “build up”. So, those who speak in tongues receive spiritual strengthen and edification.

- **Jude 20** – *“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit...”*
- **Romans 8:26-27** - *²⁶In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. ²⁷And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.*

While “praying in the Holy Spirit” does not exclusively mean to pray in tongues, it is one of the ways the Spirit can use to bring edification to the believer. Similarly, the intercession of the Spirit that is mentioned in Romans 8 is not exclusively in the form of tongues. However, we recognise that the gift of tongues can be a tool that the Spirit uses to minister, strengthen and intercede for the believer.

II. It enriches your prayer life

- **Romans 8: 26 – 28** – *“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.”*

One of the keys to effective prayer is the power of the Holy Spirit. The gift of tongues can be a tremendous help in this area.

The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit wants to help us in our weakness. The word *“help”* is the Greek word *“synatillambanomai”*. It means *“to lay hold along with”* or *“to strive to obtain with others”*, *“to take hold with another”* or *“to come to the aid of”* or *“join in helping”*

In other words, the Holy Spirit wants to join us in helping to take hold of or obtain something that we are praying for. The word *“weakness”* is the Greek word *“astheneia”* meaning *“state of weakness”* or *“want of strength in the soul”*.

One of the ways that the Holy Spirit helps a believer is in their prayer life by interceding for them in ways that they perhaps struggle to express. In this regard, the gift of tongues is one of the ways the Holy Spirit can intercede for a believer by helping them express their needs to God through a spiritual language.

There are cases where, as a believer prays in tongues, Scriptures come to mind that bring encouragement, directions on what to do in a situation are revealed, and breakthrough is experienced in an area of need. Again, the gift of tongues is not the only way the Holy Spirit ministers and enriches a believer’s prayer life, but it is one of the powerful tools that can use to bless the believer.

In light of such wonderful benefits, we encourage believers to desire and ask the Lord for this gift.

D. HOW SHOULD THE GIFT OF TONGUES BE EXERCISED IN OUR COMMUNAL GATHERINGS?

Paul’s instructions in 1 Corinthians 14 are addressed primarily to the communal gathering, and so it is necessary for FCC to clarify how the gift seems to operate when believers are assembled together, whether in a worship service or a prayer meeting.

A close reading of 1 Corinthians 14 suggests that Paul’s restrictions may be directed specifically at the individual who takes the floor to broadcast an uninterpreted tongue to the whole room, rather than at the believer who quietly prays or worships in tongues as a private expression of devotion while remaining part of the gathered church. When Paul instructs that the person speaking in a tongue without an interpreter present should *“keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God”* (1 Cor 14:28), this could possibly be interpreted not as banishing tongues from the gathering altogether, but as relocating the uninterpreted tongue from public address to private devotion within the assembly.

This distinction seems to find some support in 1 Corinthians 14:19, where Paul states that he would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct the church than ten thousand words in a tongue. The context appears to be instruction (*katēcheō*) — Paul seems to have in view someone addressing or teaching the gathered body, where an uninterpreted tongue cannot build up the listener. A similar concern may underlie verses 16–17: an outsider cannot say *“Amen”* to a prayer they cannot understand, since agreement would seem to require comprehension. Read together, both texts could be understood as concerning the believer who speaks *to* the room, rather than the believer who speaks *within* the room as part of their own worship.

On this basis, FCC tentatively distinguishes between two kinds of expression in our gatherings:

Unintelligible public address is not permitted. No individual — whether leader or congregant — should take the floor or the microphone to address the whole congregation in an uninterpreted language or tongue. This reflects Paul's clear concern for order: "God is not a God of disorder but of peace" (1 Cor 14:33).

Personal devotion within the gathering is permitted and welcomed. Where a leader gives clear, intelligible instruction inviting the congregation into a time of prayer or worship, individual believers — including the leader — are free to pray or worship in tongues as a private expression to God, even while physically present in a communal setting. This appears consistent with Paul's own language in verse 28, where the believer speaks "to himself and to God," rather than to the room.

In this way, FCC seeks to hold together both halves of Paul's instruction in 1 Corinthians 14: we do not forbid speaking in tongues (1 Cor 14:39), while upholding the need for intelligibility whenever an individual addresses the whole congregation. On this understanding, the gift remains available for personal devotion within our gatherings, exercised in a manner that protects the edification, order, and unity of the whole church body.