

## Are Members Allowed to Speak in Tongues?

**Question:** Many people in our fellowship have visited other churches. Some have spoken in tongues. Are members allowed to speak in tongues?

**Answer:** Yes. Speaking in tongues is a New Testament practice, described as a gift of the Holy Spirit. Members may worship as the Spirit leads them. However, they should keep in mind that the Spirit does not lead to confusion, nor to division. Speaking in tongues should not be done in a situation in which others will be offended, frightened or made uncomfortable, such as in a regular worship service.

Spiritual gifts, including tongues, must always be used as God intends — to lead a person to growth in godly living, to edify the body of Christ, or to otherwise build the kingdom. As soon as a person focuses on the gift instead of the intended result of the gift, they are misusing it. Gifts are not for goosebumps or "good feelings." They are given by God for a purpose — to edify the body and produce spiritual growth. They are not an end in themselves.

We are created to bring glory to God. Gifts are given to help us do that — never to bring glory or attention to ourselves. The more unusual gifts are not a sign that we are more spiritual than others. In some cases, they may even be given because we are dull of hearing, and God uses the gift as an extraordinary method of trying to get our attention. So, if a person has a particular gift, he or she should enjoy it, be thankful for it, and use it to edify — not to hurt or tear down or make others feel inferior.

**Question:** GCI does not allow tongues speaking in its worship services. Doesn't this contradict [1 Cor. 14:39](#), which says that we should not forbid tongues speaking?

**Answer:** We do not forbid tongues speaking. We forbid it only during worship services. Members are welcome to speak in tongues as a private prayer language or in small groups composed of people who know that tongues-speaking is allowed in that particular small group.

We believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, including miraculous gifts such as healing. But we do not believe that every Christian should have the same gift. We do not believe that all Christians ought to seek the gift of tongues.

We welcome tongues-speakers into our fellowship, as long as they do not use their gift in a contentious or offensive way. Paul's message in [1 Cor. 14](#), summarized in verse 40, emphasizes order in the worship service, each activity at an appropriate time. In our tradition, we do not use the worship services for any of the miraculous gifts. There are other times when such gifts are more appropriate.

**Comment:** Some Pentecostal churches have slaying in the Spirit, holy laughter, crying, moaning and barking. Haven't these practices (with the possible exception of tongues) been denounced by many evangelicals as unbiblical?

**Response:** Most charismatic churches believe in and practice the gift of tongues. However, they are not all alike. The degree of pentecostalism varies from congregation to congregation. Some Pentecostal pastors do not accept practices such as being slain in the Spirit, holy laughter, etc. Although these "manifestations" happen in some Pentecostal churches, their denominational headquarters do not also encourage or emphasize them. Simply because a minority of members in a denomination are teaching or practicing something, it doesn't mean that every church in that denomination is in favor of it.

The Four Square Gospel church would generally be regarded as a "moderate" pentecostal group — not affiliated with the Toronto blessing or the Pensacola revival. Four Square has an orthodox statement of faith. Unlike well-known word of faith teachers like Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland and Benny Hinn, Four Square does not teach that we are little gods, that Christ had to go to hell to make atonement for our sins, etc.

We do not condemn the gift of tongues, but we do not allow it in our worship services. If a member has that gift, we would see it primarily as a "prayer language." We do not foresee any place in our worship services for manifestations such as holy laughter, barking or being slain in the Spirit.