



Prophecy and Tongues Defined

Working Toward “Pleromic Maturity”

David Niquette, First Christian Church, June 2002

Gift of Prophecy (New Testament): The manifestation of the Spirit prompting a person to sense the heart of God. It is offering a timely word from God measured by the timeless Word of God. It is “in part” (1 Corinthians 13:9) and subject to testing by Scripture and by other gifted believers. It enables believers share Jesus’ heart for people today. It may come from the Word of God quickened by the Spirit of God, or it may come as a Spiritual prompting which is supported by Word of God.

Gift of Tongues: The manifestation of the Spirit enabling a believer to sense the presence of God. It is Spirit-prompted prayer to God in a meaningful language not previously learned, the content unknown to the speaker.

It is a sign (v. 22) to unbelievers of judgment, and a sign to believers of God’s presence. It gains the attention of the assembly to expect divine, holy business. It can signify the supernatural due of heaven resting on an assembly, a miraculous sign of the manifest presence of God, prompting everyone to pay attention and listen to the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ.

But it has greatest value in private devotion and intercession. At Pentecost, the many languages spoken in the temple were a “sign” of the global dimension of God’s plan of salvation. God is still moving internationally with the Gospel. Praying in the Spirit, whether by tongues or unutterable groaning (Cf. Rom. 8:26-27), allows God resident within (Holy Spirit) to intercede to God in heaven (God the Father) in accord with the divine will.

Dimensions of a “Timely Word” from God

1. Pictorial	-----	<i>Nature</i>	-----	Conceptual
2. Partial	-----	<i>Content</i>	-----	Complete
3. Present	-----	<i>Time Reference</i>	-----	Coming
4. Private	-----	<i>Disclosure</i>	-----	Communicated
5. Preliminary	-----	<i>Certitude</i>	-----	Confirmed
6. Process	-----	<i>Reception Over Time</i>	-----	Conclusion
7. Personal	-----	<i>Target Audience</i>	-----	Corporate

Testing Questions:

Before I act on a prompting, impression, leading, or burden, I must ask . . .

1. Can I describe accurately what I “saw,” or is it a principle, idea, question, direction, or prayer target?
2. How complete and clear is this word? Is it in harmony with Scripture? Is it clarified by Scripture?
3. Is this word for now or does it cast light on the path ahead?
4. Am I released by God and spiritual leaders to share it at this time? Do I understand God’s timing?
5. Have I waited on God to confirm it from His Word and other valid means?
6. Do I need to process this impression with other believers to help us all get the whole picture?
7. Is this word for me, or for others? What am I to do with this prompting? Pray it? Say it? Obey it?

Prophecy and Tongues in 1 Corinthians 12-14

Practical Spirituality Series, Pastor David Niquette, First Christian Church, June 2002

General Statements about both Prophecy and Tongues:

1. All gifts are manifestations of the Spirit; we must not separate the gift from the Giver. 12:7
2. God sovereignly and wisely distributes the variety of gifting, ministries and effectiveness. 12:4-6, 11
3. All Christian believers share a common partnership with the Spirit, regardless of gifting. 12:13
4. The outpouring of the Spirit shouldn't divide Christ's church, but rather, it should unite us. 12:25
5. Neither prophecy, tongues nor any other gift is given to all believers. We need each other. 12:28-29
6. Neither tongues, prophecy nor any other gift is anything if not exercised in love. 13:1-2
7. Neither tongues, prophecy nor any other gift will be needed when we see Jesus face to face. 13:8
8. Spiritual gifts are tools, not toys. We must grow to handle the anointing in a mature way. 13:11; 14:20
9. The fruit of the Spirit is the indispensable context for the gifts of the Spirit. 13:13-14:1a
10. "Practical spirituality" is maturing so that all things edify, and are done properly and in order. 14:26, 40

Biblical Facts Related to Prophecy:

1. Believers should desire all spiritual gifts to be evident, but especially prophecy. 14:1, 5
2. Prophecy is offering a timely word from God directed to God's people. It is not directed to God. 14:3
3. Prophecy results in edification, exhortation and consolation; it is a sign to believers. 14:3-4, 22
4. Prophecy in church is, therefore, a greater value than tongues (unless interpreted). 14:5, 24-25
5. Yet prophecy as Paul describes it in the New Testament is "in part," a dim mirrored reflection. 13:9
6. Practically, after several have prophesied, others must test them (e.g., by the Word of God). 14:29
7. Prophesying may involve many people, with courtesy and humility maintaining unity. 14:30-31
8. All who are prompted may share, weaving the "partial" together into a clearer, beneficial truth. 14:31
9. However, those with a prophetic gift are responsible to submit to God and to other prophets. 14:32
10. When prophecy is handled in loving maturity, peace will be the signature of God on His church. 14:33

Biblical Facts Related to Tongues:

1. Tongues are a prayer directed to God. It is not a primary communication tool to the church. 14:2
2. Tongues directly benefit the one who exercises it, but it only indirectly benefits the church. 14:4-5a
3. Tongues do not profit the church like other speaking gifts unless it is interpreted. 14:5-6
4. Let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. 14:13 *Do so for the following reasons:*
 - Tongues are prayer in one's spirit, but do not communicate directly to one's mind. 14:14
 - It is best to pray in tongues privately, but to pray publicly with understandable words. 14:15
 - This courtesy allows others to agree with your prayer and be built up in Christ. 14:16-17
 - Tongues are a valuable prayer tool, yet "in church" five understandable words are better. 14:18-19
5. A mature view of biblical tongues requires accepting their purpose as a "sign" to unbelievers. 14:20-22
6. But overuse of tongues in church frustrates their sign purpose, causing negative reactions. 14: 23
7. Practically, when tongues are appropriate, only two or three at the most may speak in turn. 14:27
8. Tongues should not be spoken out in a public gathering if there is not an interpretation. 14:27-28
9. Praying in tongues is valuable even if it is spoken privately, silently in one's heart to God. 14:28
10. Since the content of tongues is prayer and praise, anticipate the interpretation to be the same. 14:16-17

Caveat: Paul speaks here of the genuine gifts of the Spirit. Prophecy and tongues were abused then, as now. Here Paul cautions us in the misuse of tongues. Prophecy must also be understood as to its dangers. Prophecy abuses must be understood in light of other New Testament passages like 2 Peter 1:16-2:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22, etc.