

Small Group Study

Prayer Language

From the sermon series, "Living a Christ-Centered Life"



Icebreakers

Use the questions below to help people open up and to focus your meeting. It is very helpful to go around in a circle with the leader going first. (Remember if you have new members or guests you should take time to introduce everyone.)

1. What was the highlight of this past week for you?

2. What foreign language(s) have you studied? Which would you like to learn?

3. What were some of your favorite expressions to say as a kid? What are some of your favorite expressions to say now?



Scriptures

Have volunteers read the following scriptures:

Acts 2:1-4, 1 Corinthians 14:1-4

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS A PRAYER LANGUAGE?

- I. Prayer language (or speaking in tongues) is speech, inspired by the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:4; 1 Corinthians 14:14).
 - A. It is speech not formed by the speaker in the usual manner of learned speech.
 - B. It is not ecstatic, emotional, uncontrolled speech.
 - C. It may be in the language of men or angels (1 Corinthians 13:1).

- II. There is a two fold dimension to this prayer language:
 - A. The public ministry of tongues (gift of tongues)
 - B. The private prayer language of a Spirit-filled believer.

PRAYER LANGUAGE IS BIBLICAL.

- I. Jesus first mentioned speaking in tongues in Mark 16:17, calling it a “sign.”
 - A. Paul called tongues a “sign” in 1 Corinthians 14:22.
- II. Paul included speaking in tongues as a manifestation gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:10)
 - A. He gave extensive teaching about speaking in tongues in public worship in 1 Corinthians 14.
 - B. Here are some of the things he said about speaking in tongues:
 - 1. Do not forbid speaking in tongues. (1 Corinthians 14:27)
 - 2. I thank God I speak in tongues. (1 Corinthians 14:18)
 - 3. I wish you all spoke in tongues. (1 Corinthians 14:5)

PRAYER LANGUAGE IS BENEFICIAL.

- I. Prayer language (speaking in tongues) takes believers beyond mere intellectual Christianity (1 Corinthians 14:14).
 - A. Our faith is both rational (having an intellectual quality that can be rationally discerned by human reason) and supernatural (having a spiritual quality that is beyond the comprehension of human reason.)
- II. Prayer language builds up and strengthens the believer (1 Corinthians 14:4, 21)
- III. Prayer language is a Spirit-anointed, Spirit-directed means of communication with God (1 Corinthians 14:2, 14, 17; Romans 8:26-27).
 - A. Through the aid of the Holy Spirit, I can pray and worship with an ability greater than my own and with a freedom beyond my limitations of understanding and vocabulary.

DYNAMICS OF PRAYER LANGUAGE

- I. The primary focus is not on prayer language, but on a deepening experience with Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit.
- II. Being filled with Holy Spirit is the core issue. Having a prayer language is a blessing of this experience not the essence of the experience.
 - A. There must be a thirst (John 7:37).
 - B. We should ask (Luke 11:13).
 - C. We must believe (John 7:37).
 - D. We must surrender and yield ourselves, including our voice, to God (James 3:5-8)
- III. Having a prayer language is a divine/human cooperation.
- IV. The Holy Spirit provides the language.
- V. We provide the voice.

THE TWO MANIFESTATIONS OF PRAYER LANGUAGE

- I. Without an understanding that there are two manifestations of prayer languages in the Bible, some of the Scriptural teaching about this seems confusing and contradictory.

- A. 1 Corinthians 12:30, Does everyone have the gift of healing? Of course not. Does God give all of us the ability to speak in unknown languages? Can everyone interpret unknown languages? No! (NLT)
- B. 1 Corinthians 14:5, I would like every one of you to speak in tongues. (NIV)
- II. Tongues as a private, prayer language (devotional tongues)
 - A. This is when speaking in tongues is used in one's private communication with God.
 - B. There is no need for an interpretation since the believer is speaking to God, not to man (1 Corinthians 14:2).
 - C. When a person prays in the Spirit, his he is communicating with God on a spiritual level, not an intellectual level (1 Corinthians 14:14).
 - D. Praying in the Spirit are for the benefit of the speaker and have little benefit for public ministry. (1 Corinthians 14:4, 6, 9, 16, 17, 19, 28).
- III. The public ministry of speaking in tongues (the gift of tongues)
 - A. This is one of the nine gifts of the Spirit mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8-12.
 - B. The public ministry of speaking in tongues is always accompanied by its sister gift, the gift of interpretation (1 Corinthians 14:28).
 - C. Speaking in tongues with interpretation has the same edification value for the church as does the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:5).

BIBLICAL GUIDELINES FOR PROPHETIC UTTERANCES IN PUBLIC WORSHIP

- I. The Church at Corinth had a real problem with this.
 - A. They were making spiritual manifestations a mark of maturity (1 Corinthians 12:31).
 - B. Their worship services were carnal and chaotic displays of exaggerated expressions of prophetic utterances.
- II. The key principle Paul outlines is that everything be done in an orderly and appropriate way (1 Corinthians 14:40).
 - A. Sensitivity to unbelievers who are present was important (1 Corinthians 14:22-24).
- III. Prayer language is discouraged by Paul when a person is speaking to the church for instruction or for the church in prayer (1 Corinthians 14:6, 15-19).
- IV. The public ministry of tongues is accompanied by the gift of interpretation (1 Corinthians 14:13, 27).
 - A. Without an interpretation, the speaker is to cease to speak publicly (1 Corinthians 14:28).
 - B. There should be an order and limitation on the public manifestation of tongues in worship (1 Corinthians 14:27).
 - C. The same guidelines apply to the gift of prophecy in worship (1 Corinthians 14:30-31).
 - D. All prophetic utterances must be carefully discerned (1 Corinthians 14:29).
- V. These guidelines are only possible because believers have control over their manner of speaking
 - A. 1 Corinthians 14:32, *Remember that people who prophesy are in control of their spirit and can wait their turn.* (NLT)

QUESTIONS

1. Of all the spiritual gifts mentioned in the Bible, why do people seem to have the most problems with speaking in tongues (prayer language)?
2. Does a person have to have a prayer language in order to be filled with the Spirit?
3. If you have spoken in tongues, share with the group how this occurred and what it was like the first time.
4. Do you think a person can “speak in tongues” any time they want to? Why or why not?
5. How can a church offer a worship service that is open to the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit and at the same time be sensitive to unbelievers or other Christians who do not understand such things?
6. How should spiritual manifestations or prophetic utterances be judged?
7. If you have ever given or have seen given a prophetic utterance in church, share with the group how it happened and what you experienced.

God bless,

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