

If it's from God, it's good. If it's good, I want it!

(Overcoming barriers to experiencing the BOHS – for all believers for all time)

I hope to connect with 3 categories of people this morning:

1. Those who are new to the teaching of the BOHS and learning, interested, and pursuing.
2. Those who have been taught this before, but have never spoken in tongues as evidence of having received the BOHS.
3. Those who have the BOHS, but rarely if ever speak in tongues as a prayer language or pursue spiritual gifts.

At the end of today, I hope I drive home 3 points:

1. The BOHS and speaking in tongues is for all believers for all time.
2. It is a useful gift we should embrace, pursue, and use regularly.
3. It is solely received by faith, it is not contingent upon my own perceived standing with God.

I'm going to talk about some common barriers to receiving the BOHS, but if you have others that I don't cover, please ask me or one of the elders afterwards.

Barrier 1 – Incorrect teaching.

This can take many forms such as:

- The speaking gifts of the HS ceased when the apostles died and the bible was complete
- Speaking in tongues is from the devil
- I received the HS when I got saved, I don't need to seek anything else

For these objections, you need to convince yourself from God's word what is true. most part, I will simply say, go back and listen to last week's sermon by Kirk and plow through the scriptures again on your own. But I will reiterate a few points.

Not for today?

The promise is for all whom the Lord our God will call. **All believers for all time.**

Act 2:38 And Peter said to them, "**Repent** and be **baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**. 39 For the promise is for **you** and for your **children** and for **all** who are far off, **everyone** whom the Lord our God calls to himself."

The command to seek and use the gifts (charismata) still stands:

1 Cor 14:37 If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are **the commandments of the Lord**. 38 But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant. 39 Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues.

Supernatural activity is a sign of the ongoing advancement of the kingdom of God

Mark 16:17 And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; 18 they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

Tongues is from the devil?

Now we should acknowledge that there is evidence of cult and occult behavior where people can fall into a trance and have ecstatic speech. But just because the devil imitates something it doesn't mean we should shy away from the real thing. That would be like saying sex inside marriage is wrong because sex outside of marriage is. Recall that God only gives good gifts to his children.

Luk 11:11-13 ESV What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; 12 or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!**"

Not a second experience.

Kirk mentioned last week that sometimes we get caught up in debates about small points of biblical details and so we let that become our focus. Is the BOHS a second experience? Do I have to speak in tongues as the evidence of the BOHS? I'm going to address this like Jesus often did, by answering a question with a question:

Are you continually seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Being used by him in spiritual gifts? And utilizing everything that God has provided for your benefit? The mysteries of the inner workings of the Spirit aren't as important as the outworkings prescribed in scripture. Follow the word and do what it says.

Barrier 2 – I don't think this is that important, or for me specifically

So you have been saved and you are growing in Christ, why do I need the BOHS or speaking in tongues? Kirk addressed this well last week, but I want to re-emphasize a few points. It has more to do with wanting everything God wants to give us more than anything else. So what does God's word say about the importance of specifically speaking in tongues? Let's look at some key verses in 1 Cor 14:

2 For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit.

4 He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. 5 I would like every one of you to speak in tongues,

14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. 15 So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind.

18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you.

28 If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God.

Tongues as a prayer language is useful and good and even the apostle Paul practiced it.

- It is prayer to God, not to men, uttering mysteries with his spirit
- Speaking in tongues edifies the speaker, this is useful
- Prayer with the spirit, your mind is not involved, and you aren't thinking up what to say
- You can sing in tongues too!
- Tongues is available for all (vs 5) – Paul encourages us all to do it!
- Paul regarded it as good and important (vs 15, 18)
- It is OK to do in church! But quietly, to yourself and God.

This is something I hope speaks to everyone here today. Whether you are yet to be a believer, new in the Lord, or old in the Lord like me. The Holy Spirit is given to empower us to be his witnesses, and this one little evidence called speaking in tongues is just the tip of the iceberg. But it is so important! Not more important than everything else, but still very important.

My Testimony – part 1

When I was struggling to understand the BOHS, I remember going through these verses and realizing that speaking in tongues was part of God's provision for me in this life. It is something I need to be an effective witness and child of God. Part of the basic equipment package he provides for those he is equipping for his army.

So, if you are seeking the BOHS, recognize how good and useful it is to receive the gift of speaking in tongues as a means of spiritual prayer between your spirit and God.

If you are a discouraged seeker of the BOHS, and maybe have even given up on it as being unimportant may these scriptures spark your thinking to realize how important it is to every believer. It is for All believers for all time. It is a good gift from the Father. It is a useful gift for you in your walk with Jesus.

And if you are someone who has been baptized in the HS, but gotten away from using your spiritual prayer language, pick it up again. There are many times that I will be here in this auditorium (not sanctuary, that's in our hearts) and I will pray quietly in tongues between myself and God. There are times in the car, or in prayer at home that I will speak in tongues to God. It seems to be especially helpful in times of distress or trouble when my mind and emotions are all over the place. Then speaking in tongues often helps my spirit to cut through the noise and be edified despite the circumstances.

One particular example of this was when Janet was in the midst of open heart surgery. There was a point where her heart was literally in the surgeon's hands. I left the hospital and drove home, partly because I did need a shower badly, but mostly because I wanted to be alone in the car and cry out to God. I spoke LOUDLY in tongues to God because I was by myself. And as I prayed, the Spirit of God enabled me to express the deepest thoughts and emotions of my heart. I knew deep in my spirit that morning that my God heard me and was with me. And that He too had Janet's heart in his hands.

Barrier 3 – I don't know how to receive the BOHS

One of big barriers to receiving the BOHS as evidenced by speaking in tongues is how do I know I've received it? How do I know I'm speaking with a heavenly language and not just making something up in my head?

Kirk covered this last week but I do want to reiterate it some. This is the intersection between the spiritual and the natural.

Joh 7:37-39 ESV On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "**If anyone thirsts**, let him **come to me** and **drink**. 38 **Whoever believes** in me, as the **Scripture** has said, '**Out of his heart** will flow **rivers of living water**.'" 39 Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to **receive**, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

There is the spiritual, what God does, and the natural, what we do. It is by faith that we ask and receive, and then by faith that we begin to speak out what God gives us to speak.

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

So how do we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and speaking tongues?

- Come to Jesus thirsty for more (seek Jesus not tongues)
- Be convinced from God's Word it is for you (for all believers for all time)
- Drink (surrender open your heart, soul, mind)
 - You will "drink in" out of your belly will flow out (speaking in tongues)
- Ask. God wants to give you his best gifts!
- Receive. It is a gift. It doesn't depend upon you; it is based on what Christ has done.
 - It is proof of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus
- Speak. Let words flow out of your mouth as the Spirit gives utterance.

More of my testimony

I was first taught about the BOHS when I was a youth. My mom joined a charismatic bible study in our neighborhood, and I started hearing about it. Then when I was about 15 or 16 years old my brother married a Pentecostal girl and began to lead the youth group at our Methodist church. We had a youth retreat focused on the BOHS.

In the main session we were praying to receive the BOHS and speak in tongues. I earnestly prayed and prayed, but nothing happened. By the end of the weekend I was confused, discouraged, and didn't really want to think about it anymore.

Fast forward about 10 years and Janet and I are now in Ohio looking for a church. We both believed that the Holy Spirit was important for today and that we wanted to be a part of a church that allowed for spiritual gifts. Now neither of us had experienced speaking in tongues to that point. But we knew it was biblical and was for the church today. We visited a few churches in the area that practiced the gifts, but when the worship leader at one place said "Everyone – speak out in tongues" we both knew, that was not right. When we came to ACC for the first time 34 years ago, we were impressed to see spiritual gifts being used, decently and in order. So we started to attend and made this our home.

At some point the topic of BOHS and speaking in tongues was being taught. I remember going up front with a group of people to receive prayer to receive the BOHS. I didn't speak in tongues, but I do remember sensing the presence and power of God in a deep way. Now I don't recall the exact year, but it was at least a few years later because we were now living in our old house on Mishler St. I had purchased Jack Hayford's book "The Beauty of Spiritual Language" and began to be convinced that this was important. That this was something God wanted me to have. That is was something that God had FOR me.

I remember talking to Reijo about it and he suggested "just go into to bedroom and ask God to give you words to speak, then just open your mouth and speak what he gives you." So I did that. I spoke a few words that day. Then over time a few more here and there. I remember a situation a years after that when I was trying to counsel a young man who was making some really bad decisions. As I drove away, a stream of language more intense and full-throated than anything I had experienced before came gushing out. That was when I really started to understand how powerful this gift was, and how mysterious as well.

So how did I overcome my mental blocks with receiving the gift of tongues?

1. I had to be open and curious about everything God has for me. (Lack of humility probably delayed the process for me!)
2. I convinced myself from God's Word that tongues is for all believers for all times, and that it is good and necessary. If the apostle Paul needed it, how much more do I?
3. I pursued it away from the pressure of a group setting. I wanted it be real, I didn't want to just try and put it on for someone else.
4. I continued to step out and exercise that gift until it did become a free-flowing river.
5. I exercise that gift regularly now as part of my normal devotional life.

So now I will close with this challenge.

1. If you are just learning about this for the first time, don't be intimidated, but pursue it with confidence that this is a gift God has for you.
2. If you are someone who has put tongues and spiritual gifts "on the shelf" for another time. Dig in again. Don't put it off, but pursue it with confidence that this is a gift God has for you.
3. If you are baptized in the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues, be spurred on to use that gift regularly as you serve and worship Jesus. Don't let it get dusty and rusty.