

THE BIG IDEA: Surrender looks for a way in instead of looking for a way out.

The Take-Off

Last week - as you'll remember if you were here - we started looking at the most misunderstood gift of the Holy Spirit. For some, tongues are not a new topic, for others, just the word can send us into a bit of a panic. And for a week, you've had the opportunity to wrestle with it all, and good things happen when we wrestle with God. Epaphras wrestled in prayer (Colossians 4:12) and the result was maturity and assurance in the Colossians. Jacob wrestled with God (Genesis 32) and the result was a different walk for the rest of his life. Wrestling with God about God always makes us stronger in God. Always! So wrestling is a good thing. It helps us grow, and it's a normal part of how we grow. We wrestle in all kinds of ways with all kinds of things - time management, daily devotions, praying with others, etc. We need to be careful not to confuse wrestling with something bad. It's a normal part of the growing process. We also need to keep the end game in mind, don't we? Over these 2 weeks, it's easy to feel consumed with tongues - it's like sticking our hands in hot dishwater. Suddenly, HOT is all we're aware of. But eventually, balance gets restored, doesn't it, and we realize that we have our hands in the sink in order to do something - wash the dishes! The Helper gives us gifts - and specifically we've been talking about a private gift many would call a prayer language - and it's easy to think TONGUES at first - but over time, we realize we have these gifts in order to actually do something - live boldly in victory over sin and proclaim boldly to others how the Gospel allows them to, as well! If you remember our series "Like A Child" then you'll remember how simply kids do all that we've just talked about, but I wanted to give you a real life testimony about somethings that our kids in KidCity have been doing. I think this will give us a good framework for the rest of our time today.

1. The gift is sought through surrender

- a. Honestly, most of us don't want to hear this guideline
- b. What we'd rather hear is a recipe to "make it happen" along with some "starter sounds" to get our prayer language off the ground
- c. But that's not God's way - his way is surrender - and until we've done that, seeking the gift of tongues - or ANY gift - is pointless
- d. Surrender is what keeps us from picking and choosing what we'll receive from the Helper
- e. Surrender is what allows us to experience an ever-increasing fullness of the Holy Spirit
- f. I love the way theologian Wayne Grudem puts it
- g. Instead of seeing ourselves as a cup that can only be filled so full, he suggests we're more like a balloon that is full until it is blown into and expands to be more full
- h. Remember the wineskins? We must surrender ourselves to God in order to allow him to fill us with more and more and more of the Spirit
- i. Surrender does that. It keeps us from stiff-arming him when we don't understand or don't like something.
- j. Wendy is the best example of seeking the gift through surrender that I've ever known
- k. So, what are some things that we need to surrender in order to seek the fullness of the Spirit?
- l. Let me suggest a few things:
 - a. sin - repent in order to receive is a common sequence in scripture (Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19)
 - b. pride - Naaman's refusal to do "a small thing" almost cost him a healing (2 Kings 5:10-14)
 - c. mind - I don't mean stop thinking, but stop needing to understand (1 Cor. 14:14-15)
- m. In all honesty, this will be the most critical step for most of us, not just in the area of a prayer language, but in the area of following Jesus, because he will ALWAYS lead us to places that require total trust and obedience, and surrender is the door that gets us there
- n. Surrender looks for a way IN instead of looking for a way OUT

2. The gift is developed with discipline

- a. I always believed that the Holy Spirit would pick the most embarrassing situations to make me do something
- b. Walking down the halls at school, and suddenly I'm speaking in tongues
- c. But this gift is no different than any other gift we have - they all require our participation in their use
- d. You should still be in 1 Corinthians 14, so look at verse 14 again

- e. 4 times Paul wrote the phrase “I will”
- f. The way we develop this gift is intentional, just like every other gift
- g. The instruction about how to grow in the use of a gift doesn’t lesson the authenticity of the gift
- h. In fact, I would argue that we instruct about what is important precisely because it’s authentic
- i. Let me give you this example: if you came to me and said that you were going to have a difficult conversation with a coworker this week and you weren’t sure what you should say, I would pray and ask the Helper to give you the words to say.
- j. In fact, if you’ve ever shared the gospel with someone, you probably prayed something similar
- k. Then I would tell you to be very aware of things that came to your mind while you were in that conversation, because God would be giving you specific thoughts for that specific conversation
- l. After the conversation, you’d tell me that you weren’t sure why you said all that you did, but it was spot on
- m. What I did was disciple you in the use of the gift called a word of knowledge (one of the gifts from the Helper)
- n. The gift is still just as real as if you had experienced all of that without my instruction, isn’t it?
- o. So, don’t think of the gift of a prayer language as any different
- p. It must be developed, which means that it will grow the more it’s used
- q. My first sermon resulted in my apologizing to the church for cussing them out
- r. I’ve intentionally developed the gift of teaching with discipline over time
- s. This gift is no different
- t. It requires intentional listening, waiting, believing and speaking

3. The gift comes through faith, not frustration

- a. Which leads us to the finish
- b. Even though many have been frustrated by the timing of God not lining up with theirs, the bottom line is that our Father is a giver
- c. So let me start winding this down by just saying that God gives good gifts
 - a. James 1:17 - God gives good and perfect gifts
 - b. 1 Corinthians 12:7 - God gives gifts that help the whole body
 - c. 1 Peter 4:10 - God’s gifts enable us be fulfilled through serving
 - d. Matthew 7:11 - We could say confidently that if God could give bad gifts, his worst would be better than our best
- d. We don’t have to beg, strive, work, yell
- e. We simply need to remember two verses from the book of Hebrews
 - a. Hebrews 11:6 - God rewards a faith that simply believes in him
 - b. Hebrews 10:35-39 - what is God’s will more than his children spending their lives believing?
- f. Faith in God allows us to wait on God even if we get frustrated by God
- g. When we know God will answer, we don’t feel like we have to shrink back
- h. As I told Wendy many times, if you waited expectantly for God’s promise and never received it, the worst you’ve done is spend your entire life in the presence of a giving God whom you can trust

The Landing

So how does a believer begin to explore the gift of a private prayer language?

He surrenders fully. He develops intentionally. He believes confidently.

And then, he waits patiently, for the perfect time for a perfect gift from the God who is a rewarder of all who seek him earnestly.

Let’s pray.