Spiritual Gifts: Volume 3

The Gift Of Speaking In Tongues

What Does The Bible Have To Say?

by

Don Stewart

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About the Author

The Gift of Speaking in Tongues

What Does the Bible Have to Say?

This is the final volume of our series on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Our first book dealt with basic questions about spiritual gifts as well as whether certain gifts still function in the church.

Volume two looked at the various spiritual gifts which the New Testament listed. We explained the purpose of each gift, as best as we could, as well as how they should be used.

This third book in our series deals with the spiritual gift that has generated the most controversy. Indeed, of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the one that has caused the most discussion is the gift of speaking in tongues.

The fact that such a gift was given to the church is acknowledged by every Bible-believer. However, beyond that, there are controversies concerning almost every aspect of the gift. There is debate as to who received the gift. There is a question as to whether women ever spoke in tongues. Differences of opinion exist as to whether the tongue-speaking was in a known language, or some type of ecstatic utterance. Finally, there are differences as to whether the gift was to continue in the church.

In this book, we look at these particular issues. It is our desire to give the best arguments that all sides bring forward in an effort to come to some understanding of the issues.

Above all, any view that is held on this particular subject should be held with grace and humility. Indeed, there is much room for differences of opinion.

Question 1

What Were Some Of The Problems With The Corinthian Church That Led to Paul Writing About The Gift of Speaking in Tongues?

There are three chapters in the Book of First Corinthians that deal with the subject of spiritual gifts—Chapters 12-14. A large part of this discussion revolves around the gift of speaking in tongues. The Apostle Paul wrote about the proper use, as well as the abuse, of this particular spiritual gift.

It is important that we understand the context in which these chapters were written before we explore this controversial subject. In fact, in doing so, we will learn many valuable lessons, not the least of which is how we are supposed to act as well as how we are not supposed to act.

The Problems In Corinth

The church at Corinth had numerous problems. From looking at Paul's exhortations to them, we can conclude the following:

Problem 1: The Believers Were Immature Christians

At the outset, we must understand that Paul was writing to a group of believers that he defined as carnal, or immature. He said the following:

> For it has been reported to me about you, my brothers and sisters, by members of Chloe's people, that there is rivalry among you (1 Corinthians 1:12 CSB).

Later he wrote:

> For my part, brothers and sisters, I was not able to speak to you as spiritual people but as people of the flesh, as babies in Christ (1 Corinthians 3:1 CSB).

The believers were stunted in their spiritual growth.

Problem 2: Certain Spiritual Gifts Were Given a Special Status

This led to the next problem—certain gifts of the Spirit were accorded a special status. In particular, it was the gift of speaking in tongues.

Problem 3: The Gifts Of The Spirit Were More Valued Than The Fruit Of The Spirit

These believers seemingly lost all concept of what was important. While they exercised all of the gifts of the Spirit, they certainly were not practicing the fruit of the Spirit. Paul explained the fruit of the Spirit in this manner:

> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22,23 CSB).

In fact, they placed the gifts of the Spirit above the graces of the Spirit and created a situation in which people were exercising their gifts in an unchristian way.

The Result: The Believers Were Acting Unchristian To One Another

Because of these problems, the believers in Corinth were acting unchristian to one another. This simply sums up the background of the chapters that addressed the issue of "speaking in tongues.

Summary To Question 1
What Were Some Of The Problems With The Corinthian Church
That Led To Paul Writing About The Gift Of Speaking in Tongues?

The believers in the city of Corinth were carnal, or immature, Christians. They displayed their immaturity in a number of ways. This includes their abuse of spiritual gifts. Consequently, the Apostle Paul devoted three chapters in his letter to this group of believers. Some of the major problems included the following:

The believers were more interested in building up themselves that building up, or edifying, their fellow believers. In addition, the more public gift of speaking in tongues, was magnified in importance above the other spirituals gifts.

The believers also assumed that they could somehow determine which particular gift they would possess. All of this led to divisions in the church. Indeed, the people had forgotten that it was the fruit of the Spirit, not the gifts of the Spirit that were the desired goal. In fact, the gifts are merely a means to an end to exercise the fruit of the Spirit.

Therefore, as we begin to look into the abuses, as well as the proper uses of the gift, we must keep this background in mind.

Question 2

What Exactly Is The Gift Of Speaking In Tongues?

One of the spiritual gifts that is mentioned in the New Testament is the gift of speaking in tongues. Tongue-speaking, or *glossolalia*, can be defined as an individual's supernatural ability to speak in a language never before learned. Paul wrote the following to the church at Corinth about the existence of such a gift. He put it this way:

> And God has appointed these in the church . . . various kinds of tongues (1Corinthians 12:28 CSB).

According to Paul, God has appointed this particular spiritual gift in the church.

There Is Much Controversy That Surrounds This Gift

There is probably no spiritual gift that is so discussed, or so misunderstood, as the gift of speaking in tongues. The exercise of this gift has led to an exaggerated emphasis by some, while a denial of its existence by others. Churches have been divided over the meaning, purpose, and existence, of this spiritual gift.

Even the nature of the gift is debated. Some believe that the gift of speaking in tongues was limited to known earthly languages, while others feel that tongue-speaking can refer to ecstatic utterances, or a heavenly language.

Some believers elevate the gift to a place of importance that is far beyond what the New Testament teaches. This includes regarding the gift of tongues as "the sign" that a believer has received the Holy Spirit, or the power of the Holy Spirit, which is often called the "baptism with the Holy Spirit."

In addition, the gift of tongues is believed by some to have ceased being given by the Lord with the death of the apostles, while others contend the gift is still valid today.

Each of these questions about the gift of speaking in tongues need to be addressed in detail.

What is of first importance is that we have a biblical understanding of the gift. Thus, at the outset, it is essential that we discover a number of things which everyone agrees upon with respect to speaking in tongues.

Facts That We Know For Certain About Speaking In Tongues

From the New Testament, there are a number of facts that we can know about speaking in tongues. They include the following:

Fact 1: Speaking In Tongues (Glossolalia) Means Speaking In Languages

Tongue speaking is also called *glossolalia*. Glossolalia is made up of two Greek words—*glossa* meaning tongue, or language, and *lalia* from the verb *laleo* to speak. Speaking in tongues can be simply defined as "speaking in languages."

One of the unfortunate things about this spiritual gift is the regrettable way in which it is often understood. Using the phrase "speaking in tongues" gives the idea of something bizarre occurring. However, what is under consideration here is speaking in languages that the person has not previously learned.

While it would be more proper to translate this phrase as "speaking in languages" the designation "speaking in tongues" has become part of the Christian vocabulary. Therefore, we will use this description to describe the spiritual gift.

Fact 2: Speaking in Tongues Is Only Mentioned In Two Books in Scripture

Examples of speaking in tongues is limited in Scripture. There is no evidence that the Old Testament writers knew of the experience of speaking in tongues. We do find that they knew of prophetic activity that was associated with a variety of different manifestations.

For example, Joel wrote about various manifestations of the Spirit of God as follows:

> After this I will pour out my Spirit on all humanity; then your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old men will have dreams, and your young men will see visions (Joel 2:28 CSB).

While mentioning prophecies, visions, and dreams, he never mentions speaking in tongues.

A Possible Mention In The Gospel of Mark

There are no references to speaking in tongues in the gospels (with the possible exception of Mark 16:17). It reads as follows:

> And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues (Mark 16:17 ESV).

However, this reference is found in the disputed portion of Mark's gospel. In other words, there is a serious question as to whether these last twelve verses were actually written by Mark. We have devoted an entire question to examining this issue (see Question 29).

Tongue Speaking In Acts And First Corinthians

In fact, we find speaking in tongues only mentioned in the Book of Acts, and in First Corinthians.

We find it in Acts 2 (on the Day of Pentecost), in Acts 10 (at Caesarea), and in Acts 19 (in Ephesus). It is also mentioned in First Corinthians chapters 12 thru 14.

The Gift Is Not Mentioned Elsewhere

Paul does not mention speaking in tongues in his letters to the Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, or Thessalonians. Paul does not mention the gift in his letters to Timothy, Titus, or Philemon.

Speaking in tongues is not mentioned in the universal letters: Hebrews, James, 1,2 Peter, 1,2,3, John, Jude. Neither is it mentioned in the Book of Revelation.

Fact 3: Speaking in Tongues Is Only Mentioned In One Of The Four Letters Where Spiritual Gifts Are Listed

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are mentioned in three different letters that Paul wrote: Romans, Ephesians, and First Corinthians. Peter also mentions the gifts of the Spirit in First Peter. However, the only place where the gift of tongues is mentioned is in First Corinthians.

Fact 4: Speaking In Tongues Was A Sign For The Unbeliever

The gift of tongues seems to have at least two different purposes. They are as follows.

(1) A sign to the unbeliever
(2) A means to pray

One of the purposes for tongues was a sign for the unbeliever. Paul wrote the following to the Corinthians:

> Speaking in other tongues, then, is intended as a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is not for unbelievers but for believers (1 Corinthians 14:22 CSB).

In the Book of Acts, we find accounts of tongue-speaking which gave evidential value of the message of Christ. On the Day of Pentecost, the gift was explained as follows:

> When this sound occurred, a crowd came together and was confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded and amazed, saying, "Look, aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? How is it that each of us can hear them in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites; those who live in Mesopotamia, in Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts), Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the magnificent acts of God in our own tongues" (Acts 2:6-11 CSB).

On this particular day, each person in the crowd heard the message of Jesus Christ in their own dialect. It was a supernatural sign to each of them.

Fact 5: Speaking In Tongues Was Also A Means Of Prayer

Scripture says that tongue-speaking was also a means to pray to God. Paul wrote the following to the Corinthians:

> For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful (1 Corinthians 14:14 ESV).

Paul spoke of praying in tongues. Therefore, this gift can be used as a means of prayer.

While there may be other purposes for the gift of speaking in tongues, these two, a sign for unbelievers and a means of prayer, are specifically stated in the Scripture.

Fact 6: Not Every Believer Has The Gift Of Tongues

It is clear from the New Testament that speaking in tongues is not a sign of receiving the Holy Spirit. In the Book of Acts, there were instances where people received the Holy Spirit and then spoke in tongues. However, there are other instances where they did not speak in tongues when they received the Holy Spirit. In Corinth, all believers had been baptized with the Holy Spirit:

> For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all given one Spirit to drink (1 Corinthians 12:13 CSB).

Paul said that each believer in Corinth had been baptized with the Spirit of God. However, not all of the believers in Corinth had the gift of speaking with tongues. Paul wrote the following to them:

> 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! (1 Corinthians 12:30 NLT).

The sentence is structured in the original Greek in such a way that demands that the answer be "No." In other words, not everyone should be expected to speak in tongues. Therefore, the gift of tongues is *not* something that every believer experiences.

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul linked the various gifts to different part of the human body. He stated it as follows:

> For just as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body—so also is Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all given one Spirit to drink. Indeed, the body is not one part but many. If the foot should say, "Because I'm not a hand, I don't belong to the body," it is not for that reason any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I'm not an eye, I don't belong to the body," it is not for that reason any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God has arranged each one of the parts in the body just as he wanted. And if they were all the same part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" Or again, the head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you!" (1 Corinthians 12:12-21 CSB).

A body is made up of different parts. All parts of the body are necessary, yet all parts are different. Thus, not everyone is a Bible teacher, and not everyone speaks in tongues.

Fact 7: There Are Warnings Against Misuse Of The Gift

The Apostle Paul spoke highly of the gift of tongues. Indeed, he wrote the following words to the Corinthians in praise of the gift:

> I wish you could all speak in tongues, but even more I wish you could all prophesy. For prophecy is greater than speaking in tongues, unless someone interprets what you are saying so that the whole church will be strengthened (1 Corinthians 14:5 NLT).

He said he wanted everyone to speak in tongues. He also wrote:

> I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you (1 Corinthians 14:18 ESV).

Obviously, he had a high regard of this gift from God. On the other hand, Paul warned against the misuse of the gift. We find him giving these words of warning to the Corinthians:

> Dear brothers and sisters, if I should come to you speaking in an unknown language, how would that help you? But if I bring you a revelation or some special knowledge or prophecy or teaching, that will be helpful (1 Corinthians 14:6 NLT).

This tells us that there is a proper, as well as an improper way, of using this gift. In other words, this gift of the Holy Spirit can be either used properly, or it can be abused as what was taking place in Corinth.

Fact 8: The Bible Sets Strict Guidelines Concerning The Use Of The Gift

The Bible sets down guidelines by which the gift of tongues should be exercised. They are found in 1 Corinthians 12-14. Those who exercise the gift, must do so according to the rules that have been set down in Scripture.

Fact 9: Speaking in Tongues Was Not To Be Done In A Church Service Without An Interpreter

If the gift of tongues were to be exercised among believers, then there must be someone there with the gift of interpretation. Otherwise the person is to keep silent. Paul wrote:

> If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God (1 Corinthians 14:27,28 ESV).

The purpose of believers gathering together is to build up the entire group of believers. Therefore, without anyone being able to interpret, the gift was not to be used publicly.

Fact 10: The Gift Of Tongues Will Someday Cease

The gift of speaking in tongues will someday come to an end. Paul wrote elsewhere to the Corinthians:

> Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away (1 Corinthians 13:8 ESV).

This gift will not last forever.

Fact 11: Speaking In Tongues Was Not Forbidden

Even with all the abuses of the gift, speaking in tongues was not forbidden. Paul wrote about not forbidding the exercise of the gift:

> So, dear brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and don't forbid speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:39 NLT).

Paul would not forbid the proper exercise of the gift, though the church in Corinth was abusing this particular gift from God.

Fact 12: There Is A More Excellent Way

According to a statement from the Apostle Paul, the ultimate guide for the use of the gift of speaking in tongues, or for any of the other spiritual gifts that the Lord has given, is love.

In fact, between the two chapters in First Corinthians which deal with the subject of speaking in tongues, chapters 12 and 14, Paul wrote the famous "love chapter." He introduced 1 Corinthians 13 with these profound words:

> I will show you a still more excellent way (1 Corinthians 12:31 ESV).

Therefore, the mere possession of the gift of speaking in tongues is not, by itself, a mark of spirituality. Indeed, without love, speaking in tongues can be simply a noisy intrusion that is both disorderly and annoying. Paul wrote:

> If I speak human or angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal (1 Corinthians 13:1 CSB).

Consequently, above all, love should prevail.

Conclusion: Tongue-Speaking Should Not Divide Believers

The exercise of the gift of speaking in tongues should not be something that is divisive among Christians. Whether or not the gift still exists, it should not be a point of contention to the place where it causes division. Unfortunately, this has not been the case with the exercise of the gift.

Summary To Question 2:
What Exactly Is The Gift Of Speaking In Tongues?

Speaking in tongues is a spiritual gift. There is no doubt about this. Indeed, there are about a dozen facts that we discover from the New Testament about this gift.

To begin with, it is the ability to speak in languages that have not been previously learned.

To begin with, the proper way to state the gift should be "speaking in languages" rather than "speaking in tongues." However, "speaking in tongues" has become part of the Christian vocabulary.

As we search the Scripture, we discover that practice of speaking in tongues is not widespread. Indeed, it is not mentioned at all in the Old Testament.

There is the mention of speaking in new tongues at the end of the gospel of Mark. However, there is some question as to whether or not this portion was originally in Mark's gospel. Apart from this reference, we do not find it in the four gospels.

In fact, speaking in tongues is only mentioned in two New Testament books—Acts and First Corinthians. Furthermore, in only one of the four books where spiritual gifts are mentioned, First Corinthians, do we find a reference to speaking in tongues.

In the New Testament, speaking in tongues seemingly had one of two purposes. It was a sign to the unbeliever, or a means of prayer. While there may have been other purposes for the gift, these two are certain.

We also know that not every Christian has the gift. Indeed, the gift was given by God to only a select group. Moreover, those who had the gift were not any more spiritual, or less spiritual, than anyone else. This is crucial for us to realize!

Scripture also warns about the misuse of the gift, and, therefore, has set down certain guidelines for its use. These guidelines need to be followed if the gift is going to be exercised.

For one thing, there was to be no tongue-speaking in church without an interpreter present. Paul emphasized that there are no exceptions to this command. None.

The gift, like all spiritual gifts, is not meant to be permanent. There will come a day when this spiritual gift ceases. Even with all the abuses present, the Apostle Paul told believers in Corinth not to forbid the exercise of the gift. Above all, speaking in tongues, like all of the other spiritual gifts, is meaningless unless it is practiced in love.

Finally, tongue speaking should not be an issue that divides believers. Unhappily, it continues to be.

These are some of the basic things that we know for certain about the gift of speaking in tongues. It is from this basis, that we should examine the totality of Scripture, to discover what it has to say about this topic.

Question 3

Were Those Who Spoke In Tongues In an Ecstatic, Uncontrolled State?

One of the issues surrounding the gift of speaking in tongues was the emotional and physical state of the person who exercised the gift. Was the person actually in an uncontrolled state of frenzy, or was the speaker in control of his or her senses? What does the Bible have to say?

According To Some, Tongue Speakers Were In A State of Ecstasy

Some Bible translations translate speaking in tongues as "speaking in ecstasy." This gives the impression that those who spoke in tongues were in some type of uncontrolled state. Therefore, tongue speaking is equated with emotional outbursts, that were not in the control of the speaker.

The Crowd At Pentecost Thought They Were Drunk

The response of the crowds at Pentecost is used to support this idea. When they heard the disciples of Jesus speaking in tongues, they assumed they were drunk. The Bible records their response as follows:

> But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine" (Acts 2:13 ESV).

This seems to indicate that they were not in control of their senses. Peter assured the crowd that they were not drunk. He said the following to the crowd that had gathered:

> These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o'clock in the morning is much too early for that (Acts 2:15 NLT).

The fact that the crowd on the Day of Pentecost thought that the disciples were drunk, supposedly shows that they were in an uncontrolled state at the time they were speaking in tongues.

Paul Warned About Unbelievers Thinking The Corinthians Were Crazy

Paul's exhortation to the church at Corinth is also used to support the idea of tongues being uncontrollable:

> If, therefore, the whole church assembles together and all are speaking in other tongues and people who are outsiders or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your minds? (1 Corinthians 14:23 CSB).

Unbelievers would assume the people to be crazy, out of their minds, because they were all in an uncontrolled state. This, it is claimed, gives further support to the idea that these people were not in control of their senses.

Response To The Belief That Tongues Was Uncontrolled Ecstatic Talk

The idea that speaking in tongues in the New Testament was some type of frenzied, uncontrolled utterance on the part of the speaker, is not what the Scripture teaches. The Bible says the following things about speaking in tongues in the New Testament.

The Greek Word, Translated Ecstasy, Never Speaks Of Someone In An Uncontrolled State

The Greek noun *ekstasis* and verb *eksistami*, from where we get the English word "ecstasy," are found in the New Testament. The word can mean "amazement" or "astonishment." In other contexts, it can have the idea of someone being in a trance. However, it *never* has the idea of someone being in an uncontrolled, or frenzied state. Basically, the word has the idea of amazement, or astonishment. The word is used of the response of the people who saw Jesus bring a twelve-year-old girl back to life. We read:

> Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement (Mark 5:42 NKJV).

In this case, the people were astonished to see this particular miracle of Jesus. The word is also used to describe the response of the crowd to a man whom Peter healed:

> And they recognized that he was the one who used to sit and beg at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. So they were filled with awe and astonishment at what had happened to him (Acts 3:10 CSB).

Here the people were amazed at what had occurred.

The Word Can Have The Idea Of A Trance

There are two places in the New Testament where the word is translated as "trance." The word is used to describe what happened to Peter when he was praying in the city of Joppa. Scripture says the following:

> I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came to me (Acts 11:5 NKJV).

Peter received a message from the Lord, when he was in this state of ecstasy. During this state of ecstasy, or trance, Peter was able to communicate with the Lord. In other words, he was in control of his senses. Paul spoke of being in a state of ecstasy, or trance, while he was praying. He gave the following testimony recorded in the Book of Acts:

> When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance (Acts 22:17 ESV).

Paul, too, received a message from the Lord when he was in this ecstatic state. In neither case, where this word means "trance," do we find Peter or Paul in some uncontrolled, frenzied state. He was able to understand the message the Lord had for them as well as communicate their own rational feelings.

The Word Is Never Used Of Those Who Spoke In Tongues

While the word translated "ecstasy," or "trance," is used in the New Testament, it is *never* used of those who practiced tongue-speaking. However, it is used of those who observed the phenomena. We read of this in the Book of Acts:

> They were completely amazed. "How can this be?" they exclaimed. "These people are all from Galilee, and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! . . . They stood there amazed and perplexed. "What can this mean?" they asked each other (Acts 2:7,8, 12 CSB).

In this context, the word means "amazed." Those who heard the disciples speak praises to the Lord, in their own dialect, were amazed that these Galileans were able to do such a thing. Again, the word has nothing to do with the idea of someone being out of control, or frenzied.

Tongue-Speakers Are Self-Controlled

Scripture makes it clear that those who spoke with tongues were in control of their selves. In other words, they have not worked themselves up into some type of ecstatic frenzy. At Pentecost, a large crowd gathered after the believers spoke with tongues. Peter then stood up and explained what happened:

> But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words" (Acts 2:14 ESV).

There is no indication that he, and the other disciples, were in some uncontrolled frenzied state before Peter eloquently spoke to the crowd about what they had witnessed.

Nothing Indicates An Uncontrolled State

In the other instances where tongue speaking is recorded, Caesarea and Ephesus, there is nothing that indicates that those who spoke with tongues were in an uncontrollable state. Indeed, there is no evidence whatsoever!

The same holds true for the situation at Corinth. Paul wrote about the ability of the tongue-speaker to exercise self-control:

> If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God . . . and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. For God is not a God of confusion but of peace (1 Corinthians 14:27,28,32 ESV).

This passage makes it clear the tongue speaking is self-controlled by the speaker. The speaker is able to keep silent, if there is no interpreter.

Indeed, Paul did not say that the people in the church had to force the person to become silent. The tongue speaker was able to control the tongue-speaking, if indeed they were exercising the God-given spiritual gift.

Therefore, any uncontrollable tongue-speaking is certainly not directed by the Holy Spirit. If a believer does speak in tongues in an uncontrolled state, then they are misusing the gift.

Self-Control Is A Fruit Of The Holy Spirit

In fact, self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote the following to the Galatians about what the fruit of the Spirit consists of:

> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things (Galatians 5:22,23 CSB).

Speaking in tongues is a gift of the Holy Spirit. The gifts are to build up the body of Christ, as well as produce the fruit of the Spirit in those who exercise them. One fruit of the Spirit is self-control. Therefore, the idea, that tongue-speaking was some uncontrolled frenzied state is not found in Scripture.

Summary To Question 3:
Were Those Who Spoke In Tongues In An Ecstatic Uncontrolled State?

There are some people who understanding tongue-speaking to be ecstatic utterances, where the speaker in an uncontrolled, frenzied state. They support this contention in a number of ways.

First, there is the word "ecstasy" itself. It, of course, has the idea of someone being in an uncontrolled state of being. If tongues are ecstatic utterances, then it seems to follow that the speakers themselves were in a state of ecstasy.

They also note the response of the crowd to the tongue-speaking on the day of Pentecost. These people thought the disciples of Jesus were drunk. This seems to indicate that the ones who were speaking were in an uncontrolled state.

Paul's statement to the Corinthians is also cited as further evidence. He said that unbelievers would think believers were crazy, if they all spoke with tongues.

These examples seem to support the idea that those who spoke in tongues were in a frenzied state of ecstasy.

However, this is not the case. While the word ecstasy is found in the New Testament it is *never* used of those who spoke with tongues. Indeed, there is no evidence whatsoever that those who spoke in tongues were unable to control themselves while they were exercising this gift.

In other words, we should not assume that the Holy Spirit seized these people to the place where they spoke in some sort of uncontrollable frenzy. This is not what happened.

Indeed, there is no biblical example of tongue-speakers being in an uncontrolled state. To the contrary, it is clear the people, who exercised this gift were always in control of their senses.

Furthermore, the Bible makes it plain that those who speak in tongues can control themselves at all times. Paul emphasized this when he gave the rules for speaking in tongues to the Corinthians. Any uncontrolled tongue-speaking is not Spirit-led.

To the point, the gifts of the Spirit are given to produce the fruit of the Spirit. One of the fruits is self-control. Speaking in a frenzied, uncontrollable state, is certainly not an example of self-control!

Therefore, anyone who speaks in tongues in a biblical manner will be in control at all times.

Question 4

Why Do Some Believe The Gift Of Tongues Has Ceased?

The Bible clearly says that no one should forbid speaking in tongues. Paul wrote the following to the Corinthians:

> So, dear brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and don't forbid speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:39 NLT).

Yet, there is a popular view held by many Bible-believing Christians that the gift of tongues no longer operates in the church. While there is no question that the gift of tongues was a valid spiritual gift at one time, it is viewed as one of the sign gifts that has ceased with the death of the last of the apostles.

The arguments for the cessation of the gift of tongues can be broken down into two categories: the biblical evidence and non-biblical evidence.

The Biblical Evidence For The Cessation Of The Gift Of Tongues

Those who believe that the gift of tongues is no longer available in the church, provide a number of biblical arguments to support their case. These include: the nature of the gift of tongues, the fact that the Bible says it has a limited duration,

Scripture says it will cease of itself, the meaning of the word "perfect," and the lack of use of the gift later in the ministry of the Apostle Paul. They support these points as follows:

The Nature Of The Gift Of Tongues

The nature of the gift of tongues shows that it was only temporary. Speaking in tongues was one of the "sign gifts." These gifts were given to the believer in Christ for only a short period of time. Their purpose was to confirm the Word of God, before there was a written New Testament. Consequently, every occurrence of speaking tongues, as recorded in the Book of Acts, was to authenticate the gospel message.

The Old Testament did not need any confirmation by miraculous signs. It was already accepted as the Word of God. However, this was not the case with the message of Jesus. The people had to be convinced that it too was a divinely given revelation. This is why we find the miraculous signs that were given.

Therefore, it is argued that *before* the message about Jesus had been committed to writing its divine authenticity was accomplished through these miraculous sign gifts.

Once the New Testament was written, then the gift of tongues, along with the other sign gifts, were no longer operating since their purpose had been served.

The Message Of Christ Had Already Been Confirmed

The writer to the Hebrews states the message about Christ had already been confirmed at the time when he wrote. He wrote:

> What makes us think that we can escape if we are indifferent to this great salvation that was announced by the Lord Jesus himself? It was passed on to us by those who heard him speak, and God verified the message

> by signs and wonders and various miracles and by giving gifts of the Holy Spirit whenever he chose to do so (Hebrews 2:3,4 NLT).

Therefore, the confirmation of the gospel was something that had already taken place when the letter to the Hebrews was written. Since speaking in tongues was one of these confirmatory gifts that demonstrated that the message of Jesus was a supernatural revelation from God, it ceased to exist once the Word was confirmed.

Tongues Were Also A Sign To Unbelieving Israel

Another purpose of the gift of tongues was as sign to the unbelieving nation of Israel. Paul wrote go to the Corinthians:

> In the law it is written: "With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; and yet, for all that, they will not hear Me," says the Lord. Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe (1 Corinthians 14:21,22 NKJV).

Speaking in tongues was a sign of judgment to the unbelieving nation of Israel. This sign testified to the fact that God had judged the nation for rejecting Jesus as the Messiah. The judgment of God upon the nation Israel became apparent to all in the year A.D. 70 when the city of Jerusalem, and the temple were destroyed. Once Jerusalem was destroyed, and the people scattered, this sign was no longer necessary.

Tongues Confirmed the Supernatural Origin Of The Message of Jesus

There was a third purpose for the gift of tongues—to confirm supernatural messages. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

> What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God (1 Corinthians 14:26-28 ESV).

God allowed speaking in tongues to be used during a meeting of believers as long as there was interpretation of the tongue language. This confirmed that the messenger and the message had its origin with God. However, once the Scripture was completed this type of confirmation was no longer necessary.

At Least One Of The Sign Gifts, Apostle, Has Ceased

We know that at least one of the spiritual gifts, that of Apostle, has ceased. It was limited to those who saw the resurrected Christ. In the Book of Acts, we read the following qualifications were necessary to choose an Apostle:

> Therefore, from among the men who have accompanied us during the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us— beginning from the baptism of John until the day he was taken up from us—from among these, it is necessary that one become a witness with us of his resurrection (Acts 1:21,22 CSB).

Obviously, nobody can meet this qualification today. Therefore, this particular gift is no longer given. If one of the spiritual gifts has ceased, apostle, then it is certainly possible that other gifts may have also ceased. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to assert that the gift of tongues was limited to the early church.

The Bible Specifically Speaks Of The Limited Duration Of The Gift

There is a passage in First Corinthians that speaks of the limited duration of the gift. Paul specifically said that the gift of tongues would someday cease:

> Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will come to an end (1 Corinthians 13:8-10 CSB).

These verses teach that the gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge will someday cease. The question is: When will this occur?

Most people who believe the sign gifts are not for today argue that they ceased of themselves at the end of the apostolic period. There are some who believe that they existed for a time after the apostolic era but have now ceased. In either case, the gift is no longer available.

The point is that Paul specifically mentioned three spiritual gifts that would someday vanish. Therefore, it is possible to infer that he meant these gifts would pass away during the age of the apostles. While this is not clearly taught in this passage it can be inferred.

The Evidence From Greek Grammar: The Gift Will Cease Of Itself

The Greek grammar of First Corinthians 13:8 also gives us an indication that the gift of tongues has now ceased. The word translated "cease" is the Greek word *pauo*. This verb in Greek is in what is known as the middle voice. The idea behind the middle voice is that tongues will "cease of itself."

However, the other two verbs in First Corinthians 13:8 translated, "fail "and "vanish away" are in the passive voice. This means someone or something will cause them to cease. This is not necessarily true with the gift of tongues. The difference is seen by some to be important. The middle voice speaks of "self-cessation."

Knowledge and prophecy will fail, or vanish away, when something external causes this to happen. However, the gift of tongues will cease of itself—there will be nothing externally that will cause this to occur.

The gift of tongues did cease of itself when the apostles died. The sign gifts were given to authenticate the gospel until the Bible was completed. Once the Scripture had been completed, there was no more need for signs, because the Word of God was then perfect and available.

The Meaning Of The Greek Word Translated "Perfect"

Paul also said the partial would be done away with when the perfect has come. Cessationists differ on the meaning of the term. Some believe that the perfect refers to the completed canon of Scripture. When it was completed, there was no more need for signs.

The Greek words *to telion*, translated "the perfect," are in the neuter gender. This leads some to believe it cannot refer to Jesus Christ. Consequently, the best answer seems to refer to the New Testament canon.

There are some cessationists who believe the gift of tongues has ceased, but do not think that Paul had the completed canon of Scripture in mind when he referred to the perfect. While they believe speaking in tongues is no longer a valid spiritual gift, they do not believe that one can appeal to the "perfect" of First Corinthians 13:10 to establish this. They believe this passage is not relevant to the issue.

The Sign Gifts Were Not Exercised Later In Paul's Ministry

It is argued that the sign gifts were not exercised later in the ministry of the Apostle Paul. Speaking in tongues, as well as the interpretation of tongues, was one of these sign gifts. As we look at Paul's ministry, we discover that the sign gifts that he earlier used, were not in use later in his ministry.

We know that Paul practiced the gift of healing. The Book of Acts records him healing a man by laying his hands on him:

> It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him, healed him (Acts 28:8 ESV).

Paul still had the gift of healing at this time. Though Paul had the gift of healing, we are later told that he left a believer sick. He wrote the following to Timothy:

> Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus (2 Timothy 4:20 ESV).

Why didn't he use his gift to heal this sick person? We know that he certainly had it at one time. It seems it had been withdrawn at this later time. In addition, he told Timothy to take wine for his weak stomach. We read his words in Paul's first letter to Timothy:

> Don't continue drinking only water, but use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses (1 Timothy 5:23 CSB).

Why didn't Paul mention anything about divine healing to Timothy? If the gift of healing was still functioning, then why wasn't Timothy told to receive his healing? Why wasn't he encouraged to see someone who had the gift?

Therefore, the New Testament itself bears witness that the gift of healing ceased from use late in the apostolic era. If the gift of Apostle and the gift of healing ceased at this early time, then it is certainly possible, if not likely, that the gift of tongues also ceased.

These biblical arguments have convinced many that the gift of tongues was given by God for only temporary purposes. Since the temporary purposes are no longer necessary, neither is the gift. Consequently, the biblical gift of speaking in tongues is no longer necessary in the church today.

The Non-Biblical Arguments For The Cessation Of Tongues

There is also what we may call the non-biblical arguments for the cessation of the gift of tongues. These include: the testimony of church history, tongue-speaking always came from heretical groups, the lack of tongue-speaking among the great saints of the faith, lack of evidence that modern tongue-speaking consists of actual languages, and the fact that tongues always cause a division when brought into churches.

Church History Does Not Record The Continuation Of The Gift

As we study church history, we find that speaking in tongues was not present after the apostolic era. There seems to be a large period of church history when tongues speaking did not occur. Early church leaders such as Justin Martyr, Origen, and Augustine testified that the gift ceased with the apostles.

An important testimony can be found in John Chrysostom (John the golden-mouth). He was one of the greatest preachers in the history of the church. Born in A.D. 345, he had the following to say about the gift of tongues:

The whole passage (1 Corinthians 14:1-40) is exceedingly obscure and the obscurity is occasioned by our ignorance of the facts and the cessation of happenings which were common in those days but unexampled in ours.

This tells us that tongue speaking was an experience that had long passed from the scene, when Chrysostom wrote in the fourth century. This is another indication that the practice was limited to first century Christians.

When the Protestant Reformation occurred, Christianity was brought back to its basic truths. However, the Reformers did not exercise the gift of speaking in tongues.

It has only been recently in the history of the church that certain believers have again begun to speak with tongues. In fact, it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that any large number of Christians began to exercise what they thought was the biblical gift of tongues.

Are we to assume that the church has been without a necessary gift, such as speaking in tongues, for some 1,750 years?

Historically, Examples of Tongue Speaking Were From Heretical Groups

In the few instances in the past, where tongue speaking actually occurred among professing Christians, it was from fringe, or heretical groups. Examples of tongue speaking, in the ancient church. were always from heretical groups.

For example, the only two references we find to speaking in tongues in the first three centuries are from Montanus, and his disciple Tertullian. Montanus is seen as a heretic—a man who claimed to be the main way through which the Holy Spirit spoke. The mainline church rejected any outbreaks of Montanism as heresy, not as the work of the Holy Spirit.

This is another indication that the genuine spiritual gift was not practiced after the time of the apostles.

Historically, Great Men And Women Of God Did Not Speak In Tongues

Down through the ages, the great men and women of the Christian faith, did not testify to personally speaking in tongues. As we look at the lives of prominent Christians throughout the history of the church, none of them exercised the gift of speaking in tongues.

This includes such great warriors of the faith: St. Augustine, John Wesley, John Calvin, Martin Luther, Dwight L. Moody, and Billy Graham.

If the gift of speaking in tongues was so vital to the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers, then why don't we find the gift being exercised by the great men and women of God in church history? Why is speaking in tongues the exception rather than the rule?

There Is No Evidence That Tongue Speakers Speak Actual Languages

There has been no solid evidence that modern tongue speaking consists of actual languages being spoken. On numerous occasions, those who have claimed to have the gift of tongues have had their words recorded. When their tongue speaking is recorded and evaluated, there have been no instances of actual languages being spoken.

All sides agree that this is the case. This, it is claimed, is evidence that the tongue speaking that presently goes on, is not something which is supernatural in origin, but rather the product of the mind of the speaker, or some other source.

Speaking In Tongues Has Always Divided Christian Congregations

By its very nature, the gift of speaking in tongues is something that can be easily abused. Whenever tongue speaking enters a church it almost always divides the congregation. Time after time we find that this is the case. While the Holy Spirit is the great unifier of the church, tongue speaking has been the great divider. There are few, if any, exceptions to this rule. Consequently, tongue speaking cannot be viewed as something that comes from God.

These reasons, both biblical and non-biblical, have convinced many that the gift of speaking in tongues, while once a supernatural gift that God gave to the church, has been withdrawn. While some may believe they have the biblical gift of speaking in tongues, the evidence from the Word of God and from other sources indicates the Lord has withdrawn the gift.

Summary To Question 4:
Why Do Some Believe the Gift Of Tongues Has Ceased?

The gift of speaking in tongues is a legitimate spiritual gift. No Bible-believing Christian doubts this. Indeed, it is clear that it was exercised by the immediate followers of Jesus. However, not everyone agrees, as to whether this gift was to be permanent in the church. Indeed, many people believe it was only meant to serve a temporary purpose. Now that this purpose has been reached, the gift has ceased to function in the church.

A number of arguments are raised concerning the temporary nature of the gift of tongues. They consist of biblical arguments and non-biblical arguments. The biblical arguments include the following:

First, it is the nature of the gift of tongues. As we mentioned, the gift was only meant to serve as a temporary sign to unbelievers. Once certain things took place in the church, the sign of tongues was removed. Furthermore, the Bible itself limits the duration of the gift. It makes it clear that the gift is not to be seen as permanent. There is no doubt about this.

There is also the argument which is made from Greek grammar. Paul told the Corinthians that the gift would "cease of itself." This is exactly what took place late in the first century.

To many, the fact that the gift will cease of itself fits well with the meaning of the Greek term translated as "perfect." When the perfect had come, the temporary gift of tongues was withdrawn. The perfect is understood by many to mean the completed New Testament canon. Once God's Word has been entirely written, there was no more need for miraculous signs. There is also the fact that speaking in tongues, along with certain other signs, were not existent later in Paul's ministry. This is another reason to believe that the gift had ceased.

There are also non-biblical arguments for the cessation of the gift. They include the absence of the gift in church history. Indeed, we do not find this gift mentioned, at all, after the time of the apostles. Furthermore, when it is mentioned, we find that only heretical groups spoke with tongues. The mainstream church did not embrace the gift.

We also find that great saints in the past did not speak with tongues. Indeed, some of the greatest names in the history of the church did not claim to have this gift. In addition, there is no evidence that tongue-speaking consists of actual known languages. Almost everyone on both sides of this issue agrees that this is the case. There is also the matter that speaking in tongues always divides congregations. It is not something which unifies believers. Thus, how can it be considered the work of the great unifier of Christians—the Holy Spirit of God?

These arguments have convinced many that the gift of tongues is no longer active in the church. While many sincere people believe the gift still exists, and continue to exercise the gift, these people are sincerely wrong according to this perspective of the issue.

Question 5

What Are the Arguments That The Gift of Tongues Has Not Ceased But Is Still To Be Used In The Church Today?

There are Bible-believing Christians who believe that the gift of speaking in tongues was limited to first century Christianity. Indeed, they list a number of arguments as to why they believe that this is so.

However, not everyone is convinced that the supernatural gift of speaking in tongues no longer exists in the church. Those who believe the gift of tongues is still to be used in the church today, respond in the following way to the arguments against its usage.

There Is No Specific Statement As To When Tongues Will Cease

To begin with, the Bible does not give any specific statement with respect to the time the gift of tongues will cease to exist. This is crucial.

While it does indeed say that the gift of tongues will cease, it does not specifically tell us when this will occur. Therefore, the burden of proof is solely upon those who claim the gift no longer operates in the church. Indeed, they are the ones who have to establish that the gift ceased after the apostolic era.

The Nature Of The Gift Does Not Indicate It Has Ceased

Furthermore, not everyone sees speaking in tongues merely as a sign to unbelieving Israel. In fact, Paul also says tongues can be beneficial to believers. We read his words to the church at Corinth about this usage of the gift:

> Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up (1 Corinthians 14:5 ESV).

Therefore, the gift was not limited as a sign to the nation Israel. It was of benefit to the local congregations.

The Gift Of Apostle Has Not Necessarily Ceased

There are those who argue that the gift of tongues has ceased because at least one of the gifts, apostle, is no longer with us. However, it has been observed that this particular argument does not necessarily follow.

First, it is not certain that the gift of apostle has ceased. While it is true that the qualifications to be one of the "twelve apostles" cannot be met by anyone today, the gift of an apostle was certainly not limited to "the Twelve." Indeed, it is never said, or inferred, that all of the people whom the New Testament called "apostles" had actually seen the risen Christ.

Even if the gift of apostle has ceased this says nothing, one way or the other about the gift of speaking in tongues. Everyone admits that some of the spiritual gifts still exist—teacher, ruling, serving, etc. The issue revolves around whether it can be demonstrated that speaking in tongues no longer exists, not whether any other gift may or may not exist today.

The Perfect Is Still In The Future

Tongues will indeed "cease of themselves," but only when the "perfect" has come. "Perfect," most likely, refers to the perfect age when Jesus Christ returns. John wrote:

> Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is (1 John 3:2 NLT).

The perfect seems to be a reference to the Second Coming of Christ, not the completed canon. Thus, the idea that Paul had in his mind a completed Scripture when referring to "perfect" is highly unlikely. In fact, many of those who reject the sign gifts as still existing, realize that this argument does not carry much weight.

Paul's Illustrations Show That All the Gifts Are Still Necessary

The illustrations that the Apostle Paul used in 1 Corinthians 13 also demonstrates the need for all the gifts until Jesus Christ returns. He explained it this way to the Corinthians:

> When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known (1 Corinthians 13:11,12 NKJV).

In the first illustration, he speaks of the difference between childhood and maturity. The church, the body of Christ, will not reach maturity until Jesus Christ returns. This is clear from another passage from the writings of Paul:

> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes (Ephesians 4:11-14 ESV).

The practice of spiritual gifts is one of the ways in which the church is brought to this maturity. When the church has reached this point, then the gifts will be of no further use. Until that time, the gifts are necessary.

He also used the illustration of a mirror:

> When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely (1 Corinthians 13:11,12 NLT).

Today, we see only vaguely, or imperfectly. It is only when we see Jesus Christ face to face, that we will fully know all things. Again, there is the need for spiritual gifts until this state is attained.

It Is When Christ Returns That The Gift Will Cease

Paul's reference to the cessation of prophecies, knowledge, and miracles is not meant to indicate the temporary nature of these gifts during the early period of the church age. There will be no need for them, only when Jesus Christ returns to the earth. Before He comes back, the gifts are absolutely necessary.

It Is Nowhere Stated That The Gift Of Tongues Was Temporary

It must be mentioned that whatever the correct answer is to this question, nowhere, in the New Testament do we find a statement that the gift of tongues was only temporary.

To the contrary, Paul told the Corinthians not to forbid people to speak in tongues. If the gift was only temporary, then why don't we find a direct statement in the Bible that says this? This omission has to be explained by those who argue that the gift of tongues has ceased.

We Are To Seek Not, Forbid Not

Although the gift of tongues is not a sign of receiving the Holy Spirit, or the baptism with the Holy Spirit, there seems to be no biblical basis for rejecting this spiritual gift.

The New Testament appears to be saying that speaking in tongues should neither be sought, nor should it be forbidden. Nowhere are believers told to seek the gift of tongues. On the other hand, Scripture says tongue speaking should not be forbidden:

> So, dear brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and don't forbid speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:39 NLT).

Therefore, to many people, the biblical arguments are not convincing, that the gift of tongues has ceased. There is every reason to assume that the gift is still operating in the church today. Thus, when it is exercised, it should follow the rules set down in the New Testament.

This sums up the response to the biblical arguments against the continuation of the gift of tongues in the church. Those who hold this position that the gift is still valid believe that the stronger biblical arguments are on their side.

Of course, those who hold the other position, that the gift has ceased, believe that they have the most convincing arguments from Scripture.

The Non-Biblical Arguments Are Not Convincing

Those who believe the gift of tongues is still active in the church today are not convinced by the non-biblical arguments for its cessation. They give the following responses to those who give arguments, apart from the Bible, that the gift has ceased.

Church History Is Not A Reliable Guide

While it is important to observe what has happened in the history of the church, it is not an infallible guide to truth. There may have been good reasons as to why the gift of tongues was not used for long periods of time in the church. The fact that the gift fell into lack of use, does not necessarily mean that it was withdrawn. Other factors may have been involved.

Speaking With Tongues Has Not Been Limited To Heretics

It is wrong to assume that all instances of speaking in tongues have been limited to those who are heretics, or cultists. Clearly there have been godly men and women in the history of the church who have attempted to exercise the gift in a biblical way.

This is certainly still true today. Therefore, it is wrong to conclude that only cultists, heretics, or biblical illiterates, are the ones exercising the gift of speaking in tongues.

Satan Counterfeits The True Gift

The fact that we find counterfeit tongues in non-Christian religions, and cults, does not speak against the genuineness of the gift. In fact, it can be used to prove just the opposite.

A counterfeit is only made of something that is real. The fact that the gift is counterfeited, only proves that there is a genuine gift of tongues that is functioning today. Why would Satan counterfeit a gift that no longer exists? Indeed, he would not. He would only counterfeit something which was genuine.

Spiritual Men And Women Have Spoken In Tongues

While many of the great names of the faith may not have spoken in tongues, this does not mean that only spiritually immature people have attempted to exercise this gift. There are many godly men and women who sincerely believe that God has given them the gift of speaking in tongues. Whether or not they are correct in their assumption, it is clear that nobody should doubt their spiritual maturity.

Excesses Do Not Prove The Cessation Of The Gift

All will admit that there are excesses among those who claim to have the gift of tongues. Indeed, this is beyond any doubt.

However, this only proves immaturity on the part of some Christians. It has nothing to do with the main issue—does the Bible say that the gift of tongues has ceased?

One can find examples of every spiritual gift abused—teaching, pastor, giving, faith, etc. The fact that the gift of speaking in tongues has been abused, is not at all relevant to the discussion.

The issue is what does the Bible have to say about the permanence, or lack of permanence, of the gift?

Division Is Caused By Sin, Not By Speaking In Tongues

The fact that speaking in tongues has resulted in division in some churches cannot be blamed on the gift. There were divisions in the Corinthian church over the proper use of tongues.

Yet, Paul nowhere blamed the gift of tongues for these divisions. The problem was with the people. The same holds true today. If a congregation is divided over speaking in tongues, it is because there is sin in the lives of people who allow this gift to divide. In sum, there are a number of responses which are given by Bible-believers who hold that the gift of tongues is still a valid spiritual gift today and should be exercised by the church.

So How Do We Decide?

In these last two questions, we have looked at some of the evidence both pro and con, as to whether the gift of speaking in tongues is still being given by the Lord to believers.

Two Important Biblical Truths To Consider

In answering questions about this particular subject, we must consider two important biblical principles. These are found together in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians.

First, he tells us not to quench, or stifle, the Holy Spirit:

> Don't stifle the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19 CSB)

Next, Scripture tells us to "test all things:"

> But test all things. Hold on to what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21 CSB)

Often, in the question about speaking in tongues we hear people rightly emphasize the first point not to quench the work of the Spirit. Indeed, this is the last thing that we should want to do. However, we must also apply the second principle—we need to test all things by the standard of God's Word.

Therefore, instead of accepting every claim that people make about the work of the Holy Spirit, it is necessary that we evaluate the claims in light of God's Word. In other words, we are to be discerning.

Why is this so? It is because our emotions, or feelings, can lead us astray?

Our Emotions Are Unreliable

Indeed, in testing the spirits, we should not let our emotions be the determining factor. Unhappily, there are too many Christians who do exactly this. For them, the final court of appeal is how they "feel" about a certain thing. This is not the way in which we should determine what is true and what is not true. Indeed, whatever conclusion that we eventually arrive at must be based upon the written Word of God, and on it alone.

Summary To Question 5:
What Are The Arguments That The Gift Of Tongues Has
Not Ceased But Is Still To Be Used In The Church Today?

While there are arguments that the gift of tongues of speaking in tongues has ceased to be a spiritual gift that presently operates in the church, there are many who believe that the gift still functions. They believe the biblical and non-biblical arguments given to prove the gift has ceased are not convincing. They respond to the objections in the following manner.

First, it is argued that the burden of proof is on those who contend that the gift has ceased. Since the New Testament does not specifically that any gift will stop operating before the return of Jesus Christ to the earth, an airtight case must be made for the cessation of the gift before believers should stop using it.

Those who believe the gift still operates are not convinced by the arguments that are put forth. They believe that each one of them can be given a reasonable answer.

For one thing, there is no specific passage that says the gift of tongues has ceased. If the gift was only to be temporary, then why don't' we find such a passage?

Furthermore, the Apostle Paul explicitly said, "Forbid not to speak in tongues." Why would he say this if the gift was only to last a few more years?

Also, the nature of the gift does not indicate that it has ceased. While the gift was indeed a sign to unbelievers, this was not the only use of the gift. In fact, it was used in the personal prayers of the believers.

Therefore, it should not be assumed that the sign-value of tongues was the main reason or the only reason that the gift was given.

It is also contended that the gift of apostle, has not necessarily ceased. Therefore, the gift of tongues has not necessarily ceased. Even if the gift of apostle has been withdrawn, it says nothing about whether any other gift may, or may not, exist.

The word perfect, or perfection, in First Corinthians speaks of the return of Jesus Christ. Tongues will continue until that time. In fact, Paul illustrated how all the gifts are still necessary in the church.

Again, it is emphasized, that there is nothing stated in Scripture about the gifts being only temporary.

Therefore, the biblical way to deal with the subject of tongues is "seek not, forbid not."

Furthermore, the non-biblical reasons, for the rejecting of tongues are not convincing either. Church history, while helpful, is certainly not a reliable or an infallible guide. There may have been good reasons as to why the gift fell into disuse. However, we find the gift was not limited to heretics or fringe groups as some claim. Indeed, many godly people have spoken in tongues in the past, and godly men and women continue to speak in tongues to this very day.

We must also remember that Satan always counterfeits God's truth. Consequently, we are not surprised to find non-Christian groups speaking in tongues. In fact, we should ask, "Why would Satan counterfeit a gift that no longer functions in the church?" One only can counterfeit something which is genuine. In addition, abuses of the gift prove nothing as to its value. Other spiritual gifts are also abused. The real issue is whether the Bible says the gift still exists.

Finally, the divisions that we find in some of the churches are not because of speaking in tongues, it is because of sin and immaturity on the part of some believers.

When all things are considered, it is argued that the evidence shows that the gift of tongues is still necessary for the church today.

Question 6

What Did Paul Mean By The Statement, "When The Perfect Has Come the Imperfect Will Be Done Away?" (1 Corinthians 13:10)

One of the most crucial passages with respect to the subject of spiritual gifts is found in First Corinthians chapter thirteen, where Paul wrote the following:

> Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears (1 Corinthians 13:8-10 NIV).

In this passage, he has made a number of statements about certain gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is important that try to find out what they mean, since this has been a key text in the discussion over spiritual gifts.

How Is This Passage Used In The Cessationist Non-Cessationist Debate?

This passage has been a key text in the debate between cessationists and non-cessationists. Cessationists are Christians who believe that some of the original gifts of the Holy Spirit have been withdrawn by the Lord. Non-cessationists, on the other hand, believe and teach that all Spirit gifts, which were originally given, remain in the church today. Both sides view these verses as proving their case, for either the cessation, or the continuance of the gifts of the Spirit.

There have been a number of ways in which this passage has been understood by Bible-believers. They are as follows:

Paul Is Saying That Certain Gifts Are Only Temporary

Some cessationists have understood this passage to refer to the predicted time of the passing away of certain spiritual gifts. Paul wants his readers to know that there will come a time when the sign gifts are no longer necessary. This is when the "perfect" comes.

It is understood that the perfect refers to the completed canon of Scripture, or the cessation of divine revelation. Either way, these special gifts will only operate until God has completed His revelation. Once completed, these temporary sign gifts would no longer be necessary.

Paul Is Saying That All Spiritual Gifts Will Last Until Christ Returns

Non-cessationists also see this passage as referring to the time when spiritual gifts will pass away. Since the perfect seems to be an obvious reference to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and His kingdom, the imperfect gifts will be necessary until this time.

Thus, the gifts under discussion, prophecy, the word of knowledge, and speaking in tongues, are not to be used exclusively for confirming divine revelation before the Scripture was completed. They have other uses for the church during this present age. Consequently, this passage is a clear indication that all the gifts will continue until the perfect, Christ's kingdom, appears.

The Passage Says Nothing Either Way About The Time Spiritual Gifts Will Cease

There is another perspective that says Paul's purpose was not to discuss the duration of spiritual gifts. In other words, the time that certain spiritual gifts would be withdrawn was not in his mind.

Contrary to the assumptions of many cessationists and non-cessationists, when Paul said we know in part, and we prophesy in part, he was not comparing ways of acquiring knowledge through spiritual gifts, such as the gift of prophecy, and the gift of the word of knowledge. Rather Paul is comparing the states of knowledge that believers now have, imperfect, with the knowledge that all will someday have—perfect, or complete knowledge.

His point is that presently all believers have limited knowledge of Jesus Christ. However, someday our knowledge will be complete though it will not be exhaustive. The subject of the duration of the gifts is not in his mind.

Therefore, it is wrong for either side, cessationist or non-cessationist, to use this passage to determine when spiritual gifts are meant to cease. The answer to that question must be determined elsewhere.

There Are Three Important Issues Involved In This Discussion

With these different viewpoints about what Paul is saying in this passage we can simplify the issues to three basic questions that need to be answered. They are as follows:

1. What are the meanings of the terms, imperfect and perfect, as Paul is using them here?

2. What is the nature of the spiritual gifts that are under discussion. In other words, are they temporary, or permanent?

3. Is Paul attempting to specify how long certain spiritual gifts will last in this passage or is he saying something else?

Issue 1: The Various Views As To The Meaning Of The Perfect And Imperfect

There have been a number of views concerning the meaning of the term "perfect." They include: the completed canon of Scripture, the completion of divine revelation, the maturity of the body of Christ, and the return of Christ. We will examine each of these options.

Option 1: The Perfect Refers To The Completed Canon Of Scripture: Some Gifts Will Then Cease

One view sees the perfect as referring to the completed canon of Scripture. When Paul wrote to the Corinthian (around A.D. 56) there were a number of New Testament books that remained to be written. These include 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Titus, 1 and 2 Timothy, Philemon, Hebrews, Jude, 1 and 2 Peter and the Book of Revelation.

It is also possible that none of the four gospels had been completed at this time. Therefore, New Testament Scripture was just beginning to be written. Consequently, believers in Jesus Christ had only "part" of the New Testament revelation that God was to give them. When the last book of the New Testament was written, then God's revelation to humanity was complete.

Thus, nothing more needed to be added. Since God has now told humanity everything necessary pertaining to salvation and godly living there is no longer any need for a further word from God. The revelation was then "perfect," or complete.

In addition, we find that the perfect is compared to the imperfect, or incomplete. At that particular time, the early church had incomplete, or imperfect, knowledge of Jesus Christ. It was not until the New Testament was completed did they receive the full picture of Him. Therefore, the perfect refers to the completed written canon of Holy Scripture—the Old and the New Testament.

While the New Testament was in the process of being written, God provided a number of temporary gifts for believers to employ. These sign gifts helped them understand certain New Testament truths. These temporary gifts included the three that Paul mentioned—prophecy, the word of knowledge, and speaking in tongues. Each of these gifts was given for the specific purpose of confirming the New Testament revelation.

Consequently, this view assumes that these gifts mentioned were for the specific purpose of God giving divine revelation to His people, before the New Testament was completed.

The Perfect Cannot Refer To Christ

It is argued that the "perfect" in this context cannot refer to Jesus Christ because the words *to telion* in the Greek are in the neuter gender. If Paul were referring to a person, he would have not stated it in this way. Therefore, the subject must be something other than Christ.

These reasons have led many to assume that Paul was referring to the completed canon of Scripture when he said the imperfect would pass away, and then the perfect would come. It makes sense of the context, and it explains why the Lord gave certain miraculous spiritual gifts for a limited time.

Response To Canon View

There are a number of objections that have been raised against the canon view. They include the following:

How Do We Know What Was in Paul's Mind?

Those who assert the canon view, believe that this is what Paul had in mind when speaking of the "perfect." However, how is anyone able to know what was in Paul's mind? Unless he specifically tells us what he was referring to, we simply cannot know. It is impossible to know what he was thinking.

Nothing In The Context Indicates He Is Speaking Of Completed Scripture

Furthermore, there is absolutely nothing in the context that would indicate that this is what he was referring to. The Greek words, *to telion* mean "the end, purpose, or completed." There is nothing inherent in the meaning of this word that speaks of a concept of written Scripture.

Thus, this interpretation of the "perfect" meaning the "canon" must be read into the passage.

Paul, Who Received Direct Revelation, Only Had Partial Knowledge

The Apostle Paul received direct revelation from Jesus. He described his doctrine in the following manner:

> I received my message from no human source, and no one taught me. Instead, I received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:12 NLT).

While Paul received direct revelation from the Lord, he could speak as only having "partial knowledge." All will admit that the Bible does not tell us everything we would like to know about God.

Therefore, even with the completed Scripture, our knowledge is still only partial. Consequently, we may ask, "Would Paul speak of Scripture as being "perfection" or "completion?" Even with the revelation that God has given us in Scripture our knowledge about Him is anything but complete.

It Assumes These Three Gifts Were Only For The Purpose Of Giving Revelation

The canon view assumes that the gifts mentioned were given specifically as means to reveal God's Word to His people before Scripture was completed. This assumption, however, does not seem to be supported by the facts. While these gifts may have been used to reveal God's truth to His people, they certainly had other uses.

For example, the gift of prophecy was used for other purposes. Paul wrote about this to the Corinthians. He said:

> On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation (1 Corinthians 14:3 ESV).

In this instance, the gift of prophecy is for upbuilding, encouraging, and consoling, the believers in Jesus Christ.

The gift of tongues was also used for private prayer. Paul wrote the following to the church at Corinth:

> For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful (1 Corinthians 14:14 NIV).

There does not seem to be any "sign" value in this particular use of the gift. Therefore, these gifts, may have been randomly selected by Paul, to illustrate the superiority of love over all of the gifts. In other words, he merely used these three gifts as representative of all spiritual gifts rather than trying to tell us when they would cease to operate.

This View Is Of Recent Origin

The view that the perfect refers to the completed canon of Scripture is of relatively recent origin in the history of the church. While this is not determinative as to whether it is true or false, it is something that should be noted.

If the "perfect" was a reference to the canon of Scripture, then we should expect a number of commentators in the history of the church to have held this view. However, this is not what we find.

This View Is A Reaction To The Abuse Of The Gifts

Some feel the "canon view" was a reaction to the abuse of certain spiritual gifts. Instead of insisting, that those who exercised the gifts should simply obey the rules that are given in Scripture, it was contended that these sign-gifts ceased at the end of the first century. Declaring the gifts were no longer operating solved the problem of abuse. This, therefore, is an example of coming up with a new doctrine to deal with a contemporary problem. This is not how Bible doctrine should be developed.

These reasons have led many to reject the canon view as the proper understanding of the "perfect." It does not seem to fit the evidence.

Option 2: The Perfect Refers To The End Of Divine Revelation: Some Gifts Will Then Cease

There is another view that is similar to the canon view. The "perfect" that the Apostle Paul had in mind was not the completed canon of Scripture, but rather the end of divine revelation. Once God completed the

revelation process to humanity these particular gifts, prophecy, knowledge, and tongues, were no longer necessary. The purpose for these gifts had been completed.

The same objections would apply to this view, as to the "canon view." Basically, it assumes that the three gifts mentioned were all for the purpose of giving divine revelation before a written Word from the Lord existed. However, that seems to limit the ways in which these gifts were used in the New Testament.

Option 3: The Perfect Refers To The Maturing Of The Body Of Christ: Some Gifts May Cease Then

There is also the perspective that the perfect refers to the maturing of the body of Jesus Christ—the church. It is argued that this maturing of the church occurred after the apostolic age, but sometime before the Second Coming of Christ. The support for this view is that Paul used the same Greek word elsewhere for Christian maturity.

In addition, the illustration he used, of comparing childhood to maturity, illustrates the point. The church in its infancy was like a child. When the church grew out of its infancy it no longer needed some of the original gifts for it had reached a stage of maturity.

Problems With The Maturing Of The Body Of Christ View

While this view has its supporters, it too has some problems. When did the body of Christ become mature? Can anyone say that the church today is in a mature state?

If this is the correct understanding of what Paul had in mind, then it seems to argue that all of the spiritual gifts must still be around today, for the church is certainly not mature!

Option 4: The Perfect Refers To The Return Of Christ: No Gift Will Cease Until Then

Another popular view sees the perfect as referring to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The evidence for this view can be summed up as follows:

The Return Of Christ Fits The Context

There are a number of reasons as to why this view makes sense. For one thing, it fits the context of what the Apostle Paul had been writing about. Paul speaks about the return of Christ in this context. He wrote:

> For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known (1 Corinthians 13:12 NIV).

Paul spoke about seeing Jesus face-to-face. We will only see Him face to face when He comes again. John wrote about this wonderful promise. He put it this way:

> Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2 NKJV).

It is only at that time that the limited spiritual gifts will pass away. Until then, everything that God has given to believers is necessary for the church to use. This is consistent, with what Paul had earlier written about the gifts to the Corinthians. At the very beginning of his letter, he wrote:

> He has enriched your church with the gifts of eloquence and every kind of knowledge. This shows that what I told you about Christ is true. Now you have every spiritual gift you need as you eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:5-7 NLT).

Paul said that the spiritual gifts are necessary while the people wait for the return of Christ. This is another indication that they will continue until He comes back.

Problems With The Return Of Christ View

While this is a popular view, objections have been brought forward against it. Some feel that the analogy that Paul gave, with seeing through a mirror dimly, does not fit with referring to the return of Christ.

Option 5: The Perfect Refers To The Return of Christ: Some Gifts May Cease Before Then

There are some who hold that Paul was referring to the return of Jesus Christ when he spoke of the "perfect," yet they think that this does not necessarily mean that all of the gifts will continue until that time. Some argue that this passage says nothing about the time these gifts will cease.

Problems With This View

While this view is possible, there is nothing in the context that would suggest that some of the gifts would cease before the perfect comes. Indeed, it clearly says they will cease when the perfect comes.

How These Views Relate To The Issue of Sign Gifts

Those who hold the views, that the perfect refers to the completed canon of Scripture, or the completion of divine revelation, believe that certain gifts, known as the sign gifts, have now ceased.

The view that the perfect refers to the maturing of the body of Christ can hold either position with respect to the so-called sign gifts. In other words, these gifts may or may not have ceased with the maturing of the body of Christ.

Most who hold the view that the perfect refers to the coming of Christ believe the gifts will remain until His return. However, there are some who hold this view who contend that this passage does not necessarily say that all the gifts must continue until Christ comes. They contend that some of the gifts may cease before Christ returns.

Others argue that there is nothing in this discussion that directly answers the question, as to the permanence or non-permanence of certain spiritual gifts.

Issue 2: What Is The Nature Of The Gifts Of Prophecy, Knowledge, And Tongues?

In determining what Paul meant by the "perfect" we must also understand what Paul meant by these three spiritual gifts he used in this passage—prophecy, knowledge, and tongues. Was he referring to speaking in tongues, prophecy, and knowledge as the supernatural means that God was using to reveal His Word to humanity? Was he limiting their use to only this purpose?

If this is what he had in mind with these gifts, then they have ceased because the New Testament is complete. There is no need for any further revelation from God. However, if he was not thinking of these gifts solely as the means of God completing His revelation to humanity, then these gifts have not necessarily ceased. It is possible that they would continue throughout the entire church age.

Issue 3: Is Paul Trying To Tell Us When Spiritual Gifts Will Cease In This Passage?

The final issue we will look at is, in one sense, the most important. Almost all of the arguments surrounding what Paul meant in this passage assume that he is attempting to pinpoint the time when certain spiritual gifts will cease.

However, we should ask ourselves, "Is this assumption valid?" It is possible that his discussion has nothing to do with the time that spiritual gifts may or may not cease.

When Paul says the perfect will come, he seems to be referring to the time when Christ returns. However, this may be irrelevant to the issue of the duration of spiritual gifts. This is because his emphasis seems to be on our present imperfect knowledge, which he compares with our future knowledge which will be perfect or complete.

All believers agree that when Christ comes our knowledge will be more complete, or greater, than our present incomplete knowledge. If this is what Paul is stressing, then the time that spiritual gifts will cease is not an issue.

When he said that prophecy, knowledge, and tongues will cease, it was merely illustrating the fact that they will be unnecessary when Christ comes. This is because our knowledge will be more complete.

Therefore, his subject is the state of knowledge we now have with the state of knowledge that we will have. He is saying nothing about how that knowledge is acquired or when the methods of acquiring this knowledge will end. Paul is emphasizing that our incomplete state of knowledge will end, not that spiritual gifts will end.

If this is what Paul had in mind, then this passage has nothing about how long spiritual gifts will be used. It is only comparing the imperfect, our present knowledge, with the perfect, our future knowledge when Christ returns.

Simply stated, if Paul is writing in this passage about our present content of knowledge, which is limited, as opposed to what we will have in the future, a more complete knowledge, then he is not addressing the subject of the time when spiritual gifts will stop operating.

Objections To This View

There are those who would argue that Paul is indeed specifically speaking about spiritual gifts—the act of prophesying, the act of receiving and giving knowledge, and the act of speaking in tongues. They will all someday cease. Consequently, this passage does have in mind the subject of when spiritual gifts will cease.

It is interesting to note that both cessationists, and non-cessationists, argue this way. In other words, each of them contends that this passage answers the question as to whether or not these spiritual gifts will stop operating. However, they come to the exact opposite conclusion as to what Paul meant!

All Of These Views Are Held By Bible-believing Christians

Our last point is to emphasize that there are good, Bible-believing, Christians that hold to each of these viewpoints. The issues are complex. Consequently, any position we hold on this issue should be held with humility and grace.

Thus, we must realize that there will always be many good people who differ from our point of view, no matter what it might be. This should be understood and appreciated.

Summary To Question 6:
What Did Paul Mean By The Statement, "When The Perfect Has Come The Imperfect Will Be Done Away?" (1 Corinthians 13:10)

In First Corinthians 13:10 Paul mentions three spiritual gifts—prophecy, knowledge, and speaking in tongues. He stated there will come a time when these gifts will no longer exist. Paul said that when the perfect comes these partial things will be done away with.

This passage has been viewed to have important implications regarding the subject of spiritual gifts. Indeed, those who believe the gift of tongues still operates, as well as those who believe that it has ceased, appeal to this verse for support. The issues can be simply stated as follows.

First, it is the meaning of the word perfect. To what does it refer?

Some feel that it is a reference to the completed canon of Scripture. When the written Scripture is completed then these temporary gifts will be withdrawn.

In response to this, there is nothing in the context to indicate that Paul had the canon in mind, when he spoke of the "perfect."

Others believe Paul was speaking of divine revelation when he wrote of "the perfect. Once God had revealed His last words to humanity that would become Holy Scripture, then there was no more need for certain gifts. This includes the gift of speaking in tongues.

This view has the same problems as the previous one. Nothing in the context seems to refer to divine revelation.

There is the position that Paul was speaking of the maturing of the body of Christ—the church. When the church reached maturity, the Lord would then withdraw certain gifts of the Spirit.

Again, there is nothing in the context that indicates this is what He was writing about. Furthermore, when did the New Testament church ever reach maturity?

One of the most popular views sees it referring to the coming of Christ. Jesus will bring everything to completion, or perfection, when He returns. Interestingly, there are those on both sides, of the speaking in tongues issue who believe that this is what Paul had in mind.

One side says all the gifts are necessary until Jesus Christ returns to the earth. They believe this is Paul's point. These gifts are only to be used until that time because there will be no need for them when Jesus comes back. However, they will not be withdrawn before that time.

In response, the other side says that even if the coming of Christ is in view this does not necessarily mean that every spiritual gift will continue until that time. There is also the perspective that Paul was not referring to the time when spiritual gifts would cease. What he was doing was using certain spiritual gifts to illustrate the incomplete knowledge that we now have. In other words, these gifts were merely for illustration purposes; he was not attempting to teach us when these spiritual gifts would cease to exist. If this is true, then it is irrelevant to appeal to this verse.

This is a complicated issue, with good Bible-believing Christians holding each of these views. Therefore, it is certainly not a test of the spirituality of a person as to how they interpret what Paul means here. This is certainly room for disagreeing, agreeably. Consequently, whatever position one takes on this matter should be held with grace and humility. Indeed, there is still much that each of us can learn about this question.

Question 7

Is There A Difference Between The Gift of Tongues And The Sign Of Tongues?

There are some people who make the distinction between the gift of tongues, and the sign of tongues. They argue that what we find in the Book of Acts is the sign of tongues, while in First Corinthians it is speaking of something different—the gift of tongues. Is this a distinction which the Bible makes?

Tongues Is A Spiritual Gift

First, we must acknowledge that Scripture speaks of speaking in tongues as being a spiritual gift. Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the various gifts which the Lord gives to believers:

> He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and to another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to know whether it is really the Spirit of God or another spirit that is speaking. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, and another is given the ability to interpret what is being said (1 Corinthians 12:10 NLT).

Here he lists speaking in tongues, the ability to speak in unknown languages, as a gift. Therefore, there is such a thing as the "gift of tongues." The Bible also says that tongues are also a sign. He wrote to the Corinthians:

> Speaking in other tongues, then, is intended as a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is not for unbelievers but for believers (1 Corinthians 14:22 CSB).

Does this mean there are two different gifts? How can speaking in tongues be a spiritual gift as well as a sign?

There Was No Interpreter Present In The Book of Acts

One argument given for this position is the use of an interpreter in the church of Corinth. When tongue speaking occurred at the church meeting it was necessary for an interpreter to be present. However, in the Book of Acts, there was no such interpreter present. The content of the message was not what was stressed, but rather that the tongue-speaking was a sign from God that the Holy Spirit had come down in a unique way upon the various groups of people. Therefore, the tongues-speaking, as recorded in the Book of Acts, was a sign to the unbelievers, while the speaking in tongues that were exercised in Corinth was a spiritual gift that was used in a church service that needed an interpretation.

We Should Be Careful About Our Conclusions

The idea of having an interpreter present does not necessarily mean there is a distinction between the sign of tongues, and the gift of tongues. It merely means that the speaking in tongues can function in a number of different ways. It can be a sign of God's Spirit coming in a historical situation, or it can be a spiritual gift to be used in the church meeting. Even if there is a clear distinction between the "sign" of tongues and the "gift" of tongues, we should be careful about drawing any conclusions.

Summary To Question 7:
Is There A Difference Between the Gift of Tongues And The Sign Of Tongues?

There are those who make a distinction between the sign of speaking in tongues, and the gift of tongues. Indeed, they see them as two entirely different things.

The Book of Acts records the supernatural ability of certain people to speak in a language which they never before learned. These episodes were meant to be signs to the other people who were present.

However, the tongue-speaking in Corinth is an entirely different matter. Here, we find the gift of tongues being spoken of, not the sign of tongues.

In addition, in Corinth there was to be an interpreter present when the gift was exercised. Yet, we find that there was no such interpreter present when the sign of tongues was exercised in historical situations. Thus, it seems that we are looking at two different things.

This, however, does not necessarily mean that there is the gift of tongues and also a sign of tongues. The gift itself can act as a sign in certain situations.

The problem, which everyone has, is our limited amount of knowledge about this subject. The Bible does not give any further explanations. Therefore, any conclusions we arrive at must be guardedly held.

Question 8

In What Sense Is Speaking in Tongues A Sign To Those Who Do Not Believe? (1 Corinthians 14:22)

There is a passage in First Corinthians where Paul states the purpose of speaking in tongues. He says that it is a sign to unbelievers:

> Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:22 NIV).

According to this passage speaking in tongues is a sign to unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign for believers.

Does Paul Contradict Himself?

This is a difficult passage because it seems to contradict what Paul had earlier said. Indeed, when we read this verse in context it seems like a contradiction. Here is what he said in context.

> In the Law it is written: "With other tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord." Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers. So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and inquirers or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? (1 Corinthians 14:21-23 NIV).

First, he says that tongues are a sign to unbelievers. He then seemingly contradicts himself, when he says that if everyone in the congregation speaks in tongues, unbelievers will think they are all crazy. How can it be a sign to unbelievers, if they assume the tongue-speakers are out of their minds?

Was This A Copyists Error?

The seeming inconsistencies lead the English Bible translator J.B. Phillips to change the text from which he was translating. In a footnote in his "Phillips Translation," *The New Testament in Modern English*, he explained his reasons:

> This is the sole instance of the translator's departing from the accepted text. He felt bound to conclude from the sense of the next three verses, that we have here either a slip of the pen on the part of Paul, or more probably, a copyist's error.

Others have joined Phillips in amending the text in this verse. However, we do not have to resort to doing this. There are a number of ways in which this difficulty can be solved, without insisting on a contradiction in Paul's thinking, or assuming that a copying mistake was made when the original letter to the Corinthians was first sent out.

No Manuscript Evidence Exists For Making This Change

Furthermore, there is no manuscript evidence, whatsoever, that would suggest that the text originally read differently. Those who alter the text in this verse are guilty of tampering with the Word of God. This is a serious offense! As we will see, there are a several ways in which this verse can be understood without assuming a contradiction. They are as follows.

Congregational Tongue-Speaking Is A Sign That Everyone Is Crazy

Some feel the answer to this dilemma is simple. Individuals, speaking in tongues one-by-one can be a sign to an unbeliever of God's truth. However, if everyone in a congregation speaks in tongues at the same time, it is then a sign to the unbeliever that the people are indeed crazy!

Therefore, Paul is arguing that it is essential to follow the rules when the gift of speaking in tongues is operating—only one person may speak at a time and there must be an interpreter present. Individuals, who speak in tongues, with an interpreter present, are exercising the gift in the proper way. Congregational tongue-speaking is always forbidden.

Was It A Sign Of Judgment On The Nation Israel?

Some believe the sign of tongues was meant to be one of judgment upon the nation of Israel. They are the unbelievers to whom Paul is addressing. This is consistent with the Old Testament quotation that Paul cited:

> Very well then, with foreign lips and strange tongues God will speak to this people, to whom he said, "This is the resting place, let the weary rest"; and, "This is the place of repose"—but they would not listen (Isaiah 28:11,12 NIV).

This idea of an alien, or foreign, language goes back to the curses pronounced by Moses against the nation. If the people disobeyed the Lord, then the following judgment was promised:

> The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth, like an eagle swooping down, a nation whose language you will not understand (Deuteronomy 28:49 NIV).

This speaks of the judgment of the Lord on disobedient Israel, by means of a foreign nation. The sign that Israel is being judged is the sound of people babbling in a foreign tongue.

We have the same situation here. The sign of tongues was one of a curse to the Jewish nation. They had rejected the Messiah. Consequently, the Lord, in the same way He did in the past, judged the people with the sound of people babbling in a foreign language.

Less than twenty years after Paul wrote First Corinthians the nation of Israel was mightily punished by God for the rejection of Jesus. The city of Jerusalem, and the temple, were destroyed. Those who were not killed were sent into exile. Judgment from God had arrived!

Was It A Sign Of God's Favor?

There is the opposite position that says the sign of tongues was a sign of God's favor to the unbelieving world. The fact that God is being praised in numerous different languages, demonstrates that the gospel is going out to all nations. This is what happened at Pentecost. The Book of Acts tells us what took place:

> When this sound occurred, the multitude came together and was confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. And they were astounded and amazed, saying,] "Look, aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? How is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites; those who live in Mesopotamia, in Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, (Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own languages the magnificent acts of God." And they were all astounded and perplexed, saying to one another, "What could this be?" (Acts 2:6-12 CSB).

Therefore, from this perspective, speaking in tongues is a sign to the unbeliever that God's message is going out into the entire world.

Each of these views is possible. Consequently, we do not have to resort to saying that Paul contradicted himself when he wrote this statement, neither do we have to amend the text. The text, as it stands, can be read in harmony with the rest of the teachings of Paul.

Summary To Question 8:
In What Sense Is Speaking in Tongues A Sign To Those Who Do Not Believe (1 Corinthians 14:22)

The Apostle Paul wrote that speaking in tongues constitutes a sign for unbelievers. Yet this seems to contradict what he earlier said about the gift—unbelievers will think believers are crazy when they hear them speaking in tongues.

This seeming contradiction caused the British Bible translator, J.B. Phillips, to change the text in First Corinthians 14:22, so that it would harmonize.

However, this is not only unnecessary, it also sets a horrible precedent. Since there is no manuscript evidence whatsoever for a different reading in this passage, we should not resort to altering the text merely because we do not understand how Paul's statements can be reconciled.

Furthermore, the idea that speaking in tongues are a sign for the unbeliever can be understood in a number of different ways without assuming some sort of contradiction in the text as it now stands. A number of points need to be made.

The simplest answer is that if everyone in the congregation is speaking in tongues at the same time, then the unbeliever, to whom the sign of tongues is directed, will think that everyone in the place is crazy.

However, if tongue-speaking follows the rules, with one person speaking at a time, and the speech is interpreted, then the unbeliever will be convicted by what they hear. Paul is simply illustrating why it is essential to follow the rules which he has laid down.

Others think it is a sign of judgment upon the unbelieving nation of Israel. In the past, they were judged by nations that spoke in foreign tongues, or foreign languages. The same thing is true here. Their judgment for rejecting Jesus as the Messiah is the sound of believers speaking in languages in which they do not understand. It would remind them of what Moses warned would have happened if they had disobeyed God's command.

There is also the view that the sound of foreign languages is actually a sign of God's favor. The gift of tongues at Pentecost showed that the gospel of Jesus Christ was going out to the entire world. It is a sign to the unbeliever that the good news of salvation is being proclaimed to everyone, Jew and Gentile alike.

The fact that there are a number of possible interpretations of what Paul meant without assuming some sort of contradiction shows us that we should not attempt to alter the text in this verse. Paul did not contradict himself! Any of these three options is possible.

Question 9

Must A Person Speak In Tongues To Be Saved?

Some people actually believe and teach that all genuine Christians must speak in tongues. In other words, the reality of their faith is linked to the ability to exercise the sign of speaking in tongues. Simply put, if they do not speak in tongues, then they are not saved. Those who advocate this position usually refer to a statement by the Apostle Paul:

> I would like every one of you to speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:5 NIV).

They take this as a requirement for salvation in Christ.

The Situation At Caesarea

Also cited are examples in the Book of Acts. The sign of speaking in tongues convinced Peter that the Gentiles had believed in Jesus. We read the following:

> While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God (Acts 10:44-46 NIV).

The sign that these people believed in Christ was their ability to speak in tongues.

The Situation At Ephesus

There is another example found in Paul's experience with certain disciples in Ephesus. The Bible records what happened as follows:

> On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. There were about twelve men in all (Acts 19:5-7 ESV).

Again, we find the sign that these people believed in Jesus was speaking in tongues.

The examples have caused some to argue that the "sign" of tongues accompanies belief in Jesus. Is this "the sign" we should expect from everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as their Savior?

Salvation Is Not Accompanied By Outward Signs

It is clear that the Bible nowhere equates the sign of tongues with salvation through Jesus Christ. In fact, there is no outward sign to be expected when a person becomes a Christian.

For example, on the Day of Pentecost three thousand people trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior. Yet, there is no indication that any of them spoke in tongues or exhibited any other outward sign of belief.

This is true with every conversion recorded in the Book of Acts. There are only two exceptions to this—the Gentiles (Acts 10) and certain disciples in Ephesus (Acts 19).

It was only on these two occasions, that speaking in tongues came at the same time that people initially believed in Jesus. Otherwise, there was no such thing as "speaking in tongues" upon belief.

Salvation Is A Free Gift

The Bible teaches that salvation is a free gift from God. It is accepted by faith and no visible sign must accompany it. Paul made this clear in his letter to the Ephesians:

> You were saved by faith in God, who treats us much better than we deserve. This is God's gift to you, and not anything you have done on your own. It isn't something you have earned, so there is nothing you can brag about (Ephesians 2:8,9 CEV).

Our salvation is not based upon anything that we do. Jesus Christ has done everything on our behalf. Our only responsibility is to believe in Him.

Not Everyone Speaks In Tongues

The Apostle Paul asked the following question to the Corinthians about the gifts of healing, speaking in tongues, or languages, never learned, and the gift of interpretation of tongues:

> Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in languages? Do all interpret? (1 Corinthians 12:30 CSB).

This sentence is structured in Greek, in such a way that it demands that the answer be "No." All believers do *not* speak in tongues. This settles the issue as to whether speaking in tongues must accompany belief in Jesus Christ.

He Wanted All Of Them To Prophesy, Not Speak With Tongues

When the Apostle Paul said to the Corinthians that he wished all of them spoke in tongues, he was not advocating that they do this. The remainder of the verse reads as follows:

> I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified (1 Corinthians 14:5 NIV).

The thrust of what he is saying is that he would prefer that they all prophesy.

Furthermore, Paul wrote that speaking in tongues is not a sign to the believer, but rather it is a sign to the unbeliever. He put it this way:

> Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers (1 Corinthians 14:22 NIV).

Consequently, we find nothing in Scripture that indicates any outward sign accompanies belief in Jesus, certainly not speaking in tongues!

Summary To Question 9:
Must A Person Speak In Tongues To Be Saved?

There are some who argue that belief in Jesus Christ is accompanied by the outward sign of speaking in tongues. A number of examples are given.

First, they point out that Paul said to the Corinthians that he wanted everyone to speak in tongues.

In addition, when the Gentiles first believed in Jesus Christ, we find them speaking in tongues upon their conversion experience.

There is also the example of certain men which Paul met in Ephesus. When they believed on Jesus Christ, they immediately spoke in tongues.

Consequently, some see speaking in tongues as a sign of receiving Christ as Savior. However, this is not what the Scripture teaches. Indeed, there is no visible sign that accompanies salvation. This includes the gift of speaking in tongues.

Furthermore, only twice in the Book of Acts do we find the sign of speaking in tongues accompanying belief in Jesus. On every other occasion, there was no outward sign that came with belief.

Moreover, when Paul asked the question to the Corinthians, "Do all speak in tongues?" the question is structured in such a way as to demand an answer of "No!"

It is thus clear that there is no such thing as the "sign" of tongues that always accompanies belief in Jesus.

Therefore, nobody should insist that a person must speak in tongues to give evidence that they have genuinely trusted Jesus Christ as Savior.

Question 10

Is Speaking in Tongues Always A Result Of Being Filled, Or Baptized, With The Holy Spirit?

There are Christians who contend that believers are supposed to speak in tongues as a sign of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Is this what the Bible teaches? Should we expect this to be the experience of all those who believe in Jesus?

The Day Of Pentecost

We do find that on the Day of Pentecost, the Bible says that the disciples of Jesus Christ when they were filled with the Holy Spirit supernaturally spoke with languages which they had never before learned." We read the following:

> Then they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them (Acts 2:4 CSB).

The disciples of Jesus spoke in these languages when they were filled with the Spirit. The fact that this happened to Jesus' disciples has caused some people to think that this sign of speaking in tongues should be the experience of every believer who receives the Holy Spirit. Is this true?

There Is The Only Instance Of This Occurring

When we search the Scripture, we find that "speaking in tongues," or speaking in languages never before learned, does not occur when each and every believer is filled with the Holy Spirit.

In fact, this episode in the Book of Acts is the *only* case in the New Testament that speaking in tongues is mentioned in connection with the filling of the Holy Spirit. There are two other instances where the Holy Spirit came upon believers, and they spoke with tongues. In one case, the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles when they heard the Word of God. The Bible says:

> Even as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who had heard the message. The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles, too. And there could be no doubt about it, for they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter asked, "Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?" (Acts 10:44-47 NLT).

This was their initial experience with the work of the Holy Spirit. Yet we are not told that they were "filled" with the Holy Spirit on this occasion.

In Ephesus, the Bible says the Holy Spirit came upon certain disciples. The Book of Acts records it as follows:

> And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying (Acts 19:6 ESV).

As was true with the Gentiles, this was the first experience these disciples had with the Holy Spirit. Yet we are not told that these men were "filled with the Spirit."

Therefore, in neither of these instances do we find that these people, who spoke in languages which were unknown to them, were said to have been "filled with the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:4 is the only verse where the filling of the Spirit is connected with speaking in tongues.

This seems to be due to the fact that the disciples were already believers when they were said to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The Gentiles, in Acts 10, and the disciples in Ephesus, in Acts 19, had not been believers in Jesus Christ before their experience.

Speaking in Tongues Is The Exception, Not The Rule

Thus, speaking in tongues, in connection with the filling of the Holy Spirit, was the exception, not the rule. In *every* other example in the New Testament there was no supernatural "speaking in tongues" when people were said to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, was filled with the Holy Spirit when she greeted Mary—the mother of Jesus. In the Gospel of Luke, we read the following account of her being filled with the Spirit:

> When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped inside her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she exclaimed with a loud cry: "Blessed are you among women, and your child will be blessed! How could this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For you see, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped for joy inside me. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill what he has spoken to her!" (Luke 1:41-45 CSB).

While Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, no tongue-speaking is mentioned in reference to her being filled.

Zechariah

Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, prophesied, or spoke for the Word of the Lord, when he was filled with the Spirit. Luke also records what took place when the Spirit came upon him:

> And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying (Luke 1:67 ESV).

Like the case with his wife Elizabeth, there is nothing said about him speaking in tongues when he was filled with the Spirit.

Jesus

The Bible says that Jesus was filled with the Spirit after His baptism. Again, we read what Luke had to say:

> And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness (Luke 4:1 ESV).

When Jesus was filled with the Spirit He was led to be tempted by the devil. Yet, there is no record of Him ever speaking in tongues.

Peter

When Peter was filled with the Spirit, he boldly proclaimed Jesus Christ to the religious leaders. The Bible says:

> Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel" (Acts 4:8 NKJV).

Yet this filling of the Holy Spirit did not result in him speaking in tongues.

The Early Church

The early church preached the message of Jesus Christ with boldness when they were filled with the Spirit. The Book of Acts says:

> When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31 NRSV UE).

Again, there is no reference to tongue speaking.

Stephen

The martyr Stephen saw the glorified Christ when he was filled with the Spirit. We read the following:

> But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55 NKJV).

However, there is no record of him speaking with tongues.

Conclusion: The Filling Of The Holy Spirit Is Not Accompanied By Speaking With Tongues

Therefore, it is wrong to conclude that the filling of the Holy Spirit will always cause a person to speak in tongues. Except for the one instance on the Day of Pentecost, the filling of the Holy Spirit is never connected to speaking with tongues.

Summary To Question 10:
Is Speaking In Tongues Always A Result Of Being Filled, Or Baptized, With The Holy Spirit?

It has sometimes been claimed that speaking in tongues, or speaking in a language never before learned, is a sign of receiving the Holy Spirit. Yet, as we search the Scripture, we will find that this is not the case at all.

Indeed, there is one instance in the Book of Acts where people spoke in tongues when they were specifically said to have been filled with the Holy Spirit. This is the only place in the New Testament where "speaking in tongues" is connected with the filling of the Spirit.

Yet, we are given numerous examples of people being filled with the Spirit of God who did not speak in tongues. This includes the parents of John the Baptist—Zechariah and Elizabeth.

Jesus was filled with the Spirit, but it is never recorded that He spoke with tongues. Simon Peter is another example of one who was said to have been filled with the Holy Spirit without exercising any sign of tongues. The early church, when gathered together, was said to have been "filled with the Spirit." However, we again find no reference to them speaking in tongues. Thus, none of these instances, where people were filled with God's Spirit, included speaking with tongues.

Therefore, we should not insist that a person speak in tongues when he or she is filled with the Holy Spirit.

Indeed, since the Bible makes no connection between the two, then neither should we.

Question 11

Should A Person Seek To Speak In Tongues?

There are those who encourage every believer to seek to speak in tongues. The following passage from Paul is usually cited as evidence that this should be the case:

> I would like every one of you to speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:5 NIV).

This seems to be an encouragement for each and every believer to seek the gift of speaking in tongues. Elsewhere Paul wrote of his own experience with speaking in tongues:

> I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you (1 Corinthians 14:18 NIV).

These passages supposedly encourage every believer to seek this particular spiritual gift. Therefore, it is argued, every believer should seek to speak in tongues.

Not Every Believer Should Seek To Speak in Tongues

However, we find the Bible making no such command that every believer should seek to speak in tongues. We can make the following observations.

The Verse Does Not Say All Should Speak With Tongues

The verse used to advocate all believers should seek to speak in tongues needs to be read in its entirety. It reads as follows:

> I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified (1 Corinthians 14:5 NIV).

Paul was not saying that everyone should seek to speak in tongues. Instead, he is contrasting the gift of tongues with the gift of prophecy. Notice that he sees prophesying as something which is more desired than speaking in tongues. The key is to exercise the gift to build up the church—the body of Christ.

Tongues Is A Gift From God For Some Believers

The Scriptures says speaking in tongues is a gift from God. But the Bible does not encourage or command the believer to seek to speak in tongues. Paul asked the question:

> Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? (1 Corinthians 12:30 NIV).

The way the sentence is structured in Greek demands a "No" answer. The New Living Translation renders the verse in this manner:

> 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! (1 Corinthians 12:30 NLT).

We find something similar in the New English Translation:

> Not all are apostles, are they? Not all are prophets, are they? Not all are teachers, are they? Not all perform miracles, do they? Not all have gifts of healing, do they? Not all speak in tongues, do they? Not all interpret, do they? (1 Corinthians 12:30 NET).

This is the proper understanding of what Paul is saying to them. He emphasizes that not every believer has these particular gifts. Therefore, not everyone has the gift of speaking in other languages, or tongues.

The Bible Does Not Say We Should Seek This Gift

There is something else that we must emphasize. There is no passage in Scripture that says that believers should seek the gift of speaking in tongues. None!

If the Scripture does not command believers to seek to speak in tongues, then neither should anyone else command them to do this. Indeed, we should not go beyond what the Scripture says.

God Gives The Gifts As He Wills

The Bible teaches that spiritual gifts are given as the Holy Spirit wills. We read the following in First Corinthians:

> But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills (1 Corinthians 12:11 NKJV).

It is the Holy Spirit, and He alone, who decides which gifts we have. We do not have any input into the matter. None whatsoever.

Paul Told Believers To Be Eager To Prophesy Not To Seek To Speak In Tongues

Paul told believers to be eager to prophesy, but not to speak in tongues:

> So, dear brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and don't forbid speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:39 NLT).

In the same verse, that Paul told the believers to be eager to prophesy, he said nothing about being eager to speak with tongues. This is another indication that he did not expect everyone to seek the gift.

In sum, there is nothing in the Bible that indicates that a believer should seek to speak in tongues.

Summary To Question 11:
Should A Person Seek To Speak In Tongues?

It has been advocated by some people that all believers should seek to speak in tongues. There are a number of reasons that are given for this.

First, they mention that the Apostle Paul said that he wished that everyone spoke in tongues. This is assumed to mean that he wanted all believers in Christ to exercise the gift.

Paul also indicated that he spoke in tongues more than anyone. The fact that he said this is further indication that people should seek this gift.

However, this is not a biblical position. There are a number of responses we can make.

To begin with, when Paul said he wanted everyone to speak in tongues, he was actually emphasizing the gift of prophecy as being superior to speaking in tongues. Therefore, when the passage is read in context, it isn't an encouragement for every believer to speak in tongues.

Furthermore, Paul also makes it clear that not every believer has the gift. In other words, it is limited to certain believers in Christ.

There is something else. The Bible never says that anyone should seek the gift of speaking in tongues. In fact, the Bible is clear that the Holy Spirit alone determines which gifts believers have. In other words, we have no say so in the matter.

Finally, Scripture does say to be eager to prophesy, but it never says to be eager to seek to speak in tongues.

Consequently, when we look at the totality of Scripture, we find that there is no indication whatsoever that all believers should seek to speak in tongues.

Question 12

Is Speaking In Tongues To Build Up, Edify, Oneself A Proper Goal (1 Corinthians 14:4)

The Bible says that speaking in tongues can be personally edifying—the building up of the one speaking. Paul wrote to the Corinthians about this. He said:

> Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but the one who prophesies edifies the church (1 Corinthians 14:4 NIV).

Is this something good? This has been used to demonstrate that speaking in tongues is a gift that God has given to believers, for the purpose of building themselves up. It is argued that since we can only build up others, as much as we ourselves are built up, we need the gift of tongues for personal building up, or edification. Therefore, it is a good thing that some people speak in tongues, and build up, or edify themselves.

In addition, speaking in tongues, it is contended, makes the believer feel closer to the Lord when they pray to God the Father, through the Holy Spirit. This is another reason why self-edification is a proper goal for the Christian.

Others Believe That This Is The Wrong Understanding Of This Verse

However, there is also the viewpoint that tongues are only to be used for the building up of the church, not the individual. It is contended that this verse has been pulled out of its context and misapplied in this area. The passage does not encourage self-edification. There are a number of points that need to be made.

This Verse Has Nothing To Say About The Purpose Of The Gift

First, this verse has been wrongly cited as the purpose of speaking in tongues. Paul is not dealing with the purpose of speaking in tongues in this verse. He does this later in the chapter when he writes the following:

> Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:22 NIV).

Since speaking in tongues is a sign to the unbeliever, the purpose cannot be self-edification. What Paul is doing in this verse, is actually speaking *against* the use of tongues for self-edification.

In other words, he is doing just the opposite of what people are saying he is doing. He is not encouraging people to speak in tongues for self-edification.

Self-Edification Is The Result Not The Purpose

In addition, self-edification is the result, not the purpose, of exercising spiritual gifts. For example, when a person exercises the gift of evangelism, they are built up. Yet, the purpose of the gift is not to build up the evangelist. Neither is it the purpose of any spiritual gift.

This includes the gift of tongues. When any spiritual gift is exercised, the person using the gift will always be built up. However, this is not the reason that the gift is exercised. It is something that accompanies the use of the gift.

Building Up Oneself Is Not A Valid Goal

Finally, the Bible speaks against the idea of building up oneself. We are already full of self. The gifts of the Spirit are to build up others, not ourselves. They have been given for the good of the body of Christ. Paul wrote:

> A spiritual gift is given to each of us as a means of helping the entire church (1 Corinthians 12:7 NLT).

This is the purpose for the gift—to build up the church. In this spirit, Paul wrote to the Philippians about the need to be thinking of others and not ourselves. He put it this way:

> Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing (Philippians 2:4 NLT).

Therefore, believers in Jesus Christ should not seek to edify or build up themselves, but rather to build up the body of Christ—the church.

Summary To Question 12:
Is Speaking In Tongues To Edify Oneself A Proper Goal (1 Corinthians 14:4)

The Bible says that those who speak in tongues edify, or build up, themselves. This brings up the question as to whether this is something which should be our goal. Should we attempt to build up ourselves?

There are those who see this as something necessary. They believe that Christians need to build up themselves so they can build up others. Since speaking in tongues builds up, or edifies, the person who is exercising the gift, self-edification should be a desirable goal.

Others do not believe that it is a valid goal for the Christian. They believe the gift of tongues, as well as the rest of spiritual gifts, are given to profit the entire body of Christ. Indeed, they are not given merely to build up individual believers.

The emphasis in Scripture is not on the individual but on the entire church. Gifts are for the edification, or building up, of everyone, not just a select few.

While exercising spiritual gifts will build up the person exercising the gift, this is the *result* of using the gift, rather than the purpose of the gift. Therefore, we must always remember that the purpose of the gift is the building up, or the edification, of others.

Question 13

Does Speaking in Tongues Have A Devotional Purpose?

The gift of tongues was given for the purpose of edifying, or building up, the body of Christ. Is it permissible then for the believer to pray by himself, or herself, to God in tongues?

In other words, does this spiritual gift have a devotional purpose? Those who believe speaking in tongues has a devotional purpose argue as follows.

Paul Mentioned Tongues In The Context Of Praying

While the explicit purpose for speaking in tongues is a sign for the unbeliever, Paul also mentioned tongues in the context of personal prayers. He said that only God understands when someone prays in this manner. We read his words to the Corinthians:

> For if your gift is the ability to speak in tongues, you will be talking to God but not to people, since they won't be able to understand you. You will be speaking by the power of the Spirit, but it will all be mysterious. . . For if I pray in tongues, my spirit is praying, but I don't understand what I am saying (1 Corinthians 14:2,14 NLT).

Only God knows what is being said when a person is privately praying in a language unknown to them. Indeed, the person praying does not understand.

There Are Times Words Are Inadequate

Sometimes a believer doesn't know how to pray. They perhaps cannot express themselves in prayer, and words seem inadequate. They may use the gift of tongues as a private prayer language between themselves and God. Paul wrote to the Romans about how the Spirit intercedes for us:

> In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans (Romans 8:26 NIV).

This could be what the Apostle had in mind when he talked about praying in the Spirit. He wrote the following to the Ephesians:

> And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people (Ephesians 6:18 NIV).

Therefore, it seems that speaking in tongues could indeed have a devotional purpose.

There Are No Examples Of People Speaking In Tongues Privately

While it is possible that the gift of tongues was used in a devotional manner, we do not have any New Testament examples of people speaking, or praying, in tongues privately. Every instance that we find the gift being exercised, it is always in public. It is never used in private.

Of course, there may be reasons as to why there are no examples of speaking in tongues in private. The prayers that are recorded in the New Testament are generally public prayers, not private prayers.

Because there is not that much said about this issue in Scripture, one can make an argument either for or against the idea of speaking in tongues in private prayers to the Lord. This being case, none of us can be certain of the answer to this question.

Summary To Question 13
Does Speaking In Tongues Have A Devotional Purpose?

There is a question as to whether tongue-speaking has a devotional purpose. Some see it as a private prayer language that God has given to certain believers. During the time of devotional speaking in tongues the believer speaks privately to God, and to Him alone.

There is some support for this. The Apostle Paul did refer to speaking in tongues in the context of praying. Furthermore, he said that those who pray in tongues pray in such a way in which only God understands.

In another place, Paul speaks about how words are inadequate for expressing our thoughts to the Lord. This, it is argued, could be a reference to speaking in tongues, or praying in tongues.

However, we find no example in the New Testament of people exercising the gift of tongues in their private prayers. This is often used as an argument against this sort of practice.

But this does not mean that such prayers did not happen, rather it merely observes they were not recorded. Since the prayers would be private we would not assume that they would be documented for us.

Consequently, this issue does not seem to have a clear answer.

Question 14

What Does It Mean To Pray in the Spirit?

The Bible says we are to "pray in the Spirit." Paul wrote the following to the Ephesians:

> And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people (Ephesians 6:18 NIV).

What does this mean? How does someone pray in the Spirit? Does this mean we are to pray by speaking in tongues?

There Are Different Views About What This Means

There are a number of views that Christians hold. Some feel that it means exclusively praying in tongues. Others believe it means praying "by means of the Holy Spirit." There is a third view that says it can mean both. We can make the following observations.

Option 1: Praying In The Spirit Means Praying In Tongues

There is the point of view that Paul was referring to praying in tongues when he spoke of praying in the Spirit. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians about praying in tongues, he said that it is his spirit which prays:

> For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful (1 Corinthians 14:14 NIV).

In the context of First Corinthians 14, Paul contrasts praying in tongues, or in the spirit, with praying with the mind. This is understood to mean that praying in the spirit is something that is foreign to praying with the understanding.

In other words, it is a prayer to God that the mind cannot understand because it goes straight from the human spirit to God. Consequently, it refers to praying in tongues, or using a tongue-language when praying.

Option 2: Praying With The Help Of The Holy Spirit

A second view sees this as praying "with the help of the Holy Spirit." The word translated "in" can mean "in," "with," or "by means of." The Bible says that we need the Holy Spirit to help us with our prayers:

> In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans (Romans 8:26 NIV).

Often, we do not know how to pray, or what we should pray for. This is why we need the Holy Spirit to help us.

The Apostle Paul may have been contrasting praying with the Spirit (tongues) as opposed to praying with the mind. We read further in this passage:

> For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. 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 (1 Corinthians 14:14,15 NIV).

Praying in the spirit has the idea of praying by means of the Holy Spirit, as opposed to praying without the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The emphasis is that our prayers should be directed by the Spirit of God and not our own selfish motives.

Option 3: It Can Refer To Either Praying In Tongues Or Praying With The Help Of The Spirit

The third option sees both as a possibility. Praying in the Spirit can be praying in tongues, or it may refer to praying by means of the Holy Spirit. Only the context will determine which is correct.

Summary To Question 14
What Does It Mean To Pray In The Spirit?

The Bible commands believers to "pray in the Spirit." There have been a couple of suggestions as to exactly what this means. They are as follows:

There are those who believe that it refers to using the gift of tongues in a devotional manner. Praying in the Spirit is thus praying in tongues. When a person prays in the Spirit, they pray directly to God without understanding what they are saying. This is what Paul encourages believers to do.

Others argue that praying "in the Spirit" means praying "with" or "by means of" the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps Christians by bringing to mind the things for which they should pray. This is because we do not know what to ask for, or how to pray correctly.

Therefore, it is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to help believers to pray for the right things in the right way.

Some think it is possible that both ideas are under consideration here. The Holy Spirit does indeed teach us what to pray for and guides us in our prayers. Whether "praying in the Spirit," is also a reference to speaking in tongues, is something which is debated.

Question 15

Does Paul's Statement About "Inexpressible Groans" Refer To Praying In Tongues? (Romans 8:26,27)

When speaking of the subject of prayer, the Apostle Paul made the following statement to the church at Rome:

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God (Romans 8:26,27 NIV).

Some people believe this refers to speaking in tongues. Is this what is in mind here?

Who Groans: Is It The Person Praying Or The Holy Spirit?

There are a number of problems with having this refer to praying in tongues. First, there is the question as to who is doing the groaning. Is it the person praying or is it the Holy Spirit? Many believe it is not referring to believers but rather to the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit Intercedes On Behalf Of The Believer

Paul says it is the Holy Spirit who is interceding on behalf of the believer. Consequently, it can be argued that He is the one groaning, not the believer. If it is the person who groans it still does not mean that it is referring to speaking in tongues.

All May Groan, But All Do Not Speak In Tongues

For one thing, Paul seems to include *all* believers in this groaning. This being the case, it cannot refer to speaking in tongues because the Bible says that all believers do not speak in tongues. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

> 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! (1 Corinthians 12:30 NLT).

As we have emphasized, the way the sentence is structured in the original Greek demands a "No" answer. Not everyone speaks in tongues. Consequently, this passage in Romans which speaks of "inexpressible groans" does not refer to speaking in tongues.

Summary To Question 15
Does Paul's Statement About "Inexpressible Groans" Refer To Praying in Tongues? (Romans 8:26,27)

The Apostle Paul said that we believers do not know how to pray as we should. Consequently, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us with inexpressible groans. Some believe he was referring to speaking in tongues. However, this does not seem to be the case. First, it is possible that it is the Holy Spirit and not the believer that is groaning. Indeed, the One who is groaning in this instance may be the Spirit of God, rather than the person praying. If this is the case, then the passage has nothing to do with the believer speaking in tongues by means of groans which cannot be expressed.

Furthermore, Paul includes every believer in his statement, he makes no exceptions. Therefore, it cannot refer to speaking in tongues because the Bible says that all believers do not speak in tongues. In sum, whatever the passage may mean, it does not refer to the believer praying in tongues by making groans in language which cannot be expressed.

Question 16

Is There Such A Thing As Singing In Tongues?

Some non-cessationists—people who believe that all the original gifts of the Spirit remain in the church today—practice what is known as "singing in tongues." This is where the congregation joins together in singing in syllables that are not part the native language of each person. Many have testified to the great spiritual blessing of such an experience.

There is one passage that seems to speak of "singing in the spirit." It reads as follows:

> So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding (1 Corinthians (14:15 NIV).

It is contended that "singing in the spirit," is in contrast to singing with words that are understandable. Is this what is meant?

There Is No Biblical Basis For This To Happen

Contrary to the testimony of some who feel that congregational singing in tongues is a blessing to them, there is no biblical basis for such an occurrence. The Bible is very plain as to what can, and cannot, happen during a worship service.

The Apostle Paul makes it clear that there is not to be any congregational tongue-speaking. He wrote the following to the Corinthians:

> Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers. So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and inquirers or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? (1 Corinthians 14:22,23 NIV).

If there is not to be any congregation tongue-speaking, neither should there be any congregational tongue-singing. Unbelievers will assume that everyone is crazy if they all spoke in tongues at the same time. The same holds true if the entire group of believers begins to sing in tongues.

Not Everyone Has The Gift of Tongues

There is something else which should be considered. The Bible teaches that not every believer has the gift of speaking in tongues. Since this is what Scripture teaches on the subject congregational singing in tongues should not be possible unless we want to assume that everyone in that particular group has been given this spiritual gift. This is another reason as to why congregational singing, or speaking, in tongues is not a biblical way of doing things. Therefore, the idea that a congregation should sing together in tongues is something that Scripture forbids. This is something which believers when gathered together should never practice.

Summary To Question 16
Is There Such A Thing As Singing In Tongues?

Today, there are churches which actually sing together in tongues. The means that the entire congregation, or at least part of it, sings in tongues at the same time. This is done publicly, and often loudly. While there are certain Christians who practice congregational "singing in tongues," there is no such biblical experience.

Indeed, the Apostle Paul set down a number of rules for using the gift of speaking in tongues. For one thing, he makes it clear that if the entire congregation spoke in tongues, unbelievers would assume that everyone was crazy.

The same would certainly hold true for any type of congregational tongue-singing. Unbelievers would be under the assumption that something was mentally wrong with the group.

Indeed, Paul stressed that any speaking in tongues must be done one at a time, and always with an interpreter present.

In addition to this, we know that not every believer has been given the gift of speaking in tongues. This being the case, it seems to rule out congregational singing in tongues since only certain members of the group would have the gift.

Therefore, congregational singing in tongues has no biblical basis for taking place. Any congregation that practices something like this is doing it in spite of what the Bible has to say on the matter.

Question 17

Is It Proper To Gather To Speak In Tongues?

Is it proper procedure for believers to assemble for the purpose of speaking in tongues? Do we find an example of this in Scripture?

The answer to this question is clearly "No." There is no justification, whatsoever, for believers in Christ to gather together to speak in tongues. A number of important points need to be made.

There Are Only Two Types of Tongue-Speaking

The Bible records that there was tongue-speaking on the two types of occasions. They are as follows:

In Groups, At The Coming Of The Holy Spirit

In the three instances in the Book of Acts, where speaking in tongues is recorded, they all have to do with the initial coming of the Holy Spirit on a particular group.

The Day Of Pentecost

On the Day of Pentecost, the disciples of Jesus spoke in tongues. This fulfilled the promise of Jesus—that they would be given this power from on high. However, they had not gathered together for the purpose of speaking in tongues.

Indeed, nothing whatsoever was said beforehand about this ability they would be given. They were probably as shocked as the crowd, that they were able to speak forth praises to God in languages which they had never before learned.

Caesarea

In the city of Caesarea, the Holy Spirit likewise fell upon certain Gentiles who were listening to Simon Peter. Again, they had no expectation whatsoever, that they were going to be able to praise God in languages never before learned. These Gentiles had gathered together to hear the words of Peter about Jesus Christ; they had not gathered to speak in tongues. Indeed, most likely, they had never heard of anything like this happening.

Ephesus

The same holds true for certain men which Paul met in Ephesus. We also find them speaking in tongues in connection with reception of the Holy Spirit.

Again, it was a spontaneous happening, not something that was planned. On none of these occasions, did the people gather for the purpose of speaking in tongues.

Individually During Worship Services

The only other biblical example that the Bible gives of tongue-speaking was during the gathering of believers for a worship service. However, on these occasions, the believers assembled for the purpose of instruction, not for the purpose of speaking in tongues. The Apostle Paul made this clear when he wrote to the Corinthians:

> But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue (1 Corinthians 14:19 NIV).

Paul indicates his goal was to teach them God's truth. It was not for the purpose of speaking in languages unknown to him.

Furthermore, the tongue-speaking that did occur was by individuals who spoke one at a time. These were the rules which were set down. Indeed, there was to be no such thing as group tongue-speaking or gathering together to speak in tongues. Paul wrote the following words to the Corinthians about this:

> If, therefore, the whole church assembles together and all are speaking in other tongues and people who are outsiders or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your minds? (1 Corinthians 14:23 CSB).

Gathering together to speak in tongues, would only cause unbelievers to assume that the believers had lost their minds. Consequently, such a practice was forbidden.

Add to this, the fact that not every believer had the gift of speaking in tongues. Thus, the idea that the entire congregation could gather together to exercise this gift has no biblical support.

Therefore, the practice of believers in Christ gathering, for the purpose of speaking in tongues, has no biblical basis. It should never be something Christian's practice.

Summary To Question 17
Is It Proper To Gather To Speak In Tongues?

Today, there are times when believers gather together for the specific purpose of speaking in tongues. Is this something which has any biblical basis?

The answer is "No." In fact, the Bible records that group tongue-speaking occurred in only two different situations.

The first was at the coming of the Holy Spirit in a unique way. This occurred on three separate occasions, as recorded in the Book of Acts.

On the Day of Pentecost, Jesus' disciples spoke in tongues, or languages, which they had never before learned. However, they had not gathered together for this purpose.

In fact, their assembling together was to wait for the Holy Spirit to descend upon them. Tongue-speaking was not the purpose of their being together.

We also have the record of Gentiles first receiving the message of Jesus Christ. When the Holy Spirit fell upon them, they too were able to speak in languages which they had never before learned. However, they had gathered together to hear about Jesus, not to speak in tongues.

There is also an incident which took place in Ephesus. The Apostle Paul preached to a group of men who had been disciples of John the Baptist. When he explained the Lord Jesus to them, they too spoke in tongues as the Spirit of God fell upon them. Again, there was no gathering together to exercise the gift of tongues.

The second instance of tongue-speaking was during worship services. In this case, the Apostle Paul plainly stated that any exercise of the gift would be from one person at a time. Congregational tongue-speaking was ruled out.

Thus, it was not proper for these believers to gather together for the sole purpose of speaking in tongues.

Furthermore, Scripture explicitly states that not everyone has the gift of speaking in tongues. Therefore, it would be worthless for a group of people to gather together to exercise the gift, seeing that not everyone has been given this particular gift of the Spirit.

In sum, there is no example of believers gathering for the sole purpose of speaking in tongues. Consequently, this idea has no biblical support whatsoever.

Question 18

Does The Bible Allow For Believers To Give Messages In Tongues?

There are some people who believe that it is proper for believers to give and receive messages in tongues. Is this a biblical practice?

Support For Receiving Messages In Tongues

There is a passage which is used for support of this idea—that messages can be given by means of speaking in tongues. Paul wrote the following to the Corinthians:

> I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified (1 Corinthians 14:5 NIV).

This has been understood to mean, that through the tongue-speaking, God would give messages to other believers. The congregation would be edified, or built up, through the interpretation of the message given in tongues.

Paul said this is something which is even greater than receiving a prophetic message. This being the case, we should assume that the gift of tongues along with the gift of interpretation of tongues can be used the same way today.

Response

There are a number of things to say in response, to this idea of receiving messages by means of someone else speaking in tongues.

First, the phrase "message in tongues" is not found anywhere in the New Testament. From Scripture, it seems that no messages were ever given in tongues.

From the Bible, we find that God gave His messages through speakers who spoke in a language that the people could understand. Neither in the Book of Acts, nor in the writings of Paul, do we find an example of someone receiving a direct message from the Lord, by means of speaking in tongues. The evidence is as follows:

Prayer, Praise, And Thanksgiving

In the New Testament, speaking in tongues was used in three basic ways. It was used as a way to praise and worship the Lord, to give thanks to God, and to pray to God. Notice that each of these uses is directed to God, and to Him alone. This is why the gift was seemingly used more in private, rather than in public.

Tongue-Speakers Speak Directly To God

In fact, we are explicitly told that the one speaking in tongues did not speak to other humans, but rather to God:

> For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries (1 Corinthians 14:2 NKJV).

This being the case, it seems to rule out the idea of tongues being used to deliver God's message.

The Episode At Pentecost

On the Day of Pentecost, the Bible says that those who heard the disciples of Jesus speaking in tongues, heard them extol the mighty works of God:

> Both Jews and converts to Judaism; Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues! (Acts 2:11 NIV).

No message was found in their display of tongues.

The Episode Of Tongues At Caesarea

At Caesarea we find the same thing. The Gentiles were praising God with their tongue-speaking. The Bible says:

> For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God (Acts 10:46 NIV).

In each of these cases, the tongues were used to give thanks to the Lord, as well as to praise Him. In other words, the tongues were directed toward God, not toward the people.

The Lord did not use tongues to give messages to believers. Rather He did this through the gifts of teaching as well as the gift of prophecy.

The Word Of God Is Completed Today

There is something else which should be noted in this. Even if it could be argued that tongue-speaking was used to deliver God's messages to the congregation, this usage would no longer be necessary.

Today, we have the written Word of God, which we can read, study, and obey. It tells us everything we need to know about who God is, as well as what He wants from us. Thus, a message for the church is not necessary. In fact, we read in Jude that the faith has been delivered to the saints, the believers, once and for all:

> Dear friends, although I was eager to write you about the salvation we share, I found it necessary to write, appealing to you to contend for the faith that was delivered to the saints once for all (Jude 3 CSB)

Therefore, nothing needs to be added to that which the Lord has already revealed in Scripture.

In sum, there is no biblical support for the idea that tongue-speaking somehow is to be used to give messages to believers. The Lord has established other means to accomplish this.

Summary to Question 18
Does The Bible Allow For Believers To Give Messages In Tongues?

There are some people who believe that speaking in tongues can be used to deliver messages to other believers. The support for this comes from Paul's statement to the Corinthians.

He said that if someone speaks in tongues in the church, and it is interpreted, then the entire group which has gathered can be built up, or edified. If this was true for the church then, there is every reason to think that it is still true today.

However, this does not seem to be what the New Testament is teaching on the subject of the use of tongues. A number of points can be made.

First, each example in Scripture of tongue-speaking has the speaker directing his or her words toward God. Indeed, they are not directing them not toward other people which had gathered.

While there were other people present when this took place, the speaking in tongues was not for the purpose of teaching, or instruction. Rather the gift was used to praise God, give thanks to God, and pray to God. There is no specific reference of the gift being used to teach Bible doctrine, or truths about God.

The church can be built up, or edified, by the fact that God is praised and worshipped. There need not be any substantive teaching through tongue-speaking, to edify, or build, up the church. The people of the church are instructed through the direct teaching of God's Word, not through any message in tongues.

In addition, we are in a different situation today than the church in Corinth. We have the written Word of God. The Lord has said all that He needs to say to us. Indeed, the faith has been once-and-for-all delivered to the saints. Consequently, we do not need any further messages from the Lord.

Therefore, if someone attempts to deliver a message to other believers through speaking in tongues, we should *not* consider their attempt, no matter how rightly motivated, to be something that the Lord is doing.

Question 19

Why Were Women Told to Keep Silent In Church? Were They Allowed To Speak In Tongues? (1 Corinthians 14:33,34)

In a passage in the Book of First Corinthians, Paul commanded that women were to keep silent in the church. He put it this way:

> The women should be silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak, but are to submit themselves, as the law also says. If they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home, since it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church (1 Corinthians 14:33,34 CSB).

What does this mean? Is Paul saying women should not speak, at all, in the church?

Is He Referring To Speaking in Tongues?

Some take this to mean that women were not to exercise the gift of speaking in tongues. They see that the restriction was not only for the church in Corinth, but it was for all of the churches. In other words, the gifts of tongues were only to be exercised by men in the church. Is this what this passage is teaching?

The Case Against Women Speaking in Tongues

The following arguments are usually made for this position. However, we must note that not everyone who holds this position would necessarily use all of these arguments to establish this position.

The Subject Of The Passage Is Speaking In Tongues – Not Speaking in General

The subject of the section is speaking in tongues. Paul is giving a number of regulations for the proper use of the gift. In the midst of the regulations, he orders women to keep silent. No other explanation for his order for women to keep silence makes sense. Therefore, he must have been referring to speaking in tongues. Thus, the context favors this view.

Women Are Allowed To Speak in Church

Earlier in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul gave rules for women praying and prophesying in the church. He wrote:

> But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved (1 Corinthians 11:5 NIV).

Since women are allowed to speak in the church, this passage must mean something other than women are to keep in total silence.

The obvious explanation seems to be that women were not allowed to speak in tongues. While they may pray and prophesy, they have not been given the gift of speaking in tongues.

Tongues Were To Bring New Revelation: This Was Limited to Men

One of the purposes of tongues was to bring new revelation. Paul said that speaking in tongues was a greater gift than the gift of prophecy, only when it was interpreted. He explained it this way to the Corinthians:

> I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified (1 Corinthians 14:5 NIV).

The forbidding of women, to participate in bringing in new revelation by means of speaking in tongues, is consistent with the rest of New Testament.

As far as we know, men wrote all the New Testament documents. The authorship of twenty-six out of the twenty-seven books is generally agreed upon. All of the known authors were men. The only anonymous work was the Book of Hebrews.

Furthermore, the apostles were special people that Jesus selected to be His unique representatives to the world. They were all men.

There Is No Clear Record Of Women Speaking in Tongues

We do not find any clear record in Scripture of women exercising the gift of tongues. The following are the only recorded accounts in the Book of Acts, when the gift was exercised.

The Day of Pentecost: Only The Twelve Disciples Spoke In Tongues

On the Day of Pentecost, it was only the twelve apostles who spoke in tongues. This is clearly taught in Acts 2. After the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, and they began to speak in languages they had not previously learned, a crowd gathered. At that point, the Bible tells us who it was who had been given the gift of tongues:

> But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words" (Acts 2:14 NKJV).

Here the gift is limited to the Twelve Disciples of Jesus—all men.

There Is No Evidence That Women Were Present In Caesarea

At Caesarea, when the Gentiles first received the Holy Spirit, it was the members of Cornelius' household who spoke in tongues. There is no record of women being among those who spoke. Again, it was just men who were present when the Holy Spirit fell upon the Gentiles.

We Are Told That Only Males Were Present in Ephesus

The twelve disciples at Ephesus, who spoke in tongues, were specifically called men. The text reads as follows:

> Now there were about twelve men in all (Acts 19:7 CSB).

Therefore, in this case there is no question that women were not involved. Consequently, it seems that in the historical circumstances, only men were given the gift of speaking in tongues.

There Is No Record That Women At Corinth Were Allowed To Speak With Tongues

This only leaves the situation at Corinth. If Paul said women were not to exercise the gift of tongues in Corinth, as in all of the other churches, then the gift was never given to them.

Other Gifts Were For Men Only

It has been argued that other gifts, apostle, and pastor, were also given to males only. Therefore, it should not be surprising, or inconsistent, that we find only males speaking in tongues. In sum, it is the conclusion of many that the gift of speaking in tongues was something that only males were to exercise.

The Case For Women Speaking In Tongues

There are many people, both male and female, who reject the idea that speaking in tongues was for males only. They argue in the following manner:

It Was The One Hundred and Twenty, Not the Twelve, That Spoke In Tongues At Pentecost

On the Day of Pentecost, the gift of speaking in tongues was not limited to the twelve disciples. We read the following account:

> All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said (Acts 1:14,15 ESV).

Specifically listed in this group was Mary, the mother of Jesus. She was among the company of disciples waiting for the Holy Spirit to fall.

This is the group that spoke in tongues. The Bible records what happened:

> When the day of Pentecost had arrived, they were all together in one place (Acts 2:1 CSB).

Mary was among this group that spoke in tongues.

There Were Probably Women in Cornelius' Household

The idea that only men were at Caesarea when the household of Cornelius spoke with tongues cannot be justified. To begin with, the passage says the following:

> While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people (Acts 10:27 NIV).

This large gathering of people should not be assumed to have been limited to males. Cornelius, most likely, had a family. In addition, his household servants would have also included both males and females. Furthermore, we are told that the Holy Spirit fell upon all that were gathered. Scripture explains it in this manner:

> While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles (Acts 10:44-45 NIV).

It would be odd if the first time the Holy Spirit fell upon the Gentiles that there would only be males present. Therefore, when the Scripture says that Cornelius and his household spoke in tongues, we should assume that this included women.

New Revelation Was Not Limited To Men

It is also wrong to assume that only men were allowed to bring new revelation. Paul also said that women could prophesy. Again, we read his words to the Corinthians:

> But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved (1 Corinthians 11:5 NIV).

Women certainly had the right to speak forth the Word of God.

The Bible also says that Philip, the evangelist, had four daughters who could prophesy. We read of this in the Book of Acts where it says:

> He had four unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophecy (Acts 21:9 NLT).

Therefore, prophecy, or speaking forth the truth of God, was not limited to men.

The Law Does Not Refer To Speaking In Tongues

Paul says that the law forbids that women were not to speak in church. He wrote the following to the Corinthians:

> For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says (1 Corinthians 14:33,34 ESV).

There is absolutely nothing in the Law about speaking in tongues. Therefore, this cannot be what Paul is referring to in this passage. Whatever this passage may be referring to, it is not speaking in tongues.

The Prohibition For Speaking May Refer To Judging Prophecies Not Speaking In Tongues

The prohibition of women speaking does not refer to speaking in tongues. A better answer seems to be, that women were not allowed to speak out and judge the prophecies. This was a job for the leadership of the church which was limited to men.

Consequently, there are arguments, given by Bible-believers, that women were not allowed to speak in tongues, as well as arguments that they were allowed to exercise this particular gift.

While nobody can be certain which answer is correct, it may seem better to assume that women, in certain instances, were allowed to speak in tongues.

Summary To Question 19
Why Were Women Told To Keep Silent In Church? Were They Allowed To Speak In Tongues? (1 Corinthians 14:33,34)

There is controversy among believers, as to whether the gift of tongues was given to both men and women, or merely limited to men. Paul said that women were forbidden to speak in church. The question is, "In what sense were they forbidden to speak?" There are those who believe that women were forbidden to speak in tongues.

Those who argue against women speaking in tongues, give the following reasons as to why they hold this position.

First, they say there are no clear examples in Scripture of women speaking in tongues. Every time we find tongue-speaking occurring in an historical situation, it is always the men who are doing the speaking.

There is no record of women speaking in tongues on the Day of Pentecost. In fact, we are told specifically that after the believers spoke in tongues, Peter stood up with the other eleven disciples of Jesus to address the crowd. This indicates that only Jesus' Twelve Disciples exercised the sign of tongues on that day.

Neither is there any evidence of women speaking in tongues in Caesarea, when Peter spoke the Word of God to the Gentiles. It seems only men were gathered to hear Peter's message about the Lord Jesus.

We are told specifically that it was only men who spoke in tongues in Ephesus, when Paul preached Jesus to them.

Thus, each historical situation finds only men speaking in tongues, never women.

Some argue that the giving of new revelation was the task of men only. Since all of the books of the New Testament were written by men, and that Jesus chose only men as His inner circle of disciples, it is consistent to believe that only men were given the gift of tongues to bring new revelation to the people.

However, there are others who believe that women were indeed given the gift of tongues.

For one thing, it was the one hundred and twenty that spoke in tongues on the Day of Pentecost, not merely the twelve disciples. Among this company was Mary, the mother of Jesus. Moreover, we should not assume that there were only men present when the Word of God first came to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius. Since his entire household was present, we would naturally assume that women were among the group. Indeed, it would be strange if only men heard the good news about Jesus and not women also.

In addition, it is not correct to limit the giving of new revelation to men only. There were women who had the gift of prophecy. Scripture specifically tells us this.

Therefore, if one of the purposes of the gift of tongues was to give new revelation, and this is a debatable question, we should not assume that the gift was limited to men.

It is possible the speaking in this context refers to speaking out and judging prophecies, not to speaking in tongues. The leaders of the congregation were to be men. Thus, it is likely that women were told not to speak out in the sense of judging prophetic words given in the church. That was the job for men only.

In sum, when all the arguments are considered, it seems more likely that women did indeed speak in tongues on certain occasions. However, this is something which cannot be demonstrated beyond all doubt.

Question 20

What Is The Proper Procedure For Using Tongues In A Meeting?

If the gift of speaking in tongues is still a valid gift for the church today, then how should it be exercised? The Bible makes it clear that tongue-speaking in a Christian assembly should follow definite rules. They include the following:

There Should Be An Interpreter Present When Exercised Publicly

Whenever the gift is exercised in a meeting there must be an interpreter present. The Bible says the following:

> Therefore the person who speaks in another tongue should pray that he can interpret. . . But if there is no interpreter, that person is to keep silent in the church and speak to himself and God (1 Corinthians 14:13,28 CSB).

If there is no interpreter present, then the person should remain silent. This is absolutely crucial. Otherwise, the person is just speaking into the air, and the congregation receives no edification, or building up, whatsoever.

Speaking In Tongues In Church Should Build Up Believers

This brings us to our next point. The purpose of exercising the gift of tongues at a meeting is to build up believers, it is not for personal edification. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the use of the gift of tongues, he stressed this truth:

> So also you—since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, seek to excel in building up the church (1 Corinthians 14:12 CSB).

Edification, or the building up of fellow believers, is primary. Paul again emphasized that everything had to be done for the strengthening of the church. He put it this way:

> What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church (1 Corinthians 14:26 NIV).

Therefore, when the gift of tongues is properly exercised the church will receive strengthening, it will not be merely the person exercising the gift.

There Should Be Limited Numbers Who Speak in Tongues

The Bible places a limit on the number of people allowed to speak in tongues during a meeting. Paul commanded the Corinthians as follows:

> If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret (1 Corinthians 14:27 ESV).

Tongue speaking should not go on indefinitely during a meeting. Indeed, there should only be a limited number of people per gathering who speak in tongues.

There Is No Congregational Tongue-Speaking

The entire congregation is not supposed to speak in tongues. Paul made this very clear! He stated the obvious.

> So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and inquirers or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? (1 Corinthians 14:23 NIV).

The Bible does not allow entire congregations to speak with tongues. Otherwise, those coming for the first time to the meeting will think that everyone in the place has lost their mind.

The Gift Is Totally Controllable

The one who speaks in tongues has control over both his volume, and his behavior. Speaking in tongues, in a biblical sense, has never consisted of a person being in some ecstatic trance, or uncontrollable frenzy. Therefore, anyone who exercises the gift in an uncontrollable manner is not being led of God. Paul wrote:

> Remember that people who prophesy are in control of their spirit and can wait their turn (1 Corinthians 14:32 NLT).

Since the gift of tongues is a supernatural gift, the person speaking in tongues cannot control the content of their speech. However, they can control when they start and when they stop speaking. This is crucial to understand.

The Gift Needs To Function In An Orderly Manner

When tongues are operating in a biblical manner, there is order in the service. Paul emphasized that the God of the Bible is a God of order. He wrote:

> For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints . . . But all things should be done decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:33,40 ESV).

When the gifts are properly operating, there will not be chaos, but rather there will be order in the church.

The Gift Is Not Forbidden To Be Exercised

Even with these restrictions, Paul said tongue-speaking is not to be forbidden when believers meet. He commanded:

> So, dear brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and don't forbid speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:39 NLT).

The gift is to be exercised, not neglected. In sum, the Bible gives a number of rules for using the gift of speaking in tongues at a public gathering of Christians. If the gift is to be exercised, then these rules must be followed.

Summary To Question 20
What Is The Proper Procedure For Using Tongues In A Meeting?

The New Testament lists speaking in tongues as one of the spiritual gifts which God has given to the church. Furthermore, it sets guidelines for speaking in tongues in a worship service. They include the following:

First, the gift should be exercised to build up believers, it is not for personal edification, or building up oneself. This is primary. In fact, each and every spiritual gift is given to build up believers rather than the person

exercising the gift. If tongues are used in a meeting, then an interpreter must be present. This is also an essential rule for use of the gift. Without an interpreter the person must keep silent.

There should also be a limited number of people speaking in tongues. In other words, the speaking in tongues does not go on endlessly. Indeed, there are many more things which are to be part of a worship service. Speaking in tongues should not be seen as the highlight. There is no basis for the entire congregation speaking in tongues. For one thing, not everyone has the gift of tongues. Also, a visitor to the meeting will think everyone is crazy if they are all speaking in tongues at the same time.

Tongue-speaking is something controllable. The person speaking does not go into some type of uncontrollable, frenzied state. Rather they are in complete control of their senses. This means the volume of their speech, as well as their physical movements, are under their own control.

Indeed, one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is that of self-control. Thus, any tongue speaking should be done in an orderly way. Chaos in the service means that the Holy Spirit is not in control.

Even with all of these rules, Scripture also says that no one should forbid tongue speaking. The key is to follow the guidelines that have been laid down.

Question 21

Could Tongue-Speaking Actually Be Ecstatic Utterances, or Heavenly Languages, Rather Than Known Earthly Languages?

There are a number of people today who believe that God has given them the gift of speaking in tongues. One of the criticisms that is leveled against those who are presently using this gift is that they are not speaking in any known earthly language.

Indeed, it is often claimed by those who have analyzed people speaking in tongues that they are not speaking in a genuine language.

One of the responses given to this objection is that the tongue-speaking in Scripture did not always consist of known languages. Some argue that the tongue-speaking were ecstatic utterances, while others say that tongue-speaking was an angelic language, rather than an earthly language. Those who believe tongue-speaking is not limited to earthly languages make the following points to support their case.

The Tongues In Acts Are Not Necessarily Known Languages

The first point is that there is no clear evidence that the Book of Acts records people speaking in actual languages when they are said to have "spoken in tongues." While Acts 2 makes it clear that the tongue-speaking was in known languages, the other instances in the Book of Acts do not. The following things are noted.

We Do Not Know About The Languages The Gentiles Spoke At Caesarea

When Peter preached Jesus Christ to Cornelius and his Gentile friends at the city of Caesarea, we are told that the Holy Spirit came down upon them and they began to speak in tongues. However, nothing is said about the content of the tongue-language. We do not know if it was a known earthly language or if it was some sort of ecstatic utterance. Scripture does not tell us.

Furthermore, it was the sign of tongues, not the tongue language, which convinced Peter that the Gentiles had believed in Jesus Christ. Indeed, there is no indication that anyone understood the languages that Cornelius and his group spoke when they received the Holy Spirit.

Thus, the fact that they spoke in languages which they did not know is what convinced Peter that the Holy Spirit had fallen upon these Gentiles, as it had fallen upon Jesus' disciples at Pentecost. This "language" may have been ecstatic utterances or some type of heavenly language. We are not told.

The Disciples At Ephesus

The same holds true for the experience of the Apostle Paul and the disciples he met in the city of Ephesus. There is no indication that the content of their tongue-speaking was known languages. All we are told is that they spoke in tongues. Nothing else. Consequently, there is no convincing evidence that the tongue-speaking episodes after the Day of Pentecost consisted of people speaking actual languages. This being the case, it is claimed, that the Book of Acts offers no solid proof that tongue-speaking always consisted of known languages.

There Are Many Contrasts Between Tongues In Acts And Corinth

But even if the tongues in Acts all were known languages, those recorded in First Corinthians seem to be of a different sort. This can be seen in a number of ways.

There Was Evangelism To Unbelievers in Acts, But A Worship Service In Corinth

In Acts, the tongue-speaking occurred in a situation where people received the initial indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It was something which was completely unexpected. It was a supernatural sign that indicated that God was placing His blessing on what occurred.

However, when Paul discusses tongues in his first letter to the Corinthians, his concern is the worship service. Therefore, the situation is entirely different. These were people who had been believers in Jesus Christ for some time. Their experience with speaking in tongues was not connected with their initial reception of the Holy Spirit, in contrast to those whom the Holy Spirit fell upon as recorded in the Book of Acts.

At Pentecost They Spoke To Humans, At Corinth To God

The words which were spoken in tongues at Pentecost were directed to the humans who had gathered. The Bible says:

> And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language (Acts 2:6 NKJV).

In this case, they were speaking in languages so that the people who had gathered could clearly understand what they were saying.

However, at Corinth the words were seemingly directed toward God. Only He could understand them. Paul wrote:

> For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries . . . So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air (1 Corinthians 14:2,9 NKJV).

Thus, on the one hand the people who spoke in tongues were understood by everyone in the crowd in Jerusalem, while in Corinth it seems that only God understood what they were saying.

Pentecost Was A Sign To Believers, Corinth To Unbelievers

At Pentecost, the sign of tongues showed the disciples that the Holy Spirit had indeed come, as Jesus had promised. Thus, it was a sign to believers. However, we are told that the purpose for the tongues in Corinth was to be a sign for unbelievers. Paul wrote:

> Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers (1 Corinthians 14:22 ESV).

Therefore, the purpose for the sign was different in each case.

No Interpreter Was Needed For The Tongues In Acts

One main difference between the tongue-speaking in the Book of Acts, and that in Corinth, was the need for an interpreter. There is no record of anyone in Acts exercising the gift of interpretation.

On the Day of Pentecost, those who heard the apostles speak in tongues did not need supernatural interpretation. Indeed, the apostles were speaking in the dialects of the various people who had gathered. They

understood the apostles because they were miraculously speaking in their native language. No supernatural gift of interpretation was necessary.

In addition, those in Jerusalem at Pentecost were unbelievers of the message of Jesus. Obviously, they could not have exercised the spiritual gift of interpretation when they did not have the Holy Spirit!

In Caesarea, Peter and his group recognized the tongue-speaking was similar to what had happened on Pentecost. Yet, there is no indication that someone interpreted what was these Gentiles were saying as they were speaking in tongues. The same holds true for what occurred in Ephesus. Paul heard the dozen disciples speak with tongues but there is no indication that the gift was interpreted.

An Interpreter Was Necessary In Corinth

But at Corinth the situation was radically different. A supernatural gift was needed to understand what was being said. In fact, tongue speaking was forbidden unless an interpreter was present. We read:

> If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God (1 Corinthians 14:27,28 ESV).

The fact that an interpreter was necessary is an indication that the languages were not of the earthly variety.

There Was Order At Pentecost But Confusion At Corinth

We find that when tongue-speaking took place on the day of Pentecost, it was done in an orderly way. Scripture says:

> When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place (Acts 2:1 NKJV).

In this instance, the disciples of Jesus were waiting for His prediction of the coming of the Holy Spirit to be fulfilled. There was no chaos, or confusion, while they were waiting. However, there was seemingly only confusion at Corinth when tongue-speaking was exercised. This caused Paul to write the following:

> For God is not a God of confusion but of peace (1 Corinthians 14:33 ESV).

The tongue speaking in Corinth did not result in order, but rather only in confusion.

At Pentecost The Unbelievers Marveled, In Corinth They Thought They Were Crazy

When the unbelievers heard Jesus' disciples' speaking in tongues, they marveled at what they were hearing:

And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?" (Acts 2:7-8 ESV).

However, in Corinth, Paul said that the unbelievers would think the people were insane if the entire congregation spoke with tongues. He wrote:

> If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? (1 Corinthians 14:23 ESV).

Thus, we again see the contrast between the speaking in tongues recorded in Acts, and that in the city of Corinth.

Paul Seems To Be Speaking Of Heavenly Languages

In addition, there are several remarks made by the Apostle Paul which indicates the tongues were not known earthly languages but rather heavenly languages. First, he talked about speaking in angelic languages:

> If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal (1 Corinthians 13:1 NIV).

This seems to indicate the possibility of speaking in languages which are non-human. He also wrote that no human could understand what he was saying when he spoke with tongues. Paul stated it this way:

> For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:2 NIV).

This statement would seem to rule out earthly languages. Paul clearly says that only God understands the person speaking in tongues. That would not be the case if a known earthly language was in view. Indeed, someone may enter the congregation who was familiar with that language. Paul then made this observation:

> For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful (1 Corinthians 14:14 NIV).

All these verses seem to refer to a heavenly language.

Paul Talks About Various Kinds Of Tongues

The Apostle Paul also spoke of various kinds of tongues. He wrote the following to the Corinthians:

> [God gives] to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:10 NKJV).

This "different kinds of tongues" could include heavenly languages.

Why Would Unbelievers Think They Were Crazy?

Paul said if everyone spoke in tongues then unbelievers who were present would assume they were all out of their minds. He wrote:

> Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? (1 Corinthians 14:23 NKJV).

However, why would this be the case if everyone spoke known languages? Instead, wouldn't the person realize a miracle was taking place?

These are the usual arguments given for those who believe that the tongues that were exercised in the city of Corinth were not known languages but rather were ecstatic utterances, or perhaps heavenly languages. This being the case we should not expect to find modern-day tongue speakers speaking in languages known to us.

Thus, it cannot be argued that the gift no longer exists because there the people who speak in tongues today are not speaking in known languages.

Summary To Question 21
Could Tongue-Speaking Actually Be Ecstatic Utterances Or Heavenly Languages Rather Than Known Earthly Languages?

It has been argued that the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues may not consist of merely speaking in known earthly languages. Instead, it may refer to either speaking in actual heavenly languages or making unintelligible ecstatic utterances. There are a number of reasons as why this is believed to be so.

To begin with, apart from one episode in the Book of Acts, there is no evidence that the remainder of the incidents where tongue-speaking is recorded in the New Testament has to do with people speaking in known languages. This is true for both the Book of Acts, as well as First Corinthians. The evidence is as follows.

First, while Acts chapter two certainly seems to have earthly languages in view when the disciples of Jesus spoke with tongues, the other two occurrences of speaking in tongues, in Acts 10 and Acts 19, are not that clear at all.

In Acts 10, there is no indication that anyone understood the tongue-language which was spoken. The same holds true for Acts 19. Indeed, nothing is said about the content of the speech from these people upon whom the Holy Spirit fell. Therefore, no one can say for certain that the tongues were known languages.

However, even if each of these three occurrences consisted of known earthly languages the situation in Corinth was quite different. A number of things need to be mentioned.

For one thing, in Acts, each of these occurrences took place in the context of preaching the good news about Jesus Christ to unbelievers. However, in Corinth a worship service is in view where the group consisted mainly of believers. Thus, the contexts are totally different.

Also, the tongues in Acts were a sign to the believers that the Holy Spirit had fallen upon them. Yet we are told that in Corinth speaking in tongues was a sign to unbelievers.

In Jerusalem, on the Day of Pentecost, each of the unbeliever's present understood what the tongue speakers were saying. The situation at Corinth was completely opposite. Indeed, none of the believers who were present understood what was being said in the tongue-language.

On Pentecost there was order when tongues were spoken. However, at Corinth, there was nothing but confusion.

In addition, in Corinth, there was the need for an interpreter when the gift of tongues was exercised. No such need is recorded in the Book of Acts. It seemed that in each case there was someone who understood what was being said.

However, this not the same as what took place in Corinth. Indeed, why the need for an interpreter if an earthly language was in view? Wouldn't it be possible for someone in the congregation to know that language?

Furthermore, we know that the Apostle Paul spoke in tongues. He also wrote of the possibility of speaking in the tongues of angels. This seems to indicate that Paul may have been able to speak in a heavenly language rather than an earthly one when speaking in tongues. Paul also wrote of speaking words that no human can understand. Again, this seems to speak of a non-earthly language.

These arguments have convinced many people that speaking in tongues, as recorded in the New Testament, can either be known earthly languages or unknown heavenly languages.

Question 22

Were The Tongues In Scripture Known Languages?

Only two portions in Scripture mention speaking in tongues. We find the use of them recorded in the Book of Acts and in First Corinthians. There has been a debate among Bible-believers as to the nature of the utterance in tongues.

Are the tongues referred to in these two sections known earthly languages? Perhaps they are some heavenly language unknown to people on earth. It is also contended that the tongue speaking may have been some type of ecstatic utterance and not a language at all. What is the best answer to this question?

The Case For Tongues Being Known Earthly Languages

One popular answer is that the tongue speaking in the Bible always referred to known earthly languages. The arguments for this are as follows:

Tongues Speaking In The Book Of Acts Indicates Known Languages

The first recorded episode of tongue-speaking was on the Day of Pentecost. In obedience to the words of Jesus, the disciples waited in Jerusalem for the promise of God the Father. The Book of Acts states the following:

> In one of these meetings as he was eating a meal with them, he told them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you what he promised. Remember, I have told you about this before" (Acts 1:4 NLT).

They were commanded not to leave the city of Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came upon them in a unique way. On the Day of Pentecost, the prediction of Jesus was fulfilled. The Bible says the following things happened:

> And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance . . . And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God" (Acts 2:4,6-11 ESV).

Luke records the fulfillment of Jesus' prediction with respect to the Holy Spirit. There are a number of observations we can make about this passage.

The People Heard The Disciples Speak In Their Own Language Or Dialect

First, the Greek word *heteros*, translated "other" in verse 4, means "different" tongues, or "different" languages. Acts 2:4 says they spoke with "other" tongues. However, in Acts 2:6, it says that each heard in his own "language."

Therefore, the words "other tongues" in verse 4 refers to the dialects or languages of verse six. This makes it clear that these people heard the wonderful works of God in their own particular language, or dialect. In fact, the Greek word is *dialectos*, from which the English word "dialect" is derived.

This Was A Miracle

Second, the disciples spoke in languages in which they had not previously learned. These languages were unknown to them. Consequently, what took place here was something which was entirely supernatural.

Jews From Different Nations Were Present

In addition, there were Jews present from a number of different nations. They had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost. This took place fifty days after the Passover. In other words, it was a gathering of Jews from across the Roman Empire who spoke many different languages and dialects.

The People Understood What The Disciples Were Saying

Next, the Scripture is clear that the people understood what the disciples were saying in their own unique language, or dialect. Indeed, they had no trouble understanding what the disciples were saying even though the disciples themselves could not understand the words they were uttering.

The Content Of Their Speech Was God's Great Works

Finally, the content of the languages spoken were the wonderful works of God. In other words, they were testifying to the goodness, and greatness of God. In sum, on the Day of Pentecost the disciples of Jesus spoke in a number of different languages, and dialects of the Roman Empire—languages they had not previously learned.

The miracle was that the disciples spoke in languages that were unknown to them. The crowd knew these languages and understood what these disciples were saying. The miracle was in the speaking, not the hearing. Thus, the first recorded instance of tongue-speaking is clearly an episode of people speaking in actual languages. This is important to note.

Acts 10 Does Not Reveal The Nature Of The Languages Spoken

Other occasions in the Book of Acts, it does not reveal whether the tongues that were used were known earthly languages, ecstatic utterances, or some heavenly language. But the indication is that they were known languages. The evidence is as follows:

When the gospel went to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius, Scripture indicates that the tongues were similar to those spoken on the Day of Pentecost. We read the following account of what took place on that day:

> And there could be no doubt about it, for they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God (Acts 10:46 NLT).

Later, when Peter recounted this episode, he gave this comment on what had transpired with the Gentiles:

> As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning (Acts 11:15 ESV).

"The beginning" is a reference to the Day of Pentecost. The same sign of tongues as had happened on the Day of Pentecost was given to the Gentiles in Caesarea when they believed in Jesus. The content of the tongue-

speaking was the same as Pentecost—they were exalting and magnifying God. This seems to indicate that Cornelius and his household were speaking known languages as we find on Pentecost.

Furthermore, since Peter and his group *understood* the content of the tongue-speaking as magnifying God, then it seems to follow that someone in his party must have been able to understand the languages, or dialects, in which they were speaking. However, we are not specifically told whether or not this was the case.

Paul And The Disciples In Ephesus: Acts 19

The third and last occasion in the Book of Acts where tongue-speaking is specifically mentioned is Acts 19. The Bible says the following took place:

> When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied (Acts 19:6 NIV).

On this occasion, there is no indication whether the tongues spoken were known languages, or whether anyone could understand what they were saying.

Since the same phrase is used of their experience, as in the previous two occasions where the gift of tongues was exercised, it would seem logical to assume that known languages were also spoken on this occasion. However, we cannot be certain of this.

In sum, as we look at the evidence from the Book of Acts, it is logical to assume that on each occasion the tongues were known earthly languages.

The Tongues In Corinth Were Also Known Languages

It also seems that the tongues exercised at the church in Corinth were of the same nature as the ones in the Book of Acts—known languages. This can be seen in the following ways:

The Same Greek Words Are Used To Describe Both Instances

To begin with, the uniform use of the word "tongue" in the New Testament shows that languages are involved. Every time the Greek term *glossa* is used in the New Testament it refers to a definite language. The only exception is when the physical organ is in view. This is also true for the Greek Old Testament as well as Greek usage outside of the Bible, it always refers to a definite language.

Furthermore, the word *glossa* does not ever have the idea of ecstatic speech. Again, we stress that it always means "language" or "dialect." So from the word itself it seems that we are looking at a known language.

The Verb Is Used Means To Translate A Language

In addition, the Greek verb, *diermenueuo* which means "to interpret" is used only of translating from one language to another. We find Paul using this word used in describing the interpretation of the tongue-language. He wrote:

> Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up. . . . Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret (1 Corinthians 14:5,13 ESV).

This is another indicate that we are dealing with actual languages.

Therefore, from the words used to describe what is going on, it seems clear that we are dealing with actual languages. Unless there is a compelling reason to understand the word *glossa* in a different sense in First Corinthians, it must be understood in the way it is commonly used everywhere else—a known earthly language.

The Word "Unknown" Is Not In The Original Text

While some translations put the word "unknown" before the word tongues in six places in First Corinthians 14 (verses 2, 4, 13, 14, 19, and 27), this word is not in the original.

Rather, the translators have supplied the word. Instead of clarifying the issue, it has only caused confusion. It gives the impression that the languages involved were "unknown" to humanity. This is not what the original text says.

The Prophecy Of Isaiah Referred To Actual Languages

In First Corinthians Paul compared the speaking in tongues to a prophecy in the Book of Isaiah. He wrote as follows:

> In the Law it is written: "Through men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to me," says the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:21 NIV).

This refers to Isaiah 28:11,12. It reads:

> Very well then, with foreign lips and strange tongues God will speak to this people, to whom he said, "This is the resting place, let the weary rest"; and, "This is the place of repose"—but they would not listen (Isaiah 28:11.12 NIV).

Isaiah predicted that the Jewish people in captivity would be spoken to in other languages. These spoken languages would constitute a sign of God's judgment upon them. This was fulfilled with the captivities of Assyria and Babylon and the worldwide dispersion of Israel. This fulfilled a prophecy that was made earlier by Moses:

> The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like the eagle, a nation whose language you do not understand (Deuteronomy 28:49 ESV).

These tongues predicted by Moses were definitely foreign languages. When the Apostle Paul applied this prophecy to speaking in tongues, he implied that they also were foreign languages. In addition, it is likely that Paul would not have used the same Greek term, glossa, unless he was referring to actual foreign languages. Therefore, the tongue-speaking at Corinth was also foreign languages as they were at Pentecost.

God Would Not Have His People Speak In Meaningless Sounds

There are also other arguments that favor the tongues in Scripture as actual languages. For one thing, God would not have His people speaking meaningless words. It does not seem consistent with the character of God to have His people using words and phrases that have no apparent meaning.

While pagan religions spoke nonsensical ecstatic utterances, God's people did not. Any speaking of things unknown would be in actual languages, not gibberish.

Ecstatic Speech Predates Christianity

There is also the fact that ecstatic utterances in a religious context are not uniquely Christian. Accounts of tongue speaking among pagans go back to over 1,000 years before the time of Jesus Christ. The mystery religions of the Roman Empire which flourished around the time of Christ also practiced ecstatic speaking.

Therefore, the fact that the early Christians spoke in similar ecstatic utterances would certainly not be anything unique. Since other religions and cults practiced the same thing, it would not have been beneficial as a sign if the tongue-language only consisted of ecstatic utterances.

To be a genuine sign to unbelievers the tongue speaking had to consist of actual known languages, that were unknown to the speaker, as well as to the interpreter. Otherwise, it would not be any different than the ecstatic utterances of pagans. This type of tongue-speaking would have no value as a supernatural sign to either believers, or unbelievers.

Does Biblical Chronology Solve The Question?

Some people appeal to biblical chronology to solve this question. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians was written from the city of Ephesus. This letter *predates* the writings of Acts by approximately six years.

Luke, the writer of the Book of Acts, would have been familiar with First Corinthians, and with Paul's usage of the Greek word *glossa* for speaking in tongues. Likewise, Luke used the word "glossa" when referring to episodes of tongue-speaking. If he were aware of Paul's usage of the word to the Corinthians, then both instances are speaking of known languages.

Accordingly, there are a number of good arguments as to why the "tongues" in the Bible are known languages and not some type of meaningless ecstatic utterance.

The Tongues In Acts And Corinth Were The Same

Though the situation in Acts and Corinthians are different the tongues are still the same. Since the first instance of tongue-speaking in Acts refers to known languages, one could assume that known languages were spoken in the other instances as well.

Answering Some Of The Objections

There are certain objections to the earthly language point of view that need answering. They can be summed up as follows:

Objection 1. Paul's Mention Of The Tongues Of Angels

When Paul mentions speaking in the tongues of angels (1 Corinthians 13:1), he likely meant it theoretically. There is nothing to indicate that he could actually speak in angelic languages. Indeed, in the same verse Paul also speaks of having all knowledge, something which is impossible.

Thus, if it was impossible for Paul to have all knowledge, it seems to follow that it was impossible for him to speak in the languages of angels.

Objection 2. Speaking To God Means Humans Cannot Understand

First Corinthians 14:2, Paul says the tongue-speaker is speaking to God. All it means is that the content was directed toward God, not toward people. It says nothing about who can or cannot understand what was said.

Objection 3. The Speaker Did Not Understand

First Corinthians 14:14, when Paul says his understanding is unfruitful, it refers to the one praying in a language which he himself does not understand. However, this does not necessarily refer to a language which *nobody* understands. This sums up the main arguments, for the view that the tongues recorded in Scripture, were indeed known earthly languages.

Summary To Question 22
Were the Tongues In Scripture Known Languages?

There is a debate, as to whether the episodes of speaking in tongues that are recorded in Scripture consist of known languages, or mere ecstatic utterances. Those who argue that they are known languages do so as follows:

The tongues that were spoken by the disciples on the Day of Pentecost were without doubt known languages. Indeed, the text specifically says so.

Consequently, the first time that the New Testament records that humans were able to speak in tongues is clearly an example of people speaking in known languages which they had never before learned. Nobody doubts this.

In Acts 10, the second occasion of tongue-speaking in the Book of Acts, Peter likened it to the same phenomena that occurred at Pentecost. This would give the impression that known languages were involved. Since Peter said the same thing that happened to the Gentiles had previously happened to them, the inference is that the Gentiles also spoke in languages which they had never before learned.

In Acts 19, the last reference to tongue-speaking in the book of Acts there is no comment one way or the other, as to whether known languages or dialects were involved.

However, since the word which is used to describe what happened is the same word previously used to describe the other two episodes of tongue-speaking, it follows that what we have here are also known languages.

In First Corinthians, Paul cites a passage from Isaiah when he talks about speaking in tongues. In the Isaiah passage, known languages are definitely involved.

Again, there is no doubt about this. Indeed, it goes back to an actual prediction recorded by Moses concerning how the people would be judged by another nation—a nation whose language they did not understand.

These reasons have led people to conclude that every example of speaking in tongues in Scripture involved known earthly languages.

There is also the argument from biblical chronology. First Corinthians was written a few years before Luke wrote the Book of Acts. It is likely that Luke would have been familiar with First Corinthians and Paul's discussion on tongues.

Since Luke used the same phrase in describing what occurred, it may indicate that he understood the tongues in Corinth to be known languages as the tongues in Acts.

Since the speaking in tongues in Acts are known languages, we should assume the same in Corinth, unless there is convincing evidence to the contrary. It is argued that there is not.

Moreover, Paul was only speaking hypothetically about being able to speak in the languages of angels. Indeed, in the next verse he wrote about the possibility of having all knowledge. This, we know, is impossible. In the same manner, it was impossible for him to speak in angelic languages.

When Paul said the tongue-speaker was speaking to God, he was emphasizing where his gift was directed—it was praise to God. He is not saying that no human could understand his language.

While there are good Bible-believing Christians who hold that the tongues in Corinth were somehow different that the tongue-speaking recorded in Acts, there is no convincing evidence that this is the case.

While it certainly is possible that we are dealing with two different types of tongue-speaking, it seems that the better case can be made that earthly languages are in view in every instance.

Question 23

If Certain Tongue Speaking Does Not Come From God, Where Does It Come From?

Some say that if tongue-speaking does not come from God the source must be Satan. Is this how we should understand it? It is indeed possible that some tongue-speaking may originate from Satan. Jesus referred to him as the father of lies:

> You are of your father the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44 CSB).

However, this is not the only possibility, In fact, there can also be tongue-speaking that originates from the speaker's human nature.

Someone, with the best of intentions, can speak out believing that he or she is speaking in tongues. If this utterance is not a gift from God, we do not need to attribute it to the devil but rather the exuberance of the person speaking. We need to make a few observations about this issue:

There Are Four Possibilities As To Where The Tongues Originate

If one assumes that speaking in tongues is a valid spiritual gift today, then when it is exercised in a congregation there are basically four possibilities to its origin. They can be summed up as follows.

1. The tongue is an earthly language, unknown to the speaker but known to someone in the audience who can interpret it.

2. The tongue is a known earthly language, or a heavenly language, which is unknown to anyone in the congregation. In this case also someone must give an interpretation.

3. The tongue is a non-rational ecstatic utterance that originates from the mind of the speaker.

4. The tongue-speaking is demonic and comes from a counterfeit spirit.

Possibility 1: The Tongue Speaking Was Unknown To The Speaker But Known To A Member of the Audience

The first possibility is that the tongue spoken is in an actual earthly language, that is unknown to the speaker, but is known to some member or members, in the audience.

This is what occurred on the Day of Pentecost. When God sent the fullness of the Holy Spirit to His disciples (Acts 2:1-11) the disciples spoke in, at least, twelve recognized dialects. Scripture says the following:

> When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language (Acts 2:6 NIV).

This Is Not What Happened At Corinth

While this is what happened on the Day of Pentecost, it is not what took place in Corinth. In fact, the Apostle Paul said tongue-speaking should not occur in the church unless there was an interpreter present. This is not

someone who speaks the language but rather someone who has the supernatural gift of interpreting what the tongue said.

Possibility 2: The Tongue Was Unknown To The Speaker And The Congregation

The second possibility is that the gift of tongues is spoken in a language that is unknown to the speaker as well as everyone in the congregation. This could be a known earthly language or some type of heavenly language. This is possibly the type of tongue-speaking that is referred to by the Apostle Paul.

> If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal (1 Corinthians 13:1 NIV).

Paul talked of speaking in angelic languages. He also said that such speaking is directed at God, not humans:

> For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries (1 Corinthians 14:2 NKJV)

There are those who deny that Paul had in mind actual angelic languages when he made these statements. They do not believe that Paul meant that people could actually speak in heavenly languages. They think he mentioned it as hyperbole—exaggeration for emphasis's sake.

However, the same problem would occur for a congregation if the tongue-speaker spoke in a known earthly language which was unknown to anyone at the church service. An interpretation would be required.

The Tongue Language Requires Interpretation

Thus, this type of tongue-speaking requires an interpretation that must be done publicly. Paul wrote that everything which takes place in the church needs to be done for the building up of the congregation not the person exercising the gift. He wrote:

> Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but the one who prophesies edifies the church (1 Corinthians 14:4 NIV).

It was the assembly, the congregation, that needed to be built up rather than the individual. Paul also said:

> But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue (1 Corinthians 14:19 NIV).

This shows his desire to speak intelligibly to the believers. Paul then gave the following emphasis:

> But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God (1 Corinthians 14:28 NKJV).

From these statements of Paul, we find that this type of tongue speaking is not encouraged for a worship service. The emphasis is on teaching in a language that everyone understands—it is not speaking in languages that people do not understand.

Although the language spoken in tongues may not be known this does not mean that someone rambles on in mindless babbling. The genuine gift of tongues will result in the person speaking some language.

Possibility 3: Some May Speak With Religious Emotionalism

It is also possible that some who speak with tongues are doing so because of a psychological reason that is unconnected to anything spiritual. This type of tongue speaking has nothing to do with the demonic or the Holy Spirit, rather it is merely a human attempt to use the biblical gift.

In this case, the person, with the best of intentions attempts to speak with tongues and the outcome is their own ecstatic babbling rather than the supernatural gift. While the intentions are honorable, the result is not something that is led by the Spirit of God.

Possibility 4: There May Be Demonic Influence

There is also the possibility that the person speaking in tongues is doing so under some type of demonic influence. Pagan priests, witch doctors, spiritualistic mediums, and others speak in tongues as part of their frenzied religious rituals.

In the first century world, there were temple prostitutes connected with the various pagan religions who would speak in tongues in a ritual preparation. It has been argued that this type of demonic tongue speaking may be the reason why Paul forbade women to speak in tongues in the Corinthian church. He wrote:

> Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says (1 Corinthians 14:34 NIV).

In some sense, women are not permitted to speak. Paul has made it clear that women could prophesy, and pray in the assembly:

> But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved (1 Corinthians 11:5 NIV).

Therefore, his statement concerning women keeping silent may refer to speaking in tongues. He may have said that to keep anyone from mistaking the New Testament gift from the demonic utterances of the pagan prostitutes. Whatever the case may be, there has been and continues to be tongue speaking that is demonically inspired.

No Matter What, The Spirits Should Be Tested

Whenever tongue speaking is exercised, the believers are encouraged to test the spirits. John wrote about this need:

> Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1 CSB).

It is imperative that we test the spirits. This is something that is something which must be done!

There Is the Possibility That The Gift No Longer Exists

Each of these options we have looked at assumes that the gift of speaking in tongues is still valid today. However, this is not necessarily the case. Indeed, if the gift of tongues is no longer a valid spiritual gift, then all tongue speaking can be attributed to either emotionalism or some demonic source.

Summary To Question 23
If Certain Tongue Speaking Does Not Come From God, Where Does It Come From?

If the gift of speaking in tongues is still a valid spiritual gift, then any tongue speaking that takes place can be placed in one of four categories.

It is an earthly language that is unknown to the speaker but known to someone in the audience. In this case, the person in the audience can testify to the miraculous nature of the gift.

While this is what happened on the Day of Pentecost, it is not the situation in Corinth. The content of the tongue-speaking needed someone to supernaturally interpret it. It was not merely that someone who translate the language because they were familiar with it.

Consequently, there is the possibility that the tongues are a known earthly language but unknown to anyone in the assembly that has gathered. To make any sense of what has been said, it would require an interpreter.

Some argue that the tongues exercised in the churches were an unknown heavenly language. If this is the case, then an interpreter was certainly needed.

Another option is that the speaker is self-generating the words rather than speaking by means of the Holy Spirit. While the person may have the best of intentions, his or her words come from their own heart and mind and not from the Lord.

The last possibility is that the tongue-speaking is demonically inspired. Indeed, there were pagans who spoke in tongues long before the time of Christ. This tongue-speaking was connected with religious rituals. This type of tongue-speaking still takes place today. Consequently, this is why the leaders of the church are told to judge, or evaluate, everything.

Of course, there is the possibility that God has withdrawn this particular spiritual gift. If the gift is no longer valid for use in the church today, then all tongue speaking is a result of demonic activity, or self-generation. The key is to test everything by the Scripture.

Question 24

Didn't Paul Have A Number of Good Things To Say About The Gift Of Tongues?

The gift of tongues may, or may not, still be a valid spiritual gift for believers today. It certainly was a supernatural gift that God gave to the church. Therefore, the gift should never be looked down upon. The question is how much emphasis, or importance, should be attached to the gift. What does the Bible have to say?

What Did Paul Say About The Gift Of Tongues?

It has been argued that Paul had a number of good things to say about the gift of speaking in tongues. These statements should be considered, when weighing the importance of the gift. Paul's statement concerning speaking in tongues includes the following:

Those Who Speak In Tongues Speak To God

First, those who speak in tongues speak directly to God. He put it this way:

> For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:2 NIV).

Their speech is directed at God not to other humans.

Paul Wanted Everyone To Speak In Tongues

Paul told the Corinthians that he wanted everyone to speak in tongues. He wrote the following words to the Corinthians:

> I would like every one of you to speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:5 NIV).

He would not have said this, if speaking in tongues was not an important spiritual gift. From this statement, some would say that speaking in tongues was more than important, it was vital.

Tongues Can Build Up The Individual

Paul said that those who speak in tongues build up themselves. He gave this explanation when discussing the gift:

> He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church (1 Corinthians 14:4 NKJV).

This is seen by some as being beneficial. It has been contended that we can only build up others to the extent that God has built us up. Therefore, speaking in tongues builds up the believer so that they, in turn, can build up others.

Paul Spoke In Tongues More Than Anyone

Paul emphasized that he himself spoke in tongues. We read his words to the Corinthians:

> I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you (1 Corinthians 14:18 NLT).

Although the Bible does not record when Paul received the gift of tongues, or when he exercised it, Paul said he was thankful for the fact that he spoke in tongues:

Tongue Speaking Should Not Be Forbidden

Paul made it clear that tongue speaking should not be forbidden. He gave the following command to the Corinthians:

> So, dear brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and don't forbid speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:39 NLT).

Consequently, these statements by the Apostle Paul indicate the value of the gift of tongues. He wanted everyone to speak with tongues, he said that tongue-speaking builds up the believer, Paul was thankful that he spoke with tongues more than anyone, and he commanded that no one forbid the exercise of the gift.

Response To This Position

There is another point of view with respect to these statements of Paul. Without meaning to look down upon the gift of tongues, these statements must be understood in their context. When this occurs, the importance of the gift will not seem so great. We can make the following observations:

The Statements Are Always Qualified

The first thing that should be noted is that every time Paul says something positive about the gift of tongues, he always qualifies it. Never do we find him making an unqualified statement about the value of speaking in tongues. This is important to understand.

Speaking To God Is Not Beneficial In The Church

When Paul said tongue speakers were speaking to God, and not to people, he was not advocating this in the church. To the contrary he was emphasizing how unhelpful this was. He encouraged people to prophesy:

> But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort (1 Corinthians 14:3 NIV).

Paul wanted the church to be built up, not the individual who was exercising the gift.

Paul Was Not Advocating Tongues For Everyone

Paul was not attempting to say that everyone should speak in tongues. He does not phrase the sentence as a command, but more of a wish or desire on his part. He uses the same type of thing elsewhere in first Corinthians.

> I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that (First Corinthians 7:7 NIV).

Therefore, this is more of a desire on Paul's part than a command from God. In fact, Paul knew that everyone did not speak in tongues. Indeed, he himself emphasized this:

> Are we all apostles? Are we all prophets? Are we all teachers? Do we all have the power to do miracles? Do we all have the gift of healing? Do we all have the ability to speak in unknown languages? Do we all have the ability to interpret unknown languages? Of course not! (1 Corinthians 12:29-30 NLT).

Consequently, Paul could not be advocating everyone to speak in tongues.

God Gives The Gifts That He Desires

There are other reasons to believe that Paul was not serious about wanting everyone to speak with tongues. First, God gives every spiritual gift as He alone desires to give it. Paul wrote:

> It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have (1 Corinthians 12:11 NLT).

Furthermore, believers are never told to ask in prayer to receive any spiritual gift. God simply gives them.

Tongues Is The Least Of The Gifts

In addition, speaking in tongues seems to be the least of all of the spiritual gifts. While God gave tongues as a valid spiritual gift with a specific purpose for its use, Paul's emphasis is always on the greater gifts. Speaking in tongues was not one of them. In addition, we must read Paul's entire sentence about the value of tongues.

> I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified (1 Corinthians 14:5 NIV).

Paul is contrasting the gift of tongues to prophecy. He says prophecy is the greater gift, unless the gift of tongues is interpreted. Therefore, the exercise of the gift of tongues is of greater benefit to the body of Christ only when there is interpretation. Otherwise, the gift of prophecy is of superior worth.

The Church Needs To Be Build Up: Not The Individual

Paul also said that tongue speaking builds up the speaker, not the believers who had gathered together. He wrote:

> He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church (1 Corinthians 14:4 NKJV).

The Bible never indicates that self-edification is something good. It is not correct to assume that believers can only build up others to the degree in which they have been built up. Love is not self-seeking as Paul emphasized:

> It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs (1 Corinthians 13:5 NIV).

The church, the body of Christ, is what needs to be built up.

Paul Nowhere Writes About His Own Speaking In Tongues

While Paul was thankful that he spoke with tongues more than anyone, the Scripture is strangely silent as to when Paul received the gift. Neither does it give us any record of Paul exercising the gift.

If the gift of speaking in tongues was so vital, then we would expect the Scripture to record Paul using it. However, there is nothing of this sort. The absence of any account of Paul speaking in tongues seems to undervalue the gift. Paul made it clear what he preferred in the church meeting. He wrote the following words to the Corinthians:

> I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue (1 Corinthians 14:18,19 ESV).

The teaching of the Word of God is what was required when believers gather together, rather than someone speaking in an unknown tongue or language.

Prophecy Was More Profitable Than Speaking In Tongues

Even when Paul did not forbid speaking in tongues, he still qualified the statement:

> So, dear brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and don't forbid speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:39 NLT).

The gift of prophecy should be preferred to the gift of speaking in tongues, for it is a more valuable gift.

With all of these qualifications, it is clear that Paul was not encouraging everyone to speak in tongues. Indeed, as he himself clearly taught, not everyone has the gift.

Summary To Question 24
Didn't Paul Have A Number Of Good Things To Say About The Gift Of Tongues?

Those who presently practice the gift of speaking in tongues argue that the Apostle Paul had a number of positive things to say about this particular spiritual gift. They point out that Paul said the following things about tongues:

First, whoever spoke in tongues spoke only to God. This is interpreted to mean that the person was in direct communion with God. The apostle also said that he wanted everyone to speak in tongues. To make a statement such as this shows that he highly valued the gift. In addition, Paul wrote that tongues built up the individual. This is interpreted to mean that a believer will mature in their Christian experience by exercising the gift of tongues.

Paul wrote that he was thankful that he spoke in tongues more than any of them. A statement like this, is further indication as to how much he valued the gift. Paul concluded his teaching on the subject by saying that tongue speaking should not be forbidden. These facts have caused many people to place an extremely high value on this particular spiritual gift.

There are other Bible-believers who do not see it the same way. They respond to the above points by stressing that Paul's words must be understood in their context. Indeed, when these statements are read in context, it will be noted that the apostle does not place that much value upon the gift as some have claimed.

First, we find that some type of warning qualifies every seemingly good thing that Paul says about speaking in tongues. In other words, whenever he says something positive about the gift, there is always a qualifying statement.

In fact, when read in context, we find that Paul was not advocating that people speak in tongues in church where they would address God and Him alone. To the contrary, he was warning against such practices.

Indeed, he said that he would rather people prophesy than speak in tongues. Consequently, he saw the gift of prophecy as having greater value than the gift of speaking in tongues.

Furthermore, he was not advocating self-edification. In a church service, all things should be done to build up the body of Christ, not any single individual.

Paul additionally said he would rather speak five clear words in church than ten thousand in tongues. Again, the emphasis is on the plain teaching of the Word of God, rather than the practice of speaking in tongues.

Finally, even though he said tongue speaking was not to be forbidden, in that same sentence he encouraged people to prophesy.

In sum, it is important that we do have a balanced view of what the Bible says about the gift of tongues. Thus, we should neither undervalue it, nor overrate it.

Question 25

What Is The Gift Of Interpretation Of Tongues?

When the supernatural gift of speaking tongues was used in a worship service, according to Scripture the uttered message is to be interpreted. Paul made this clear when he wrote to the Corinthians. He said:

> If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God (1 Corinthians 14:28 NIV).

Those who have the gift of interpretation of tongues accomplish this need. The Bible says the interpretation of tongues is a spiritual gift. Paul wrote:

> He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and to another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to know whether it is really the Spirit of God or another spirit that is speaking. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, and another is given the ability to interpret what is being said (1 Corinthians 12:10 NLT).

There is a gift of interpretation of tongues.

This Is A Supernatural Gift

A number of things must be said about the gift of interpretation of tongues. First, the interpretation of tongues is not the ability to understand a language that one has already learned. It is rather a supernatural ability to understand someone speaking in a language in which they have never learned. In other words, it is a gift from God.

There Is Uncertainty About What Is Interpreted

There is uncertainty as to the nature of the tongue language that was interpreted at Corinth. There are a number of possibilities: If the tongues in Corinth were genuine foreign languages, then anyone who knew the language, believer, or unbeliever, would be able to interpret it. There would be no miracle involved in those cases.

If the tongue was a genuine foreign language, that was unknown to either the speaker or interpreter, then there was a double miracle—one in the speaking and another in the interpreting. However, if the tongue speaking were merely a series of strange syllables that were broken up and disjointed, then the gift of interpretation would consist of taking these meaningless utterances and making sense out of them.

These are the three possibilities.

The Tongues Should Always Be Interpreted In A Church Context

Whatever the nature of the tongue language, the interpreter turns the attention of the congregation, from the one speaking, toward God. The Apostle Paul insisted that every time the gift of tongues was exercised publicly, it should be interpreted. He wrote:

> If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret (1 Corinthians 14:27 ESV).

While the tongue languages which were spoken may never have been translated outside of a church meeting, it was commanded that they were to be translated during a church meeting. From what Paul says about the gift of interpretation of tongues, we can deduce the following.

There Were Known Interpreters In The Church

It seems that from what Paul wrote we can conclude that there were people in the congregation at Corinth who were known to have the gift of interpretation. This appears to be the meaning of Paul's statement about keeping silent unless there was an interpreter present. Indeed, for this statement to make any sense the people in the church must have known who had the gift of interpretation. This would permit those who had the gift of tongues only to speak when the one with the gift of interpretation was present. Otherwise, they would have to remain silent.

The Tongue Speaker May Have Had The Gift Of Interpretation

It is possible that those who had the gift of tongues may also have had the gift of interpretation. Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the possibility of the speaker interpreting his own words. He put it this way:

> I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified (1 Corinthians 14:5 NIV).

Therefore, the one who utters the tongue may also be the one to interpret it.

One Interpreter Could Interpret Any Tongue Language Spoken

We can also deduce from this passage that the interpreter was able to interpret any language that was spoken. The interpreter had the supernatural gift to explain any tongue language that was spoken during the service.

Only One Person Was To Give The Interpretation

No matter how many different people spoke in tongues during a meeting, which Paul limited to three, only one person was to give the interpretation. There were not to be multiple interpreters.

There May Have Been Different Interpretations Of The Same Tongue In Corinth

The fact that Paul called for only one interpreter during a meeting may mean that multiple interpreters gave multiple interpretations, and that their interpretations did not always agree. This could have been why Paul made the following remark:

> For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints (1 Corinthians 14:33 NIV).

This could have been why he said the following at the end of his discourse on spiritual gifts.

> But be sure that everything is done properly and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40 NLT).

If the tongue speaking was receiving different interpretations, then it can easily be seen how different doctrine could come into the church. Paul made it clear that only God understood those who spoke in tongues. He wrote.

> For the person who speaks in another tongue is not speaking to people but to God, since no one understands him; he speaks mysteries in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:2 CSB).

The fact that only God understood what was being said further shows the need for some interpretation of the tongue.

Since no one understood the tongue speaker, and that various interpretations may have been given, could explain the divisions that arose in the church at Corinth—the people were getting mixed messages.

Hence, there was the need for one interpreter who clearly had the gift of interpretation. This way the church could be built up.

The Gift May Be Non-Existent Today

Those who believe the sign gifts have now ceased to function in the church also believe the gift of interpretation of tongues is no longer being given. The interpretation of tongues is only possible if the gift of tongues is still existent. Since the gift of tongues is looked upon as being only a temporary sign gift until the New Testament was completed, the gift of interpretation of tongues would have also passed from the scene.

However, if the gift of tongues is still a viable spiritual gift that God is giving to the church, then the gift of interpretation would still be necessary if the gift is to function in a church service. This remains an issue which good Bible-believing Christian's debate.

Summary To Question 25
What Is The Gift Of Interpretation Of Tongues?

The Bible speaks of a spiritual gift of speaking in tongues as well as the spiritual gift of the interpretation of the language spoken.

We can define the gift of interpretation of tongues as a supernatural ability to understand the tongue language and translate it. It is not the ability to translate a foreign language. The nature of the tongue-language is debated. It was either definite foreign languages or some type of ecstatic utterance that no human could understand.

We know that those with the gift of interpretation of tongues were commanded to turn the congregation toward God, not to the speaker. There are a number of things that can be deduced about the gift of interpretation of tongues. They include the following:

First, there seem to have been known interpreters in the congregation at Corinth. These interpreters were able to explain any tongue that was spoken. Unless one of these interpreters was present, the people were to keep silent as far as exercising the gift of tongues. Also, only one interpreter was supposed to practice his or her gift during the church meeting. Hence, there were a limited number of speakers as well as a limited number of interpreters.

This may mean that there were multiple interpretations of the same episode of speaking in tongues happening at Corinth. These different interpretations of the same tongue could have added to the confusion in the church. Consequently, Paul wrote this particular section of First Corinthians to solve the problems which had come about from this confusion. However, of this we cannot be certain.

There are some who believe the gift is no longer functioning among believers because the gift of speaking in tongues has been withdrawn from the church. If this is the case, then there is no need for anyone today to discover whether they have this gift since it has been withdrawn by the Lord. As we mentioned, this is an issue that good Christians continue to debate.

Question 26

What Similarities Do We Find Between Luke And Paul Concerning Speaking in Tongues?

When we compare Luke, the author of the Book of Acts, with the writings of Paul on the subject of speaking in tongues we find many similarities. Of course, this should not surprise any of us since Paul and Luke traveled together in the ministry. Paul tells us the following:

> Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you his greetings. So do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my co-workers (Philemon 23, 24 NLT).

In his letter to the Colossians, he wrote:

> Luke, the beloved doctor, sends his greetings, and so does Demas (Colossians 4:14 NLT).

In fact, Luke was with Paul until the very end of his life:

> Only Luke is with me (2 Timothy 4:11 NLT).

Therefore, we have every reason to believe that their comments upon this subject, as well as upon any other, should reflect their common beliefs.

The "We" Sections of Acts

We also have the famous "we sections" recorded in the Book of Acts where Luke is traveling with Paul (Acts 16:4; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16). When we examine these various instances of Luke using the word "we," it seems that he joined Paul shortly after Paul had written to the Corinthians (Acts 20:1-4).

Their Agreements Concerning Speaking In Tongues

From the writings of Paul and Luke we can find a number of things that they agreed upon concerning the subject of speaking in tongues.

1. The Ability Originated From The Holy Spirit

To begin with, each writer stated that the ability to speak in tongues as originating with the Holy Spirit. In the Book of Acts, we read the following:

> Then they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them (Acts 2:4 CSB).

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came down on all those who heard the message …. For they heard them speaking in other tongues and declaring the greatness of God (Acts 10:44-46 CSB).
In the same manner, Paul acknowledged that this was a gift from God.

> Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit . . . to another, different kinds of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:5,10 CSB).

They Use The Same Terms To Describe What Happened

We also find both writers using the Greek words, the noun *glossa* and the verb *laleo* to describe what took place:

> For they heard them speaking in other tongues and declaring the greatness of God . . . And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began to speak in other tongues and to prophesy (Acts 10:46; 19:6).

For the person who speaks in another tongue is not speaking to people but to God (1 Corinthians 14:2 CSB).

Each Writer Recognized That The Gift Could Be Misunderstood

While recording the exercise of the gift, each writer was careful to acknowledge that the gift could be misunderstood. Luke noted the following response from the crowd when the miracle took place:

> But some sneered and said, "They're drunk on new wine." . . . For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it's only nine in the morning. (Acts 2:13, 15 CSB).

We discover something similar in the writings of Paul:

> If, therefore, the whole church assembles together and all are speaking in other tongues and people who are outsiders or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your minds? (1 Corinthians 14:23 CSB)

Hence, we find that Paul's remark about the charge of "madness" is paralleled with Luke's description of the crowd believing the disciples were drunk on the Day of Pentecost. All in all, we find a number of similarities between these two writers when discussing speaking in tongues.

Summary To Question 26
What Similarities Do We Find Between Luke And Paul Concerning Speaking In Tongues?

As we compare subject of speaking in tongues in the writings of Luke, in the Book of Acts, with what the Apostle Paul wrote in First Corinthians, we can make the following observations.
For one thing, we note that they traveled together. Therefore, we would expect to find them agreeing on a number of things about this subject; and this is precisely what we do find.

First, both Luke and Paul agreed that speaking in tongues was a gift of God. Also, they used the same Greek words to describe the act of speaking in tongues.

In addition, each of them gave examples concerning how the gift could be misunderstood.

In sum, when we consider their writings, we find that there were a number of similarities about the subject of speaking in tongues.

Question 27

What Truths Do We Discover In The Book Of Acts From The Episodes Of Speaking In Tongues

On the day of Pentecost, the believers in Jesus Christ spoke in tongues; languages and dialects that they had never previously learned (Acts 2:1-11), The multitude that witnessed this miracle asked the question, "What does this mean?"

> They were all astounded and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" (Acts 2:12 CSB).

From the Book of Acts, we find a number of truths revealed through the various episodes that speaking in tongues is recorded.

Luke Emphasized The Meaning Of The Gift

The emphasis of Luke in the Book of Acts was the meaning of this supernatural gift; particularly in light of the events that took place on the Day of Pentecost. In other words, he did not deal at all with the misuses of the gift as Paul did when he wrote to the Corinthians.

Pentecost Was The Reversal Of Babel

At Pentecost, there is also the reversal of what took place at Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) where God confused the languages. Previously there was only one language that everyone spoke. However, at Babel, the one language became many. In contrast to Babel, instead of confusion, we have the different languages and dialects understood by all in attendance.

Important Truths Are Revealed Through The Episodes Of Tongue-Speaking

In the Book of Acts, we discover that the various episodes of speaking in tongues provided evidence for a number of important truths.

The Prediction Of John The Baptist Was Fulfilled

The first that that we discover is that the prediction of John the Baptist's was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. John predicted of One who would coming who would baptize in Spirit:

> I baptize you with water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I. I am not worthy to remove his sandals. He himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matthew 3:11 CSB).

This was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost:

> While he [Jesus] was with them, he declared, "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait there for what my Father promised, which you heard about from me. For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." . . . But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest parts of the earth." (Acts 1:4-5, 8 NET).

Therefore, after His death and resurrection, the Lord Jesus continued to manifest Himself among His people through the promised Holy Spirit that has been poured out upon them.

The Promise Of Joel Was Fulfilled In Some Sense

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter cited the prophet Joel:

> But this is what was spoken about through the prophet Joel (Acts 2:16 NET).

There is some question as to what exactly that Joel prophesied was fulfilled on that day. There are a number of views as to what Peter meant. However, what is clear, is that the events at Pentecost were connected to this prediction in the Old Testament.

The Church Age Began

The beginning of the church age was inaugurated by the miraculous speaking in tongues on Pentecost. This fulfilled the promise of Jesus:

> And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it (Matthew 16:18 NET).

The church consists of those who have placed their faith in the risen Christ. Beginning at Pentecost, the church still exists to this day!

Jesus Was Proven To Be The Genuine Messiah

The tongue-speaking also gave testimony to the supernatural life and ministry of Jesus. Though He was crucified, He was also raised from the dead and then eventually ascended into heaven. Peter said:

> Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man clearly attested to you by God with powerful deeds, wonders, and miraculous signs that God performed among you through him, just as you yourselves know-this man, who was handed over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you executed by nailing him to a cross at the hands of Gentiles. But God raised him up, having released him from the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be held in its power (Acts 2:23-25 NET).

The coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was evidenced by the miraculous spectacle of the believers speaking in tongues. Among other things, it demonstrated that the death of Jesus was actually a victory!

Indeed, God had raised Jesus up from the dead and this was confirmed with the miraculous pouring out the Holy Spirit fulfilled that which Jesus had promised.

Gentiles Are Now Part Of This New Group Of Believers, The Church

We also read in the Book of Acts of the experience of the Roman centurion Cornelius. He and his household began speaking in tongues when they heard the gospel message:

> While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came down on all those who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in other tongues and declaring the greatness of God. (Acts 10:44-46 CSB).

This miracle paralleled that of the 120 on the day of Pentecost and confirmed to the Jews that Gentiles would now be part of this new community of believers, the church.

The episode with Cornelius was also cited at the Council of Jerusalem to justify Peter's ministry among the Gentiles. Peter told the gather the following:

> "As I began to speak," Peter continued, "the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as he fell on us at the beginning. Then I thought of the Lord's words when he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' And since God gave these Gentiles the same gift he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to stand in God's way?" When the others heard this, they stopped objecting and began praising God. They said, "We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life" (Acts 11:15-18 NLT).

Ephesus

At Ephesus, we find that followers of John the Baptist had their own unique experience in speaking in tongues:

> While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior regions and came to Ephesus. He found some disciples and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" "No," they told him, "we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." "Into what then were you baptized?" he asked them. "Into John's baptism," they replied. Paul said, "John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people that they should believe in the one who would come after him, that is, in Jesus." When they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began to speak in other tongues and to prophesy. Now there were about twelve men in all. (Acts 19:1-6 CSB).

These miracles that are recorded in the Book of Acts, with respect to speaking in tongues, provided evidence to all of these various biblical truths.

Summary To Question 27
What Truths Do We Discover In The Book Of Acts From The Episodes Of Speaking In Tongues

In the Book of Acts, the supernatural manifestation of speaking in tongues gave testimony to a number of important biblical truths.

Indeed, the miraculous speaking in tongues fulfilled a number of predictions, those or John the Baptist and Jesus, as well as demonstrating that Jesus was the One whom the Bible has made Him out to be; the Son of God and Savior of the world.

This message, of offering salvation from sin to both Jews and Gentiles through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, was to go out to the ends of the earth. It did and it continues to this very day!

Question 28

How Many People Spoke in Tongues On The Day Of Pentecost? Was It Only The 12 Apostles, Or The 120 Who Had Gathered?

One of the questions that often arises about the Day of Pentecost, and the exercise of the miraculous ability of those speaking in tongues, concerns who actually spoke in tongues on that day.

Two groups of people are mentioned in the first chapter of Acts; the 120 believers who had gathered together as well as the 12 Apostles; who were likely were included among the 120 believers. We read:

> In those days Peter stood up among the brothers and sisters — the number of people who were together was about a hundred and twenty . . . When the day of Pentecost had arrived, they were all together in one place . . . Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them: "Fellow Jews and all you residents of Jerusalem, let me explain this to you and pay attention to my words" (Acts 1:15; 2:1,14 CSB).

Luke did not specify who it was that spoke in tongues on that day. Was it merely the 12 or all 120?

Arguments For It Being Limited To The Twelve

The following arguments are usually given for limiting the number of tongue speakers to twelve.

Although the one hundred and twenty had gathered together, it seems that only the apostles were given the supernatural ability to speak in tongues. In fact, as we just noted, Peter stood up with Eleven apostles to explain what was taking place as well as proclaiming the message of Christ. To many, this indicates that only the Twelve were given the supernatural ability to speak to the crowd on that day in languages and dialects that they could understand.

Arguments For It Being The One Hundred And Twenty

On the other hand, there are those who believe that all of the one hundred and twenty believers who were gathered together spoke in tongues:

> And tongues spreading out like a fire appeared to them and came to rest on each one of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them (Acts 2:3-4 NET).

The fact that it mentions each one of them indicates, to many, that it was the entire group that was given this supernatural gift. Indeed, the Twelve are not mentioned as a distinct group until after "all of them" were filled with the Spirit and were speaking in tongues. This would include both men and women.

Why Does It Matter?

If the entire group of 120 believers spoke in tongues, then it would contradict the argument that says women never spoke in tongues. However the reverse is not the case. In other words, even if it was limited to the Twelve Apostles this does not mean that women were never given this particular spiritual gift.

While Luke does not specify who exactly spoke in tongues on that day, it seems best to understand that the entire group of 120 were given that supernatural ability.

Summary To Question 28
How Many People Spoke in Tongues On The Day of Pentecost?
Was It Only The Twelve Apostles, Or The One Hundred And Twenty?

There is a question about how many believers spoke in tongues on the Day of Pentecost. Two groups are mentioned; 120 believers in Jesus who had gathered and the 12 Apostles who were likely included in that group. The Scripture does not specifically tell us.

While arguments are given for each of these possibilities it seems more likely that the entire group of 120 believers, which would have included the apostles, spoke in tongues on that day.

Question 29

Should Mark 16:17 Be Used in the Tongues Debate?

As we mentioned, there is only one passage in the four gospels that may refer to speaking in tongues. This is found in Mark. It reads as follows:

> And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues (Mark 16:17 CSB).

This verse is often claimed as a promise that the gift of tongues would continue until the Lord returned. While this seems to be an obvious promise from Jesus that the sign of tongues will follow all those who believe, the issue is not quite that simple. In fact, there is a question as to whether this verse belongs in the Gospel of Mark.

The Testimony Of The Manuscripts

The existing manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark are not unanimous in their testimony as to whether this verse was original with Mark. There are some early manuscripts of the Greek New Testament that do not have this portion of the Gospel of Mark. In fact, the last 12 verses, Mark 16:9-20, are missing. On the other hand, the great majority of the later manuscripts that still exist do contain the last twelve verses.

Most of our modern printed Bibles do one of two things about these last twelve verses. They either put them in brackets or omit them entirely.

So, which is correct? Do these verses belong or do they not? As noted, most modern-day scholars reject the last twelve verses as being part of the original gospel of Mark. However, there are other scholars who strongly contend for the originality of those last twelve verses. To sum up, since there is some doubt with respect to the originality of the last twelve verses it should not be used in the debate as to whether the gift of speaking in tongues is still given to believers today. Other passages should be consulted to settle that matter.

Summary To Question 29
Should Mark 16:17 Be Used In The Tongues Debate?

There is a passage in the Gospel of Mark that quotes Jesus as predicting that believers will speak with "new tongues." While this passage is often cited in support of the ongoing gift of speaking in tongues there are problems associated with doing this. The main problem is that this verse is not found in a number of important New Testament manuscripts. Indeed, the last 12 verses of Mark, 16:9-20 are missing from two of the oldest manuscripts. Many scholars reject the idea that they are original with Mark.

While there are others who argue for the inclusion of these verses in Mark's gospel, it is not a good idea to use Mark 16:17 in the debate about whether speaking in tongues is a gift that still belongs in the church.

Question 30

What Did Paul Mean "I Speak In Tongue More Than All of You?"

There is a difficult statement made by the Apostle Paul, about his own experience in speaking in tongues, that has caused a number of different interpretations. It reads as follows:

> I thank God that I speak in other tongues more than all of you (1 Corinthians 14:18 CSB).

What did he mean by that statement "more than all of you?" There have been a number of suggestions given by Bible commentators.

Option 1: His Statement Is Hyperbole

Many understand Paul's statement to be hyperbole. Indeed, how could he know that he exercised the gift of tongues more frequently than anyone else in the congregation at Corinth?

Basically, he was emphasizing to the Corinthians that he used the gift too. In this context, however, Paul seems to be saying that although he believed in the validity of the gift, he did not value it as highly as other gifts, such as his gift of teaching. In fact, the next verse seems to confirm this idea:

> Yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, in order to teach others also, than ten thousand words in another tongue (1 Corinthians 14:19 CSB).

Option 2: He Had A Special Giftedness In That Area

Other commentators suggest that Paul refers to his speaking in tongues qualitatively rather than quantitatively. In other words, he had a special giftedness. In fact, the Revised English Bible translates his words as follows:

> Thank God, I am more gifted in tongues than any of you (1 Corinthians 14:18 REB).

In this case, he is emphasizing a unique giftedness that nobody else had.

Option 3: He Could Speak More Foreign Languages Than Any Of Them

There is the position that has Paul saying that he had the ability to speak more foreign languages than all of the people at Corinth. However, since the gift was something supernatural, this does not seem to be what he had in mind. All in all, it seems that the first option is the best. Though he exercised the gift often, it was not as important to him, or the congregation, as other gifts that the Lord had given, especially the gift of teaching.

Summary To Question 30
What Did Paul Mean "I Speak in Tongues More Than All Of You?"

There is a statement made by Paul about his ability to speak in tongues. He claims that he speaks in tongue more than all of the Corinthians. How are we to understand this?

The best answer seems to be that Paul was speaking in hyperbole. Although he used the gift often, it was not as important to him as the other gifts that he exercised. Thus, he was downplaying the gift. This appears to make the most sense when we read his next statement about how he would rather speak a few intelligible words to teach others rather than a myriad of words that he did not understand.

Question 31

What Are Some Of The Questions About Speaking In Tongues Where There Is No Clear Answer?

In this book, we have looked at the subject of speaking in tongues. We have found that there are many questions regarding this spiritual gift where we cannot come to a definite conclusion.

In these cases, there is simply not enough information to be certain one way or the other. They include the following issues:

Question 1: Were The Tongues In Corinth The Same As Recorded In Acts?

It is not possible to come to a firm conclusion with respect to the tongue-speaking that occurred in Acts as compared to what is stated in First Corinthians. There are similarities but there are also a number of differences.

Question 2: What Did Paul Mean, "I Speak In Tongues More Than All Of You?"

Paul made this statement about his association with the gift of speaking in tongues. As we noted in the previous question, he seems to be making the point that although he does exercise the gift, it is not as important as other gifts that the Lord has given to the church.

Others, however, believe Paul was emphasizing the important of the gift when it was exercised in the right context. Which answer is correct?

Question 3: Were Women Allowed To Speak In Tongues?

Are women given the gift of speaking in tongues? There are a number of Bible commentators that say, "No." They believe that the Scripture prohibits this.

Others strongly disagree. Among other reasons, they point to the day of Pentecost where the 120 believers all spoke in tongues.

Question 4: Were the Tongues Spoken Known Languages, Ecstatic Speech, Or Angelic Languages?

Some people believe the gift could be a known language, as we find in the episodes in the Book of Acts, or it may be an ecstatic utterance, as we find in Corinth.

In other words, some type of angelic language. Should we allow for languages, unknown to human beings, to be considered as "speaking in tongues?"

Question 5: What Did Paul Mean By When The Perfect Comes The Partial Shall Be Done Away

Paul's statement about "the perfect" replacing the partial will continue to be debated. What exactly is the meaning of this statement? What does it have to do about the gift of tongues ceasing to exist?

Question 6: What Did Paul Mean By Praying In Tongues?

Paul spoke about "praying in tongues." What was the purpose of him doing this? Is this something that is available to every believer?

Conclusion: These Questions Will Continue To Be Debated

This is a merely a sampling of some of the issues about the subject of speaking in tongues that believers in Christ continue to debate with one another.

Again, it must be emphasized, that there are good Bible-believers that differ on each of these questions. In other words, there is no consensus as to the correct answers on these difficult questions. This must be appreciated!

Consequently, any convictions that we do hold about what we think that the Bible is telling us must be done with the utmost humility and grace.

Summary To Question 31
What Are Some Of The Questions About Speaking In Tongues Where There Is No Clear Answer?

As we conclude our study on the subject of speaking in tongues, we discover that there are a number of issues where there is no definitive answer.

In other words, the information is not sufficient for anyone to give the final answer on these questions. We have cited a few examples of this.

Basically, this means that there will always be some ambiguity with respect to the biblical experience of speaking in tongues.

Hence, everyone, no matter what their conclusion may be on the issue of speaking in tongues, must recognize this fact. Consequently, it should lead to humility as well as graciousness in dealing with other believers who hold a different perspective.

Question 32

What Observations And Conclusions Should We Make About The Gift of Speaking In Tongues?

After looking at this difficult and controversial subject of "speaking in tongues" there are a few final observations and conclusions that we should make.

Observation 1: The Questions About Speaking In Tongues Will Not Go Away

The issues that we have dealt with in this book will continue to be debated among Bible believers. In other words, they will not go away. This is important that we realize this. As we saw in our previous question, there are a number of issues with respect to speaking in tongues where there is no answer that will satisfy everyone.

Observation 2: There Will Always Be People Who Hold Differing Views

This leads us to our next point. Among Christians, there will always be those who hold different views on this subject. Indeed, there will be no consensus among Bible-believers that will settle these matters once-and-for-all. Consequently, these are issues that will be continually discussed.

Observation 3: We Must Fairly and Accurately Represent The Position Of Those Who Differ With Us

While this should not have to be mentioned, unfortunately, it does. Often, we find that when one attempts to support a particular viewpoint with this subject of speaking in tongues, they do not accurately represent opposing views.

In other words, they tend to pick the weakest or outdated arguments from those who have a difference of opinion on the subject. This is not what anyone should be doing. If we are searching for truth, for the correct answers to our questions, then we must examine the "best" arguments which each side gives.

Observation 4: The Key Is To Discover What the Scripture Says

Since these issues will continue to be a source of controversy, our responsibility should be to discover, as best as we can, what the Scriptures say. Therefore, when people do attempt to exercise the gift of speaking in tongues, they must abide by the rules laid down in the New Testament.

Observation 5: Our Attitude Should Be "Seek Not, Forbid Not"

Consequently, the best answer seems to be summed up in the phrase: "Seek not, forbid not." While there are many Bible-believing Christians who argue that this gift, along with a few others, has been withdrawn from the church, this seems to be saying more than the Bible itself says.

Granted, a case can be made for the cessation of this gift as well as a few others. However, as we saw in our previous book on Spiritual gifts, a case can also be made for their continuance.

Conclusion: Our Goal Must Be To Produce The Fruit Of The Spirit

This is the most important takeaway from our discussion. It is not the gifts of the Spirit that we should seek after! To the contrary, our goal should be to produce the various fruits of the Spirit. The gifts of the Spirit are merely a means to an end. Indeed, whatever our final view may be about this difficult topic we must emphasize what we do know.

Summary To Question 32
What Observations And Conclusions Should We Make About The Gift Of Speaking In Tongues?

As we looked in-depth at the subject of speaking in tongues we discovered that there are many difficult questions connected with this spiritual gift. We can make the following observations and conclusion about this controversial subject.

First, there questions about speaking in tongues will continue to be asked.

As we observed in our previous question, there are many issues where the evidence is not conclusive for anyone to come up with a definitive answer.

The best we can do is to discover what the Scripture had to say. In other words, if the gift of tongues is to be exercised it must strictly be done according to the rules.

With all of the unanswered questions around this issue, the best response seems to be "seek not, forbid not."

Above all, we should seek to produce the fruit of the Spirit which the Bible documents for us. In other words, our goal should be to show the love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, kindness, self-control, etc. that is the mark of a spirit-filled Christian.

About The Author

Don Stewart is a graduate of Biola University and Talbot Theological Seminary (with the highest honors).

Don is a best-selling and award-winning writer having authored, or co-authored, over eighty books. This includes the best-selling *Answers to Tough Questions*, with Josh McDowell, as well as the award-winning book *Family Handbook of Christian Knowledge: The Bible*. His various writings have been translated into over thirty different languages and have sold over a million copies.

Don is now a full-time missionary with GoinChrist Ministries. His website educatingourworld.com provides many free resources for those wanting to know what Christians believe, as well as why we believe.

Currently under eleven different categories, there are 65 books on the site in PDF form, containing thousands of pages of material while answering over 1,900 questions about the Christian faith. All of the books can be downloaded for free at educatingourworld.com.