MUSIC TOGETHER
There’s a story told of the famous tenors Luciano Pavarotti, Placido Domingo, and Jose Carreras performing together in Los Angeles. A reporter tried to get the men to admit to competitiveness among the three gifted singers. Domingo’s calm reply was, “You have to put all of your concentration into opening your heart to the music. You can’t be rivals when you’re making music together.”

The three tenors recognized that in order to be able to make music together that others would want to listen to, they had to put their egos aside and focus on the task at hand. If one tried to prove that their voice was better or tried to take over another’s part, the end result would not be a display of musical brilliance, but rather of selfish immaturity.

It seems that among Christians today we can sometimes have difficulty working together in harmony. Many times it is our differing views on theology and doctrine that can be what divides us and causes discord among us. Certainly, the Bible teaches us that proper doctrine is important and that we should not take our beliefs lightly (I Tim. 4:16). However, if we are considering breaking fellowship with someone over a particular issue, we need to be certain that the issue deals with something that the Bible is not only clear on, but is of primary importance (such as the deity of Christ or salvation by grace through faith).

An area that has the potential to cause much division among Christians is our view of the Holy Spirit. Though an incorrect view of the Holy Spirit and His workings is a cause for concern, many times there is disunity within the Body of Christ over issues that are not at the conviction level. Such areas could include an overemphasis on speaking in tongues, a misunderstanding of Holy Spirit baptism or an incorrect view of what it means to be filled with the Spirit.

Within the coming paragraphs, I hope to bring some clarity as to who the Holy Spirit is and suggest an appropriate perspective on some issues that frequently arise when discussing the Holy Spirit. It is my prayer that we would have a proper biblical perspective on the Holy Spirit, yet allow for differences in points of view when it comes to non-critical areas. For “God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24).

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?
Though often mistakenly assumed to be like “The Force” from the classic Star Wars films, The Holy Spirit is not just some mysterious force or “It.” The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Holy Trinity - God the Spirit. II Corinthians 3:17-18 refers to the Spirit as the Lord. He is just as much God as the Father or the Son and is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and Son. He possesses intellect (John 14:26), will (I Corin. 12:11) and emotions (Eph. 4:30).

To most Christians, there is much that remains a mystery about the Holy Spirit. Because God is truly unique, our efforts to explain or fully comprehend Him will inevitably fall short. Some have even bought
into wrong views of the Holy Spirit and, specifically, the Trinity as a result of bad pneumatology, the study of the Holy Spirit. A widespread false view of the Trinity that has been around for centuries is known as Modalism or Sabellianism. The Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry says the following about Modalism:

Modalism is probably the most common theological error concerning the nature of God. It is a denial of the Trinity which states that God is a single person who, throughout biblical history, has revealed Himself in three consecutive modes, or forms. Thus, God is a single person who first manifested himself in the mode of the Father in Old Testament times. At the incarnation, the mode was the Son. After Jesus’ ascension, the mode is the Holy Spirit. These modes are consecutive and never simultaneous. In other words, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit never all exist at the same time, only one after another. Modalism denies the distinctiveness of the three persons in the Trinity even though it retains the divinity of Christ.

Dr. James White (director of Alpha and Omega Ministries) offers the following definition for the Trinity:

“Within the one Being that is God, there exists eternally co-equal and co-eternal persons, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

A proper understanding of the Holy Spirit is needed in order to understand His role in our lives. To assume that the Holy Spirit is not God or to take all attention off of the Father and the Son in order to focus on certain workings of the Spirit are both incorrect and unscriptural points of view.

HOLY SPIRIT TERMINOLOGY

Much of the confusion that results when referring to issues regarding the Holy Spirit could be eliminated if we all had a correct, workable understanding of biblical terms pertaining to the Holy Spirit. Some of the terms frequently misunderstood are the baptism of the Spirit (or Holy Spirit baptism), filling, and gifts of the Spirit. An improper understanding of these terms can lead to confusion, misunderstandings and misrepresentations.

BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the act by which the Holy Spirit places someone into the Body of Christ. Though confused oftentimes with the filling of the Spirit, Holy Spirit baptism is an occurrence that has happened in the life of every believer at the point of salvation (I Corinthians 12:13; Romans 8:9,11). There are some that would argue that salvation and the baptism of the Spirit do not happen simultaneously. At first glance, this argument has some credibility because there are several instances within the book of Acts where this happens. This may lead some to believe that this is normative for all Christians today.

However, the Book of Acts was written during a transitory time in the history of the early church. Followers of God were transitioning from the Old Testament law to the New Testament commands of Jesus. To assume that everything that happened in the Book of Acts is what is normative now is not consistent with the teachings in the Epistles letters in the New Testament. Rather than being a historical account (such as the book of Acts), the Epistles deal specifically with doctrine.

The cases in which the Holy Spirit “came upon” individuals separately from receiving Christ appear to be among those that have not received the full gospel message. It is also notable that each of these instances happened among four distinct groups of people – Jews (Acts 2:1-5), Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17), Gentiles (Acts 10:44-48) and John’s disciples (Acts 19:1-7). Respected theologian Millard Erickson explains these instances:

“It is my interpretation that these cases did indeed involve people who were regenerated before they received the Holy Spirit. They were the last of the Old Testament believers. They were regenerate because they believed in the revelation they had received and feared God. They had not received the Spirit, however, for the promise of His coming could not be fulfilled until Jesus had ascended.”

Furthermore, it is not biblically accurate to use the terms filling and baptism interchangeably. For instance, in I Corinthians 12:13 it says that “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body…” The word baptized (baptizo) is in the ‘Aorist, Indicative, Passive’ Greek grammatical construction. It is emphasizing something that has already happened and is a single statement of fact. We are never commanded to be baptized in the Spirit or to seek a baptism in the Spirit because Scripture tells us we have already been baptized in the Spirit. However, we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit.
FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Unlike the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the filling of the Spirit is not something that is a current reality for all believers in Christ. In Ephesians 5:18, we are commanded to "be filled (pleroo) with the Spirit." Unlike baptism, which is a one-time occurrence (Ephesians 4:5), filling is something that can happen over and over, time and time again. In the Greek language, it is in the 'Present, Imperative, Passive' tense. This emphasizes a continuous action and is a command. It literally means to 'keep on being filled.' The filling of the Spirit is what empowers and directs the Christian to see spiritual fruit produced and power for Christian service. Just as we become Christians by faith, we are filled with the Spirit by faith. Subsequent to receiving Christ, an individual may have a very dramatic encounter with the Holy Spirit which could be accompanied by a certain spiritual gift manifesting itself. To avoid confusion, though, it is more biblically appropriate to refer to this as a dramatic filling of the Spirit rather than a baptism of the Spirit. In addition, whether one is filled with the Spirit should not be judged based on whether one has spoken in tongues or "felt something." The filling of the Spirit is not to be validated or invalidated by an outward display of emotion or certain spiritual gifts. Our confidence that we are filled with the Spirit is that God has commanded it in His Word (Ephesians 5:18) and He has promised to answer anything that we ask that is in accordance with His will (I John 5:14,15).

In one of the most beautiful chapters in Holy Scripture, the Apostle Paul shares about the most important evidence of being filled with the Spirit. After writing about spiritual gifts in I Corinthians 12, Paul begins to transition in I Corin. 12:31 by stating, “But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.” He then goes on to explain that we can possess any kind of miraculous gift that we want, but if we do not have love, then it does not matter (I Corin. 13:1-3). He proceeds to talk about the attributes of love and concludes chapter 13 in v. 13 with “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” After explaining what true love looks like, Paul then picks up his discussion of spiritual gifts, specifically the gift of speaking in tongues.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Author William McRae defines a spiritual gift as:

“An ability to function effectively and significantly in a particular service as a member of Christ’s body, the Church.”

Spiritual gifts are the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in which God demonstrates His power through an individual. In addition, spiritual gifts are for the common good of the Body, they are not for selfgratification (I Corin. 12:7). Gifts of the Spirit are given to us so that we can be effective in service to others as we play the unique role within the Body of Christ that God has for us (Hebrews 2:4). There are three specific places in Scripture where spiritual gifts are listed: Romans 12, I Corinthians 12 & 14, and Ephesians 4. Among the gifts listed in the passages mentioned are three distinct groupings of gifts:

- Equipping gifts: Prophecy, evangelism, pastor, teacher
- Service gifts: Administration, exhortation, faith, giving, service, mercy, leadership
- Sign gifts: Miracles, healing, tongues, interpretation of tongues

Typically when there are disagreements over spiritual gifts, it usually involves the sign gifts. There are those that claim that the sign gifts are more important than some of the other gifts. Some go so far as to even claim that if certain individuals don’t possess these gifts, then they aren’t really a Christian. Apparently the church at Corinth dealt with this very issue because Paul addresses this subject in I Corinthians 12 when he says:

“The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable are treated with special modesty.” (I Corinthians 12:21-23)

Paul says that we all need each other and that none of the gifts are more important than the others (I Corin. 12:4-6) and that we don’t all possess all of the gifts (I Corin. 12:27-30). He even claims that God has brought us together as a Body so that there would be no division among us, but that we should all share concern for one another (I Corin. 12:24--25). Isn’t it sad that the very reason that God gave us spiritual gifts is oftentimes neglected because we get caught up with focusing on the gifts themselves?

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:22,23 says, “but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” Just as a branch on an apple tree receives its nourishment from the roots of the tree in order to produce apples, we cannot produce fruit on our own. The fruit of the Spirit is produced in our lives when we abide in Christ (John 15:5). Frankly, it is impossible to have the fruit of the Spirit produced in our lives when we rely on our own efforts to do it. Things like patience, self-control and kindness do not come naturally to us as sinful human beings. It is by the fruit of the Spirit that Jesus said His followers would be recognized – not whether people displayed a specific spiritual gift. Jesus even went so far as to say that there would be some that would perform great works in His name, even when they did not know Him personally. Christ emphasized the aspect of a personal relationship with Him – not the outward gifts. Look at this passage from Matthew 7:

“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!” (Matthew 7:15-23)

It is clear from Scripture that God desires for all nine of the fruit of the Spirit to be displayed in our lives. However, this can not necessarily be said about each of the gifts of the Spirit. I Corinthians 12:11 says that the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts “as He wills.” So the true indicator of one’s spiritual maturity is not whether one has a gift of tongues, interpretation, or prophecy, but rather if that person possesses love, joy, peace, patience, etc.

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

What is the gift of tongues or speaking in tongues? Speaking in tongues is:

“The act of speaking in a language either unknown to the speaker or incomprehensible to the speaker.”

It is referred to in Greek as glossolalia, which is taken from two words – glossa and lalia. Glossa refers to: 1) the physical organ of the tongue; 2) Something shaped like a tongue; or 3) A language or dialect. Lalia refers to speech. Thus, glossolalia refers to speaking in languages or tongues.

It does need to be mentioned here that there is a wide spectrum of belief on the issue of speaking in tongues. There are some that would say that the existence of this gift has ceased since its purpose was completed when the biblical canon was established. There are others that claim that speaking in tongues is THE evidence that one is actually a Christian. For our purposes here, I will attempt to take a more middle of the road approach on this matter and provide a biblical framework for the matter of speaking in tongues.

THE PURPOSE OF TONGUES

I Corinthians 14 clearly states that the gift of tongues is unprofitable if they are not interpreted and, therefore, not understood. Also, the fact that those that possessed this gift could be commanded to control their speaking (vv. 27-28) indicates that this gift was not one that was an uncontrollable ecstatic utterance. Rather, when the term glossa is used biblically, it refers to a known human language. The Apostle Paul encourages believers to not be immature in their thinking when it comes to spiritual gifts and, thus, it is important to understand what the Bible does and does not teach about the purpose of speaking in tongues.

According to I Corinthians 14:22, tongues are not for believers, but for unbelievers as a sign from God. Tongues were used as a sign to authenticate God’s message and activity in unbelieving people groups. They were also used as a sign to unbelievers who had rejected Jesus as the Messiah (see I Corinthians 14:21). In the early church, God used the gift of tongues to demonstrate to unbelieving Jews that He was, in fact, identifying Himself through this gospel message. There are some who would argue that tongues are good for self-edification and use I Corinthians 14:4 to back up that claim. However, it is clear from the context of that passage that Paul is downplaying the significance of this gift. He does not put utmost importance on it and is essentially saying, “What good does it do to speak in tongues...
when no one else knows what you’re saying? It doesn’t help anybody, but just makes you feel better about yourself.”

For those that would argue that tongues are proof of one’s salvation or evidence of the Holy Spirit’s presence in one’s life, it is important to note that speaking in tongues is not unique to Christian cultures. Look at what author William Fitch has to say,

“In many parts of the world, glossolalia is a well-known fact of life. Buddhist and Shintoist priests speak in alien tongues while in a trance. Speaking in tongues exists as much in South America as it does in India or Australia...Whatever else we may say about glossolalia, we cannot escape the fact that it is not a phenomenon unique to Christianity.”

Since it is known that non-Christians can speak in tongues or even that this can be an easily learned behavior among Christians, isn’t it unwise to base the judgment of one’s relationship with God on such a faulty foundation? In fact, this gift has often been used by immature individuals as a weapon to demonstrate their deeper spirituality over someone else’s. If, in fact, this gift demonstrates that one has a deeper relationship with God than others, couldn’t we logically conclude that this spiritual depth would result in greater Christ likeness and not harsh judgmentalness and impatience with others?

It is a tragedy that some have been made to feel that their salvation should be questioned, that their walk with God is not sincere or even that they are not as special in God’s eyes as others that have exhibited this gift. Those that turn the Christian life into the “haves” and the “have nots” do a great disservice to the gospel and can be a hindrance to others experiencing the abundant life that Jesus talked about in John 10:10. Since Jesus (or even the Apostle Paul) never indicated that the gift of tongues is the measurement for one’s spirituality, we would be wise to not emphasize this gift either.

CAMPUS CRUSADE’S STANCE ON SPEAKING IN TONGUES

As an interdenominational movement which seeks to minister to all segments of the Body of Christ, the leadership of Campus Crusade realizes that there is division within the Body of Christ over the matter of speaking in tongues. Just as we deal with any doctrinal issue not central to the major thrust to which God has called us, we ask our staff, fellows, volunteers, and student leaders to avoid division or confusion by not emphasizing the gift of tongues or using this gift publicly.

Campus Crusade takes a biblical stance on speaking in tongues, arising from the framework laid out in I Corinthians 12-14; and we, as a movement, neither condemn nor condone its use. In allowing the private use of tongues we are not endorsing or promoting tongues. Rather, we are giving freedom to spiritually mature leaders within Campus Crusade – who believe they have the gift – to choose whether God would have them exercise the gift of tongues privately.

The person being considered for leadership within Campus Crusade who privately speaks in tongues must demonstrate strong spiritual maturity, and trustworthiness that they will not promote tongues. The bottom line is that any Campus Crusade staff, volunteer, or student leader who feels that he/she has the gift of tongues must refrain from:

a) promoting the public or private use of that gift; and
b) using the gift of tongues publicly – restricting any practice of tongues to his/her private devotional life.

HOW TO RESPOND

As has already been mentioned, there are varying perspectives on this matter within the Body of Christ. So how should we deal with this issue when it arises? There are several principles that can be followed: 

1. We should understand clearly what the Bible teaches about this subject. We should listen to God’s Word on this matter and not just our pastor or favorite televangelist. Familiarize yourself with the books of 1st and 2nd Corinthians as these matters are addressed thoroughly.

2. No matter what our opinion on the matter is, we should always speak the truth in love. If a discussion on speaking in tongues can not be entered into without there being an argument, then it is unnecessary to have the discussion.

3. We must not attack those that disagree with us on this issue. No matter what our perspective is, we should recognize that this is not a matter that is worth breaking fellowship with someone. If an individual feels that strongly about it and can’t co-exist with you because you don’t agree with them, then they have the
problem and not you.
4. If our church practices this gift, it is reasonable that it be done according to Scriptural guidelines:
a. The gift is not for everyone (I Cor. 12:30)
b. Without a translation, the practice of this gift has no value (I Cor. 14:1-5)
c. It is more important to speak in your own language (I Cor. 14:18-19)
d. No more than two or three are to speak in tongues in one service (I Cor. 14:27)
e. There should be one speaker and interpreter at a time (I Cor. 14:27)
f. If there is no interpreter, the person who has the gift of tongues should remain silent (I Cor. 14:28)
g. The gift of tongues is not uncontrollable (I Cor. 14:32,33)

CONCLUSION

As a mature believer in Christ, it is vitally important to not only understand what the Bible teaches in regard to the Holy Spirit, but it is of primary importance that our lives are a reflection of Jesus in us. Understanding who the Holy Spirit is and the role that He plays in our life should result in spiritual fruit being produced in our lives – both in our lives and the lives that are touched by our walk with Christ.

I trust that this brief examination of the Holy Spirit will not only help you in your spiritual development, but will also help you as you lead others. May a proper understanding of the Holy Spirit, His gifts and, most importantly, the fruit He produces draw you closer to Him. I pray that this will help lessen the division that is so often caused within the Body of Christ over matters pertaining to the Holy Spirit and I hope that this will help you to live in greater harmony with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

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NOTES

8 Paul Sartarelli, The Gift of Tongues (I Cor. 12-14; Acts 2).