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## Spiritual Sign Gifts

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### Overview of Beliefs

Formative	Possible	Normative
<i>Cessationist</i>	<i>Open But Cautious</i>	<i>Charismatic</i>
Sign gifts were uniquely used during the time of the apostles to authenticate the gospel in the early church but no longer exist in the modern church.	Sign gifts are still possible but not normative in the modern church.	All sign gifts are normative in the modern church.  <i>*584 million people worldwide. 27% of Christians. Second only to Romans Catholics.</i>

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### Biblical View

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**Spiritual Gifts:** A spiritual gift is any ability that is empowered by the Holy Spirit and used in any ministry of the church to unite and build up the body of Christ.

**Key Passages:** *1 Corinthians 7:7, 12:8-10, 28, Ephesians 4:11, Romans 12:6-8, and 1 Peter 4:11*

#### A Spiritual GIFT is...

- Given by God for God (1 Cor. 12:11, 18, 31; 14:13)
- Imparted to individuals (1 Cor. 12: 7-11; Rom 12:6; 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6)
- For the benefit of others (1 Cor. 12:7, 26; 14:12, 17, 26)
- Tested against the Scriptures (1 John 4:1)

**Sign Gifts:** A sign gift is a specific spiritual gift of tongues, prophecy, miracles, and healings.

**Purpose of Sign Gifts:** A large frequency of sign gifts shows a shift in God's redemptive story (Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, Jesus and Apostles). Sign gifts were meant to validate the messenger and prove physically what God was doing spiritually in areas where God's message was beginning to take ground.

**Tongues:** Speaking in a prayer or praise not understood by the speaker (Grudem).

- A spiritual gift to be filtered through G.I.F.T. (see above)
- Falls into same purpose of sign gifts (see above)
- Comes from the Greek *glossa* meaning "language"
- Language sometimes understood by hearers (Acts 2:6)
- Language sometimes not understood by hearers (1 Cor 14:2)
- Tongues is a sign of judgement for unbelievers, not for believers (1 Cor 14:21-22, Isaiah 28:11-12)
- Always require an interpreter or else should not be used in public (1 Cor 14:27-28)
- Never meant to be ecstatic but controlled and orderly (1 Cor 14:27-28)
- Not a validation of the indwelling Spirit (1 Cor 12:30)

**Sign Gifts Today:** Due to the nature and purpose of sign gifts, these specific gifts have either ceased or are currently only being used in areas similar to the early church (i.e. validation of gospel message). All gifts are still possible, for God is in the heavens does as He pleases (Ps 115:3). If gifts were provided to unite and build up the body, then they should never be used to bring glory to yourself or confuse others. For God is not a God of confusion but peace (1 Cor 14:33). Though seen in Acts, as the era of the Apostles drew to a close, sign gifts became less frequent (compare Acts 20:9-12 with Phil 2:25-27, 2 Tim 4:20, 1 Tim 5:23, 2 Cor 12:7-9). There is no explicit verse stating that they have ceased and yet are also not normative (1 Cor 12:30). Sign gifts, therefore, are possible but not probable leaving us open but cautious.

## Common Questions

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### Can I just speak tongues as a private prayer language?

*Common Argument for Privately Praying in Tongues ([gotquestions.org](http://gotquestions.org))*

- Praying in tongues is a personal prayer language between believer and God (1 Corinthians 13:1)
- It is used to edify the individual believer privately (1 Corinthians 14:4)

*Biblical Response: How can praying in tongues be a private prayer language if...*

- All spiritual gifts are for the edification of the body, not for yourself (1 Cor 12:7, 14:12)
- Praying in tongues is always to be interpreted (1 Cor 14:13-17)
- Tongues is a "sign to unbelievers" (1 Cor 14:22)
- Not all possess the gift of tongues (1 Cor 12:11, 28-30)

### If tongues is a message from God, does that run the risk of an open canon? Are tongues just as authoritative as scripture?

*The canon is closed:*

- The message of the Apostles is the final written revelation of God (Jude 3)
- God's ultimate revelation has been shown in Jesus Christ (1 John 1:1-4)
- The New Testament comes from the Apostles and those directly connected to the Apostles (2 Peter 1:16-21)

*Messages of Tongues should not be Canonized:*

- All biblical occurrences of speaking in tongues were not canonized (Acts 10:46)
- God has spoken throughout history without his words being canonized (John 21:25)
- All Scripture is for the edification of the entire church throughout history (2 Tim 3:16-17)

*Tongues are not as authoritative as Scripture:*

- There are no verses stating tongues are authoritative (2 Tim 3:16-17)
- Sign gifts are to be weighed for validity (1 Cor 14:29-33)
- Paul claims greater authority in his writings than those using sign gifts (1 Cor 1:36-38)

## Case Study

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You walk in on your roommate who is speaking what seems to you to be gibberish. Your roommate tells you that this has been a prayer language she developed after trusting in Christ. Using 1 Cor 12 and 14, what do you say to your roommate? Which of the spiritual gifts detailed in 1 Cor 12 or 14 are still in use today? Your roommate confides in you a desire to share this gift in the church. Using 1 Cor 12 & 14, how do you counsel your roommate?

1. **Use the Columbo Tactic** - What do you mean you speak in tongues? How did you come to that conclusion? Have you ever considered... (see above on sign gifts)
2. **Tongues are not Gibberish** - Tongues is never used in scripture to be ecstatic but controlled and orderly (1 Cor 14:27-28)
3. **Tongues is not developed but a gift** (1 Cor 12:4-11)
4. **Tongues without an interpreter is not loving** (1 Cor 14:27-28)
5. **Spiritual Gifts are for others benefit** - What revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching are you planning on sharing to build up the body? (1 Cor 12:26; 14:12, 17, 26)
6. **Order and not disorder in the church** (1 Cor 14:26-35)
7. **See Purpose of Sign Gifts and Sign Gifts today above**