

ISI Perspective on the Charismatic Movement

International Students, Inc. (ISI) is an evangelical organization that works with a large variety of denominational and independent bible-believing churches. Its staff and associates represent considerable diversity in their church backgrounds and membership. Some latitude in perspective is allowed, therefore, on the charismatic movement.

While ISI wishes to be open with respect to the charismatic movement, we do have concerns about two themes that some charismatics might emphasize. First, we are concerned that the sufficiency of Scripture might be diminished by supposed contemporary revelations. We affirm that Scripture is *unique* as the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12), *complete* in its revelation (Jude 3, Revelation 22:18–19), and *sufficient* as the authority for matters of faith and practice (2 Timothy 3:16). Second, we are concerned about the teaching of some charismatics that a Christian needs to experience a “second blessing” in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit. ISI believes that the Christian receives the Holy Spirit fully at the moment a person places his or her trust in Jesus Christ (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:13). We acknowledge the biblical command to “be filled with the Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18), but we understand that phrase to mean that we are to submit ourselves to the control of the Holy Spirit, who took up residence within us at conversion.

ISI neither condones the charismatic movement nor condemns the exercise of spiritual gifts when carried out according to the explicit instructions of Scripture (Romans 12:1–10, 1 Corinthians 12–14, Ephesians 4:11–16). Out of a deep desire to be faithful to God’s Word, ISI refuses to endorse both the extreme that seeks to impose “sign gifts” on every Christian and the extreme that denounces every contemporary instance of their use as carnal and demonic. As a corporate entity, ISI neither practices such sign gifts nor promotes them. But neither does ISI go beyond Scripture by forbidding or condemning the exercise of sign gifts by individuals whose churches believe the Bible permits the use of such gifts. If we are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, let us remember: “In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things love.”