

Speaking in Tongues Is 'Routine Part of Spiritual Discipline,' Says Archbishop Welby

The archbishop of Canterbury recently spoke about the gifts of the Spirit, saying speaking in tongues is a "routine part of spiritual discipline."

Charles Moore writes about an interview he conducted with Archbishop Justin Welby in a *Telegraph* article.

"Since he is an evangelical," Moore writes, "I ask him whether he can speak 'in tongues'—the 'charismatic' spiritual gift recorded in the New Testament. Oh yes, he says, almost as if he had been asked if he plays tennis, 'It's just a routine part of spiritual discipline—you choose to speak, and you speak a language that you don't know. It just comes.'"

Welby also spoke of his conversion and said it was not necessary for a true Christian to have a personal conversion experience.

"There is an incredible range of ways in which the Spirit works," Welby told Moore. "It doesn't matter how you get there. It really does quite matter where you are."

During his time in New Court at Trinity College, Welby said he was praying with a Christian friend on Oct. 12, 1975, when he suddenly felt "a clear sense of something changing, the presence of something that had not been there before in my life. I said to my friend, 'Please don't tell anyone about this', because I was desperately embarrassed that this had happened to me, like getting measles."

The archbishop said that although he has experienced long periods with “no sense of any presence at all,” he has never gone back on his decision to follow Christ. This is not his doing, he says. “It’s grace. Grace is a reality; feelings are ephemeral.”

As an only child raised by an alcoholic father, Welby was an extremely lonely adolescent. But he says although it felt horrible at the time, “Now it feels hugely valuable. God doesn’t waste stuff.”