


This exhortation can manifest itself in many ways, including: within personal friendships, by short words of motivation, by long conversations in a coffee shop, or by anything that shows an obvious personal interest in the spiritual growth of others.


 The following is a list of characteristics devised by Bill Gothard in his material on spiritual gifts. Each of these characterizes the Christian who possesses the gift of exhortation. Alternate reading these qualities and discuss them as a group. Indicate beside each quality, on a scale between 1-5 (1 being lowest) how well each of these describes you.

- ___ 1. A motivation to urge people to their full spiritual maturity in Christ.
- ___ 2. An ability to discern where a person is in spiritual growth and to speak on that level.
- ___ 3. A desire to give precise steps of action in urging people toward spiritual maturity.
- ___ 4. A drive to explain truth with logical reasoning in order to gain acceptance for it.
- ___ 5. An ability to visualize spiritual achievement for people and to use this to motivate them to action.
- ___ 6. A desire for face to face discussion in order to determine and ensure a positive response.
- ___ 7. An ability to identify with people of different types and backgrounds in order to gain a wider hearing.
- ___ 8. A motivation to bring harmony between diverse groups of Christians, and an awareness that harmony is basic to spiritual maturity.
- ___ 9. An ability to welcome personal tribulation as a chief motivator of spiritual growth.

By nature, the exhorter is concerned for the spiritual well-being of others. But this gift can be misused. The exhorter can be hurtful if he does not accurately discern the spiritual state of others. He may demand too much progress too quickly, or may become impatient or frustrated with a lack of spiritual growth. He may also become satisfied with the outward appearance of spiritual growth while overlooking the lack of a heartfelt change.

One who has the gift of exhortation should seek to build relationships with less mature Christians. Phone conversations, casual meetings, online communications, and Bible studies can all be avenues of encouragement!


So far in this series we have seen a gift that is exercised best before crowds of people – the gift of Prophecy; we have seen a gift that is exercised best behind the scenes of public ministry – the gift of Service; and today we are going to look at a gift that is best exercised within one-on-one, personal relationships – the gift of Exhortation.

 We find this gift mentioned in Romans 12:6-8. Alternate reading these verses.


The word *exhortation* means *to comfort, encourage or excite* someone by the use of words. In the context of the Spiritual Gift of exhortation, it means *to encourage others to come to their full maturity in Christ*.


The Apostle Paul is probably the greatest example of one who possessed the gift of Exhortation. Over and over again in his epistles we find phrases like “I exhort you, or, I beseech you”. These phrases are often preceded or followed by lengthy arguments for our continuation in the faith.

Paul was so burdened for the spiritual growth of his fellow Christians, that he likened the intensity of his desire to that of travailing in birth!

 Galatians 4:19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until


Like Paul, the Christian who possesses the gift of exhortation has a sincere desire and burden for the spiritual growth of others. This person may encourage others through teaching and preaching, but this is not his primary outlet. The exhorter prefers face-to-face, personal relationships in which he can encourage fellow Christians to grow into spiritual maturity.

 Col 1:27-29. **Q.** According to vs 28,29, for what reason did Paul *preach, warn, teach, and labour*?

 What does the biblical word *perfect* mean? What do you think being “perfect in Christ Jesus” means?

The exhorter seeks to take biblical principles and to help others apply them practically to their lives. At times this encouragement can take the form of both comfort and rebuke. The exhorter will use whichever approach is neces-

sary to motivate others to take the next step in their spiritual lives. The wise exhorter has the ability to discern at which spiritual level someone is at, and to speak to them on that level.

 1 Cor 3:1-4. Alternate reading these verses.


1. At which level of spiritual maturity did Paul determine the Corinthians were at? v1
2. How did their level of spiritual maturity affect Paul's message? v2
3. How would you characterize Paul's words of exhortation? Were they a rebuke? A comfort? An encouragement?

Paul lovingly rebuked the Corinthians for their spiritual immaturity, and then immediately followed his rebuke with instruction. He explained *why* their actions were immature and helped them to change their perspective. (v5-23).


Paul was able to patiently adapt his way of teaching to the spiritual level of his hearers. This requires both longsuffering and forbearance and is a strong trait of the exhorter.

Barnabas – Mr. Exhortation


It is quite possible that Saul would not have become the great Apostle Paul if it had not been for another man with the gift of exhortation. In Acts 4:36 we read about a man named Joses. It was abundantly clear to the other disciples that Joses possessed the gift of exhortation, so much so, that they gave him a nickname – Joses the Exhorter.

 Acts 4:36. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, _____),...

The word that the apostles used here to name Joses is the very same word used in Romans 12:8 where it is translated “exhortation”. Every other time we read about Joses in the Bible it is by this nickname – Barnabas.


 Acts 9:26,27. In Acts 9 we read about Paul's conversion. In vs 26, 27 we see Paul attempting to join the disciples.

1. What was the disciples' reaction to Paul?
2. What did Barnabas do for Paul? How was Barnabas' reaction to Paul consistent with what we have already learned about an exhorter?
3. If someone had helped you in this way, how might it change your perspective or attitude toward others?

 Acts 11:19-24. Alternate reading these verses.

1. What things in Antioch made Barnabas glad? v21, 23
2. What did Barnabas do for these new converts in Antioch? v23
3. What did Barnabas exhort these new Christians to do? v23

As an exhorter, Barnabas was gladdened by the conversion of these men and women, but in his mind, their conversion marked just the beginning of a process of spiritual maturity. His overarching desire for these new Christians was that *with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord*.

 Acts 14:21,22. **Q.** What two things did Paul and Barnabas do for the disciples in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch?

The word *confirming* means *to strengthen or reestablish*. Paul and Barnabas were two men with the gift of exhortation who travelled from church to church seeking to encourage believers to grow into spiritual maturity.

Appreciating the gift of Exhortation

A church that has men and women who possess the gift of exhortation is truly blessed. These Christians have a sincere care for others and their spiritual growth. These church members will sacrifice personal time and expense in their drive to see others grow. Oftentimes those with the gift of exhortation will even take on a spiritual and emotional burden for the sake of others. Their hearts will be burdened for the growth of others, and they will spend time praying for these fellow Christians.