

Spiritual Gifts: *Exhortation*

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October 20, 2001

Introduction

Good afternoon, brethren. This is Pastor Appreciation Month. We all appreciate Mr. Whitting in a variety of ways and right now I appreciate him for letting me get up here to speak and for saying to me, “Dan, take as much time as you need.”

Today I’ll be speaking about the spiritual gift of exhortation. The Spiritual Gift Analysis book defines exhortation as “the ability to help others reach their full potential by means of encouraging, challenging, comforting, and guiding.”

Exhortation comes from the same Greek word translated “Helper,” “Counselor” and “Comforter” in John 16:7.

Author Chuck Swindoll explains that the gift of exhortation is “the ability to bring encouragement, to help others see the relevance of Scripture, to give insightful counsel, to motivate, to comfort, and to offer hope that prompts action.”

We see that in Paul’s 1st letter to the Thessalonians, in which he exhorts Christians to do a wide range of things:

1st Thessalonians 5:14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.

Exhorters exhort Christians 1) to warn, 2) to comfort, 3) to uphold, 4) to be patient.

Here’s a *sound-bite description* of the gift of exhortation: Exhortation is used to motivate people towards achieving *inward transformation/spiritual fulfillment* and *outward manifestation* of godly fruit in their lives.

Transformation is the goal of exhortation: to see the person growing more in his spiritual life and becoming more like Christ.

The one who exhorts is person-oriented, disciple-directed, program-preparing. Let me explain.

- ◆ He is person-oriented – he cares about people and desires to help them in their spiritual growth and maturity.
- ◆ He is disciple-directed – meaning that he directs his attention to those who are disciples of Christ or those who are becoming disciples of Christ. Also, he often has a *relationship* with those disciples.
- ◆ He is program-preparing – in other words, he may offer advice, an outline for solution, a program for progress.

The one who exhorts takes this Scripture to heart:

Hebrews 3:13

but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Therefore, he sees an *urgency* to life’s problems and situations and wants to take *immediate steps* to solve the problem. Because of his understanding of the problem and his recognition of the solution, the person with the gift of exhortation often offers a series of *steps* to reach the desired outcome.

The gift of exhortation *discerns* the problem or situation, *visualizes* the potential, and *outlines* steps of action to achieve spiritual growth. The exhorter knows that the only way to get from where you *are* to where God wants you to *be* is to *take a step* and he strongly encourages the person to take that step.

Which Gift?

On September 1st, I presented the first spiritual gift (the one on prophecy), and, afterwards I was wondering which gift to speak about next. The next day, Eileen and I went to a picnic at the Whittings’ house and we had a marvelous time in fellowship with the brethren. On the way home, I was telling Eileen about my conversation with Paul James, and it occurred to me that what I had been doing much of the day was *exhorting* my brothers and sisters. So, exhortation seemed like the best gift to give next. Paul said that it would be okay to use our conversation as an example.

My brother Paul will be speaking to you in a few weeks about the gift of evangelism. Paul was very concerned about presenting the *right* information. He wanted to be *accurate* and to say what *God* wanted him to say. Paul told me that God had placed this burden on his heart to speak about this subject. That he had so much material to present and that he didn’t know how to structure it. That he had searched a number of libraries for additional material about evangelism, but there was little to be found. And that he wasn’t sure what to say to you all about evangelism because, for him, *all* of the spiritual gifts have an element of evangelism and *all* that we say and do, in one way or another, is evangelistic in nature.

I suggested to Paul a number of different approaches as to *structuring* his presentation. And I exhorted him.

Brethren, this is what I told Paul. But these words could be spoken directly to you as well. Take what I said to Paul and apply the principles in your own lives. Harken to these words.

I told Paul ...

“You have the heart of an evangelist. You can see the evangelistic nature of all the other gifts. You recognize the depth of the subject and know that encyclopedias could be written about each of these gifts and they could never address everything about them. And you feel burdened to present the right material in the right way for our fellowship.

“You don’t have to scour libraries and bookstores for more information. God has already given you all that you need. God has put the Truth He wants you to tell us in your heart, and anything else He wants you to have He’ll find a way to give you.

“Your task is to prayerfully put into words the message that God has already given to you to give to us. Of all of the countless aspects of evangelism, God has a specific message He wants you to give us. You already have everything that you need. You have a heart for evangelism – a fire to evangelize. You know God’s awesome power and His love and you know how He miraculously changes lives.

“You have everything you need. God will guide you and direct you to complete this task. And your words will touch the hearts of those whom God seeks to touch.”

My brothers and sisters – God has given *you* everything you need. You have God’s Spirit. God has given you spiritual gifts. You have been in the church for years or decades and you have a body of knowledge and an understanding of God’s Word. You have everything you need to meet life’s challenges.

Whatever your situation or circumstances, wherever you are in your journey with Christ, realize that you have everything you need. Take the next step. Move forward. Walk in God’s grace and power. Your steps may be different from mine, but *together* we can fulfill God’s purpose for this fellowship.

None of us has all the answers. But we all have what we need. Take that step. Move forward.

Go, in peace. I love you, brethren. God bless you.