

## 06. The Motivation Gift of Exhortation

*Spiritual Gifts—God's Way*

By Robert Rohlin

**Bible Text:** Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12

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Chapter 12. It is good to see each of you here this morning and just we are going to quick have a... every week we want a quick refresher of just a few basic principles about spiritual gifts so that you can be mindful of those. So, first, Romans 12 and then also I want to just to very quickly look again at 1 Corinthians 12. So we will start in Romans 12 first and just look at the gifts and the next gift we were going to study is teaching, but we are going to skip over that for just a moment, because I didn't have time to finish my slides on that one. And I wondered why I didn't already have it done and I decided it must be because I didn't want everyone to know what my weaknesses were. So we will talk about those later.

But in Romans 12 beginning in verse six it says:

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us,  
whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or  
ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;  
Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with  
simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with  
cheerfulness.<sup>1</sup>

And then for each of those seven verses there is one verse after that that corresponds to that and so verse nine corresponds with the gift of prophecy and verse 10 corresponds with the gift of ministry that we talked about last time and verse 11 for teaching. Verse 12 is going to be our caution for those with the gift of exhortation and it says, "Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation; continuing instant I prayer."<sup>2</sup> And so that will be our caution.

And then if you just turn over to 1 Corinthians 12 and, again, this is, you know, a lot for the benefit of those who maybe haven't been with the whole series so far and I was walking to one dad this last week. He said he had been looking for something to do with his family during devotional nights and he hadn't been here during the spiritual gifts. I said, "You ought to find out what all of your spiritual gifts in your family are."

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 12:6-8.

<sup>2</sup> Romans 12:12.

So they were going to go to the website and listen to these lessons after they were taught and try and figure out what the spiritual gifts in his family were. So it is a great way. So if you don't get it here, you need to get it on the website.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 12 it says at the very beginning, I love the first verse:

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.”<sup>3</sup>

You know, it depends in how you... your inflection means a lot there, right.

“I would not have you, ignorant.”<sup>4</sup> Or, you know, “I would not have you ignorant,”<sup>5</sup> you know. It all depends on how you say that, right?

But did you notice he says in verse four:

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.<sup>6</sup>

So in those few verses the apostle Paul just used four different Greek words to describe spiritual gifts. And the reason God uses different Greek words is because he has different meanings, different things to understand. So there is differences of administrations. That is one kind of thing. And then there is the diversities of operations, another Greek word. And then there is the manifestation of the Spirit, still, another Greek word.

So what I want us to do is just by way of quick review we have been kind of looking at brief description as to how to discover and develop your spiritual gift. And let's review these types of spiritual gifts. The first kind is the motivation gift and these are listed in Romans chapter 12 verses three through nine. So that's the first passage we just read. These are the... there is a list of seven of these gifts and you have one of these seven. It says in 1 Corinthians 12 that you were given, that God gave severally to every man as he will.

In Greek that means that he gave each person one of these gifts. And he used, referred to the Greek words that correspond with this passage.

So when he says there is diversity of gifts, the χαρισμα (khar'-is-mah) is the Greek word. Then he says each person is given one of these at the moment of salvation. So when you were saved you got one of these gifts.

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> ibid.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:4-7.

So every believer has one of these gifts listed in Romans 12 and the purpose for that is so we can focus on it so we can concentrate on it. And then also, you know, the list, of course, is, we have gone over. But we want to concentrate on knowing the others.

Then there the ministry gifts. And 1 Corinthians 12:5 this is what are called the diversities of administrations.

In Ephesians four it mentions this.

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.”<sup>7</sup>

And, you know, these were given for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

And then 1 Corinthians 12, this is where διακονια (dee-ak-on-ee'-ah) from which we get deacon. It means a minister and usually this is a gift given by the church and possibly even through the gift of ordination.

And then we have the manifestation gifts which says that what does the Holy Spirit do in the life of someone when they hear you minister or see you minister with your spiritual gift? Well, these... this is the Greek word ενεργημα (en-erg'-ay-mah) or effect. It could also be the word φανερωσις (fan-er'-o-sis) which means to show and so when someone hears you give your spiritual, you know, use your spiritual gift or they see you use your spiritual gift in what you are doing, what it results in is ability to, you know, that gives him something.

So, for example, they may get a word of knowledge that they know something they didn't know before. They have the word of wisdom that now they see how something applies to their life that they have never seen before. So the relationship between the gifts is when you use your motivation gift in a ministry opportunity God gives you, then God produces the manifestation in the life of that person. And so what goes wrong in a lot of churches today is when they start studying spiritual gifts they all want to focus on the manifestation gifts.

They say, “Oh, I like those gifts. Those look cool. I want one of those.”

They don't understand that they are not to seek those. Those are what God produces in the life of the person being ministered to. What they are supposed to do is figure out which one of the gifts in Romans 12 is their gift and they are supposed to figure out what ministry that the church offers them can they get involved in to glorify God. And so there is a real wrong focus in spiritual gifts today because people don't understand the relationship between these different spiritual gifts.

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<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 4:11.

So let's look at specifically this morning at the motivation gift of exhortation. And sometimes the word "exhortation" you will hear some people call this the motivation gift of encouragement because exhortation and encouragement have a lot in common.

This is best illustrated in the life of the apostle Paul. He is an exhorter through and through.

For those of you who have ever known Mr. Doppler, he is an exhorter and so his gift would be an as an exhorter.

Now I have often said that the best way to figure out what your spiritual gift is out of those list of seven gifts in Romans 12 is to figure out what it is that irritates you about other Christians and what irritates exhorters is when they see somebody not growing spiritually. They see, you know, here is somebody that is saved, but they are not discipling others. They are not reproducing. They are not winning others for Christ. They are not discipling others. And when they see discipleship not happening it really bugs them. It just really bugs them. They don't like to see Christians just park their selves in a pew and that is all that they ever do. They want to see them grow. And it is a wonderful gift. In fact, it is... we will talk later when we kind of finish these seven gifts, we will talk about how God uses the gifts on the church, but the exhorter is the balance to the teacher and I am the teacher so I need one of these people around me to kind of balance me out.

And I have benefited in my life more from exhorters than I probably have from any other gift. They are just... they minister to me in great ways.

So there are some guidelines. Again, we read these in Romans 12 verse 12.

It says, "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer."<sup>8</sup>

And the most important principle that they need to understand in exhorters is they need to understand God's design so that they can explain God's principles to others. If they understand God's principles, they understand how God designed life and how a life works, then they can encourage people in spiritual growth by explaining how those work.

So let's go back to our humorous cartoons we have looked at a couple of times before and so I posited the idea that if each person with a spiritual gift went to a dinner party and somebody dropped dessert on the floor how would they react? Well, the exhorter might say, "Well, next time let's serve the dessert with the meal. In other words, they want to correct the problem so it is not repeated in the future. They want to figure out, ok, what can we do, what can we change so that we get better results next time? And that is kind of an exhorters motivation is they are looking for what can we change to improve things?

Now if you are sick and in the hospital and an exhorter visits you, you know, they want to know what is God teaching you through this? But, you know, what are you learning through this that is, you know, helping, that you can use to help others in the future?

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<sup>8</sup> Romans 12:12.

Because they want everything in life for even the bad stuff, one of the cool things about exhorters is they have a knack for looking at the bad stuff and figuring out what the benefit or the blessing is. And the fact is if you go and complain to an exhorter, they will probably tell you, "Well let's get out a legal pad and let's write down every possible way that God is using this bad thing to bless your life."

And most of us don't think that way. We are thinking... Blessing? What do you call this a blessing? And yet, you know, it is great exercise. And I would encourage every one of you to do that exercise when something bad is happening to you. Sit down and make a list. How is God using this to bless my life?

Now you may remember we have talked a lot about how Paul sets forth both in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 the fact that the Church is the body of Christ and just as the body has seven different kinds of sense perceptrors, each spiritual gift corresponds to one of those perceptrors. The prophet that goes to the sense perceptror of heat. When you get close to a fire there is a special kind of nerve in your body. It says, "Whoa. I am getting too close to the fire. I better back off." God sends prophets to people to say, "You are sinning and you are getting very close to judgment. You are getting very close to chastisement. You better back off."

And then you have the gift of service. That is that little thing that feels the lightest touch because servants, man, all you got to do is tap them and say, "I have got a problem," and they are ready to help you, you know?

And then exhorters, there is a special kind of nerve in your body that actually senses that when something is being stretched. And I tell you what. My stretch perceptrors are a lot more keen in my older age than they were in my younger age because I can definitely tell when I am stretching because it hurts. Ok?

But, you know, they can feel when your skin is stretching. They can feel when you are stretching your muscles. You can tell something is being stretched. And that is a great corollary because a person with a gift of exhortation, what are they trying to do? They are trying to help you stretch and grow spiritually.

So if your skin gets tight and something. Have you ever had your foot swell up or another part of your body swell up because you had a, you know, an injury or something and you could actually feel that your skin was tight? Ok, so that perceptror is kind of a corollary to this gift of exhortation.

See, exhorters are keen to whether or not someone is growing spiritually and they know how to help those people grow spiritually and give them kind of practical steps. So let's talk about some characteristics of the exhorter. They are trying to help you make progress off the spiritual chart, as it were. And let's talk about some of the characteristics.

So, you know, you may remember ever week we kind of talk about some of the positive use of gifts and we talk about the negative uses of gift as we usually... we don't know what ours is, we probably recognize it from the negative uses.

A person is... the spiritual, the exhorter is committed to spiritual growth. They want spiritual growth. They don't like to see you just warming a pew.

Now it is interesting. Paul said, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."<sup>9</sup>

He was saying, "I want to see you grow so bad, I am having labor pains to watch you grow."

Now that is pretty picturesque language for a man, actually. I don't think I have ever told anybody that. But, you know, it is like I am in, you know, I want to see you grow.

And then in Colossians 1:28 he says, talking about Christ, he says, "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect,"<sup>10</sup> and the word perfect here means τελειος (tel'-i-os). It means to be mature, to be complete.

So what was his goal? He wanted to see people being mature. That was his goal. And the reason he taught, you know, a teacher might teach you because he just wants you to know something that you don't know yet. But an exhorter, he is going to minister to you. He wants to help you mature to be like Jesus Christ. And that is so crucial.

Another thing is exhorters are very good at seeing root problems. Once an exhorter understands cause and effect. And, by the way, this is something... this is something I have changed in a lot over the course of my ministry. I remember when I was very young in the ministry and in seminary. You know, I reveled in theology, you know, where you could get all the theological facts and all the Bible verses and all the theological terms. You can know the difference between exegesis and isogesis and you knew the difference between post, mid and pretrib views and all of that and you really reveled in that and you were ready so that if anybody came along with the wrong theology you could assist them by improving their level of knowledge and fixing their misunderstanding.

You know, that was kind of... that was kind of the focus. What I have discovered is over the years I have become much less interested in theological terms and I have become much less interested in being able to debate people in theology. I know practice what I call practical theology which is how does the Bible tell us to live? How does the Bible... in other words, forget the ivory tower discussions between theologians about which view is right on something. How does the Bible help people to know how to raise their families, keep their marriage intact, run a business by God's principles? How... where is the Bible practical? Because I think what... for too long too many churches have focused

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<sup>9</sup> Galatians 4:19.

<sup>10</sup> Colossians 1:28.

on just explaining the theology. And so I actually was online the other day on our sermon site. There are some statistics on the back of the bulletin, by the way, in case you are interested in getting to see the printout last week. Kind of interesting, but I was on the sermon site and I saw another one of our BMA preachers that had some sermons out there and I had gone to seminary with this man. I thought, "I am going to go listen to this guy." And I hadn't seen him for a long time. I went out and listened to a sermon and it was an intensely theological sermon and it really deserved... it should have been a thesis paper because... and he was reading it from a manuscript just about word for word. A very intellectual, but the topic is kind of interesting. The topic that he preached on was something of the effect of the error of charismatic error among Calvinists, I think, was the something like that. And I listened for a long time to the sermon. I was impressed with his Bible knowledge, but I thought, "How much practical good is that doing for somebody in the pew that we are discussing people that maybe aren't even there? You know, and how interesting is that?"

I wonder if some of those people really just needed to know how they get from month to month honoring God in their finances and following God's principles and not follow the world's way of finances. I wonder how many of those people out there have broken marriages. They really would like to have heard something from God's Word about what does God say about resolving conflict. How do you forgive somebody when they have hurt you so deeply you feel like a knife has been buried in your back?

You know, I think... and this... I think my perception about all this has been shaped by exhorters because exhorters help make the Bible practical. They help bring the Bible down to the... the rubber down to the road, so to speak, so we really do that. And that is one of the things I really appreciate about exhorters.

Now, by the way, they see these root causes. Paul talked to the Corinthians. He says, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ."<sup>11</sup>

So an exhorter seeks out anything that is keeping them from growing. In other words, Paul was looking at the Corinthians thinking, "What is wrong with you people? What is wrong with you that you are not growing? Why are you still fleshly? Why are you still carnal? What are the hindrances to that?"

And they encourage those who are growing spiritually. They want to encourage that kind of thing.

Another thing an exhorter can do is that they can see steps of action. In other words, an exhorter can give some practical steps. You know, I think you ought to work on this first and then you ought to work on this. Very often in Scripture we have these things called precepts. They are concepts. They are principles. And you need to be able to put precept upon precept, Psalm 119 mentions. So we need to build upon our understanding of Scripture and build this.

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<sup>11</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:1.

And, you know, it probably doesn't do you a whole lot of good to spend a long time studying some deep, theological content if you haven't first of all just spent some time figuring out how to integrate Christ into your life. So we need to build precept on precept.

And in 2 Timothy Paul is talking to Timothy and he has got some practical advice and I love this because he called Timothy a young man. Timothy was in his 40s. Brother Fulton and I are both in our 40s. I am not there for very much longer, though. But, you know, I still like the idea that being in your 40s is youthful.

But he says, "Flee also youthful lusts."<sup>12</sup>

And then he says, "Ok, here is something you need to flee. If there is sexual immorality, just run from it."

By the way, it is interesting in Scripture that we are to resist all other kinds of sin, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you,"<sup>13</sup> but when it comes down to sexual immorality, you don't resist it, you just run from it. He says, "Flee from it. Don't even put yourself in a place where that is going to be a temptation."

He says, "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid."<sup>14</sup>

So he says, "Ok, Timothy, you need to stay away from sexual immorality. You need to follow and focus on these character qualities. And, by the way, stay away from theological arguments. They are not profitable, ok?"

He says, "Knowing that they do gender strifes."<sup>15</sup>

He says, "You, you know, you get into these little arguments and all they really do is promote strife. They are not really helping."

So he brings out the fact that, you know, here are some action steps you need to take. And Paul is always doing that. Paul is always giving somebody practical steps of action.

By the way, the apostle Paul if you read all of his writings you know so very frequently in a verse he will have a long list of things. And he puts them in a specific order expecting you to follow them in that order.

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<sup>12</sup> 1 Timothy 2:22.

<sup>13</sup> James 4:7.

<sup>14</sup> 1 Timothy 2:22-23.

<sup>15</sup> 1 Timothy 2:23.



Now another thing the exhorters do is exhorters help you experience hope again. I will tell you, what if you are in a situation where you just feel hopeless, you just feel like, you know, there is no point in going on, there is no reason to be going on, you need to be around an exhorter. You need an exhorter to be around because they help you see the potential of your life.

One of the wonderful things an exhorter can do, they can look at somebody that is having a lot of trouble. They are not being... not living for Christ and, you know, a lot of times they can look at a troubled youth and they can talk to him for a few minutes and then they will ask him some weird off the wall question about: Have you ever considered that maybe God wants you to do so and so?

And you are thinking, "Wait a minute. This person is ready for juvenile hall and somebody is saying God may want you to have this ministry?"

And I am thinking, "You know, where did you come up with that?"

But that is what an exhorter is so good at doing because they say... they give a person a vision of their life. You know, what is that verse? Where there is no vision, the people what? Perish. That is right. If they don't have a vision for their life, they kind of give up.

And we just found out this last week about a young lady we know who has really just, I think, kind of given up on life. She doesn't even venture out of her house most weeks and her power of life is just on the computer. And this is not the way this young lady has been in the past and we are very concerned about her.

So Paul used the testimony of one church to motivate another church. So he told the Corinthians, he says, "For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many."<sup>16</sup>

He says, "Listen. I know that you have had some zeal. I have told about your zeal to other people and have encouraged them."

And Paul in Philippians, you know, he talks about the generosity of the people in Philippi. And he actually told other churches about how generous, how Philippi gave beyond their ability. They gave sacrificially and Paul was doing that to motivate others to give like the Philippians had given. And so they are always sharing stories as a hope of motivating other raising solutions.

He used his own life as an example. He says:

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all

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<sup>16</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:2.

longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.<sup>17</sup>

Basically what he is saying is, you know, he is telling his testimony. He is saying, “Listen, if you think that you are too sinful for God to use, let me tell you something. I am the chiefest of sinners and if God would save me and make me a part of his grace, there ain’t any of you that he can’t do something with.”

That is how he motivated it. And, Linda, it sounds like you and me talking about our lives, you know? So it is like if God can use me, he can use anybody.

The exhorter turns problems into benefits. Usually exhorters have learned exhorters get a lot of trials in life and they often actually take time to figure out. They do a debriefing to figure out what... why did that trial come. What was the benefit in that trial.

And the cool thing is, they can then look at you when you are going through a trial and because they have probably already been through something pretty similar, they can go, “Ah, let me share with you what I think God may be doing through this, because here is what happened to me and here is what I learned from it.”

And suddenly a light goes on in your head and you go, “Wow. I never thought about that before. This might actually be a blessing after all.”

You know, Ron Dunn preached a sermon many years ago talking about Jacob wrestling with the angel and, of course, you know that before Jacob had his encounter with that angel, he had heard Esau was on his way to kill him. And so he sent, you know, half of his flocks off this way and half of his flocks off this way. He even split up his family. He said, “If any of you meet Esau, tell him that Jacob, you know, his servant is coming and, you know, and give him gifts and, you know, kind of butter him up a little bit.”

And then somebody came and told him, “Well, yeah, we found Esau. He is coming this way. He has got 400 men with him.”

So now Jacob is really freaked out. And so he is all alone. He has sent his family, his flocks, everything away. I think he was all alone hoping that, you know, all these other gifts going ahead of him would just appease Esau, there wouldn’t be any problem.

All of the sudden in the middle of the night somebody jumps on him, I mean jumps on him hard. Who do you think he thought was jumping on him in the middle of the night? I thought he thought Esau was after him. I think he thought Esau just jumped on... and so they start having this wrestling match. And it is dark out side and they don’t have streetlights and mercury lights and what not so it is dark. He can’t really see who he is wrestling against, but he is sure it is Esau. But they wrestle for a while and suddenly he figures out it is not Esau because the way I think about it, these brothers had wrestled before and he knew where Esau’s weaknesses were and he knew how to pin Esau’s

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<sup>17</sup> 1 Timothy 1:15-16.

shoulders to the mat and suddenly he is not getting this guy and he thinks, “Now wait a minute, this isn’t Esau. Esau is not this good.”

And so he says, you know, “I don’t know who you are, but I am not letting go of you until you give me a blessing.”

You know, and the interesting thing about that. I remember Ron Dunn saying in that message that blessing and curse are like two rails of a railroad track. Blessing and curse often travel down life to your life and arrive at the same time. And very often it is the very trial that comes that is, you know, weighs so heavy upon us that it at that very same time God is trying to bless us.

One preacher once said that when you feel like Satan is trying to drown you, God is trying to teach you how to swim. You know. He wants you to learn from the benefit.

So an exhorter will look at problems and they turn into benefits because they say if you will humble yourself, God will exalt you in due time. If you will humble yourself, he will give you grace. God gives grace to the humble.

Because of this, Paul gloried in his tribulation. You remember he prayed three times for this thorn that was in his flesh to be taken from him and finally God says, “Hey, it is in you weakness that my grace is made sufficient.”

He said, “Well, much glory, then, much then will I rather glory in my infirmities that I may, you know, I can have Christ. I can experience Christ. I can have his grace.”

So the good news is, you know, the bad news is you have got a problem. You have got a curse. You have got a very difficult time in your life. The good news is God is trying to bless you through that bad time. And he is trying to give you some spiritual blessings.

2 Corinthians one Paul is, it says:

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia: Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...<sup>18</sup>

And look at what he calls God.

“...the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.”<sup>19</sup>

And here is what he says.

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<sup>18</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:1-3.

<sup>19</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:3.

“Who comforteth us in all our...”<sup>20</sup> What? Our tribulation.

In other words, God gives comfort and God comes alongside. God is blessing when? In the midst of our trials.

And here is why.

“...that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble.”<sup>21</sup>

He says, “Listen. The reason I have these trials is so that I can experience God’s solution and God’s comfort so I can turn around and help somebody else that has got the same mess.”

Now that is the perspective of an exhorter. He says, “The comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”<sup>22</sup>

So it is a great gift to have.

He says, “For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation.”<sup>23</sup>

He says, “I am suffering. I am experiencing God’s comfort and I am going to pass that on to you. It is for your benefit that I am suffering.”

Not too many people understand that. It is a perspective of an exhorter.

Here is another thing about exhorters. They have a desire to be transparent. They don’t want to just play the game. They don’t want to just give you the factoids and not be walking. In other words, they want their walk to match their talk. They know that spiritual growth doesn’t take place where there is guilt. And so they want to make sure that they don’t feel guilty about something. They don’t want to be hiding anything from you. They don’t want to have a guilty conscience. They know that the greatest strength in the life of a Christian in terms of being able to minister to others is that they have a clear conscience. There is the power of a clear conscience.

Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy one. He says, “That thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience.”<sup>24</sup>

He says, “Listen. You are in spiritual warfare and the only way you are going to win the battle is if you have a clear conscience and you have faith. That is what you need.”

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<sup>20</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:4.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:5-6.

<sup>24</sup> 1 Timothy 1:18-19.

And, by the way, when it says, “holding faith” in the Greek you can also translate those same two Greek words as holding faithfulness. It is like that Mark 11:22 when it says, “Have faith in God.”<sup>25</sup>

Hudson Taylor who was the first missionary to the inland parts of China came across that. He was trying to translate that verse into Chinese and he looked at it at  $\tau\sigma \epsilon\chi\epsilon\tau\epsilon \pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\nu \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  in Greek he looks at it and it could be translated, “Have faith in God,” but because  $\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  is what is called a genitive, he said, “Hold fast to the faithfulness of God.” And that is an equally correct translation. The fact is, I kind of like it better because I will tell you why I like it better. I... probably none of you here are like this, but in my life sometimes my faith does this. You know, it is more ragged than the stock market, ok. But, do you know what? The faithfulness of God it is there all the time, isn’t it?

Lamentations three it says:

It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.<sup>26</sup>

I just... man, I like that. I would rather hold fast to the faithfulness of God than rely on my faith. So exhorters open their lives and they are transparent because they want to open the door to people getting God’s grace and especially to the gospel.

In 1 Corinthians nine Paul is very autobiographical. He says:

And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak...<sup>27</sup>

And, by the way, I want to give you a word of caution about this Scripture passage because I think a lot of people misuse this Scripture passage in my estimation. They get the idea that what they are supposed to do is we are supposed to go out and we are supposed to make our church more seeker friendly in the sense of we have got to be more worldly. We have got to have the world’s style of music and style of dress and everything else in order to attract the world into the church. That is fishing with a lure. The disciples didn’t fish with a lure. They went out at night and we know this from Luke chapter five. They hung lights over the edge of the boat. The fish were drawn to the light and when Jesus said, “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men,” he didn’t say throw something out there that looks like the world and we will trick them into coming in.

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<sup>25</sup> Mark 11:22.

<sup>26</sup> Lamentations 3:22-23.

<sup>27</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:20-22.

He says, “You go out in the midst of a darkened world and you hang the light over the edge of the boat and there will be some fish that are drawn to the light.”

Peter says, “Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing, nevertheless at thy word we will let down the nets for another draught.”

And so what we need to be doing instead of being more like the world, because if you make your church more like the world you just wind up with a worldly church. What we need to do instead is be so different when people look at us they say, “Wow, there is something different there. Because we are not relevant to the world if we are not different from it. Because otherwise you can get a lot of people to come in and then after they are here for a while they think, “Hey, shoot. This is just like it is on the outside. Why am I wasting my time?”

That is why we are not retaining a lot of people even though we are being more contemporary in many of our churches.

Now note what Paul is saying here is he isn't saying he became worldly. What he is saying is, “Hey, if I was talking to somebody that had a college education, hey, I went to the University of Tarsus. I will talk to them on their level. If I am talking to somebody that, you know, dropped out of the eighth grade, you know what? I am going to talk in a simpler vocabulary. I am going to talk on his level. If I am talking to a Jew then I have a big background as a Jew. I was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. I was of the tribe of Benjamin, you know, which was the first tribe to have a king. I was circumcised the eighth day. I am of the, you know, stock of Israel.” You know, he says, “I will talk to you from that perspective and show you how the law of God points to Christ. And if you are a Gentile, you know what? I am not going to mess with any of that law stuff or try to impress you with my Jewishness. I want to impress you with the fact that Jesus is the very logos of God, the Word of God and I am going to win you to Christ that way.”

In other words, adapt not your lifestyle and don't change the message, but maybe adapt the vocabulary so that you are talking on the same level. You are not over top of people's heads because you use theological language and everything.

But notice he is opening himself up and he is sharing from his vast wealth of experiences. And he uses whatever experience identifies with the user.

Another thing the exhorter does is he gains insight through experience. So he understands that Scripture is about cause and effect. We studied here for a little over a year the 49 commands of Christ and basically every problem in life can we experience as Christians can be attributed to a violation of one of those 49 things Christ commanded us. And we are still in the process of finishing getting all of those out on the web if you haven't hear those, because, you know, the most important thing, you know...

Christ said discipleship, he says, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”<sup>28</sup>

Teaching them what?

“Whatsoever things I have commanded you.”<sup>29</sup>

So if we are going to be discipled we need to understand what Christ commanded us.

His motivation is to promote spiritual growth and to bring diverse groups of Christians together to serve the common gospel.

Another thing the exhorter does is they communicate urgency to act on clear steps. They explain truth logically, but then they want you to do something about it. Exhorters are always very good about asking for commitment. They will be the ones who, in a church meeting will say, “You know, bow your heads, close your eyes. Everybody that, you know, if you are ready to make this commitment together, will you raise your hands?” You know, they want to know that you are making commitment.

1 Corinthians 15 Paul wrote this wonderful treatise on the fact that the resurrection is for real. It is the real deal. In the fact is, if we didn’t have the resurrection, Paul says, we would of all men be most miserable. He was... but it was a reasoned logic. He reasoned with King Agrippa. He reasoned with the Greeks. He reasoned with others and they gave clear steps.

And in Acts 18:4 it says, “And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.”<sup>30</sup>

Before King Agrippa, you know, he persuaded Agrippa and Agrippa finally said, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian,”<sup>31</sup> which, by the way, is probably the saddest sentence in the New Testament that, you know, didn’t go that way.

Another thing Paul liked is he liked to be face to face. He would not have liked Facebook or email or Twitter, you know, all of which we use a great deal of here. But he wanted to get face to face with you because he wanted to see. And, you know, there is a lot you can tell about a person when you look him in the eyes. The fact is, you can tell a lot about a person if they can’t look you in the eyes. Have you ever noticed that?

You know, but they want to be with you in person. They want to personally motivate you. They want to have that relationship with you and Paul was always saying, “I long to see you. I wish I could be there. I wish I could see you.”

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<sup>28</sup> Mark 16:15.

<sup>29</sup> Matthew 28:20.

<sup>30</sup> Acts 18:4.

<sup>31</sup> Acts 26:28.

He liked those personal meetings whenever he could.

He told the Thessalonians, “But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.”<sup>32</sup>

He said, “Man, I wished I could see you in person.”

He told another place in Thessalonians he says:

As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.<sup>33</sup>

And he is talking about, hey, when I was with you last time, don't you remember how I exhorted you to live for God? Don't you remember how I encouraged you to do that?

He longed for those personal meetings.

Now let's talk about the misuses very quickly. A lot times we know our gift by how they are misused.

Exhorters a lot of times keep other people waiting on them. And, by the way, that does not mean, guys, that your wife is automatically an exhorter. Ok, that is another whole problem we will talk about another time. Ok? And, uh, oh, I got a dirty look.

So but an exhorter, they see somebody that needs help and needs spiritual encouragement and they go and they start to... they get down to encourage them and spend time with them in practical application. They may forget there is something that there a whole bunch of people are out in the van waiting for.

And they may... it may cut into their personal responsibilities, their time. And he assumes that, hey, my family will understand I am doing ministry.

Tell you what. Let me give you one little thing every man in here needs to know and every preacher in here especially needs to know is that your family is your ministry. Let me say that again. Your family is your ministry. If you haven't raised a godly family, you have forfeited the credentials for future ministry. They are your credentials.

I will tell you what. Who is going to listen to you talk to them about marriage unless you have got a happy marriage? Who is going to listen to you about how to raise kids unless your kids are living for the Lord and walking in the Lord and deporting themselves appropriately?

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<sup>32</sup> 1 Thessalonians 2:17.

<sup>33</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12.



Now, by the way, you will notice that Paul in 1 Corinthians seven, he basically said that he had chosen to remain unmarried. Now most Bible scholars think that he was married and he was widowed because he had been a member of the Sanhedrin at some time. But he says, you know, “I have to choose to remain unmarried,” because he wanted to devote himself more fully to serving others and ministering to others.

I won't take time to read that, but it is interesting. He says in 1 Corinthians seven he says, “The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.”<sup>34</sup>

One of the benefits of being single is it gives you the ability to focus on serving God in ways that you won't be able to do after you are married. Can husband and wife serve God after they are married? I certainly hope so because what I have been trying to do for the last 30 years.

But you have the ability to make decisions about going places and engaging in ministry without having to consider how many other people it is immediately affecting.

Now I can't make a decision about changing a post of ministry without thinking how does this affect my wife, how does it affect my children, you know, a whole bunch of other things. But, you look at...

Another thing is exhorters can sometimes look to themselves for solutions. In other words, they have had so many experiences that sometimes they just think that their vast wealth of experience will give them all the insight they need to help someone. And sometimes they don't completely stop and listen. They don't stop and pray.

You remember in Joshua chapter seven where Israel went into battle against Ai and they didn't pray first. They had a disaster. I think a lot of times exhorters can rush head long into trying to help somebody because they have seen the problem before. They know the problem. Sometimes they don't even listen to all the problem. They are ready to go help because they have already seen it and already had the solution.

One thing I have discovered is no two people are alike and no two problems are identical. So you really do need to take time to listen and I think you should pray before you give anybody any advice.

Proverbs 18:13, a great verse for husbands. I call this the key verse in the Old Testament for husbands.

It says, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:34.

<sup>35</sup> Proverbs 18:13.

In other words, if you give people an answer before you have heard them out, you are being stupid. Ok? So we need to do that.

The exhorter also can be proud of visible results. When they have helped someone and, maybe, this was, you know, a person headed for juvenile hall and now they are the model, sometimes, you know, they want to kind of trot them out as their trophies and say, "Hey, look what we have accomplished." And if they are not careful they can fail to give the glory to God. And they may want to take credit for it.

So this is another thing. We have to be careful that God alone gets the credit.

If God uses you to work in somebody's life, you need to understand. It wasn't you. It was the Holy Spirit.

Now let me tell you about one of my favorite stories in the Old Testament is when Moses had been on the back side of the desert of Midian keeping sheep for a whole lot of years. One day he looks up and he sees a bush burning.

Now that wasn't anything special. Big whoop, you know, big deal, bush burning. Bushes burned all the time. Acacia bushes are full of oil in their leaves. You get lightning, you get a, you know, a something else, you know, they were breaking into fire all the time.

Now what was weird about this one is that the bush wasn't being burnt. It was just that the fire was in it. And Moses said, "Now, there is something different about this bush. I have got to go see this."

So he goes over there. Gets close. God makes him take off his shoes because he says he is on holy ground which, by the way, is my son's justification for why he never wore shoes when he lived under my roof.

But at any rate, he would go up and I think what God was really saying and there is a book by Ian Thomas called *The Saving Christ* it makes a great, great point. He says Moses was... that God was telling Moses there isn't anything special about the bush. What is special is the fire that is in it. And the fact is, all of us are just bushes. There is nothing special about any of us that we should take credit for anything that God is doing. What is special is the fire that is in it. You know, God has blessed our church tremendously in the last three years. We can't take credit for any of it. It is the fire. It is the spirit that is in it and he alone deserves the credit and we have got to be careful about that.

And also exhorters sometimes if they just see a change on the outside they are content with that. The behaviors change.

How many of you have ever changed your behavior, but not changed your heart? You know that. The kids, they clean the kitchen, but outside they are playing in the playground. They are not cleaning the kitchen.

They can start projects prematurely. And this is probably one of the biggest problems that exhorters have. They visualize projects. They get people excited about them and then they never follow through to make it actually happen. They will come up with whole grandiose ideas about, ok, we are going to have this university or we are going to do this or we are going to do that. And then it never follows through to completion because they fail to delegate to somebody that has that ability.

And they use projects to motivate people, but they only stay on that until they find a better project and then the better project suddenly becomes their new pet thing and they kind of leave it.

Another thing is you can treat everybody around you like they are a project. It is kind of like, oh, you have got a problem. You are my new project. Let me give you some steps.

You are going to come back. You are going to check on that project. Now once that project, that person has reached a certain level of maturity and they don't have the big problems anymore, the exhorter kind of like, oh, yes, it is nice to see you. Doesn't even remember your name anymore at that point because you are no longer a project for them.

And so it is... you have got to be careful that people don't become projects. And the other thing is, you have to be careful that you don't share illustrations because exhorters love telling stories about how God did so and such and such in this person's life. Got to be very careful that you have that person's permission to share that illustration.

There are some things my wife doesn't give me permission to share. She didn't let me tell that whole joke about furniture disease in public anymore, Tom. You know, she doesn't give me permission to that. Any time I say something about my chest falling into my drawers, she is embarrassed. So I don't say it in church anymore, ok.

But you have got to be careful that you... if you have got an illustration, you have permission to share it. And here is the other thing is that exhorters can present truth out of balance. And this is why the balancing gift for an exhorter is a teacher. An exhorter needs a teacher to make sure that the Word of God is being taught in balance.

Let me tell you something. You can take any verse in the Bible and you can give me that verse and I can preach that verse out of balance and I can preach heresy. Every verse has a balancing verse to it. And you need to keep it in balance.

So what happens is sometimes exhorters get so focused in on little thing and they keep talking about it, but they actually have error.

They also can set unrealistic goals. They assume that people can accomplish the goals and they say, "Here. Here is your project." And they dump something on you and it is like the dump truck backed up and said, "Here is all these projects for your life."

And they don't tell you how hard it is going to be to accomplish them.

And here is another thing. If an exhorter meets somebody that is just kind of uncooperative. They will work with them three or four days and then they just and they just want to give up, you know. It is kind of like, well, you are not... you are wasting my time. I have got other people I can help. And they will give up on you.

Do you know what? We need to not give up on people. I am glad God didn't give up on me.

So last slide. Here is the instructions to the exhorter. He says, first of all, you need to be rejoicing in hope. In other words, keep your own hope up. You might give up on people, but guess what? God may not be done with them. God may point you. He... God may use you to give somebody an idea about what they need to do in their life and they may not do it instantly.

I learned this the hard way. The very first church I pastored, I went out there and I think sometimes, I don't know if brother Fulton had this experience. I think sometimes the first church you pastor is designed to see whether or not you are going to stay in the ministry because they will eat you alive many times. And that is what I felt like at that first church. And I was there for two years. I kept praying for God to let me leave and God would say, "Nope, not yet. Nope, not yet."

Finally God gave me the opportunity to leave. Years later the church called me back to pastor them again and I made probably one of the greatest mistakes of my life. I said yes without praying about it and I went back and pastored this church a second time. Boy, if you thought the first time was rough...

But I did get one bit of encouragement from it. I was walking down the hall one day and I passed by a Sunday school class and I overheard one of the teachers in the side room saying, "Do you remember when bother Rohlin was here the first time and he taught us such and such?"

And I thought, "Somebody actually listened? I didn't know they listened."

That just blew my mind. You know what? You may minister in somebody's life and they don't respond, but I want you to have hope because sometimes it just takes a long time for that truth to process. And get in their life.

And then he says, "You need to also be patient in tribulation." You need to develop messages from your own suffering.

When you are in tribulation you are... think of it not just as I have got out of this problem, but start thinking about, ok, how could I put this problem into a PowerPoint presentation to share with people later? You know, how... what can I learn from this to give to other people?

And then, finally, he says, "Continuing instant in prayer."

We need to all do this, by the way. Every one of us needs to develop the attitude and it is especially important for exhorters that we don't ever think that we have what it takes to help somebody in and of our selves. It is very tempting sometimes if you have got a lot of experience or a lot of knowledge to say instantly, "I know how to help you." And I will tell you what. One of the best things you can do, and, by the way, people respect you if you do this, is when they tell you your problem, you say, "Could we just stop right now and pray about that?"

Before you ever give them a piece of advice, before you ever give them a piece of counsel, "Could we just stop and pray about that?"

And I am going to tell you something. You may then have some counsel or advice to give you, but God may talk to them directly and he will give them far better advice than you did.

Never answer a problem without stopping to pray about it and I think that is why he tells us to be continuing instant in prayer.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Father, we are thankful for the different spiritual gifts that make up the body of Christ and we desperately need exhorters. We need them to look at us and tell us when we are not growing spiritually and tell us how we can progress, how we can grow to be more than we are in Christ. Father, give our exhorters here at this church wisdom to never treat people like projects, to always stop and pray before they offer a vision or a project for somebody's life. And help us to all be more like the exhorter in that we should never be content with a lack of spiritual growth. And help us to all be rejoicing in tribulation and continuing instant in prayer and never giving up hope on others.*

*Father, there are some times I just want to say that somebody is beyond hope, but I am glad that nobody said that, that you didn't say that about me, that you waited on me. Father, we love you. Glorify yourself today. Fill brother Fulton with your Spirit as he preaches we pray in Christ's name. Amen.*