



Discover God's Unique Design for Your
SPIRITUAL GIFT OF EXHORTATION

YOUR GIFT:

EXHORTATION



Discover God's Unique Design for

YOUR GIFT: EXHORTATION

by Dr. Douglas Porter



HOW TO DEVELOP AND USE THE GIFT OF EXHORTATION
Copyright © 2007 Ephesians Four Ministries/Church Growth Institute
Released as:
DISCOVER GOD'S UNIQUE DESIGN FOR YOUR GIFT: EXHORTATION
Copyright © 2015 ChurchGrowth.org
All Rights Reserved
Published in the United States of America
E-Book ISBN-10: 1-57052-254-5
E-Book ISBN-13: 978-1-57052-254-3

CONTENT

Introduction	5
Chapter 1: What Is Exhortation?	7
Chapter 2: Building a Ministry Out of Problems	13
Chapter 3: Learning to Listen to Others	21
Chapter 4: Nurturing Personal Growth in Others	27
Chapter 5: Leading People to Make Significant Change	35
Chapter 6: Intervening in a Crisis Situation	41
Chapter 7: Finding Your Place on the Ministry Team	49
Appendix 1: Identifying Your Giftedness in Exhortation	57
Appendix 2: A Two-Year Plan to Begin Thinking Like an Exhorter	65

INTRODUCTION

The first preacher mentioned in the New Testament was engaged in the ministry of exhortation (Luke 3:18). The best-known leader of the early church was also an exhorter (Acts 20:2). Therefore, it is not surprising that the gift and ministry of exhortation is mentioned more often in the New Testament than any other spiritual gift.

Paul used the Greek word *paraklesis* to describe this gift. This term is based on two other Greek words, *para* (beside) and *kaleo* (to call). It was used in Greek culture to describe anyone who was called to one's side to assist in some matter; i.e. a lawyer, nurse, helper. Gary Collins coined the phrase *people helper* to describe the character of this gift.¹ A variation of this term is used in the New Testament as a distinctive title of both Jesus (1 John 2:2) and the Holy Spirit (John 14:16).

By some accounts, the gift of exhortation may be the most widely distributed gift given by the Holy Spirit to the church. Yet many churches are full of hurting people who feel no one really cares enough about them to help. That suggests many Christians gifted in the area of exhortation have failed to recognize their unique giftedness and/or do not know how to use their gift in meaningful ministry. As a result, instead of experiencing the personal fulfillment that comes from using your gift effectively in ministry, they may be among those who are hurting deeply.

This book is written for laypeople to help resolve this apparent problem in the church of our day. It was planned with the gifted yet inexperienced lay exhorter in mind. Therefore, chapter one discusses what is involved in the ministry of exhortation so the gifted lay exhorter can fulfill his or her ministry.

Perhaps the reason why so many exhorters fail to develop their spiritual gift is because they have personally faced problems and failures in their past, perhaps their very recent past. What they perceive as their major weakness may in fact be their greatest strength. Therefore, chapter two deals with building a ministry out of one's personal problems in life.

The major ministry focus of those gifted in exhortation may be described as "people-helping growth ministries." Chapters three through six deal with specific ministry skills that the gifted exhorter is most likely to utilize. These include learning to listen to others (chapter three), nurturing growth in others (chapter four), leading people to make significant changes in life (chapter five), and intervening in a crisis situation (chapter six).

Although God gave gifts to His church to enhance its ministry effectiveness, various gift abuses abound in many evangelical churches. Chapter seven addresses this issue by helping you recognize how other gifted individuals can

¹ Gary Collins, *How to be a People Helper* (Santa Ana, California: Vision House, 1976).

also be involved in people-helping growth ministries and how you can contribute to other aspects of your church's ministry as part of the ministry team.

The rest of the book addresses issues that are of primary importance to the lay exhorter committed to developing his or her God-given gift. Appendix one is intended to help you identify your giftedness in exhortation and discover how to express your gift in your church. This book was written to help you begin to develop your gift of exhortation. Obviously, there is much more you can learn about exhortation and incorporate into your ministry than could be contained in a book of this size. Therefore, appendix two lays out a two-year plan to help you begin thinking like an exhorter and get started on a lifelong continuing education program designed to help you become the most effective gifted lay exhorter you can be.

The Lord bless you as you use your gift in ministry to His glory.

Dr. Douglas Porter
Mississauga, Ontario

CHAPTER ONE

What Is Exhortation?

Everybody needs somebody sometime! It has been years since I first heard those words, but they remain as true today as they were then. People need people. That's just the way God made us. In His first evaluation of the human race, God concluded, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him" (Gen. 2:18).

God recognized this would be an ongoing need in human race. Therefore, He established a social order setting "the solitary in families" (Ps. 68:6). When Jesus established the church as an institution by which the world could be evangelized and Christians encouraged in their Christian life, the name family was quickly used to describe church life (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19). In both divinely appointed institutions, God has placed people in an environment where others can come to their side and assist as needed.

People still need people, someone who can be a friend when needed most. One Christian leader who recognized this important principle was Dawson Trottman. At a time when many evangelical church leaders were caught up in the enthusiasm of crusade evangelism, Trottman steadfastly insisted there was a better way to reach the world. His strategy was to do it one person at a time.

It didn't make much sense to some to devote a year to discipling one person when Billy Graham was having hundreds respond in a single meeting. But Daws (as he was known by his friends) insisted that taking a year to invest himself in one person would double his effectiveness in only twelve months. This process would be repeated each year until the whole world was being reached and disciplined in the Christian faith. Using this approach, he estimated the task could be completed in less than thirty-five years.

This did not mean he excluded himself from others while helping one person. On the contrary, he earned a reputation for always being available to help wherever there was a need. He often offered rides to hitchhikers he met on the highway, viewing it as an opportunity to share the Gospel. When Billy Graham needed help producing discipleship materials for those converted in his crusade, Trottman took time from his own ministry to help. Even in his death, Trottman was a people-helper. He drowned in a New York lake while attempting to help another who had fallen out of the boat.

Although his life was cut short, he left behind a ministry committed to disciple-making one on one. Not everyone who identifies himself/herself as a Navigator has as high a profile ministry as Trottman. Most would probably never choose to address a group of more than two or three people at one time. Their strength in ministry is reflected in their willingness to come to the side of others in their time of need and be a friend who helps them discover and develop a vital relationship with God.

Not all gifted exhorters express their gifts the same way. Winston serves as an elder in his church and is one of several who make a point to greet people each week. Within a few minutes of meeting a church visitor, he usually knows enough to begin networking them to others who share common backgrounds or interests. As he talks with members of the church, he seems to naturally communicate a sense of interest in and respect for the one to whom he is talking. He once introduced a common looking man to a guest speaker as someone who had just completed "one of the most important ministries in the church." The speaker was then informed he was shaking hands with the man who had just refinished the church's washrooms. People are important to Winston, and those important people know it.

In contrast to the outgoing personality of Winston, Shirley liked to keep to herself. When the youth department of her Sunday school needed a secretary, Shirley agreed to keep records. But she did more than just keep records. She took a very personal interest in each student on the role. She let it be known in her own way that she was available to help when needed. It was not long before high school students were coming to Sunday school early and the check-in lines got longer and moved slower. When problems at home overwhelmed the students to the point of running away, they often ended up at Shirley's place. A couple hours later, she and her husband would find themselves taking a runaway home to work out his or her problems.

At first glance, Winston and Shirley appear so different it is hard to imagine they could have anything in common. But time has demonstrated that both have the gift of exhortation and have learned how to use their gift in unique ministry opportunities. If God has given you the gift of exhortation, you too can have a personally fulfilling people-helping growth ministry like Winston and Shirley. It begins with understanding the nature of exhortation, how exhorters help people, and where you can be most effective in helping people for whom you are concerned.

The Nature of Exhortation

The word translated "exhortation" in our English Bible is *parakaleo*. It refers literally to calling someone to one's side. Implied in the term is the idea that the one called to the side is there to help. The term is often translated with expressions such as "encourage," "implore," "appeal to," and "comfort." But the real emphasis of the term is two-fold. First, the exhorter is an equipper who builds people by giving them what they need to grow and accomplish their goals. Second, the exhorter is a motivator who is able to persuade people to do what they might not do otherwise.

Some Christian counselors have identified exhortation as "the gift of counseling." This is largely due to the similar nature of the ministries of both the Christian counselor and gifted exhorter. I prefer to describe the ministry of exhortation more broadly as "people-helping growth ministries." This description reflects the primary focus of those kinds of ministries to which gifted exhorters seem to be most attracted. They are ministries that most often involve direct

contact with people and tend to effect significant spiritual growth in the lives of those people. Counseling is only one of many of these ministries in the church.

The New Testament uses at least five different Greek verbs to describe the normal process by which both the Christian counselor and gifted exhorter accomplish their ministry. These verbs include (1) *paramutheoma*, (2) *parakaleo*, (3) *paraineo*, (4) *noutheteo*, and (5) *protrepo*.

The first word, *paramutheoma*, is usually translated "consol." This compound term is based on two other Greek words, *para* meaning "near" and *muthos* meaning "speech." It was used to emphasize a measure of tenderness in the conversation (John 11:19, 31; 1 Cor. 14:3; 1 Thess. 2:11; 5:14).

The way one speaks to another often determines the nature of an emotional response. "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Prov. 15:1). People struggling with personal problems are often emotionally strained. Therefore the gifted exhorter should be careful to address this emotional distress before he or she can help a person.

The verb *parakaleo* often translated "comfort" or "exhort" is the second term describing this process. This verb, which is also used to describe the gift of exhortation, is also a compound word that refers to being called (*kaleo*) to one's side (*para*) to help. It was used in Greek literature to describe a nurse who came to the bedside of a patient to help, and of the legal counsel who stood with a client before the judge. In the New Testament, it is often used in a context that implies a person in need of a sympathetic helper (Matt. 2:18; 1 Thess. 3:2, 7; 4:18). This term implies the ideas of both nearness and sympathy with the one in need.

Paul's statement about his own ministry of exhortation in Thessalonica suggests the effective exhorter is also a person of high moral character with an overriding commitment to please God. "For our exhortation did not come from deceit or uncleanness, nor was it in guile. But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts" (1 Thess. 2:3-4).

The third verb in the process is *paraineo* usually translated "recommend." This compound verb contains the ideas of being near (*para*) enough to a person to tell (*aineo*) him or her what to do. The verb is used twice in the New Testament to describe Paul advising others with whom he was sailing (Acts 27:9, 22).

It is not just enough for the gifted exhorter to console and be sympathetic to the need of a hurting person. The nature of this gift suggests a role in recommending specific actions that may be taken by a person to resolve their problem. As the gifted exhorter continues using that gift in ministry, he or she will normally begin earning a reputation of always having specific steps or formulas for solving problems and accomplishing tasks.

Fourth, the verb *noutheteo*, usually translated "admonish," refers to encouraging another to accept the advice offered. The Greek verb means "to put in mind," suggesting the idea of convincing another of one's opinion. This verb

seems to imply a confrontational aspect to the process of exhorting others. Many people live in denial of the problems that threaten to destroy them and need to be confronted with reality before they can be helped.

There appear to be certain prerequisites to being effective in admonishing others. Paul described those who are "full of goodness, filled with all knowledge" as "able also to admonish one another" (Rom. 15:14). Also, he urged the Colossians to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" assuming that would naturally result in a ministry of "admonishing one another" (Col. 3:16). A good moral character, comprehensive understanding of the Scriptures, and spiritual insight into God's perspective of human problems enable one to be effective in admonishing others.

Finally, the verb *protrepo* is used to describe the act of "persuading" another to take a specific course of action. It is used to describe the Christians in Ephesus "exhorting" the Christians in Achaia to be supportive of the ministry of Apollos. When the Christians of Achaia were persuaded and agreed to let Apollos minister among them, "he greatly helped those who had believed through grace" (Acts 18:27).

Exhorters tend to present a workable plan and encourage others to apply it. However, some people need a little more prodding. Therefore, the exhorter who wants to make full proof of his or her ministry will do more than advise others. He or she will take other measures to encourage compliance and insure the suggested strategy is applied to each situation.

In accomplishing their ministry, those gifted in exhortation have two very significant role models to follow. A form of the verb *parakaleo* is used as a name of both Jesus (1 John 2:2) and the Holy Spirit (John 14:26). As gifted exhorters engage in people-helping growth ministries, they would be wise to begin viewing themselves as one of three persons actively engaged in promoting personal spiritual growth in the lives of others. Therefore, the key to an effective ministry in exhortation is to cooperate with Jesus and the Holy Spirit who are already working in harmony with each other to transform each of us into the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29; Phil. 1:6).

How Exhorters Help People

In helping people, those gifted in exhortation use each of these steps to meet needs and help others experience significant personal growth. While every ministry situation is unique, a basic ministry pattern is apparent when these are compared and analyzed. Consciously or unconsciously, effective exhorters tend to establish a systematic process by which they do ministry. This process usually includes five steps: (1) developing a relationship with a person or group in need, (2) exploring the personal or group problem together to establish a better understanding of the real situation, (3) deciding on effective actions which are believed to be effective in solving the problem, (4) motivating the person or group to implement the proposed problem-solving strategy, and (5) encouraging the

person or group to continue resolving personal or group problems independently of the exhorter's direct involvement.

This process is illustrated throughout the ministry of Jesus who is described as an exhorter (1 John 2:2). One cannot read the gospels without recognizing that Jesus was a people person. Even though He often was surrounded by large crowds, he also took the time to identify with specific individuals. His primary purpose in calling the twelve disciples was to establish a personal relationship with them (Mark 3:14). He took time out of a busy schedule in Jerusalem to meet with Nicodemus (John 3:1-15). He spoke to a Samaritan woman He met at a well when others would have tried to ignore her (John 4:7-27).

When Jesus had established a basic relationship with people, He then led them into a fresh evaluation of their life to help them understand their basic problem better. Jesus Himself had a unique understanding of basic human nature (John 2:24). Therefore, He did not engage in this activity for his own benefit, but rather for the benefit of the one He was trying to help. Often, Jesus used questions to bring people face to face with their basic problem in life. Nicodemus needed to realize his understanding of religious truth was limited before he could be born again (John 3:10). The woman at the well needed to be honest about her immoral lifestyle before she could drink the living water (John 4:16-18). The rich young ruler needed to recognize the dominant role his wealth had assumed in his life before he could become one of Jesus' disciples (Matt. 19:16-22).

In each of these cases and many more, Jesus advised those He helped by suggesting a specific course of action. He told the religious leader, "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again' " (John 3:7). To the Samaritan woman he advised, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). The rich young man was told, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Matt. 19:21).

Jesus did more than simply propose a solution. Without interfering with the other individual's God-given right to make responsible decisions, He urged them to respond. Again, Jesus had insight in His dealings with people that we often lack. He knew a man like Nicodemus needed time to digest what he had learned; yet Jesus prompted Nicodemus to begin a process of changing that did not climax until Jesus Himself was dead. In contrast, He knew the woman at the well was ready to respond and urged an immediate response. He also recognized there was nothing that could be done for the rich young ruler until that young man dealt with his money problem. Perhaps the hardest thing for an exhorter to do is accept the fact some people will reject his or her advise and watch that person walk away knowing he or she is making an irresponsible decision.

In each case, Jesus helped people until they matured enough to be involved in helping others. He recognized that even His own disciples needed to separate from Him to achieve their potential in ministry. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not

come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you" (John 16:7). Of course, there is a sense in which the disciples were never independent of Jesus (Gal. 2:20). Jesus remained the Vine out of which the branches gained their life (John 15:1-8). But Jesus recognized the time had come for a change in His relationship with the disciples. The goal of the gifted exhorter is to help people mature to the point they can be effective in helping others in need.

The Ministry Focus of the Gifted Exhorter

Every spiritual gift seems to have its own unique ministry focus (see chapter eight). As noted earlier, those gifted in exhortation tend to be most effective in people-helping growth ministries. A study of the life and literature of the Apostle Paul, a man who appears to have been gifted in exhortation, suggests seven specific areas in which the gifted exhorter may excel in ministry.

First, those gifted in exhortation can be effective in evangelism as they help people take steps toward Christ and salvation (Acts 8:31; 16:9). Second, the gifted exhorter tends to be effective in communicating hope to others, especially those who need comforting most (1 Thess. 4:18). Also, those gifted in this area tend to be effective in mobilizing others in the ministry of prayer (Heb. 13:19). Fourth, gifted exhorters tend to be effective in raising money to meet specific ministry needs (2 Cor. 9:5). Also, they tend to be effective in developing and nurturing interpersonal relationships, especially when people need to be reconciled (Phil. 4:2; 1 Thess. 4:10). Sixth, the gifted exhorter is often the person God uses to motivate people into a deeper personal commitment to Christ (Rom. 12:1). Finally, the gifted exhorter is often the best one to encourage others to finish a task begun earlier when they might otherwise elect to quit (2 Cor. 8:6).

Those gifted in exhortation are stimulated by this kind of ministry. Exhorting one another is a ministry in which all Christians are to some degree involved (Heb. 10:24-25), but gifted exhorters actually thrive on helping people. It is also a gift needed in your church today.

CHAPTER TWO

Building a Ministry Out of Problems

If you haven't noticed yet, there is an intimate relationship between life itself and problems. As you look at your own experience right now, you have either just come out of a problem, find yourself in the midst of a problem, or you're due for a problem any day now.

While this principle is true of everyone, it is especially true of those gifted in exhortation. Gifted exhorters are by nature trouble-shooters or problem-solvers. Therefore, if it seems you have had more than your share of problems, it may not all be in your imagination. But don't jump to conclusions too quickly. Problems always seem larger than life to those who are in the midst of them. Also, we tend to remember our problems longer and forget the problems of others sooner. But even if you do experience more than your share of problems, you can be assured God allows them to happen only when He is convinced you can handle them. "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

Perhaps you, like many exhorters, find yourself wondering, "Why does God think so highly of me?" How often have you found yourself in the midst of a problem you were sure you could not handle? Or perhaps you can recall problems that proved to be beyond your ability. In the midst of your biggest problem, you failed!

Facing Personal Failure

Failure can be devastating to gifted exhorters. They find their greatest ministry fulfillment in helping others fix their problems. To be faced with the reality that they are unable to fix their own personal problems is perhaps the most humiliating experience through which they can pass. "How can I help others if I can't even help myself?" they ask.

Many exhorters complicate this problem by confusing failing in the midst of a problem with being a failure in life. The two are not the same thing. Many of the world's most successful people failed many times before achieving success in their chosen field. Alexander Graham Bell did not invent the telephone the first time around. The goal of creating an incandescent light bulb was achieved by Thomas Edison only after a long record of unsuccessful attempts. Abraham Lincoln ran for office unsuccessfully many times before being elected President of the United States. Nobody looks at these men with a long track record of failure as failures today.

Perhaps the real problem gifted exhorters face in dealing with personal failure is the problem of pride. When you help people resolve problems in their personal

life, they tend to express their appreciation. You can respond to this praise in one of two ways. Ideally, you can reflect it back to God who ministers through them and is the real problem solver. However, a more common response is to accept that praise personally and begin believing you helped the person independent of God's involvement in the process. In that context, personal failure may be God's way of humbling you so you can once more be effective in ministry.

Often, those with the greatest ministry potential are those most likely to face problems beyond their "fixability." Certainly that was true in Paul's experience. Paul was able to help many people experience significant personal growth through his fourteen New Testament epistles. As evangelicals, we understand Paul's writings were fully inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16) and the result of God revealing truth to him (Deut. 29:29; Eph. 3:3). But despite the fact Paul helped so many people fix their personal and church problems, he himself faced a problem he could not fix. He called it "a thorn in the flesh."

On at least three occasions, Paul pleaded with God that it would be removed (2 Cor. 12:8). As an apostle, Paul had prayed for others and seen miraculous results (2 Cor. 12:12). But his problem remained unresolved. In his own experience, Paul came to recognize this problem as a means by which God chose to humble him and keep him dependent upon the grace of God in ministry (2 Cor. 12:9). He explained, "And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure" (2 Cor. 12:7).

The fact you experience periodic personal failures may simply be God's way of reminding you that you're still human. People are by nature sinners. Their sin is an evidence of their failure to be all God originally intended for the human race. Even when your personal failures do not involve sinful attitudes or behavior, they serve to remind us of our human limitations. Rather than becoming discouraged and abandoning the opportunity to help others with their problems, learn to recognize God's purpose in allowing problems into your life.

Recognizing God's Purpose in Problems

The Bible has much to say about problems and why God allows them to happen. In the context of his thorn in the flesh discussed above, Paul concluded, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10). This major problem in Paul's life forced him to be more dependent upon God. In allowing Christ to minister through him (Gal. 2:20), his personal weakness insured greater ministry strength. Had he attempted to serve in his own power, his strength would have produced a weaker ministry.

In addition to using problems to keep us humble and dependent on Him, God also uses problems to demonstrate our real character. At the end of his life, Moses challenged Israel to "remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not" (Deut.

8:2). In the New Testament, God allows the trial of your faith "that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7).

When God introduces problems in our life as trials, they are not designed to discover our response. God, who is omniscient, already knows how we will respond before we experience the trial. Rather, God's purpose in allowing some problems into our life is to demonstrate to us the strength of our faith.

If you have been a Christian for several years, think back to some of the first big problems you struggled with in your Christian life. Did they seem to be problems beyond you? Were you surprised when you realized you could handle them? God sometimes brings problems like that into our life early in our Christian experience to demonstrate to us the changes that have taken place in our life. Perhaps He is doing the same thing with the problems you are presently experiencing.

For those gifted in exhortation, one of the key biblical passages describing God's purpose in problems is 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. In these five verses, a form of the Greek word *parakaleo* is used ten times. These words are translated "comfort" or "consolation." These verses reveal five benefits available to those facing problems. While these benefits are available to all Christians, they are especially significant to those gifted in exhortation.

First, problems are a means by which we grow in our experiential understanding of who God is. In this context, Paul identifies God as "the Father of mercies and God of all comfort" (2 Cor. 1:3). It is doubtful that anyone can ever fully appreciate the meaning of either of these names of God without experiencing problems. Throughout the Scriptures, God reveals aspects of who He is in names that have special significance in a particular context. These names became important to those who experienced their meaning. It is not surprising that Job's favorite name of God was *El Shaddai*, the God who is enough (the All-Sufficient God).

In the Old Testament, one of the primary names of God is *Jehovah*. This name of God was based on the Hebrew verb "to be" and was claimed by God when He identified Himself to Moses as "I AM WHO I AM" (Exod. 3:14). It is the basis of numerous compound names of God in the Old Testament. Some Bible teachers believe this name could be translated "I will become." When Abraham offered a ram as a replacement sacrifice for his son Isaac, he called that place *Jehovah Jireh* because he saw in that sacrifice God's provision (Gen. 22:14). When Gideon faced the challenge of leading Israel against the Midianites, he named the place where he met God *Jehovah Shalom* because God had promised him a victorious peace (Judges 6:24).

Problems are also a means of our receiving ministry from God. Paul described God as One "who comforts us in our tribulation" (2 Cor. 1:4). The English word "comfort" is derived from two Latin terms, *forte* meaning strength and *cum* meaning with. It is in our problems that God comes to our side with the

strength we need to get through our problems. Andrea Crouche expressed this principle in his song *Through It All*. He wrote, "If I'd never had a problem, I wouldn't know that God could solve them. I wouldn't know what faith in God could do."²

In giving us strength to survive our personal problems, God is also equipping us for future ministry. The exhorter has a ministry of problem solving. He or she is most effective in ministry as the strength received in a personal problem is used to help others in their problems.

Having written more than 2,500 gospel songs, Dottie Rambo may be the most prolific gospel songwriter of her generation. Many of her songs communicate in a special way to encourage people struggling with problems. Dottie herself has endured what some might consider more than her share of problems. She once explained to another gospel singer who found himself in the hospital, "Your spiritual victories give you a testimony, but it is out of your problems that God gives you a ministry."

Fourth, our personal experience with problems gives us a reason for our hope. Hope is the one thing people with problems need. A child or spouse living in an abusive situation needs to know there is hope for people like them. A church facing a financial crisis needs to know there is hope for a church in their situation. Regardless of a person's or group's problem, the first thing a gifted exhorter needs to do is communicate hope for their situation.

Communicating hope is difficult for those who are unsure that the problem can be resolved. There may be many rational reasons that could be offered to the distressed person or group, but distressed people don't always think rationally. They need to see confidence in the exhorter before they will begin to consider hope in their situation. Having experienced God resolving many problems in his life, Paul could boldly tell the Corinthians, "And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation" (2 Cor. 1:7).

Many counselors have used support groups to help people with problems. They gather people with problems together with others who have begun resolving their problems. While many things are accomplished in a support group setting, one of the most significant is that people are given hope when they see others resolving their problems. They begin to think they too can overcome what was formerly insurmountable, at least in their thinking.

Denominational leaders have used this same approach to help churches in crisis. When a pastor struggles to lead a church through a difficult situation, he may be networked together with another pastor who has successfully led another church through a similar situation. In addition to being able to advise and guide the inexperienced pastor through the problem, the more experienced pastor is also able to communicate hope because he has faced a similar situation and knows the problem can be resolved.

² Andrea Crouche, *Through It All*.

Wise pastors also use this approach to networking to help people with problems within the congregation. One pastor lightened his personal counseling load significantly by adopting this approach. When a person with a problem came to him for help, he would network that person with a gifted exhorter who had experienced a similar problem. This not only freed up the pastor's time for other aspects of ministry, it also provided better "pastoral care" for the person with the problem and involved more people in meaningful ministry.

Finally, what we learn and experience through problems becomes the foundation of our praise to God. Does it seem strange that Paul should begin this discussion of problems with the statement, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 1:3)? It really isn't. Paul was not praising God so much for problems, but for what problems came to mean in his personal experience. Through his problems, he came to a fuller understanding of who God is and deeper appreciation of what God would do for Him.

Paul's experience in the New Testament was similar to that of David in the Old Testament. One wonders if David had not spent those years in the wilderness trying to escape Saul's wrath if many of the psalms would have been written. Yet out of that tragic period in Israel's history came many of the hymns upon which the worship of God has been based in every generation since then. In the midst of that period, David himself concluded one of his psalms with the words, "I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High (Ps. 7:17).

Turning Principles into Transferable Concepts

If God allows problems in our life to equip us for significant ministry in the lives of others, then the gifted exhorter should learn how to transform those principles learned into transferable concepts to help others in their time of need. A transferable concept is a tool which enables you to effectively communicate something you have learned experientially (i.e. a problem-solving strategy) to someone else simply so that they can quickly apply it to their situation. This tool may be communicated in the context of a group or individual. Also the exhorter may communicate orally or in writing to the person facing a problem. In either case, the problem solving strategy should include several things.

First, as you prepare a transferable concept, take time to clearly define the nature of the problem being dealt with. Not every problem is the same, but many problems are similar. By taking time to define the nature of the problem, you will gain greater insight into the kind of problems for which your strategy may be helpful. Also, you may gain insights as to why your strategy worked for you in your situation. This may lead to your perfecting your strategy for others in different situations.

The second step in preparing a transferable concept is to identify the root cause of the problem you experienced. Many gifted exhorters severely limit their ministry because of their failure to take this step. By identifying the root cause of

your problem, you gain insight into the real nature of your problem and can avoid proposing solutions that won't work for someone experiencing similar symptoms.

Statistics suggest one in two people will experience depression to some degree at some point in their life. But depression is a symptom common to several different types of problems. It may be caused by a chemical imbalance in the body, financial pressures, tiredness, job-related stress, personal sin, or any one of several other problems. One person may successfully come out of their depression through medical treatment, but that approach will not help everyone who is depressed. Likewise, a person who overcomes depression by changing to a less stressful job or repenting of personal sin should not conclude that course of action will help everyone who is depressed. Rather, different strategies will be effective with different depressed people, depending on the root cause of their depression.

Once the root problem is identified, the key to resolving the symptom or apparent problem is to destroy the root. This usually involves an attitudinal or behavioral change (see chapter five). When effecting this change, it is important to deal with the problem in both a negative and positive way. Your transferable concept needs to tell people how they can stop one behavioral pattern by adopting a new behavioral pattern.

This approach is used throughout the Scriptures to help people resolve problems. This is illustrated in Paul's advice to the thief. "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need" (Eph. 4:28). In this verse, Paul identified the problem (theft), understood the root cause of this problem (laziness and greed), and advised people to make both negative (stop stealing) and positive (manual labor, giving to those in need) behavioral changes in their life. This transferable concept may be used to help the teenager who is caught shoplifting as well as the hardened criminal arrested in an armed robbery. When applied, both can deal with their problem of stealing from others.

Training for Ministry through Ongoing Problems

This may be the last thing in the world you want to hear, but it is so important I am going to say it anyway. *The key to your growing effectiveness in ministry as a gifted exhorter is your response in personal problems.* Nobody looks forward to problems, but if you want to become the most effective exhorter you can be, you need to recognize problems are not only inevitable in your life, they are necessary. If you're counting on a time when you will no longer have problems, you will eventually become frustrated in your extended waiting.

You do not need to become anxious over your prospects for life. You have enough to worry about today without adding to it unnecessarily (Matt. 6:34). Also, as noted earlier in this chapter, problems are not all bad. Problems are one of those "all things" Paul was thinking about when he wrote, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28). And that purpose is identified in the very

next verse, "to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). How could we ever become like Jesus without experiencing a problem?

This does not mean you should begin looking for new problems. They'll find you soon enough. Problems have a way of doing just that. Involving yourself in the problems of others unnecessarily is an evidence of a lack of maturity in one's life. "He who passes by and meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a dog by the ears" (Prov. 26:17). People who grab dogs by the ears are people who get bit. Be careful about involving yourself in someone else's problem.

Don't let your personal problems discourage you from the exciting ministry God has in store for you. Rather, let them become important steps in your personal growth to becoming all God intended you to be. When you experience personal failure, let it remind you of your ongoing need to be dependent upon God. When you are successful in resolving your problems, translate what you have learned into transferable concepts that will help others in their problems.

CHAPTER THREE

Learning to Listen to Others

Perhaps the most important ministry skills those gifted in exhortation should acquire is listening skills. Before exhorters can help people resolve their problems, they need to hear them express their problems. Even when exhorters have a good understanding of the problem, it is important to hear how the person or group experiencing it perceives their situation. Perhaps the first step in helping people resolve their problems will involve helping them understand their problems.

Most effective exhorters find themselves commonly engaged in two aspects of people-helping growth ministries. First, exhorters tend to be involved in helping people resolve the problems in which they are already involved. Many exhorters limit their ultimate effectiveness by limiting themselves exclusively to this aspect of the ministry. Those who are able to expand their ministry horizons tend to move into the second aspect of people-helping growth ministries. This involves helping people mature in their Christian life, equipping them with the tools they need to deal with their own problems as they arise.

Learning to listen is important in both phases of this ministry. It is important to listen to people with problems to gain insight into both the problem and the response of the one experiencing the problem. It is important to listen to people who are maturing to both evaluate the growth being experienced and to identify areas in which growth is still needed.

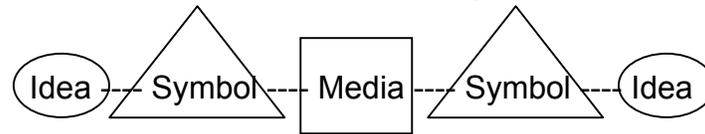
But listening, as important as it is, is just one part of the process by which people communicate with each other. Therefore, those who would help people need to understand how people communicate. When they understand the communication process, they can then begin learning how to listen more effectively. But even that is not enough. Ultimately, it is important that those being listened to are convinced they are in fact being heard. Learning to listen to others involves understanding and applying principles in each of these three areas.

How People Communicate

Before you can be an effective listener, you must understand the process by which people communicate with each other. A frustrated would-be communicator expressed himself this way, "I know you heard what you think I said, but I'm not sure you heard what I thought I said." His statement reveals an important insight into listening. What is *heard* is not always the same as what was *said*.

The root idea behind the word communication is sharing, to have in common. Communication involves more than speaking words or writing a note. Communication does not exist until there is a mutual sharing of ideas. Listening is an important part of communication, but not the only part.

Communication has been described in a variety of ways. Several communication models have been suggested to give us greater insight into how we share our ideas with others. I have found the following diagram helpful in understanding how people communicate and why it is done so poorly so often.



The above diagram identifies the five basic elements involved when we chose to communicate with another person. First, we begin with an idea. Because we don't communicate telepathically, we tend to express that idea through a symbol (i.e., words, pictures, etc.). Next, we choose a particular media though which we hope to communicate that idea. The person who receives of message receives a symbol and from that symbol attempts to guess the original idea. This is the way we express every thought we share with others. The closer we look at this model, it becomes increasingly obvious why we sometimes fail to communicate.

Notice the shapes used in the above diagram. The ideas are drawn with a circle, an unending line, to symbolize their immense proportions. The symbols are triangles drawn to illustrate how those ideas are limited when expressed in words. The media is drawn as a square. Once the message has been committed to a particular media, the media itself limits and restricts the message further.

The English language illustrates the difficulties one has with using words to communicate. When a person uses a word like "dog" to describe a particular animal, it is a very limiting term considering how many distinctive breeds of dogs there are. The person who attempts to decipher the symbol back to an idea faces the same problem. Any good unabridged dictionary contains over one hundred different meanings for the word "run." These problems occur naturally, assuming the message is clearly stated and heard correctly.

Of course, that is not always the case. A story is often told of a poor minister who wanted to send a message to a timid couple he had just married. Being short of funds, he sent a telegram to their hotel room with the reference 1 John 4:18. But in the process of sending and receiving the telegram, the "1" was lost. The minister's original message, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18), was suddenly transformed to read, "For you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly" (John 4:18).

How to Listen More Effectively

In light of the natural barriers to effective communication, it is especially important to learn how to listen more effectively. For most of us, that means taking steps to change a poor pattern we have developed over the years. This is not an easy task. Initially, it may seem to be more of a bother than it's worth. But

as these new listening skills begin feeling more natural, their value will become more apparent.

Failure to listen will hinder your ability to help people resolve their problems and experience significant growth. Sometimes exhorters view listening as a waste of time because they feel they have something very useful to say. But those who don't take time to listen are often not given time to speak. Also, through listening attentively, gifted exhorters may gain insight into a situation that will enable them to deal with it more effectively.

Be careful not to allow things to hinder your ability to listen. Listening is hard work, so you should be well rested before attempting. Yawning in the middle of another person's statement is likely to send the wrong message. It may mean, "I was up too late last night," but be interpreted to mean, "You don't think I have anything important to say." Also, watch your emotional response to what you are hearing. Your feelings toward another person or activities they have been involved in may cause you to hear selectively. At that point, you are no longer listening.

Listening involves giving another person your complete and undivided attention. Therefore, when listening to someone else, pay attention and resist distractions. If a radio or television is interfering with your ability to hear, turn it off. If you find yourself in a loud or distracting environment over which you have no control, suggest continuing the conversation somewhere else, somewhere more conducive to listening.

As you listen, evaluate what you are hearing. The average person speaks about 160 words per minute in normal conversation, but we can train ourselves to read at a much faster rate. This means you can think faster than other people can talk. Therefore, as you listen, take time to interpret what you are hearing. Ask yourself questions about what you are hearing. Is it consistent with what you have been hearing throughout the conversation? Where is this conversation heading? What is being said between the lines? What is not being said that should be verbalized?

While asking yourself these questions, be careful not to interrupt the other person. If something is not clear, you may need to ask a question to clarify what is being said. But be careful not to ask leading questions or probe for information that is not being offered. When using feedback, try to use the speaker's own words as much as possible. Avoid the ever-present temptation to change the subject.

Above all, when you are listening, remember that is what you are doing. When others are explaining a situation to you, they are often not ready for you to jump in and give immediate advice. Even if your advice is good, they will assume you have not had time to think through what they have said. This is not the time to argue or preach.

Convincing People You Really Hear Them

Sometimes, just listening is not enough. You also need to convince people they are being heard. When people aren't convinced you hear them, they will be reluctant to give your advice the attention it deserves. There are three simple ways you can communicate your interest in others and convince them you are listening. These include (1) your body language, (2) your facial response, and (3) your use of feedback to clarify what is being said.

Your posture and positioning is important as you listen to people. If you do not already do so, get into the habit of turning in your chair and leaning toward the person who is speaking. Most people interpret that kind of gesture to mean, "I am interested in what you are saying." But be careful not to invade the other person's space. Each of us has a certain personal space we tend to think of as ours. When others get too close physically, we tend to respond by backing off. Their nearness becomes a communication barrier.

The way you position yourself is important, but perhaps the best way to communicate you are listening is through your facial response to what is being said. People are more likely to think you are listening if you look directly at them rather than leafing through a book or looking elsewhere. When you look elsewhere while listening, you are telling people I have more important things to think about than what they are saying.

While that is normally the case, eye contact means something different in some cultural settings. Therefore, you need to be careful how you use body language when communicating with someone from another culture. How can you know how to show interest without being offensive? Perhaps the easiest way is to watch others and notice the reactions they elicit. When you just don't know what the norm in a particular culture is, the golden rule is still a good rule to follow. Respond to other people like you would want them to respond to you. If you offend someone in an attempt to demonstrate interest in them as a person, most people are understanding enough to correct you gently. Then learn from your mistake and make the necessary adjustment.

The third way to convince people that you are listening involves using feedback to clarify your understanding of what you hear. Feedback is a term used to designate a response intended to clarify or expand upon something that has been said. Don't just assume you understand what is being said. Use feedback to insure you are hearing what is being said.

As you improve your listening skills, you will become increasingly aware at how poorly we tend to express ourselves. Sometimes you will hear a statement in conversation and know instinctively that it is not what was meant. When you use feedback to clarify the statement, be careful not to put down the other person. Instead of asking, "Do you really mean what you are saying?" express yourself with the statement, "Am I hearing you correctly?" This enables the other person to correct himself or herself without being intimidated.

The best communicators are the best listeners. And the best listeners are those who have learned how to use questions to stimulate thinking and conversation. This was particularly evident in the ministry of Jesus. He listened to people so well He often knew what they were thinking even before they expressed themselves directly (Mark 2:8; Luke 9:47). And better than any other teacher of any age, Jesus knew how to ask the right question at the right time to gain the greatest effect (Mark 2:9; Matt. 22:20). When you learn to listen to others as Jesus listens to you, you will be far more effective in the use of your gift of exhortation.

CHAPTER FOUR

Nurturing Personal Growth in Others

When gifted exhorters do little more than help people and groups resolve problems, they unnecessarily limit their ministry potential. Exhorters tend to be very effective trouble-shooters, but they are also far more. They tend to be most effective in causing others to experience significant spiritual growth. While every exhorter gains a limited sense of personal fulfillment in resolving problems, they tend to experience a greater sense of fulfillment in effecting significant growth in others. While every Christian should be involved in nurturing one another in the Christian life, those gifted in exhortation have their own reasons for wanting to be involved in this aspect of ministry.

Nurturing personal growth in others is a ministry goal few would dispute as valid. A significant part of the apostolic ministry was devoted primarily to encouraging ongoing spiritual growth in converts (Acts 14:21, 22; 15:21; 18:11; 19:9). Perhaps John spoke for all gifted in exhortation when he confessed, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4).

Paul rebuked the Corinthians for their failure to mature like they should (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

The gifted exhorter is not without resources in accomplishing this goal. God's stated purpose in human lives is that they be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). The accomplishment of this goal is at least in part the responsibility of the Holy Spirit. "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). This work that began at conversion continues throughout the Christian life (Phil. 1:6).

In addition to the direct work of God, God also effects spiritual growth through the Scriptures (1 Pet. 2:2). Most of the New Testament was apparently written for that specific purpose. Indeed, all Scripture is identified as being effective in the growth process, "that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17). In the Old Testament, the psalmist identifies Scripture as the instrument by which the simple are made wise (Ps. 19:7). Meditating on the Law of the Lord is a characteristic mark of both the blessed (Ps. 1:2) and successful (Josh. 1:8) person.

How then does the gifted exhorter accomplish this ministry objective? The answer varies to some degree in every situation. Still, certain guidelines should prove helpful in preparing for this ministry. First, make an attempt to define more clearly the nature of maturity as the goal of nurturing. When this goal is brought into focus, gifted exhorters will readily recognize the enormity of the task ahead. They need to learn how to recognize the potential in people for significant spiritual growth. Then, they need to understand how God is accomplishing this goal in the context of His will. Finally, they should develop a strategy which

enables them to work cooperatively with God to accelerate spiritual growth in others.

Defining Maturity as a Growth Goal

Just exactly what is meant by the goal of maturity? Admittedly, maturity means different things to different people. It even means different things to the same people in different contexts. While the Scriptures do not define maturity as clearly as we might wish, it is described rather fully in a variety of ways.

One of the ways God has revealed His personal growth goals for His people is in the terms He uses to describe them. The title "Christians" (Acts 11:26) seems to imply the idea of Christ-likeness as a growth goal. The title "Believers" (Acts 5:14) seems to imply strong faith as another goal. When Christians are called "Disciples" (Acts 6:1), a teachable spirit is yet another implied growth goal. Stewardship is still another growth goal implied in the use of the word "Servant" as a descriptive title (Rom. 1:1).

Throughout the Pauline epistles, spiritual maturity is described another way. "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13). The Apostle upheld this trilogy of virtues in several of his epistles (Eph. 1:15-18; Col. 1:3-6; 1 Thess. 1:2-3; 2 Thess. 1:3-4). Certainly the exhorter involved in nurturing ministries should view character consistent with these virtues as a legitimate goal.

Becoming a Responsible Member of the Church

There is yet another biblical means by which maturity may be described. Throughout the New Testament, Jesus and the apostles encouraged Christians to be actively and positively involved in the lives of "one another" in a variety of specific ways. The following verses each describe one or more of these actions. They are printed here without comment to assist the reader to capture the feel of this goal in the spectrum of Christian maturity.

If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet (*John 13:14*).

A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (*John 13:34-35*).

These things I command you, that you love one another (*John 15:17*).

Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another (*Rom. 12:10*).

Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion (*Rom. 12:16*).

Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law (*Rom. 13:8*).

Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way (*Rom. 14:13*).

Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God (*Rom. 15:7*).

Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another (*Rom. 15:14*).

Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you (*Rom. 16:16*).

That there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another (*1 Cor. 12:25*).

All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss (*1 Cor. 16:20*).

Greet one another with a holy kiss (*2 Cor. 13:12*).

For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another (*Gal. 5:13*).

Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another (*Gal. 5:26*).

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (*Gal. 6:2*).

With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love (*Eph. 4:2*).

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you (*Eph. 4:32*).

Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord (*Eph. 5:19*).

Submitting to one another in the fear of God (*Eph. 5:21*).

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others (*Phil. 2:3-4*).

Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created them (*Col. 3:9-10*).

Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if any has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you must also do (*Col. 3:13*).

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord (*Col. 3:16*).

And the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you (*1 Thess. 3:12*).

But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another (*1 Thess. 4:9*).

Therefore comfort one another with these words (*1 Thess. 4:18*).

Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing (*1 Thess. 5:11*).

But exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (*Heb. 3:13*).

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching (*Heb. 10:24-25*).

Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge (*James 4:11*).

Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door (*James 5:9*).

Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much (*James 5:16*).

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart (*1 Peter 1:22*).

Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing (*1 Peter 3:8-9*).

And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." Be hospitable to one another without grumbling (*1 Peter 4:8, 9*).

Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (*1 Peter 5:5*).

Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen (*1 Peter 5:14*).

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin (*1 John 1:7*).

For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another (*1 John 3:11*).

And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment (*1 John 3:23*).

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God (*1 John 4:7*).

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us (*1 John 4:11-12*).

And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another (*2 John 5*).

Recognizing the Potential in People

Some Christians define “maturity” in terms of specific behavior patterns. In one youth group, spiritually mature boys might claim, “We don’t drink, we don’t smoke, we don’t chew, and we don’t go with the girls that do!” Others create a similar list with a focus on spiritual disciplines, i.e., Bible study, prayer, faithful church attendance, fasting, soul-winning, etc. But God’s maturity goal for us is much broader. It includes character development as we grow in Christ-likeness, living by faith as we follow God wherever He leads, continued learning and growth as disciples, personal stewardship of the resources God has entrusted to us, continued care for one another as we build healthy relationships, and a lifestyle marked by attitudes and behavior patterns consistent with each of these goals.

What an awesome objective! Is it even possible? Can it be that those with whom you are working could someday be described in this way? What about you? Is this maturity goal even within reach? Exhorters don't always ask these questions, much to the hindrance of their own ministry. They don't ask the questions because they already know the answer. The problem is they tend to have the right answer for the wrong reason.

Because of the unique nature of their giftedness, exhorters are often attracted to multi-level marketing business opportunities that promise a success few people ever realize. But exhorters tend to be the kind of people who can do well in that kind of business opportunity if they apply themselves consistently. They are used to developing and applying formulas to achieve success. They know their formulas have worked in the past and believe they have the potential to succeed in the future. They like the positive mental attitude that tends to characterize these companies.

One of the dangers in this scenario is that some (not all) of these organizations have developed a general business philosophy based on an erroneous view of human potential. Some have even adopted a new age view of human potential and speak of “the divine spark within.” The problem is that what lies within is not a divine spark at all. Rather, what dominates the inner being is a sin nature that defiles every other part of their being (Mark 7:21-23). If success in achieving personal growth is assumed on the basis of a wrong view of people, the results will be significantly less than hoped for.

But it is possible to experience significant personal growth. It is possible because of the very nature of the Christian life itself. The Christian life is not our doing our best to please God, but allowing Christ to do His best in living His life through us (Gal. 2:20). Its success is guaranteed as long as we continue abiding in Him (John 15:1-8). This principle was so foundational to Paul's view of the Christian life that He describes Christians 162 times using the expression “in Christ.” To the extent that we learn and apply this principle, we experience significant and lasting spiritual growth consistent with God's will for us.

Identifying the Will of God

During a rather heated debate in the Sanhedrin over the validity of the Christian faith, one respected member urged that company to take care in coming to a quick conclusion, "lest you even be found to fight against God" (Acts 5:39). In the context of helping people experience personal growth, that advice might be well passed on to the gifted exhorter. Is it possible, that in their zeal to help people, exhorters might be found recommending a solution to a problem that hinders God from accomplishing His purpose in someone's life through that problem? It has perhaps happened more often than we would care to admit.

If God has accepted responsibility for personal spiritual growth, it would be wise for the exhorter to understand "what the will of the Lord is" in this area (Eph. 5:17). That is really not as difficult as some people have been led to believe. A survey of those passages speaking directly to the will of God suggests nine areas in which God has a specific desire for one's life. First, it is God's will that people come to personal salvation (Gal. 1:4; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). Second, God wants His people to remain morally pure (1 Thess. 4:3). Also, God's will includes giving thanks (1 Thess. 5:18), serving others (Acts 13:36; Eph. 6:6), submitting to authority (1 Pet. 2:13-17), enduring problems (1 Cor. 10:13), suffering for Christ (1 Pet. 3:17; 4:19), and walking in wisdom (Eph. 5:15-17). Finally, there is an aspect of God's will dealing with gaining specific direction in life (Acts 21:14; Rom. 1:10; 1 Cor. 4:19; James 4:15).

Sometimes Christians are guilty of using the will of God as an excuse for their own inactivity. While the Scripture, one of God's primary means of revealing His will, also addresses many principles and issues which may impact the decisions we make, the idea that Christians are little more than pawns on a chessboard waiting to be moved by the Master is foreign to biblical Christianity. Instead, the Scriptures themselves suggest an alternative approach to doing the will of God in circumstances of uncertainty. "A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps" (Prov. 16:9). God made people with the ability to make decisions in the hope that they would remain open to following His direction. When there is no specific direction, He expects us to use that God-given ability to make good decisions.

Developing a Personal Growth Strategy

A good place to begin making some of those decisions as a gifted exhorter is in developing a personal growth strategy. As you read some of the biblical descriptions of maturity identified earlier in this chapter, how did you measure up? Remember, you can only help others grow as much as you have grown yourself.

Take a few minutes right now to look over that description again and identify areas you need to work on. Then use a good concordance and other Bible study tools to learn what the Scriptures have to say about that area. As you find answers, begin applying what you learn. And as you learn, think about ways you

can translate these principles into transferable concepts that can help others experience similar growth.

Of course, you don't have to wait until you have arrived before you can begin helping others grow. If that were the case, none of us could ever be involved in this ministry. Our failure to continue growing will limit our ministry potential in nurturing others, but it does not hinder us from helping someone else get started. If your church has an effective evangelistic outreach ministry, your pastor or the coordinator of that ministry should be able to network you with a new convert to help you begin.

While there are many discipleship and nurturing programs in the evangelical market place, there are really only two ways this ministry is being accomplished. Some prefer to disciple new converts in the Christian faith and witness in a one-on-one discipleship relationship. Others do it just as effectively in a small group setting. To some extent, the best method depends on the one used by the person offering the advice. Both approaches have been and are continuing to be effectively used by God in a variety of contexts.

Choose the approach with which you think you feel most comfortable and begin using it. The first time through, you might want to team up with a more experienced exhorter and tap into his or her expertise in this area of ministry. Later, you will return the favor by training other exhorters to become involved in nurturing personal growth in others.

CHAPTER FIVE

Leading People to Make Significant Change

The ultimate goal of people-helping growth ministries is to effect significant behavioral change in the life of another. Most people problems are the consequences of wrong or irresponsible behavior. By changing the way people behave, the consequences of that behavior pattern are eventually eliminated. Even though people tend to look for help with the symptoms of their wrong or irresponsible behavior, the exhorter who helps people most helps people change their behavior. Helping people merely cope with the consequences of wrong and irresponsible behavior really doesn't help them deal with their problems.

Often, the most-desired change begins with attitudinal changes. Individual behavior is the natural consequence of attitudes. "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). Therefore, significant and lasting behavioral change includes a similar change in the way one thinks.

But changing people can be a rocky process. People tend to develop a personal systematic approach to life and living. Changing one part of a person's life necessarily involves changing other parts of his or her life. Change has a rippling effect in a person's life, like the waves that ripple out across the surface of a quiet pool when a rock is tossed into it. The bigger the change, the larger the ripples.

Some Christians resist the idea of changing people. They may sincerely believe people can't change. Because they believe significant change can't be made in people's lives, they don't try. Others question the ethics of changing people. They fail to distinguish between manipulating people into a dysfunctional lifestyle and motivating people to make significant and lasting attitudinal changes which result in behavior modification.

People with problems tend at some point to become dissatisfied with some condition in their life. Even though they may appear resistant to change, there is a part of them that wants to change. The exhorter who understands change, how people change, how people respond to change, and how people can be changed can become an effective change agent in the life of a person who needs to change.

What Is Change?

The dictionary defines change as "to make or become different." That simple definition unfortunately masks the true character of change. One of the ways we define the word "different" is "not normal." Few people want to be "not normal," therefore most people tend to resist changing.

Change forces people to relinquish something with which they are familiar for something that is unknown. Many changes in life are beneficial. Some are not.

But even when we give up something we don't like in hopes of achieving something we think we might like, we are still giving up a familiar friend (even if not a very good friend) for something about which we know little experientially. No wonder people are insecure about making significant changes in life.

Can People Be Changed?

Change can be threatening, so much so that people look for ways to escape the necessity of change. Perhaps the most widely used escape mechanism in this area is to adopt the belief that people, or at least some people, just can't change. When challenged to be different, people who are reluctant to change simply respond, "I can't change." The threat of having to change is removed, and everyone lives happily ever after.

Or do they? Change is a part of life. Sooner or later, even those who are most threatened by change are confronted with changes in life they would like to make. But by then they have used the line so many times they have really begun to believe it. "I just can't change." How do they respond now that they really want to change?

There are four unhealthy ways people respond to life when they begin believing they can't change. Some simply become resigned to the idea and continue living with a conscious awareness that they are necessarily missing out on an exciting dimension of life. Others begin focusing on what they "can't" do, assuming a martyr complex. Still others become rebellious over their "inability" to change and seek their revenge by taking it out on others. And then there are those who simply withdraw themselves from the fullness of life and turn inward in their perspective. "You can't teach an old dog new tricks," they sigh.

While that may or may not be true of dogs, it is certainly untrue about people. People can and do change in many ways as a part of life. Children develop habits they see in their parents. Groups tend to develop expressions and behavior patterns that are unique to their group. A book, movie, speaker or event makes a significant impression on a person and he or she makes equally significant changes in his or her lifestyle. We change each other every day of our lives without trying.

But people are by nature creatures of habit who find security in traditions. For the most part, they are threatened by the unknown factors in change. Often, they don't understand why they need to change. Others resist change because they feel isolated from the change process around them. Many are comfortable with the status quo and don't recognize the need to change. Sometimes, people resist change because they conclude the cost involved in changing is overvalued, i.e. they lose more than they gain. Then some resist change because they lack confidence in the person or group proposing the change.

How People Change

People change, but not all people change the same way. There are four degrees of change. *Exceptional change* is minor change that allows for an

"exception" in a previously held value system. *Incremental change* is a minor change that is virtually unnoticed in a person's life. In contrast to these relatively insignificant changes, *reactional change* involves abandoning former ideas and embracing new values. Finally, *integrational change* involves incorporating new insights into present values to produce an integrated view of life.

Perhaps these four degrees of change can be better understood in the context of a person changing his or her attitude toward dogs. Someone who doesn't like dogs may be attracted to a particular dog, but maintains a dislike of dogs in general (*exceptional change*). He or she may explain, "But this dog is not like other dogs."

In the same context, the dog-hater may modify his or her attitude toward dogs slightly (*incremental change*). He or she may move from not liking dogs to not liking the way dogs smell and their barking. While the change is not necessarily apparent to the dog-hater, a theoretical door has been opened to liking a dog that doesn't smell like a dog or bark.

The third person also doesn't like dogs until a dog plays a significant and helpful role in a personal crisis. This person radically switches from being a dog-hater to an indiscriminate dog-lover (*reactional change*). He or she may acquire several dogs as pets and begin contributing financially to charitable organizations committed to providing care for dogs that are abandoned or abused.

The fourth and final dog-hater in this group also changes his or her attitude toward dogs significantly, but in a more discriminating manner. This person may continue to dislike certain things about dogs he or she has always found undesirable, yet at the same time come to appreciate the unique characteristics of a specific breed of dogs (*integrational change*).

The process by which change becomes an integrated part of our lives involves three steps. The first step is the *entry point*, the point at which the prospect of change is first considered in a potentially favorable context. The second step involves *exploration*. At this point, the various aspects of the proposed change are examined and evaluated from different perspectives. The final step in the process is *assimilation*. When the proposed change is understood, and the implications of that change are also appreciated, change can be assimilated into the existing value system that is modified accordingly.

Change, regardless of how well integrated or insignificant that change may be, makes us different people. Changing attitudes and behavior often involve expelling parts of the existing value system as we assimilate parts of a new value system into our life. The Apostle Paul illustrated this principle using the metaphor of "putting off" and "putting on" (Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:9, 10). He understood a fundamental problem people encounter when making significant change in life. When you concentrate on changing part of an existing lifestyle, focusing on the problem tends to result in failure and frustration. Instead, Paul advised people to "put off" a sinful lifestyle by adopting of "putting on" a new behavioral pattern.

How People Respond to Change

As noted earlier, people have a natural degree of resistance to change. Therefore, it is not surprising that people's first reaction to change is often negative. That does not necessarily mean they are opposed to the proposed change. They are only opposed to the idea of changing. They have not yet evaluated their response to the specific change that is being proposed. Their response to the specific proposed change will depend upon their perception of the nature of that change.

When exhorters propose change, others begin assessing the impact of the change in their personal context. If the effect of the proposed change is thought to destroy something of value, they will respond with active resistance to the change. If the effect is thought to only threaten something of value, the resistance will be more passive. If the change is perceived to have little or no effect, a response of tolerance or apathy will develop. But if the proposed change is viewed as that which will enhance something they view as valuable, they will embrace the change and begin to take steps to integrate it into their value system. It is therefore the exhorter's goal to "sell" change to others as something that will enhance that which they value significantly.

Becoming a Change Agent

There are two ways you can become a change agent in the life of another person. First, you can learn how to motivate people to change attitudes that will produce a behavioral change. Second, you can resort to manipulating people into a more desirable behavior pattern. In the first instance, significant, and lasting behavioral change takes place. In the second model, the changed person usually retrogresses back into his or her former lifestyle and learns to resist change more intensely.

If a manipulative approach to change consistently fails to produce long-term effects, why do so many people choose this approach? The answer is found in the would-be change agent. Manipulators tend to have a negative self-image and corresponding inferiority complex. They have never learned to recognize themselves as individuals who have significant value. Many struggle with change in their own life, wanting to change things they have come to view as unchangeable. They are understandably insecure in their ability to help other people change. The immediate changes effective through a manipulative approach help them feel successful. Their insecurity causes them to deny or excuse the long-term consequences of this approach.

There is a better way to effect lasting change in the lives of others. This involves becoming a legitimate agent of change who effectively motivates others to change their attitudes to the extent that behavior modification naturally follows. But becoming a change agent is not without its cost to the exhorter. To change others, there are seven things you must do first.

First, as a change agent you must first be a changed person. The Scriptures apply four concepts to the Christian that imply significant change. First,

repentance involves changing one's attitude about sin to the degree that it effects a change in one's practice (Acts 17:30). Second, *conversion* describes a change that involves both turning from sin (repentance) to faith in God through our Lord Jesus Christ (saving faith) (Rom. 6:17). While conversion looks at the salvation experience from a human perspective, *regeneration* looks at the same experience from a divine perspective. This involves a change only God can produce through granting new life (Titus 3:5). Finally, the outworking of that salvation (*sanctification*) involves an ongoing pattern of change (Phil. 1:6).

Second, changes that have taken place in your life must be evident to those you attempt to change. The changes you experience as a Christian should be apparent to others. Paul noted this was indeed the case when the Thessalonians embraced salvation (1 Thess. 1:6-10). James suggested that the absence of any evidence of significant change in one's life was cause enough to suspect the reality of that person's salvation experience (James 2:14-26).

Third, you need to understand the nature of change and principles by which people are changed. There are certain specific ways people do everything, including change. The wise Christian will change people in the context of what has already been said about change in this chapter.

Also, you need to be deeply committed to effecting change in the lives of people if you aspire to becoming a change agent. Changing people is at the very heart of ministry. The process of making disciples demands effecting changes in others (Matt. 28:19). Christians in ministry need to view their role as a change agent as a calling from God.

Fifth, you need to be able to communicate the value of change to the person being changed. Remember, people will resist changes that are perceived as destructive and/or threatening. They will at best tolerate changes that they believe will have no significant effect on them. But when one can demonstrate that a specific change will enhance something of value in their life, they will want to change.

Then, you need to learn how to make people feel secure with change if you are going to succeed in changing people. Change invites people to be different, i.e. not normal, and no one is comfortable apart from his or her norm. But people can feel more secure with change as they increase their understanding of all that will accompany the change and are assured of the support of others as they work through the process of changing.

Finally, you need to develop a people-changing strategy that works. John Maxwell says, "People change when they (1) hurt enough that they have to change, (2) learn enough that they want to change, and (3) receive enough that they are able to change."³

³ Elmer L. Towns, *An Inside Look at 10 of Today's Most Innovative Churches* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1990), p. 31.

Developing a People-Changing Strategy

To effect significant and lasting change in other people, a gifted exhorter needs to take people through five steps. First, you must decide what to change. Then, you need to create a need to change. These first two steps have often taken place in people's lives prior to their turning to someone for help. Third, you then begin to develop a desire in the other person to change. The fourth step in this process involves communicating how to change. Finally, in order to insure changes continue in people's lives, you must insure change is rewarded.

The specifics involved in these five steps need to be worked out individually in each context. That which needs to be changed in one's life is the root problem, not just the surface symptom that has caused discomfort. A wise exhorter will demonstrate how the unresolved root problem will continue to complicate life until it is resolved. Sometimes, these consequences may have to be experienced before the person is ready to respond to needed change.

But simply making change desirable is not enough. If that were the case, people would change without the help of others. Most people have difficulty resolving problems themselves. Therefore, one of the principle responsibilities of the change agent is to communicate a specific strategy by which people can change specific attitudes and behavior.

The key to turning significant change into lasting change is reinforcing changed attitudes and behavior with suitable rewards. There are few things more frustrating for a person than to go through the threatening process of change only to not experience the benefits anticipated. Often, the consequences of change take time to take effect. In the interim, the changed person struggles through the consequences of that period of dysfunctionality experienced while the change was taking place. Often members of a support group (i.e., family, Bible study group, etc.) need to artificially establish rewards the changed person can recognize as related to his or her changed attitudes and behavior.

When developing suitable rewards for changing, keep several principles in mind. First, plan to reward and reinforce the changed behavior when it occurs. Second, be certain the person who is being rewarded recognizes the rewards as rewards. Third, as much as possible, give these rewards as they are earned. Fourth, be certain the value of the reward is consistent with the effort and risk involved in changing. Fifth, enlist others within the changing person's immediate support group to cooperate in reinforcing the changed behavior. Finally, be consistent in continually reinforcing and rewarding positive changes in attitude and behavior.

CHAPTER SIX

Intervening in a Crisis Situation

To some degree, most people have developed effective strategies to help them cope with the minor problems that characterize their life. But every now and then, the problem is bigger than usual or significantly different from the norm. When that happens, the person with the problem suddenly finds himself or herself in a crisis situation.

A crisis may be described as an event or condition resulting in a significant change in one's personal circumstances marking a turning point in one's life which temporarily leaves one feeling anxious, threatened, confused or depressed. The term is used to describe any event or series of circumstances that threatens a person's sense of wellbeing and interferes with one's more normal lifestyle.

People experience a crisis when confronted with a new and threatening situation in which their normal method of solving problems fails to work. Often a crisis situation is readily apparent to others, but occasionally a problem not noticed by others may result in a personal crisis. Gifted exhorters can be effective in helping people through these crises in life if they learn to recognize the symptoms of people in crisis and develop a workable plan for helping people through their personal crisis.

Essentially, there are two kinds of crises people experience in life. First, there are what may be called *developmental crises* which tend to naturally occur during certain developmental phases in life. It is not uncommon for people to experience difficulties in the normal adjustments associated with puberty, marriage, the birth of a child, retirement, etc. The second kind of crisis may be called *accidental crises* that are the result of some sudden or abnormal situation such as the loss of a job, a sudden unexpected death in the family, marital breakdown, etc. How people respond in these situations is to some extent dependent upon the type of people they are.

Different People – Different Problems

Exhorters are not involved in ministry long before they begin to recognize significant differences between different people. Notwithstanding one's commitment to legal and social equality, it soon becomes clear that people are not always the same. They may be similar in some respects, but there are distinct personality types. People with different personality types respond differently to different situations, and are likely to experience different kinds of problems. Before you can really help a person in a crisis situation, or one with any other problems, you need to determine the kind of person with whom you are dealing.

The Apostle Paul emphasized this principle when he advised the Thessalonians, "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all" (1 Thess. 5:14). Paul recognized it often takes time to deal with people, but different kinds of people are better dealt with in different ways. He specifically mentions three kinds of people in this verse: (1) the unruly, (2) the fainthearted, and (3) the weak.

Each of these three personality types is best helped with a different approach. The unruly person is one who has challenged or rejected regulation. The wise exhorter helps this kind of person by meeting fire with fire and admonishing them directly. The fainthearted person (lit. "little souled") is one who has difficulty believing because of a severe lack of self-confidence and self esteem. This kind of person is best helped by an exhorter who comes along side to comfort. The morally weak person is one so dominated by sin that he or she needs substantial help to completely restructure his or her life. The wise exhorter will support the weak by paring them with others who have been victorious in a similar struggle and will hold them accountable for their actions on an ongoing basis. This is why organizations like Alcoholics Anonymous are so effective in helping people whose lives are dominated by alcohol.

The personality type model outlined by Paul to the Thessalonians is one based on the effect of sin on some aspect of one's personality (unruly will, fainthearted intellect, weak emotions). There are several other ways to distinguish between different personality types. As noted elsewhere in this book, one's spiritual giftedness will also color one's outlook on life (see chapter seven).

Another means of distinguishing different personality types focuses on an analysis of one's temperament. Dr. Tim LaHaye has written several books describing the four basic temperaments (Sanguine, Choleric, Melancholy, and Phlegmatic) and the various blends of these temperaments.⁴ and developed a temperament analysis tool available through his Family Life Seminars. Church Growth Institute has published and offers the L-E-A-D Personality Inventory, by Dr. Walt Lacey, for the same purpose.⁵

Exhorters who are heavily involved in counseling ministries may wish to take advantage of several other psychological inventories available to help identify different personality types. Most of these psychological profiles require one to complete some sort of response sheet. That response is then compared with data on hand to suggest a probable personality profile. When used correctly, these tools can give the counselor insight into the personality and probable

⁴ These are described more fully in Dr. Tim LaHaye's books, *Spirit-Controlled Temperament* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1966), *Transformed Temperaments* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 1971), and *Understanding the Male Temperament* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1977).

⁵ *L-E-A-D Personality Inventory* is available separately and as part of the *Personal Ministry Finder* online tool for individuals or groups, from ChurchGrowth.org.

response of the counselee in a particular situation. However, those who have not become familiar with the specific inventory being used may find them more of a hindrance than a help in understanding a particular person.

How People Respond in Crisis Situations

While different personality types are likely to respond to a crisis situation in different ways, there are similarities in response patterns. When people encounter problems, they normally adopt their usual problem solving strategy to resolve their problem. When that doesn't work, they begin a series of new strategies that are often not successful. At this point, many people experience a nervous breakdown or experience emotional burnout. If this situation continues unchecked, they begin to deny the problem and withdraw from others.

While everyone is different, people in a crisis situation tend to have several common characteristics including (1) anxiety, (2) a sense of helplessness, (3) increased dependence on others, (4) loss of self-esteem, (5) anger, and (6) decreasing efficiency. It is not uncommon for a person in crisis to look for help while struggling through the problem alone. That represents an open door for ministry by the gifted exhorter.

Out of her research among terminally ill patients, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross concluded people tend to pass through several phases upon becoming aware of the ultimate life crisis, their impending death. These phases include denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.⁶

This pattern also appears to exist in other crisis situations. One of the first responses in any crisis situation is an attempt by the person or group in crisis to deny the real existence of a problem. They may evade the problem through some kind of escape mechanism (drugs, work, recreation, etc.) or they may simply refused help in this phase. As the reality of the problem becomes more evident to those directly involved, they tend to initially hide their emotions from others. They may be angry, upset, frustrated, or guilty, but they tend to continue denying how they feel about their situation. As long as denial exists, little of a constructive nature can be done to help a person or group in crisis.

Gifted exhorters who intervene in a crisis situation want to move a person or group quickly through the process of identifying the crisis for what it is. Only then can significant steps be taken to correct the situation. Initially, you may need to take stop-gap measures to relieve some of the pressure experienced by the person or group involved. Do not simply look for a way to help people escape the pressure of a crisis situation. Rather, target the complete resolution of this problem as the ultimate goal. Part of that resolution involves rebuilding that which has been destroyed in the crisis and restructuring the group or personal lifestyle involved to minimize the likelihood of a recurring crisis.

Crisis Intervention Strategy

⁶ Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1969).

When helping a person or group experiencing a crisis, the first goal of the gifted exhorter is to convince those involved that a real problem exists. As noted above, the more natural response is denial. What makes this even more difficult to deal with is the tendency of some people and groups to admit the existence of a problem, but identify the wrong problem.

A church found itself in a financial crisis and went to their denominational leaders for help. The church admitted having a serious financial problem, blaming it on the spending habits of a former pastor. The real problem related to a long history of poor stewardship and unwise financial decisions that had characterized the church through several different pastors. Within a two-year period, three pastors resigned, significant church ministries were eliminated, a large church campus was sold for significantly less than its market value, and the church board found themselves discussing the feasibility of maintaining a church ministry in their town.

To help a person or group in a crisis situation accept the reality of their situation, there are several things you as a gifted exhorter can do. Nothing can be done until you first make contact with the person or group in crisis. Then, you should work to reduce the anxiety surrounding the situation. Next, you should help the person or group focus on the issues and encourage them to take action. In your own non-critical approach to the situation, you can do much to help the person or group in crisis accept the situation they find themselves in.

In helping people in crisis, take care to understand the situation as fully as possible. Make every effort to open channels of communication between the person or group in trouble with those who may be able to help. Help those in crisis identify their negative feelings of guilt, anxiety, resentment, bitterness, etc. Your goal in this phase of helping them through the crisis is to help them begin viewing their situation from an alternative viewpoint.

In every problem, there are two problems which need to be dealt with: (1) our response to the unchangeable and (2) our strategy to change that which can be changed. In a crisis situation, the emotional tension of the moment tends to cloud this reality. Before the crisis can be resolved, those in crisis need to be brought to the point of learning to accept and adjust to the unchangeable. As an exhorter, you may find yourself riding an emotional rollercoaster as you remain at the side of those in crisis.

Once the unchangeable has been identified and accepted, take steps to make other changes. At this point, the best thing you can do is to help those in crisis explore practical steps in dealing with the problem. These steps do not have to resolve the whole situation overnight. Rather, often a very small step taken will have enough impact in a crisis to give hope and motivate those in crisis to take more substantial steps.

When the principal of a Christian school was faced with a major crisis which threatened school enrollment, he found that by simply transferring a few students to another class, the problem was resolved for the few remaining months of the school year. The transfer of students did not deal directly with the root cause of

the problem, but it did relieve tensions significantly and convince the faculty, students, and their families that the school was on track and had a future. As a result, the school experienced a significant increase in enrollment and the principle was able to effect more substantial changes during the summer.

Before the crisis is completely resolved, those in crisis must be brought to the point of accepting personal responsibility for coping with their problem. This is especially difficult for those who are in crisis because of circumstances beyond their control. The fifty-year-old man who loses a well paying job during a prolonged economic recession may not be directly responsible for his job loss, but he is responsible for the way in which he copes with that problem. Rather than allowing his crisis to isolate him from others, he needs to draw closer to others who can help him within his social network.

When Jesus was betrayed by Judas Iscariot and arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, all of the disciples were scattered. That evening, Simon Peter denied knowing Christ on at least three occasions. Later, Jesus led Peter to express his love and allegiance three times during a conversation on a Galilean beach. Jesus did not hold Peter responsible for the crisis over which he had no control (the betrayal and arrest), but He did hold Peter accountable for his actions in the midst of the crisis.

As noted earlier in this book, gifted exhorters are never in ministry alone. Throughout this entire process of helping people in crisis, be involved in prayer personally and lead those in crisis to express themselves to God through prayer. One of the most obvious themes in Scripture is that God is still in control, even when that control is not apparent to us. As you help people and groups work through their crises, help them recognize God's sovereignty over their lives and His compassionate concern for their well being.

Helping People in Abusive Situations

Certain types of crises tend to require a more specialized approach to helping people. As you become increasingly involved in people-helping growth ministries, you are likely to encounter abusive situations in families and other groups. Often these situations are of such a nature that your best response will be to look elsewhere for help.

In the Old Testament, Moses appointed judges with various levels of responsibility to help people resolve their problems (Exod. 18:25). He did this to minimize his own involvement in this aspect of ministry while insuring the people got the help they needed. Usually, these judges were able to resolve the problems they encountered, but occasionally they encountered a problem that was beyond their ability. "So they judged the people at all times: the hard cases they brought to Moses, but they judged every small case themselves" (Exod. 18:26).

Do not become discouraged when you encounter a person in an abusive situation that is beyond your ability. Rather, like the Old Testament judges, refer those situations to your pastor or other more qualified person and concentrate on

doing what can be done within your natural limitations. If you find yourself often encountering people in abusive situations, you might be wise to discuss the situation with your pastor. He may be able to identify specific agencies in your community such as shelters and support groups and help you become better equipped for a more specialized ministry.

When you find yourself involved in an abusive situation, be careful not to narrow your focus and miss seeing the full extent of the problem. A parent who is involved in an incestuous relationship with one child, commonly sexually abuses other children. A group leader who manipulates one group member emotionally often treats others in the group the same way. A man who physically abuses his wife often abuses his children.

Normally, the nature of a crisis situation involving abuse is such that an immediate concern is to separate the abused and potentially abused from the abuser. This is especially difficult in a family situation where family members find themselves in a dysfunctional love-hate relationship with the abuser. Most jurisdictions have laws protecting abuse victims, but police authorities are unable to enforce those laws until an abused person is willing to make a statement and press charges. Practically, the gifted exhorter called upon to help in this situation will often find it easier to get the abused to agree to spend time elsewhere than to press charges against the abused.

In an abusive situation, there are really two victims. Many wife abusers appear to be model husbands, until they get drunk or angry. When gifted exhorters understand that, they will want to help both the abused and the abuser. But like most people with problems, abusers tend to live in denial. Before anyone can help an abuser change his or her destructive behavior, the abuser must recognize himself or herself as an abuser.

Intervening in a Potential Suicide

Perhaps the most frightening crisis situation in which a gifted exhorter may be involved is suicide prevention. This is in part due to the finality of one's death that is equated with failure on the part of the one intervening. Yet suicide is widespread around the world. Based on current statistics, ten people somewhere in our world have probably taken their own life in the time it has taken you to read this chapter. And it has been estimated there are eight to ten unsuccessful suicide attempts for every success.

The Bible describes seven suicides, including that of (1) Abimelech (Judges 9:53-54), (2) Samson (Judges 16:28-31), (3) Saul (1 Sam. 31:1-6), (4) Saul's armour bearer (1 Chron. 10:4-5), (5) Ahithophel (2 Sam. 17:23), (6) Zimri (1 Kings 16:18), and (7) Judas Iscariot (Matt. 27:3-5). There is no specific biblical statement about the morality of suicide; however, most Christians agree that the prohibition against murder also applies to the murder of one's self. The Scriptures describe God as the source of life (John 1:4) and therefore the only one with the right to take life.

It is generally accepted today that suicide attempts are almost always a cry for help. Usually, the last thing a suicide victim hopes to do is be successful in their attempt. This is especially true of those who attempt suicide through generally ineffective means such as drug overdoses or slashing their wrists. Because they want help, it is not uncommon for potential suicide victims to communicate their intentions to those with eyes to see.

Several things are common in the behavior of those who are contemplating suicide. Often, they will tell others of their plans either with a direct statement of their intention or indirectly by asking questions about suicide or talking about not being around in the near future. Talk of suicide should be viewed as a warning signal, especially if the potential victim has well thought out plans as to how he or she intends to accomplish the act.

Even when statements are not made, a change in behavior may be a warning signal that suicide is being considered. When a person who has been depressed for some time has a sudden improvement in their attitude, friends are often relieved. Sometimes, the improved attitude is related to a decision to commit suicide. This is especially true if accompanied by giving away personal possessions to friends, paying long-standing personal debts, buying or updating life insurance, and putting personal affairs in order.

Certain types of people tend to be more likely to commit suicide at certain times than others. Historically, a man over fifty with one or more previous attempts was more likely to commit suicide than a younger person. Also, this suicide was more likely to take place in February. More recently, there has been a significant increase in the number of teen suicides. Today, the typical suicide victim is sixteen years old and takes his or her life during the first week of November. Teen suicide is especially likely when the teenager is involved in the occult, spends a lot of time listening to music which glorifies death and suicide, and/or has friends who have recently committed suicide as part of a death pact.

People who commit suicide tend to have a deep feeling of hopelessness and few people win their support system to convince them otherwise. They often live alone and are rarely actively involved in church or community activities. These potential victims are more likely to take their life when confronted by a problem that overwhelms them. Without a friend to intervene, they often simply die alone.

The gifted exhorter who is most effective in suicide intervention has learned to take every threat seriously. The widely held belief that those who talk about suicide never do it just isn't true. To be effective in suicide intervention, you must be convinced there is a valid reason for the potential victim to continue living. With that prior commitment, you will be able to use listening skills and a crisis intervention strategy to help the potential victim work through their crisis situation and find significance in life.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Finding Your Place on the Ministry Team

Churches in North America are returning to the biblical practice of team ministry. There is a valid biblical precedent for a team approach to ministry.

Team ministry was practiced throughout the New Testament beginning with Jesus. While no one would dispute the ability of our Lord to meet needs in the lives of others without the assistance of others, He chose to gather disciples (first the twelve, later seventy others) to assist Him in His ministry objectives. The fact that these others were so unqualified for ministry only serves to emphasize the importance Jesus must have placed on the ministry team concept.

In light of Jesus' use of the ministry team, it is not surprising the apostles continued ministering as a team in the early days of the church. They were recognized as a distinct group within the church and were together involved in the ministries of evangelism (Acts 2:14; 5:42), teaching (Acts 2:42; 5:25), miracles (Acts 2:43; 5:12), prayer (Acts 3:1; 4:24) and administration (Acts 4:37; 6:2). They chose to appoint ministry teams to solve problems whether those problems were as mundane as feeding widows (Acts 6:3) or as major as confirming the authenticity of a reported new ministry (Acts 8:14).

The Apostle Paul also used team ministry effectively throughout his ministry, particularly on his second missionary journey. Before engaging on this mission that brought the gospel to Europe, he gathered a team that included Silas, Timothy and Luke. At times, various members or groups within his ministry team were sent off on special assignments. On at least one occasion Paul found himself involved in ministry alone (cf. Acts 17:16-18:4). But his preference was apparently ministry as a team. Twelve of the thirteen New Testament epistles that bear his name in the introduction also include a reference to others with him at the time he wrote that epistle. The only exception is his first epistle to Timothy, a long-standing member of his ministry team.

There are two approaches to forming a ministry team depending upon what that ministry team is trying to accomplish. Some establish highly specialized teams that tend to resemble a colony of similarly gifted individuals. This may be planned or result as gifted individuals naturally gravitate toward each other. The resulting team tends to prove extremely effective in a particular area of ministry and less effective in other areas. While this plan has inherent long-term problems, churches may elect to take this approach in forming a team to initiate a new ministry and get it established.

A second approach to team ministry recognizes the strength of pluralism and blends various individuals with differing gifts into a ministry team. Just as the

more highly specialized team may be established to initiate a new ministry, this alternative approach may be better utilized to build greater stability in existing ministries. Having different spiritual gifts represented on the team means various perspectives are applied to the ministry and this helps insure a more balanced approach to ministry.

The key to finding our place on the ministry team is knowing our spiritual gift and how it can be used in various aspects of ministry. As we come to understand how God can uniquely use us in ministry, our desires for someone else's gift(s) are removed. We recognize how others gifted differently can also be involved in ministry and we lose the tendency we may have to impose our gift(s) on them.

Spiritual Gifts and Ministry Potential

Some people confuse the gifts only certain people have with the ministry in which every Christian should be involved. Each of the nine task-oriented spiritual gifts is apparently related to a particular ministry in which all Christians should be involved. Christians who are gifted in a certain area have a natural tendency to also be deeply committed to a particular ministry pattern because of their effectiveness in exercising their gift in that area. It is important to understand where the ministry bias of each member of the ministry team lies as we work with those gifted in different areas.

If you could gather nine people, each gifted in one of the nine task-oriented gifts, and ask them the question, "What is the most important ministry in our church?" you are likely to get nine completely different responses.

The person gifted in evangelism may claim that the most important ministries are those that result in people coming to Christ as Savior.

The person gifted in prophecy with a strong desire to make a statement for righteousness would probably identify the church's involvement in political and social action as the most important ministry.

The person gifted in teaching would tend to identify the most important ministries as those that effectively communicate biblical truth to people.

The person gifted in exhortation would tend to identify people-helping ministries that effectively motivate others in their Christian life as the most important ministries in the church.

The person gifted in pastoring-shepherding would tend to identify ministries that effectively assimilate others into the church family as the most important ministries.

The person gifted in showing mercy would likely identify ministries which best express the church's concern for hurting people as the most important ministries.

The person gifted in serving would tend to point to ministries that most effectively meet the practical needs of others as the most important ministries in the church.

The person gifted in giving might identify the most cost-effective ministries that release funds for other aspects of the church's ministry as the most important ministries in the church.

The person gifted in administration would tend to look at those areas of the church's total ministry that help insure the efficient management of church affairs as the most important aspect of the church's total ministry.

So who answered the question correctly? The answer is, "All of the above!" Each person identified an aspect of the church's ministry in which he or she is likely to be most effective. Of course, they can also use their gifts effectively as part of a ministry team in any of the other eight ministry areas, but like us, they prefer to use their gift in the ministry that suggests their greatest potential for growth and effectiveness. In light of our team approach to ministry, it is important to understand both (1) how other gifts can be used effectively in people-helping growth ministries and (2) how we can use our gift of exhortation in other ministry areas.

Spiritual Gifts and People-Helping Growth Ministries

I use the expression "People-Helping Growth Ministries" to describe a broad range of church ministries that tend to help people experience personal spiritual growth in their Christian life. Few would dispute a role for those gifted in exhortation in these ministries. This is what an exhorter is by nature. But others gifted in different areas can also have an important ministry in this area and should be involved on the ministry team. Indeed, one of the fundamental purposes for gathering together Christians into churches is to accomplish this ministry of exhortation (1 Cor. 14:3).

What does a Christian need to grow to maturity in word and deed? Those gifted in evangelism can contribute to the spiritual growth of others by training them to reach others effectively. Those gifted in prophecy can assist spiritual growth in others by pointing out areas where growth is needed most. Those gifted in teaching can communicate the biblical and doctrinal base upon which spiritual growth rests. Those gifted in shepherding (pastoring) can accelerate personal spiritual growth in others by enfolding them into the church. Those gifted as mercy shower can encourage growth in others by modeling God's merciful concern. Those gifted in serving can encourage growth through involving others in practical ministry projects. Those gifted in giving can encourage growth by teaching and motivating others to give. Those gifted in administration can help others grow by helping them get organized and involved in a personal growth strategy.

The Gift of Exhortation and Team Ministries

Your giftedness in exhortation colors the way you look at other ministries. If you understand that principle, you can utilize it to your advantage and become an effective member of the ministry team serving outside your preferred ministry area. If you realize your different perspective on the ministry is the result of a God-given gift, you do not need to be intimidated by others who appear more effective in that ministry area because of their unique giftedness. God will use someone gifted in an area that most complements a particular ministry emphasis to make a good ministry better. But He will also use the rest of us to make that better ministry best.

As an exhorter, you can contribute a perspective to other areas of ministry that other Christians gifted in other areas are likely to overlook. Using your gift to help others maximize the effectiveness of their giftedness will help you avoid falling into the trap of gift imposing, i.e. expecting others to exercise your gift rather than that which God has given them.

When an evangelist involves you in the ministry of evangelism, you can be effective in stair-stepping others to Christ and salvation.

When a prophet involves you in social action, you can help the team develop a plan likely to effect significant change.

When a teacher involves you in team teaching, you can communicate to others the practical application of Scripture and encourage them to be "doers of the Word" also.

When the shepherd (pastor) involves you in team nurturing, you can help individual members of the group to overcome their problems and accomplish the challenges that lie before them.

When the mercy shower involves you in compassion ministries, you can help people by giving them a step-by-step plan to resolve their problems and build a better lifestyle.

When the server involves you in team ministry, you can use that ministry as an opportunity to come to the side of others in a practical expression of your concern for them.

When the giver involves you in financial aspects of the ministry, you can help people develop a simple financial plan that enables them to experience financial freedom and support the ministry financially.

When the administrator involves you in team leadership, you can help translate broad plans into specific actions to be taken by various individuals.

Part of what God expects of us as stewards of the resources He has entrusted to us involves knowing how to use our spiritual giftedness as part of a ministry team. At times, you may be part of a highly specialized team launching a new people-helping growth ministry. At other times, your perspective as an exhorter may be needed on a more balanced ministry team. Regardless of the

situation we find ourselves in, it is important that we continue developing and using our giftedness in ministry to the glory of God.

Where Do I Go From Here?

This book has addressed several issues important to those who are gifted in exhortation and desire to be good stewards of the spiritual gift God has entrusted to them. While I hope you have learned something that has enhanced your understanding of the gift of exhortation, it was never my intent to simply to produce a book to add to the sum total of knowledge on this subject. Rather, this book was produced as a tool to help you develop your giftedness in exhortation. Before you put this book on the shelf along side of others you may own, let's talk about making this book work for you!

Exhortation Is a Team Ministry

Chuck Swindoll defines the gift of exhortation as "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."⁷ That is a big undertaking for any Christian, even one gifted in exhortation. Obviously, it is more than one person can do.

Exhortation is a team ministry. God's plan for His church involves everyone on the team being involved in some aspect of the ministry of exhortation, regardless of their spiritual giftedness. "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb. 10:24-25).

Because exhortation is a team ministry, it is imperative that you become a part of a ministry team in your church where you can use your gift to help others experience personal growth. For help in finding a suitable place of ministry, talk with your pastor or other church leaders about ministry opportunities available in your church.

Chapter four includes a number of Scriptures describing how the first Christians carried on their ministry of exhorting one another. As you look over these verses, you may be overwhelmed and find yourself saying, "But I can't do that!" There are some things all of us find difficult. Rather than focusing on what you cannot do and becoming discouraged, consider what you can do. Remember, the key to effective ministry is to let Christ work in and through us to accomplish His purpose in the lives of others around us (Gal. 2:20).

You can take steps today to become the exhorter God intended you to be. Take inventory and make a list of those in your personal sphere of influence (friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors). Now compare that list with the list of verses printed in chapter four. Which aspect of exhorting one another does

⁷ Charles R. Swindoll, *He Gave Gifts: Bible Study Guide* (Anaheim, California: Insight for Living, 1992), p. 38.

each friend need this week? How could God use you to meet that need in your friend's life? Add these people and their needs to your prayer list and ask God for wisdom and opportunities to use your gift to meet needs in their life.

You Can Become a Better Exhorter

One of the objectives of this book is to describe ways you can become more effective in exercising your spiritual gift. You can begin growing in your effectiveness as an exhorter by making a list of problems God has brought you through in the last year. What did you learn through each experience? How could you most effectively communicate those lessons to others experiencing similar problems? Using the guidelines discussed in chapter two, identify the principles God has been teaching you and develop a few transferable concepts that you can begin using to help others. As you continue this practice in the years to come, this may prove to be the single greatest investment you ever make in your ministry.

While you are developing transferable concepts, you may also want to take time to develop your listening skills. Review the guidelines summarized in chapter three with a view to becoming a better listener. You may want to evaluate yourself in two or three meetings you already have scheduled this week. After each meeting, take a few minutes to write down everything you recall others in the meeting saying. Don't be discouraged if your notes are limited. People who are gifted in exhortation often find it easier to recall what they said than what others say. Developing good listening skills may take a little time and a lot of discipline.

The ministry strength of the exhorter is helping people experience significant growth toward maturity. If you are just beginning to develop your giftedness, you may want to consider the principles outlined in chapter four in the context of discipling a new convert for a couple of months. Seeing God use you to effect growth in others will encourage you to continue using your giftedness in ministry.

One of the most difficult aspects of ministry you will be involved in as an exhorter will be changing people. Don't be too quick to attempt to change people you think need to be changed. Remember, the change agent is a changed person. As you review chapter five, ask yourself, "What needs to be changed in my life?" As you make significant change in your own life, others will notice the positive results. That will give you the experience and credibility to help others make changes in their life.

The final ministry skill discussed in this volume deals with intervening in a personal crisis. Because of the serious nature and potential negative consequences of many of these crises, many gifted exhorters are most hesitant in this aspect of ministry. There are two things you can do to apply the principles outlined in chapter six and better prepare you for a ministry in crisis intervention. First, you may wish to team up with a more experienced exhorter who is already engaged in this aspect of ministry. This would enable you to continue learning how to apply the principles you have learned in specific situations. Second, you

may wish to become involved in a crisis hotline service in your church or community. Again, this would enable you to apply the principles you have learned in specific situations, but in a context where there would be others to help you when you need it.

Additional Resources Available

Part of this book has described specific ways of doing people-helping growth ministries. No attempt has been made to exhaust the subject here. Many aspects of this field of ministry have been alluded to in these pages; others have been overlooked completely. I do not wish to suggest ministries not specifically mentioned are in any way inferior to those discussed. This book is intended to serve as an introduction to a vast field; a guide to get you started in people-helping growth ministries.

Because there are many valid and effective methods of helping people mature in Christ, you will want to become better acquainted with different ministry strategies. In recent years, there has been an increased interest in Christian nurture ministries such as discipleship and counseling. This interest has resulted in the establishment of several discipleship ministries and counseling centers together with a growing body of literature written from an evangelical perspective on how to help people with problems. Many discipleship ministries have developed products designed to help people experience significant spiritual growth. Also, some counseling centers conduct special workshops, seminars, and other training opportunities for those interested in specific ministry issues. Some denominational and parachurch ministries also produce publications dealing with discipleship and counseling issues common within their ministry sphere of influence.

The publisher of this book is committed to helping people develop their giftedness and build growing churches. As you prepare a personal growth plan by which you can further develop your own giftedness in exhortation, you will want to visit www.ChurchGrowth.org to learn what other ministry resources are available.

APPENDIX ONE

Identifying Your Giftedness in Exhortation

Among the various Team Ministry gifts, exhortation may be one of the most widely distributed within the church. Sometimes, this may be the most difficult gift to accurately identify. Because of the nature of this gift, an exhorter often takes on the characteristics of other gifts to meet an urgent need. Paul, who was gifted in many areas including exhortation, spoke of being "all things to all men" (1 Cor. 9:22). People who are gifted in exhortation tend to apply this principle most readily in their ministries.

Could it be that many "multi-gifted" Christians began as exhorters who developed giftedness in other areas as they matured in ministry? When "coming along side to help" someone who is unorganized, the exhorter may look like an administrator. When working with someone who is hurting, he or she may look like a mercy shower. Sometimes, he or she tries to help a person struggling with a problem and appears to be exercising the gift of shepherding. In meeting the needs of others, exhorters sometimes find themselves doing things more characteristic of the other gifts.

How can I know if I am indeed gifted in exhortation? Sometimes, people who are drawn to people-helping growth ministries really need help themselves before they can help others. That is not always the case. How can I determine if my attraction to these kinds of ministries is because of a personal need in my life or the unique spiritual gift God has given me?

There are at least three ways to determine if you have the gift of exhortation. First, you can complete a *Spiritual Gifts Inventory* to help you determine probable areas of giftedness. Second, you can look at your own ministry passion (what you would prefer doing) as an indicator of probable giftedness in that area. Third, you can compare yourself with a standard profile of a gifted exhorter to note important areas of similarity or difference.

Using the Spiritual Gift Inventory

Your dominant area of giftedness will tend to impact the way you think and feel about things much as other influences such as family or educational background also contribute to the person you are. The *Team Ministry Spiritual Gifts Inventory* (revised edition: *Your Gifts: Spiritual Gifts Survey*) has helped many people discover their spiritual gift(s) by matching certain attitudinal statements to probable areas of giftedness. Those gifted in exhortation tend to

identify closely with the following statements:⁸

1. When I do something, I like to see "tangible" results for my efforts.
2. When I speak to a group, my message usually deals with topics, not verse by verse studies.
3. I believe I am a very practical person.
4. I am able to help others when they have personal problems.
5. When studying Scripture, I am more interested in the practical areas.
6. I put great importance on the God's will.
7. I have several steps of action to solve every problem.
8. I question the value of deep doctrinal studies.
9. I have the ability to motivate others.
10. Unpractical teaching upsets me.
11. Other people think I am not evangelistic because of my emphasis on personal growth.
12. I am accused of not using enough Scripture when teaching.

Confirming Your Test Results

While the *Team Ministry Spiritual Gifts Inventory* has proved an effective tool in helping people identify their dominant area of giftedness, be careful about coming to conclusions too quickly on the basis of a single test. In the Old Testament, a matter could not be legally confirmed without two or three witnesses who agreed. When you evaluate your response to the *Team Ministry Spiritual Gifts Inventory*, apply this Law of Two or Three Witnesses to your test results by asking the following questions:

1. Is this conclusion consistent with what I know about this gift?
Something in your background or even the way you felt as you

⁸ Attitudinal statements taken from the Classic *Spiritual Gifts Inventory*, now available in a new, revised edition: *YOUR GIFTS Spiritual Gifts Survey* published by ChurchGrowth.org. This diagnostic tool is available through <http://www.ChurchGrowth.org> and wherever Christian books are sold.

completed the inventory may have colored your answers slightly, resulting in a false conclusion.

2. Do other Christians who know me see evidence of this gift in me? If you possess this gift, it should be apparent at least in embryonic form to more mature and spiritual Christians who know you.
3. Is the exercise of this gift effective in ministry? When you use your spiritual gift, you will tend to experience maximum effectiveness with minimum effort.

Gifts, Passions, and Learned Abilities

Some Christians confuse their spiritual giftedness with a passion for ministry and/or learned abilities they have acquired. Normally, God also gives His people a passion to serve Him in some area related to that in which they are uniquely gifted. Also, as Christians begin using their gifts in ministry, they tend to find other learned abilities they have acquired over the years can be used to open ministry doors or enhance the effectiveness of their gifts. Therefore, the challenge of gift stewardship involves determining how to use your gifts and learned abilities in a ministry for which you have a passion. When this balance is achieved, you will realize your maximum effectiveness in ministry and greatest sense of personal fulfillment.

As you look for an opportunity to use your giftedness in ministry, ask yourself, "If I could serve in any ministry in my church, which would I choose?" This will help you identify your passion for ministry. If you have difficulty deciding between several options, determine what these ministries have in common that make them attractive to you. For example, the Christian that has difficulty choosing between a summer day camp ministry to children or accompanying the youth group on their winter retreat may have a passion for a camping ministry rather than children's or youth ministry.

Once you have identified your ministry passion, begin investigating opportunities within that ministry area that would enable you to use your gift(s). This may involve talking with others currently involved in that ministry. In some cases, you may need to do some creative thinking to help others see how your unique giftedness could contribute to the effectiveness of the ministry team. In other situations, God may give you a passion to use your giftedness in a ministry that is not yet established in your church. Many pastors and church leaders are waiting for people to begin much-needed new ministries in the church.

Having determined a role for your gift(s) in the area of your passion, the third step in gift stewardship involves using your learned abilities to enhance your ministry effectiveness. Some of our learned abilities (perhaps most of them) may not readily lend themselves to the ministry we have chosen. Others may only

contribute slightly to enhancing your effectiveness. Still others may open significant doors of ministry that might have otherwise remained closed.

Practicing Gift Stewardship

God has uniquely gifted each of us for effective ministry in our church. He is the giver of the gifts, but as the recipients of His gifts we have a stewardship responsibility (1) to discover our unique giftedness, then (2) to demonstrate that giftedness in ministry, and finally (3) to develop the potential of our spiritual giftedness. The Lord bless you as you are found faithful as a steward of the gift(s) He has entrusted to your keeping.

A Profile of the Exhorter⁹

The Exhorter has the Spirit-given capacity and desire to serve God by motivating others to action by urging them to pursue a course of conduct. He is the "HOW TO" teacher, giving the application of God's Word.

I. CHARACTERISTICS

- A. He is result oriented.
- B. He is comfortable working one-on-one or in groups.
- C. He is a very practical person, usually analytical.
- D. He is usually a good counselor.
- E. He is expressive in a group setting; groups listen when he speaks.
- F. He is usually impulsive, needs self-discipline.
- G. He is more tolerant than hostile toward people, usually sympathetic.
- H. He is accurate in his self-image.
- I. He is serious minded, conservative, logical.

⁹ Gift profile based on *How to Find Meaning and Fulfillment through Understanding the Spiritual Gifts within You*, which was revised and updated to *YOUR GIFTS: Discover God's Unique Design for You* by Larry Gilbert (for individuals/small groups) and *TEAM MINISTRY: Gifted to Serve* (for pastors/church leaders), Forest, Virginia: ChurchGrowth.org, 2015.

- J. He is talkative.
- K. He is an orderly person, likes things done in an orderly fashion.
- L. He is enthusiastic, usually cheerful and bubbly.
- M. He is a person of charts, graphs and lists.
- N. He is bored with trivia.

II. BURDENS, DESIRES, AND STRENGTHS

- A. He is able to help others find their problems and solutions.
- B. He shows interest mostly in the practical areas in studying the Scriptures.
- C. He is burdened to show how Scripture relates to conduct.
- D. He has a desire to unify people by using practical rather than doctrinal issues.
- E. He puts great importance on the will of God.
- F. He has several steps of action to solve every problem.
- G. He has the ability to motivate others to action.
- H. His messages are usually topical when preaching and teaching.
- I. He is objective and makes decisions logically rather than on feelings.
- J. He wants to see everyone reaching full potential.
- K. He believes the Scripture has the solution to every problem.
- L. He is a positive thinker, a strong believer that things will be better tomorrow.
- M. He prefers the analysis to the task itself.
- N. He occasionally needs to be alone where it's quiet in order to think.
- O. He is extremely creative.
- P. He likes being the center of attention.

Q. He outwardly demonstrates competence.

III. SPECIAL NEEDS AND WEAKNESS

- A. He may question the value of deep doctrinal studies.
- B. He may have difficulty accepting himself because of the need of being an example.
- C. He may be guilty of using Scripture only to support what he is teaching rather than starting with the Scriptures.
- D. He is upset with impractical teaching.
- E. He often interrupts other people because of his enthusiasm.
- F. He enjoys motivating people to do more, do better and do their best.

IV. HOW HE IS MISUNDERSTOOD BY OTHERS

- A. Others think he is not evangelistic.
- B. Others think he makes everything too simple.
- C. Others think he takes Scripture out of context just to suit his purpose.
- D. Others think he doesn't use enough Scripture.
- E. Others think he puts too much emphasis on edification.
- F. Others think he is too positive when things look bleak.

V. HOW SATAN ATTACKS THIS GIFT

- A. Causes pride in his motivational abilities.
- B. Causes him to lose sight of people because of program emphasis.
- C. Causes discouragement when results are not evident.
- D. Causes him to encourage others to do the wrong thing because of his persuasive abilities.

VI.WHERE TO USE THIS GIFT

- A. As a "trainer" in areas of leadership or methodology.
- B. As a counselor, especially in a counseling center.
- C. As a "Church Training" teacher.
- D. As a seminar speaker.
- E. As a telephone ministry worker.
- F. As a teacher of pre-marital classes.
- G. As a counselor in drug program, rescue mission, poverty program.
- H. As a counselor in a halfway house and runaway ministry.
- I. As a follow-up counselor with new converts.
- J. As an encourager with those who are discouraged.

APPENDIX TWO

A Two-Year Plan to Begin Thinking Like an Exhorter

One of the things Jesus accomplished when He ascended into heaven was to grant spiritual gifts to all Christians to use in the ministry (Eph. 4:8). Specific spiritual gifts are identified by different names in Scripture. There appear to be three kinds of spiritual gifts. One group may be described as miraculous gifts or “signs and wonders.” This group includes gifts such as speaking in tongues and gifts of healing. Then there are four enabling gifts that each Christian appears to have to some degree. These include spiritual discernment, faith, knowledge and wisdom. These four gifts enhance a third group, the task-oriented spiritual gifts (TEAM Gifts). These task-oriented gifts are tools for effectiveness as part of the ministry team. Each of these nine tools for ministry is the subject of one of the books in this series on spiritual gifts.

Spiritual gifts are given to Christians for several reasons. They equip Christians with tools for effective outreach ministries (Eph. 4:12). These same tools equip Christians with the ability to edify, encourage, and care for fellow believers (Eph. 4:12). They also enable each Christian to contribute practically to the unity of the church (Eph. 4:13). Spiritual gifts provide the means by which Christians can experience their greatest personal fulfillment, that which comes from using their gifts in ministry to others (Rom. 12:4-8).

While the focus of this and other books in this series is spiritual gifts, it is important to remember that all gifts are given by the same Giver who distributes those gifts “to each one individually as He wills” (1 Cor. 12:11). When churches develop a gift-orientation to ministry, they recognize Christ’s authority as the head of their church to determine the nature of their ministry. Ultimately, the key to an effective gift-oriented ministry is not the gift, but the Giver. He determines who gets which gift and in doing so, He also designs the unique gift mix within each congregation to accomplish the specific ministry He intends for that church. That is why, despite the failings of the Corinthian church in many respects, Paul could affirm with confidence that they came “short in no gift” (1 Cor. 1:7). God gave them and us every gift we need to accomplish the ministry He wants us to accomplish.

Looking at Spiritual Gifts from the Perspective of the Giver

When Paul addressed the Corinthians on the subject of spiritual gifts, he used five different Greek words to describe the nature of these gifts (1 Cor. 12:1-7). Each term tends to emphasize a different aspect of our spiritual giftedness. Paul used the word *pneumatikon*, which is translated “spiritual” (1 Cor. 12:1). This adjective describes the character of these gifts as spiritual. The second Greek

word used was *charismata* which is usually translated “gifts” (1 Cor. 12:4). This term emphasizes gifts as God’s free and gracious gifts. The word *diakonia* is the third term used to describe gifts. This word is translated “ministries” (1 Cor. 12:5) and reveals gifts as opportunities for ministry. Fourth, the word *energema*, translated “activities” (1 Cor. 12:6), suggests that gifts are an endowment of God’s power or energy. The fifth the word used by Paul, *phanerosis*, translated “manifestation” (1 Cor. 12:7), means that gifts are evidence of God working through us.

That last word creates a problem for many Christians. If my spiritual gift is a manifestation of God working through me, it will be frustrated unless I get out of the way. God and the people He made have two different ways of thinking. Speaking on behalf of God, the prophet Isaiah wrote, “ ‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways’ says the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts’ ” (Isa. 55:8-9). At some point in the development of your spiritual gifts, you need to begin thinking like the Giver of your gifts.

Paul understood this principle. Just before discussing spiritual gifts in his epistle to the Romans, he wrote, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2). The key to that renewing of our mind is found in saturating your mind with God’s Word. Paul urged the Colossians, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly with all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16). The psalmist wrote, “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You” (Ps. 119:9-11).

A Two-Year Strategy to Begin Thinking Like God about Your Gift

In our hurry-up world many people look for quick solutions to fix problems, but learning to think like the Giver is a challenge bigger than can be accomplished in a weekend seminar or by reading a book or taking a course. The gap between our way of thinking and God’s way of thinking is so great it could take a lifetime to bridge. Even then we may discover we still have more to learn. But the more we allow God’s Word to saturate our thinking process, the more inclined we will be to begin thinking like Him.

As you strive to begin thinking like God about your spiritual gift, two spiritual disciplines will help you accomplish that goal. The first is the discipline of reading through the Bible. Christians who depend exclusively on the ministry of their pastor to teach them the Scriptures often end up with a piece-meal understanding of the Scriptures. If a pastor preached on a different chapter each week, it would take him 1189 weeks to preach through the Bible (about twenty-three years and five months). Of course some chapters might take several weeks

to preach through and other times the pastor may choose to preach on a doctrine, problem, social issue or other topic. Most people don't stay in the same church long enough to understand their Bible using this approach exclusively. But despite the size and scope of the Bible, you can read it through yourself in a year by devoting fifteen minutes daily to personal Bible reading. Many "through the Bible" reading guides are published as tracts or special edition Bibles to help you accomplish this goal.

The second spiritual discipline to help you begin thinking about your gift from God's perspective is Scripture memory. While most people believe they cannot memorize, throughout history, this has been the most often used means of teaching the Scriptures. Even those who cannot read can memorize the Scriptures because it involves only two steps, repetition and review. To learn a new verse of chapter, continually repeat the verse until you can say it without error. Then to remember the verse, review it often on a regular basis. In the Old Testament, parents were encouraged to review the principles of the law they memorized with their children four times each day, "when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deut. 6:7). Regardless of our lifestyle we can still find time to repeat and review the Scriptures during our wait time and commute time and when we go to sleep and wake up each day.

One Hundred and Four Key Verses on Exhortation

To help you get started in your own personal spiritual gift development plan, the following list identifies one hundred and four key verses on exhortation. Don't let the list overwhelm you and don't try to memorize them all this evening. Instead, take the first verse and read it over until it becomes familiar. Set a goal to memorize that verse this week and begin thinking about how that verse relates to your giving ministry. Then review that verse daily for the next month, even as you begin learning the next verse on the list next week. At the end of the month, set the verse aside to be reviewed monthly so you don't forget it.

The following list does not include every verse related to your gift, but it will help you get started and develop this discipline over the next two years. You may come across other verses to add to the list as you read your Bible daily. In addition to changing the way you think about your gift, this plan will also help you experience accelerated spiritual growth. Peter understood the link between the Scriptures and spiritual growth when he wrote, "as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2). As you mature in Christ and begin thinking like God about your spiritual gifts you will find yourself using your gift with greater effectiveness in ministry. In doing so you will also experience a greater sense of personal fulfillment as you serve God the way He designed you to serve Him.

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

2. Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another (Rom. 15:14).
3. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord (Col. 3:16).
4. These things I command you, that you love one another (John 15:17).
5. Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father (Gal. 1:4).
6. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man (John 2:24-25).
7. My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (1 John 2:1).
8. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7).
9. Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you (John 16:7).
10. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).
11. Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another (Rom. 15:14).
12. Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God (Rom. 15:7).
13. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28).
14. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us (1 John 4:11-12).
15. See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil (Eph. 5:15-16).
16. As you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2:11-12).

17. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality (1 Thess. 4:3).
18. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service (Rom. 12:1).
19. Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5).
20. For this is the will of God that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men (1 Peter 2:15).
21. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you (John 14:26).
22. Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10).
23. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:29).
24. Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if any has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you must also do (Col. 3:13).
25. Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge (James 4:11).
26. Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Christ (Phil. 1:6).
27. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:3-4).
28. A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Prov. 15:1).
29. This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith (Tit. 1:13).
30. The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple (Ps. 19:7).
31. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil (1 Peter 3:17).

32. And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him (Acts 8:31).
33. Therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we are comforted concerning you by your faith (1 Thess. 3:7).
34. Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law (Rom. 13:8).
35. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him (Luke 9:47).
36. Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage (Gal. 5:1).
37. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work (2 Thess. 2:16-17).
38. So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done" (Acts 21:14).
39. And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation (2 Cor. 1:7).
40. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." Be hospitable to one another without grumbling (1 Peter 4:8-9).
41. For our exhortation did not come from deceit or uncleanness, nor was it in guile. But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts (1 Thess. 3:3-4).
42. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God (2 Cor. 1:3-4).
43. Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith (1 Tim. 1:5).
44. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way (Rom. 14:13).
45. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work (2 Cor. 9:8).
46. But we were gentle among you just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children (1 Thess. 2:7).

47. That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:7).
48. I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called (Eph. 4:1).
49. But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine (Tit. 2:1).
50. But concerning brother love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another (1 Thess. 4:9).
51. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time (1 Pet. 5:6).
52. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you (Eph. 4:32).
53. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing (1 Thess. 5:11).
54. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another (Rom. 12:10).
55. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it (1 Cor. 10:13).
56. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20).
57. Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men (1 Tim. 2:1).
58. A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Prov. 15:1).
59. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).
60. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
61. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall do this or that" (James 4:15).
62. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

63. Beloved, while I was very diligent to write you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).
64. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion (Rom. 12:16).
65. Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him (1 John 2:15).
66. But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men (1 Cor. 14:3).
67. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need (Eph. 4:28).
68. So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath (James 1:19).
69. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others (Phil. 2:3, 4).
70. For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more (1 Cor. 9:19).
71. Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men (Tit. 3:1-2).
72. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption (Acts 13:36).
73. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers (Eph. 4:29).
74. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another (Gal. 5:26).
75. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (Col. 3:9-10).
76. Your therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 2:1).
77. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18).

78. Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believer in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity (1 Tim. 4:12).
79. Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us (Heb. 12:1).
80. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching (Heb. 10:24-25).
81. If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth (Col. 3:1-2).
82. In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you (1 Thess. 5:18).
83. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth (3 John 4).
84. A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:34-35).
85. Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1).
86. He who passes by and meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a dog by the ears (Prov. 26:17).
87. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified (1 Cor. 9:27).
88. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:2).
89. For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother (Phile. 7).
90. Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing (1 Peter 3:8, 9).
91. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7).
92. Therefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thess. 4:18).
93. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also make us sufficient as

- ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit give life (2 Cor. 3:5-6).
94. And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another (2 John 5).
 95. For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but he who judges me is the Lord (1 Cor. 4:4).
 96. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself (Phil. 2:3).
 97. And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure (2 Cor. 12:7).
 98. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it (1 Thess. 5:24).
 99. For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another (Gal. 5:13).
 100. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door (James 5:9).
 101. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:9).
 102. Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart (1 Peter 1:22).
 103. A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps (Prov. 16:9).
 104. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet (John 13:14).