

The Gift of Exhortation

John the Baptist told his listeners that Jesus "*will baptize them in the Holy Spirit and fire. Using exhortations of this sort, he preached the good news to the people.*" ¹

After Saul experienced conversion, the disciples put no trust in him, did not believe he was a disciple, and were afraid of him, but it *was Barnabas that took him in charge and introduced him to the Apostles.* ² Barnabas, whose name means "*son of encouragement,*" ³ appealed to Saul's conversion and argued for his acceptance, an example of exhortation.

We have gifts that differ according to the favor bestowed on each of us, and "*one with the power of exhortation should exhort.*" ⁴ Do you have this particular gift? Can you exhort, counsel, dissuade, admonish, or guide? Can you offer encouragement at the right moment? Do you realize how very important that can be?

Saul, now Paul, sets an example when he tells the Corinthians that he "*exhorts them by the meekness and kindness of Christ when he is with them and with boldness when he is away.*" ⁵ He advises the Galatians to "*encourage one another,*" ⁶ and he sends Timothy to the Thessalonians "*to strengthen and encourage them in regard to their faith.*" When he journeyed in Macedonia "*he provided many words of encouragement for the Christians there,*" ⁷ and "*exhorted them to even greater progress.*" ⁸

We need not be great as John the Baptist, Paul, Barnabas, or Timothy to have this spiritual gift, but we can always find those times where encouragement and positive words are helpful to another, and in this way do our part in building up the Kingdom.

All of us are gifted in unique ways and we need not concern ourselves on how important our individual gifts are. This can be exemplified by a story told of three monks who lived together. One was in constant prayer, the second in constant suffering and always thankful, the third served the other two in constant good will, and yet they were all considered equal, just as if they were each performing the same good work!



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¹ Luke 3:16-18

² Acts 9:26-31

³ Acts 4:36

⁴ Romans 12:6-8

⁵ 2Cor 10:1

⁶ Galatians 13:11

⁷ Acts 20:2

⁸ 1Thes 4:10