



Discovering Your Design:

Preparing Christ's followers to change the world

ENCOURAGEMENT

DEFINITION: THE SPIRIT-GIVEN ABILITY TO STRENGTHEN PEOPLE'S FAITH THROUGH A WORD OF COMFORT OR EXHORTATION.

- This gift literally means to be called alongside. The word (in its noun form) is used to describe the Holy Spirit who is called alongside of the believer (Jn 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7).
- This gift is closely linked to the gifts of teaching and hence the Bible-God's Word (Romans 12:7,8) and prophecy (Acts 13:1; I Corinthians 14:3,31).
- Although this gift is closely tied to "words" and the Word, it should be noted that the gift manifests itself in actions as well. This can clearly be seen in the life of Barnabas when he sold his property giving the proceeds to the church, (it was likely used to help those in need cf Acts 2:45) and when he accepted Paul and introduced him to the apostles (Acts 4:37; 9:27).
- This gift can be exercised privately or publicly.

Biblical References: Romans 12:8; John 14:16,26; Acts 11:22-24, 14:21,22; II Corinthians 7:6

Contribution: this gift helps those in the body who are struggling and need to receive a word that will strengthen their faith, encouraging them to go on for Christ.

Biblical Examples: Barnabas (Acts 4:36; 9:27; 13:43), the Holy Spirit (John 14:16,26, 15:26, 16:7), Jesus to Peter (John 21)

Characteristics - People with this gift :

- are sensitive, able to tell when people are discouraged—usually good listeners
- accept people where they are at but motivate them to move forward
- know how to use the Bible to strengthen those who are discouraged
- very likely have gone through their own trials - because God uses those experiences to help us understand His comfort so that we can share that comfort with others (II Corinthians 1:4)
- point people to God who is our great comforter and who has given us His Spirit
- desire to see people live obediently before God
- are generally sought out by people, because they refresh their souls

Cautions:

- understands that God uses the "valleys" of life for good in a person's life- don't be too quick to pull them out of it, rather enter into it with them. We are called alongside, not up above, to pull them out
- don't let the reality of who God is (His truth & promises) get lost in the ever-changing reality of their feelings
- don't be overly optimistic or simplistic when addressing their situation
- don't over-commit

Christian Responsibility: Hebrews 3:3, 10:25 reminds us that all Christians are to be involved in encouraging one another, strengthening the weak and lifting up the discouraged.