



# EXHORTATION

Imagine an experienced guide taking a group of hikers up a mountain. Their goal is to reach the summit safely. The guide helps the hikers to know where they are so they don't get lost. Along the path, the guide gives advice to the hikers about how to avoid dangers and overcome difficult terrain. He makes sure they are taking proper safety precautions. And when the hikers are tired and weary, the guide encourages them to keep going, saying, "The view from the summit will be worth all the effort! Don't give up!"

## **This is exhortation!**

The Greek word for exhortation is *paraklesis*. It is also translated as encouragement, teaching, comfort, admonishment (correction) and appeal. Indeed, exhortation encompasses all those things. Exhortation is often understood as a way to uplift or help someone to continue by pointing out the positive, as well as by guiding and correcting.

As people of God, we are called to give exhortation to each other. The author of Hebrews describes the book as a 'word of exhortation' (Hebrews 13:22). Paul also uses the word *paraklesis* 19 times in his letters. This is because, in his letters, he gives a lot of correction and warning; he speaks truth to strengthen his readers in areas where they are weak; he warns them about situations that may be harmful to them.

Exhortation can sometimes be difficult to hear, but it is always for our good. We need it to grow so we become the person God wants us to be. Can you imagine what would happen if the hikers didn't like the exhortation of their guide and decided to ignore it?

The reason Paul was able to give strong exhortations in his letters was because of the relationships that he had built with the churches. What about us? Are we taking the time to build relationships and really understand and support each other so that, when the time comes, we could give exhortations that would encourage, teach, comfort, strengthen, and correct?

In our devotion this month, we will look at several key passages about *paraklesis* and consider how we can incorporate exhortation into our work, ministry, and relationships at RW.

## Devotional Study

# SEPTEMBER

## Exhortation

Reflect on a time when you have been the recipient of exhortation.

- How were you uplifted or challenged?
  
- What was the result?
  
- How did this moment impact you?

Romans 12:4-8

*<sup>4</sup> For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup> We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; <sup>7</sup> if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; <sup>8</sup> if it is to encourage, then give encouragement [paraklesis]; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.*

- Why do you think exhortation is listed as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit?
  
- How does exhortation build up the body of Christ?
  
- Have you ever known anyone who has this gift?

- Do you think that only some people have the gift of exhortation, or is it for all believers?
- What would happen to the body of Christ if this gift was missing?

Hebrews 12:3-6

<sup>3</sup> Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

<sup>4</sup> In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. <sup>5</sup> And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement [paraklesis] that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says,

*"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline,  
and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,*

*<sup>6</sup> because the Lord disciplines the one he loves,  
and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son."*

- Why does God discipline us?
- What is the response we need to have when we receive exhortation?
- In what way is exhortation:
  - encouraging:
  - comforting:
  - correcting/guiding:
- In the RW family, what can you do to make sure that your exhortation is well received?

Hebrews 10:23-25

*<sup>23</sup> Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup> And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging [paraklesis] one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

- What specific ways of exhorting are mentioned in this verse?
- What might cause us to “swerve” from our hope in Christ, to become slow to show love or do good deeds, or to “give up meeting together”?
- Do you know anyone who is struggling with any of these things?
- What exhortation could you give them? (Remember, it should be encouraging, comforting, and correcting.)