
GIFT-MIXES AND THE TOURIST

Can you spot your friends?

GIFT-MIXES AND THE TOURIST

Let me offer a verbal video-clip as a way to briefly introduce various *GIFT-MIXES* to you. A hapless (and lost) tourist stands alone and dejected, several blocks off Broadway amidst the noisy confusion of New York City. He has become separated from his group of friends “taking in the City” during an all-day flight layover between San Francisco and Zurich. Because the tall buildings block his view of the sun, he has no idea of direction, and the expressions “up-town” and “down-town” offer him no hint of which way to go—even if he could discern north from south.

Good news for the tourist, not far from where he stands is the store-front meeting place for a church being planted by a small group of believers. Several of those *go-for-it* saints are passing through the area on their way back from lunch, doing last-minute errands, hurrying back to their jobs or taking power-walks. Consequently, our tourist-friend is about to meet these believers, one-at-a-time.

EVANGELIST

Not surprisingly, the *EVANGELIST* is first on the scene, not through any intentional planning, but just because of the way the day worked out (*EVANGELISTS are somewhat oblivious to details of the day, but they do capitalize on whatever the day offers*).

“I see you’re lost,” says the *EVANGELIST* to the tourist.

“Yes, I am,” he responds.

Suddenly animated by opportunity, the *EVANGELIST* inquires, “But do you know how *truly* lost you are?” Without waiting for an answer, he uses Broadway Blvd. to open conversation about the broad way that leads to destruction, and about the Way (Jesus) who can take us to God.

PROPHET

As that conversation ends, our tourist has much more to think about, but he’s still at the same corner, as physically lost as before. Soon thereafter, a *PROPHET* happens along and because her mind is on other things, she almost bumps into the tourist (*PROPHETS tend to be overly focused on a few things and unaware of others*).

“You’re LOST, aren’t you,” exclaims the *PROPHET*. “I don’t normally take this street to the cleaners, but I just had the sense—a few blocks back—that I should turn down this street... And, praise the Lord, here you are!”

Feeling somewhat useful to the *PROPHET*, but not quite sure how or why being in need is so exciting to the spontaneously-guided *PROPHET*, the tourist doesn’t really know what to say or ask. Apparently, the *PROPHET* has found reason and confirmation for the changed walking route. Feeling glad to be needed, at least the tourist feels a personal bond with someone in the big city.

TEACHER

As they stand there together, a *TEACHER* approaches them with purposeful strides, crossing over from the other side of the street. Without any preliminaries, he quizzes the tourist, “Are you lost? Yes, of course you are. Happens all the time around here. Is that a map in your hand? Let’s just take a look at it, shall we?” (*TEACHERS almost always find lessons-to-be-learned in others’ circumstances*)

Instinctively adopting a pupil’s willingness to be instructed, the tourist nods and holds up the rumpled map he has been clutching absentmindedly. When asked the name of the street he’s on, the tourist looks at the nearby street sign and, with the *TEACHER*’s urging, finds himself repeating the name aloud.

“Now let’s look for that name on the back of the map where they list street names and coordinates,” the *TEACHER* continues. Before long the *TEACHER* has become absorbed in the map and explanations about how the city was laid out last century.

LEADER-CHAMPION

Another member of the new church, who is obviously a close friend of the *TEACHER*, happens on the scene with another take on matters: “I, for one, am not surprised that you’re lost. You are lost, aren’t you? I thought so. Figures. When will the city learn?”

The tourist has some difficulty following the rest of the conversation because the *LEADER-CHAMPION* seems to be alluding to a bigger problem—of all tourists in New York and what the City ought to do to make itself more tourist-friendly. The *LEADER-CHAMPION* is clearly an organized sort of *get-it-done* man who multi-tasks with ease. His zeal is contagious.

The tourist almost expects the *LEADER-CHAMPION* to pull out a petition. “I’ll sign,” he finds himself thinking. Though he doesn’t even live in New York, he feels compelled to join the cause “Save the tourists!” (*LEADER-CHAMPIONS have an uncanny ability to mobilize recruits for a big cause or event.*)

EXHORTER

It isn’t long before an *EXHORTER*, conversing with someone she met two blocks earlier, calls out with a warm greeting to the tourist and his friends. Seeming to continue the previous conversation with her latest, new best friend, the *EXHORTER* keeps talking as though everyone has been listening to her for hours. (*EXHORTERS can talk and talk and talk—but no one minds when they do.*)

Suddenly making discovery of a fresh, not-yet discussed subject, she exclaims, “Oh, you’re lost?!”

Simultaneously with the tourist’s affirmative reply, the *EXHORTER* continues aloud, “It reminds me of the time I was lost in Paris—or was it Naples? Anyway, I was so lost, I mean, *really* lost. I met these folks who have a little place in upstate New York. What are the chances of that? We got talking about our experiences in the snow...”

APOSTLE-PIONEER

Somewhat dazed, but strangely comforted by knowing someone else has survived being lost in a big city, the tourist turns his attention to another man who has just joined the group. He has an air of unconventionality about him—as though he doesn't care much about the way things have been done before. He, too, makes the tourist feel comforted—not with stories of past survival, but with thoughts about a different future. (*APOSTLE-PIONEERS seem to go their own way, following the beat of a very different drummer.*)

“Who says you're lost?” asks the Apostle. “The way I see it, you're only lost if the people looking for you can't find you. Just start walking. That's the way to see a city. Don't bother with following a map—especially not those guided tour maps. Tell you what, I'll be your tour guide. We'll make up our own tour of the city.”

PASTOR

Fortunately, the tourist doesn't have to decide whether or not to follow the *APOSTLE-PIONEER* because several other believers join the now-growing group standing around on the sidewalk. The woman who seems to be leading these newcomers reminds the tourist of a mother hen keeping a watchful eye on all her friends. It would be too strong to say she is herding her flock down the street, but she keeps the group together by speaking and paying attention to each of them alternately. And by reminding them of their eventual destination.

The PASTOR, for such she is, greets her newfound flock (including the tourist) warmly and reassuringly. Turning her attention to the tourist, who instantly feels known and covered, she voices her concern, “Oh my, you're lost. Whatever shall we do?” (*PASTORS want everyone to have and to feel things in common—“One for all and all for one.”*)

Turning back to address the assembled group, she exhorts them to come in a little closer and gather around the tourist. “Let's hold hands and sing *Kumbaya*. Remember, Jesus told us to do to others as we'd like them to do to us.”

GIVER

The tourist, who doesn't know the words to the song and isn't quite sure what he thinks about holding hands with strangers, is relieved by a series of practical questions coming from one of the other new members of the sidewalk

congregation.

“Is anybody hungry? Do you need a new map? Can I buy you a Day-Pass? It’s good on the subway and all city busses!” The *GIVER*, a man who doesn’t necessarily look wealthy, is reaching for his wallet while asking the questions. The string of questions is secondary to his main interest: giving money. (*GIVERS like to play spiritual Jeopardy. The answer to the Daily Double is always Give*).

The tourist is somewhat embarrassed by this generous eagerness to supply his needs, especially when he can tell that the *GIVER* is offering impulsively. Feeling almost selfish by contrast, the tourist would have calculated the money in his wallet and compared it to upcoming needs before making an offer of that sort. At ease with all his new friends, the tourist almost replies in jest, “I could use a new overcoat,” but believes this friend would somehow get one for him.

SERVER-HELPER

The tourist’s attention quickly shifts away from himself and his needs to one of the others who joined the group along with the *PASTOR* and the *GIVER*. Funny how he didn’t see her before. She just seems to blend in with her surroundings, even though, now as the tourist really looks at her, he can see she is quite attractive in a quiet sort of way.

The tourist watches for a few minutes as the *SERVER-HELPER* arranges things—straightening a nearby group of trash cans, righting a toppled bike that has been chained to a light pole, and assisting various members of the group with an assortment of needs. She does things that the tourist would never think to do. It’s as though she is being coached, by some unseen overseer, to know exactly what little things will make a big difference for others. (*SERVER-HELPERs know and do what needs doing to maximize benefit for others.*)

She reminds the tourist of an old movie whose main character can do things in warp speed without others noticing, almost as though everyone else stands still in time. Attending to things without most of the group being aware that she is even there, The *SERVER-HELPER* lives almost in her own world, and she obviously derives deep satisfaction out of the limelight, going about her business.

MERCY-SHOWER

After another moment or two of watching her, the tourist becomes aware that another of the newcomers is focused intently on him—not with scrutinizing curiosity, and certainly not in judgment. Quite the opposite! Though he could not explain why he feels this way, the tourist feels totally accepted and embraced by the man's eyes. The *MERCY-SHOWER*, an obviously gentle and kind man, approaches and holds out his hand to shake with the tourist.

His grip conveys warmth—but definite strength. *“I’ll bet it takes a lot to make this man angry,”* thinks the tourist, *“But if he did get mad, I wouldn’t want him mad at me!”* The tourist feels understood, instantly, when the *MERCY-SHOWER* whispers, *“You must be feeling a bit overwhelmed—and a trifle dazed in such a big city with so many people.”*

Whereas the *EXHORTER* used the tourist's experience as a launch-point for her own story, the *MERCY-SHOWER* remains silent, inviting the tourist to tell him everything about what has happened. (*MERCY-SHOWERS are great listeners, but while they listen, they help others process their experiences.*)

Though he is still on the same corner in New York City, not exactly sure what to do next, the tourist no longer feels uncomfortable or out of place.

GOOD-BYES

Realizing the lateness of the hour and knowing he must rendezvous his tour group from California, the tourist declines an offer from the *PASTOR* to join them for an impromptu meeting in their new church building. It's time to say good-bye.

What friends he has made! Being found by such a group of people is almost worth getting lost. He shakes hands with the *GIVER* and feels a \$20 bill being pressed into his hand while they shake. The wink tells him to remain quiet and not protest, so he simply says, *“Thanks for everything.”*

The *SERVANT-HELPER* has somehow managed to neatly refold the tourist's map and place it in the backpack he helps adjust on the tourist's back. *“Wow. That feels much lighter,”* states the tourist, *“What did you do, fiddle with the straps? Thanks.”*

Already half a block down the street, the *EVANGELIST* cries out, *“Remember, once you were lost, but now you've been found!”* The tourist smiles as he witnesses the

EVANGELIST turn quickly to an unsuspecting bystander, as if to answer the question, “Lost?” that may—or may not—have been on the bystander’s mind. An animated conversation ensues.

The *EXHORTER*, speaking to anyone who might be listening, continues his string of stories, “All this reminds me of a chance meeting several of my college buddies and I had...” The tourist is sorry to miss the *EXHORTER’S* story that already sounds interesting.

But he’s also anxious to get back to his own buddies and the flight to Switzerland. Continuing the good-byes, the tourist hugs the *PROPHET*, who whispers in his ear, “Remember, God knows right where you are at all times.” The *APOSTLE-PIONEER*, still seeming a bit distracted by thoughts no one else is likely thinking, asks a farewell question that isn’t really a question: “Isn’t this exciting? I love it when life throws us a curve!”

The *TEACHER* and *LEADER-CHAMPION* do wave, but they are absorbed in a discussion about today’s incident—and its meaning. The *LEADER-CHAMPION* wants to know, “What can we do about this?” The *TEACHER* asks, “What can we learn from this?” The tourist chuckles to himself, thinking how great it would be to have both on his planning team back at the office.

The *MERCY-SHOWER* and the *PASTOR* are the last two to turn away with the group. It’s as though the *MERCY-SHOWER* wants to lend his assuring presence for as long as possible, until it’s clear the tourist is ready to go for it on his own. And the poor *PASTOR* seems torn, almost tormented as her flock divides. She wants to keep everyone together on their way, fussing over and singling each one out for special attention. And she wants to linger with her newest charge until the tourist is clearly out of danger.