



# THE EXHORTER

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***“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40***

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. ([prchurchofchrist.org](http://prchurchofchrist.org))

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## JUMP START #566

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**1 Thess. 5:11- “ Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.”**

One of the wonderful blessings of belonging to a church family is the dual benefits of sharing and receiving comfort and encouragement from each other. We need that. We need to be encouraged by others and we need to be encouragers to others. Encouragement keeps us in the fight and it keeps us going. When the road becomes long and hard, and the encouragement is lacking, that’s when some start dropping off. Discouragement takes over and they just don’t think they can do it anymore.

Encouragement is not something that is only found in religious settings, it’s part of life. The parents in the stands, cheering their child on, as they watch him play basketball, are encouragers. The proud celebration that comes when a child shows a parent a report card that has good grades, is encouragement. The praise of co-workers, the appreciation of bosses, the sweet compliments of a mate are all forms of encouragement and necessary to life. Encouragement is not flattery, false praise or saying things just to get something in return. Encouragement comes from the heart and it recognizes the good of others and the achievements of others. Encouragement comes from a heart that sees others. That may be one reason why people are so hungry and so needing encouragement today—everyone is so busy thinking about themselves and talking about themselves that they have quit encouraging others.

- Encouragement reminds us that others need us and are counting on us. That’s true in a marriage, a work environment and especially in our church family.
- Encouragement is positive, uplifting, and a wonderful feeling. That’s needed. We often run on empty and can get so tired that we wonder whether our efforts are doing any good? Without encouragement many would give up and quit.
- Encouragement comes in many forms. There is not just one way to encourage. Seeing a church house full of people who are glad to be there is so encouraging. Hearing voices singing out praises to God fills the heart. Hugs and smiles are encouragers. A note, and e-mail, even a text message, expressing appreciation can be just the thing a person needs.

- A gift, whether it's a plant, a book, a gift card or an invitation to dinner are ways to encourage.

Paul's thoughts in our verse are important. We need to be encouragers. We need to recognize how powerful, needful and helpful encouragement is. We'd hate to think that one among us gave up because he felt alone and all he needed was someone to encourage him. It's easy to encourage the preacher, the elders and those who are so visible. What happens sometimes is that we forget about others. We forget about the widow, who is alone now and struggles. She could use some attention. We forget about the teen-ager. His mind, hormones and heart are spinning around all the time. He needs encouragement. He's trying. Then there are the new people. They don't know many people and they can feel left out. Then there are the hard working families that are solid and steady and dependable. They, too, need to be encouraged.

As a person thinks about it, there is no one that doesn't need encouraging. The thought ought to make us busy with ideas and ways to help each other. We need each other. We need to show that and express that. We need to pray for each other, be there for each other, and help each other.

These are the things that make a church, a family and they make it a special place. The energy, the connections, the love becomes obvious. People want to be there. People want to do things, because they come to love a church like that.

Encouragers—you can do that. One of my favorite people in the Bible is Barnabas, who got that name from the apostles, because he was "an encourager." He helped Saul in Jerusalem, when the folks there weren't sure about him. He defended and supported his cousin, Mark, when Paul wasn't sure about him anymore. He strengthened brethren. His life was a life of encouragement. He built up. He pumped air into the souls of brethren. He was a good man who made a difference. He was an encourager.

You can do that. It doesn't take a lot, just noticing others and helping others. It starts with your circle of association. Look among them. You'll see those who are struggling, those who are tired, those who complain, those who are talking about giving up. Reach out. Be there. Find the gift. Write the note. Smile the smile. Give the hug. Share a passage. Encouragement doesn't have to be big, expensive or complicated.

A while back I was preaching and another preacher was in the audience. I looked at him while I was talking, he smiled and gave me a wink. That was awesome. It was a "thumbs up." It was, "I'm with you." It was, "keep preaching preacher." It was what I needed. It was encouragement. I haven't forgotten that.

We need each other and we need to let each other know that.

Roger Shouse

