



# 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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**John 4:35** *“Do not say, ‘There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.”*

The setting of this passage defines the urgency of Jesus and the dedication He maintained to His purpose and mission. His disciples urged Him to eat (v. 31). That shows that they were looking out for Him. Jesus replied, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” The disciples were thinking and talking physical food and Jesus was thinking and talking spiritual food. Our verse follows shortly after this.

Jesus pulled illustrations from the natural world on a regular basis. The farmer who plants must be patient. He can't hurry up the process. So while the farmer waits for the harvest, he must do other things or else just sit around and wait. Idle time. Lost time. The harvest Jesus has in mind is the work that He came to do. He came to seek and save the lost. There was no time for sitting around. Have you ever realized how busy Jesus was in those three years of His ministry? No vacations. No chilling out. When He did get away from the crowds, He was connecting with the disciples or more often praying intense prayers to His Father. Busy Jesus. Not wasted time. For Jesus, it was harvest time.

That is the thrust of this passage. If the disciples could only see what Jesus saw. He saw that it was harvest time-the busy season for the farmer. Lift your eyes...open your eyes and look. There were things to be done right then. There was work that needed their attention. Jesus had lessons to teach and people to heal. It was harvest time-a busy time.

Open eyes became a practical lesson in our home when my kids were smaller. My wife and I had gone out for the evening, and when we returned the kids were in front of the TV where we had left them. I was a little disgusted with that and asked them why they didn't help out around the house. Their response, so typical, was “you didn't tell us.” I then stood them up and told them to look around and tell me what they saw. There were clean dishes that could be put away, toys on the floor that could be picked up and several things like that. That is when I told them to “have open eyes.” Don't wait to be told, use your eyes and see what needs to be done. The next time we went out, we returned and they proudly announced that they had “Open eyes” and they showed us what all they

had done.

Open eyes...I've noticed many disciples today have trouble with that. Ask someone to do a job and they will do it, but for some reason they don't have open eyes to see it.

Jesus practiced "Open eyes." When the bent over woman came into the synagogue, Jesus saw her. I'm certain others noticed her. Some may have complained about her, however it was Jesus who SAW her.

I wonder how many bent over people I notice every day, but I fail to see them. Bent over with problems...bent over with pain...bent over with family issues...bent over with worry...bent over with sin. They assemble in our church buildings, often looking for help for their souls, hoping someone will connect and speak with them. They are noticed, but how few are SEEN. They work beside us. Often they spill their souls of stories of dysfunction and heartache, and we hear them but we fail to LISTEN to them. They are our neighbors. They are our children. The world is full of bent over people.

We often sit in Bible classrooms discussing how to reach people with the gospel of Jesus. The preacher proudly presents some flashy multi-colored flyers that he worked on and tells everyone to take a stack of them and pass them out. Little good comes from the effort. Little change takes place. In another six months, there will be another class and another idea floated. What's needed is not more color on the flyers, another method, a better plan, more ideas, more time spent in the huddle- NO. What is needed is OPEN EYES. Lift up your eyes and look...

I hear disciples complaining that no one is interested in the gospel today. That it's not like the 60's. LIFT UP YOUR EYES-methods change, people are the same. Hurting people are looking for answers. They are looking for hope. They need Jesus. They are there. They are right beside you, we just have to LIFT UP OUR EYES.

Instead of pamphlets, people need us. They need us to spend time listening, answering and helping them. It's harvest time. It's the busiest time of the year. There's no time to spend being lazy. The Devil is working overtime. God needs us. The harvest is ready.

Leaving a pamphlet on someone's desk or door step doesn't take much faith on our part. Talking with them does. Asking them how things are going does. Looking and listening does. Building trust and relationships and connecting does. Harvest is busy time.

I wonder how many bent over people you'll see today? They are there. Jesus saw them.

LIFT UP YOUR EYES...

Roger Shouse

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