



# 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 # 365

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### **Romans 12:13 *“contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality”***

This week we have been looking at Paul's bullet points of Christian character and duty. The apostle doesn't explain these nor does he go into detail to prove their value. It's as if the readers understood. What he does is give a list of things that they ought to be doing.

This list of things Paul mentions connects us both with God and with each other. In our busy times we might find it difficult to accomplish these. This is where we must squeeze things together, move things around and find time.

Our verse today list two things. They involve helping others. They also involve time and commitment on our part.

- Contributing to the needs of saints. This is one reason we give on Sunday. The money is to be used to help other Christians. “The saints” are alive. Paul used this expression often (see Phil. 1:1). It means to be sanctified or set apart. In other words, “the saved.” Contribute to the needs of the saved. In this setting, Paul is not talking about church services. The extent of our helping others, financially and other ways is not totally done through the church. The story of the good Samaritan was about an individual who cared. There are those who have needs. They need us. Sometimes it is financial. They have lost jobs, their mates have left them, there has been medical bills and they face a mountain of bills. They are not alone. Since coming to Christ, they are now united with the family of God. Family takes care of family, that's just what folks do. There are other needs. Some need helping hands. Some need man power and muscle to help them out. Some need a friend to talk to. The church is more than a group of people that I sit beside on Sunday morning, they are my spiritual family. We are blood related, through Jesus Christ. We count on each other. We depend upon each other.

To fulfill what Paul is saying here means giving up some Saturday mornings. The saints need me. It means letting some borrow things that I have. It means buying groceries or sending a gift card to the college kid who is away from home. It means more than anything else, I will do what I can to help.

- Practicing hospitality. The word 'hospitality' means entertaining strangers. The thought takes us back to Genesis where Abraham entertained three visitors. He didn't know that they were angels. Hospitality is known in the south. It is a thing of earlier generations. Today, many never eat at home. Can they still do what the apostle is saying? Certainly. Hospitality is sharing. Hospitality is extending love. Taking folks out to eat, especially those who can't afford it is a sign of hospitality. Acts of kindness, buying a young preacher some needed books, finding a unique gift for someone are ways hospitality is demonstrated. I especially like the concept of having a family over for a meal. You can really get to know people that way. You can talk about important things. You share memories, laughter and build stronger relationships that way. For that to work, you have to make time. You have to clean the house up some. You have to get some food and prepare it. Sure it costs some. Sure it takes time, to prepare and then to clean up after. But it is so worth it.

Let me ask, when was the last time you have a family in your home for a meal? Don't count your physical family. Don't count holidays. I mean someone from the church. It may have been a long time. I've had people say, 'what will we do?' Or, 'what will we talk about?' It works to invite two families at the same time. One that you know well and the other you don't. Just chit chat. Play a game. Get to know each other. Doing those things makes your Sunday even better. You know more people at the church building, you find things in common, you build strong relationships.

My wife and I have someone in our home nearly every week. We've been doing this for a long time. People ask, 'don't you ever get tired of it?' Not really. Doesn't it get expensive. It can. But isn't it worth it? Isn't this what Jesus wants us to do? Isn't this one of the ties that builds a stronger church?

Hospitality. Paul says to "practice" it. Now if you told me to go practice golf, that would mean go to the driving range and hit some golf balls. When my wife practices the piano, she plays and plays, often before she plays at a wedding. Now if we are going to practice hospitality, it means that I am going to be doing things for someone else.

Now, I often hear someone complain, 'well, no one has had me over in their home.' And they will use that as a reason not to do what the apostle says. Wrong. If others are not doing it, they are not doing what God wants. Why do you want to join them? Be different. Do what God says.

Contribute and practice. Action words. Doing words. Words that involve others. And in the words of the Nike commercial, 'just do it.' Get your calendar out. Pick some dates. Go ask some folks to come over and give it a try.

Roger Shouse

