



THE EXHORTER

“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)

January 26, 2014

Jump Start # 361

1 Corinthians 3:6 *“I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.”*

Growth is in these days. In fact, growth has always been in. Whether we discuss growing the economy, growing our relationships with other nations, growing our kids education, or simply growing more muscles, folks are interested in growth. Growth is positive. It means things are moving in the right direction. As Paul used the word “growth” he was talking about the kingdom, spiritual growth.

Spiritual growth comes about two ways. First, new people are brought in. Folks are taught the gospel of Christ and they become converted. This form of growth is easy to measure. New faces. More bodies. Crowded church buildings. This form of growth creates problems. Parking problems. Space problems. Class room sizes. Great problems to have.

The other way spiritual growth comes about is internal. This happens as the current members grow, mature and become stronger spiritually. They grasp the concepts of Christianity. It is through this growth that these very people invite their friends to come to services. This growth produces more teachers and leadership in the church. This growth is extremely important. Having a full house on Sunday is exciting, but what is more exciting is witnessing Christ in the hearts of the members.

Now all of this leads us back to Paul’s comparison of himself and Apollos. One planted and the other watered. There are books, seminars and all kinds of “church growth” concepts on the market today. Much of this is nothing more than Madison Avenue public relations. I’d rather learn church growth from someone who knew how to do it and how to do it God’s way, and that’s Paul.

Paul and Apollos, both preachers. One was an apostle, the other wasn’t. One planted and the other watered. Planting is beginning work. It is taking the gospel where no one has heard before. It is teaching the plan of salvation. It is converting someone. Years ago, most of us had God’s word planted in us. It may have been from a parent or Bible class teacher or a friend. In

many ways, in fact, in most ways, each of us are planted with the gospel. Apollos did a different work. He watered. If you have a garden you must water it. Before you water, you must have plants to water, otherwise you are watering dirt. The only thing that grows when you water dirt is weeds. Paul planted. Apollos followed. He watered. He worked with those tender young Christians and grew them. His work was with Christians

Our look at the Scriptures would make us conclude that Apollos was a better speaker than Paul. Folks complained about the way Paul preached. Apollos is described as being fervent in the spirit, and an eloquent speaker. Apollos was polished. Apollos was natural in the pulpit.

Paul and Apollos. Two different preachers, both doing the Lord's work. We need planters. We need those who will carry the water bucket. Both preachers used the same method in their work, and that was preaching the word of God. You don't find Paul tricking people to come to church by offering seminars on investments, or promising to play basketball with their kids, or giving a cooking school. He preached Christ. Apollos did the same. He preached Christ.

I had a long discussion with someone on the phone the other day about this very subject. They were selling but I wasn't buying. The item at stake was how to grow the church. They wanted me to get all these DVD's from some big shot about how to best market the church in a postmodern society. I knew what he was talking about and it wasn't the gospel. When I pressed him more and more about the bottom line, I found out the bottom line was marketing, not the Bible. I have the Bible. That's what Paul had. That's what Apollos had. That's what we need.

The key expression in all of this is God. It is God who gives the increase—externally and internally. Give God the praise. Make room for God to work. The seed, the word of God, in a good and honest heart, the good soil, always produces. Every time! Keep teaching. Keep preaching. Make it interesting. Make it relevant. Make it practical. Make it Biblical. Growth will happen.

You ever notice that young families don't worry much about the kids growing. It's natural. Give the kids a good diet, take them to the doctor when they are sick, let them get plenty of exercise and look out. They'll be out growing their jeans in no time. That's just the way God made it. Growth is natural. The same happens spiritually. Is it any wonder that the church is referred to as a "Body." There are similarities. Get the right diet, the word of God. Fight diseases, error. Exercise, go do things for God. Then look out. Growth will happen. It's natural.

Forget the DVD's by Dr. Bigshot. Just stick with the model given by Paul and Apollos. Plant and water. And by the way, when it's all accomplished, don't praise preacher Paul or preacher Apollos—it was God who did it all. They were just instruments, His tools.

Roger Shouse

