



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)

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Jump Start # 1033

Acts 2:46 "Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart"

Our passage today gives us a brief look into what the first Christians did. Here we see a daily connection and routine. Day by day-they were in the Temple. Day by day they were eating meals together. Day by day they were sharing, growing and being there for each other.

Other places in the N.T. reveal that they were teaching every day. They were spreading God's word every day. Every day they were feeding their faith and walking with the Lord. Every day.

Our culture tends to pull us apart. The first Christians were Jews and they lived very close to each other. Grocery shopping meant a trip every day to the market place. Their lives were intertwined with each other. Today, we live apart from each other. We work, shop and do things in different places. It is literally very realistic that we do not see one another outside of the church building. The sense of belonging, community, fellowship and togetherness doesn't impact us as much. Our daily spiritual activities are done more alone than they are with others.

Togetherness does something positive for us. God realized that and that is why we are brought together in a congregation. The "one another" factor is important. Alone, doubts rise. Alone, we get discouraged. Alone, we find excuses to lag behind. Alone, the feeling of quitting is greater. One of the best solutions to these things is to quit being alone. Get around other Christians. Connect throughout the week. Find each other. Share with each other. Do things with each other.

Our culture is creating loners. Sure we connect on twitter and facebook-but that's at a distance. It's not the same as being there. Nothing beats the pat on the back or the hug from another Christian. Nothing beats the way their eyes light up when you talk to them. Nothing beats the genuine smile on the face. It's hard doing these things because we are so busy. We have places to be. We have so much to do. We do not live next to each other. We are not walking down the same road to the same market place as the first Christians did. Our lives are separate and that creates hearts that are separate. It's not uncommon for folks to worship with each other in the same congregation for years, and yet not know much about each other. We tend to be guarded and protected. We don't interact other than the usual superficial things. So we are alone even in a crowd. We are alone even in a congregation of many. This loneliness of heart creates a longing for friendship, sharing and connecting. Is it any wonder that many feel closer to co-workers or neighbors than they do their fellow Christians. Worship services, for many these days, is similar to going to a movie. You attend not for the crowd,

but for what is on the screen. You rarely talk to anyone and you certainly hope no one sits right next to you. You enjoy the show, gather your stuff and head home. There is no interacting with the rest of the audience. Our church services can quickly move to that state if we don't do something about it. Lonely Christians in a crowded church just doesn't make sense. There is so much that is missing when that happens. Could it be our rate of drop outs is connected to this loneliness factor. Had someone known. Had someone connected. Had there been a greater sense of belonging. If there was more to going to services than just what is happening up in the pulpit...

Here are some thoughts.

First, we ought to recognize this in ourselves and others. How often, during the week, between services, do you have contact with other Christians? How often are others doing the same? Are we eating meals just with our family? Are we doing things just with our family? Include others. Invite others. The solution to the spiritual loneliness that may experience is to open the door to your heart and your home. Begin with little things. Ask another Christian to meet you for lunch. Invite a family over on Friday night. Include other Christians when you go to a movie, show or ballgame.

Some are doing these things and this is just as natural and easy as breathing. For others, this is huge. It's scary to them and they are uncertain. Give it a try. Recognize that there are others who are not connecting. They are alone. They are not at other gatherings. They are missing out. Reach out to them.

Second, develop strong friendships within the congregation. That takes time. That takes spending time. That takes sharing and caring. That takes doing things together. Those strong spiritual bonds help hold us together. They help us fight Satan. They help us keep going. It is wonderful to have a Christian that you can count on. It is amazing that there is a Christian that cares and is praying for you. It is great to have a Christian that you can talk to and confide in. The words of a fellow believer, one who is serious about going to Heaven, will be so much more helpful than the words of one who doesn't know the Lord.

Day by day...every day. Things were happening among the first Christians. They were growing and connecting. We need that.

Day by day, begins with THIS DAY.

Roger Shouse

