



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)

Aug. 30, 2015

Jump Start # 1395

2 Timothy 2:2 *“The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”*

Once in a while, and not every often at that, a person experiences something so special that it is nearly a once in a lifetime experience. I've been to some weddings like that. The atmosphere, the setting, the music, was magical. It was such a special event and I've never seen anything like that again. Yesterday, was one of those rare, special and once in a lifetime events. It took place in a small town's high school gym. A large crowd of over 300 people had gathered to celebrate the life of a former principal, a friend and a spiritual giant. The gathering was a funeral, a most unique funeral. It started with the playing of the National Anthem. The high school marching band played. The family, sitting in the front row, across from the open casket, heard story after story of this magnificent man who touched so many lives. There were periods of amazing laughter. There were moments when the tears flowed. My friend was a giant in that community. Estimates of over 1,200 people stood in line for hours at his visitation. The high school gym that held his service was named after him, even though he never coach a game. I was honored to be on stage and read one of our Jump Starts that I had written about him. The service was long, but very fitting. He was a leader, a hero and a faithful believer.

Funerals have a way of making a person think. Solomon grasped that when he said that it was better to go to the house of mourning than the house of feasting. Funerals have a way of putting the brakes on in life. It makes us slow down, think and reflect. A person can't help but wonder, who will come to my funeral? What will be said? What am I doing now that is really making a difference in people's lives?

It is an interesting study why some people are the way they are. The bottom line of course is choices. They have chosen, most times, the easiest course to pursue. But even within a family, some stand out and others don't. Some are making a difference, and some make little difference. Some are leaders, and some are not. Some are spiritual giants and some don't seem to be interested. The bottom line is choices.

There are some fundamental choices in life that shape us and determine the course of our actions. Choices such as Christ. Choices such as being a worshipper of God, a reader of the Bible, and the people we allow to influence us, shape and mold our hearts into what we are today.

It's this last choice, the influencers in our life, that I want us to give some thought to. We are all impressed by certain people. It may be the Hollywood crowd. This is why magazines are devoted to following that scene. Who is wearing what and who is kissing who and who is doing what must be important to some folks or else those magazines wouldn't sell. For others, it's the world of sports. They follow their heroes with devoted interests. Then there are our friends. Work friends. School friends. Life long friends.

Our passage talks about the molding and influence in a spiritual direction. Paul mentions "faithful men." Those faithful men were to be taught what Timothy had learned. In turn, because of their faithfulness, they

would teach others. It was a passing of the baton, one to another. In Galatians, Paul referred to "spiritual" ones who would restore one who has fallen by the wayside.

Faithful men and spiritual men-God's people. Godly influences. I can't help but think that the higher the quality of people we surround ourselves with the better we will become. If we hang around with low life, we will become low life. If we hang around and allow ourselves to be influenced by faithful men and spiritual men, then guess what? Those things tend to help us make the right choices and influence us to being faithful and spiritual ourselves.

We get this lesson when we are talking to teenagers. We love to use 1 Cor 15:33, "evil companions corrupt good morals," to add some substance and weight to what we are saying. We can leave the impression that Paul wrote those words for a Friday night devo with teens. The evil companions in that chapter are brethren who were denying the resurrection of Christ. The evil companions may well have been in their 40's, 50's or even 60's.

Faithful men-surround yourself around them. Notice them. Learn from them. We get this in other areas of life. If you want to be successful with money, you learn, listen and watch what successful people do. If you listen to your broke cousin for advice, you'll be broke like he is in no time. If you want advice about exercise, you don't ask a couch potato. You ask the neighbor who runs everyday or the guy at work who goes to the gym. If you want to make a difference in your life and walk with the Lord, you don't seek advice on Google, where every nutcase can post anything. You seek out faithful men. You notice what faithful men do.

So here is a short list of things to consider:

1. Have you ever noticed what makes the shepherds of the congregation tick? What are their habits? What is a typical day like for them? They are spiritual leaders. They are experienced spiritually. They know what they are doing, so just what is it that they are doing? Have you asked them, "What are you reading?" Have you asked them, "What are your prayers like?" You see them visiting the hospitals. You see them hanging around the church building, long after most have left. You see them teaching classes. You see them talking to others. Faithful men-right before our eyes. Do we allow them to influence us?

2. Have you ever really considered what your preacher does? Sure we see the classes and hear the sermons. There's the bulletin, website stuff and things like that. But what does he do? How does he do it? Faithful men, do I see the footprints that he is leaving for me to follow?

3. Godly men and women, often not even in the congregation where you worship, but you know about them. People you see attending meetings. People you are drawn to because they have a caring heart. People who go out of their way to encourage you. What makes them that way? Why are they that way?

God places faithful witnesses all around us. I could start with New Albany, Indiana, where my congregation meets and begin a list of faithful witnesses. The circle would grow to those in Southern Indiana, then the state of Indiana, then all across this nation, folks in Florida, Texas, California, Minnesota, the East Coast, Africa, India, Philippines, Norway and on and on, all across this planet. Men and women who have chosen to follow the Lord. Men and women who are encouragers, helpers and have that special kind heart. Men like my friend Jim, who we buried yesterday, who touched so many. Their kind is not easily forgotten. They will continue to speak, like Abel, though they are gone.

Sometimes we do not see the value of including faithful people in our lives. Sometimes we do not name the faithful of God as our dearest and closest friends. Some come and worship, but keep their distance. They don't get close to others and as a result they miss out on being influenced for the better. Some don't know faithful people and it shows in their choices and their decisions.

It has been said that we will be exactly the way we are in five years except for the people we hang around with and the books we read. Influencers in our lives.

Paul wanted Timothy to teach faithful men who in turn would teach others. Men who would be true to God's word. Men who understood faithfulness with God. Men who loved the Lord and His ways. Men who treasured God and His people.

The best people on the earth are Christians. They are not perfect. They are not without mistakes. They are not finished becoming, but they are the best. Faithful ones-these are the people who we need to ask for advice. These are the ones that you need to listen to. These are the ones that you need to have in your home. These are the ones that will make you a better person.

Faithful ones-are you such a person yourself?

Roger Shouse

