



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 # 1440

Colossians 3:23 "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men"

Do your best, that's the thought behind our verse today. Paul was addressing the slaves, which would have included Onesimus, because he was being sent back to Philemon, his owner who lived in Colossae. This spirit and attitude ought to define us in all that we do. Just flying through things to get done, but not done well, is not the right spirit. Too often, someone has to go back and do it again, because it wasn't done right the first time.

The word "heartily" means from the soul. Put your all into it. Do it right, the first time. One of the lessons that we taught our kids was to leave things better than you found them. If they went to someone's house and there were toys all over the place, when it was time to leave, pick them up. Pick them up, even if you didn't get them out. Leave the place better than you found it. If you borrowed a tool and it was dirty, when you returned it, you had cleaned it. Leave things better than you found it. If you borrowed the car, you brought it back with more gas in it than when you took it. Leave things better than you found them.

I'm not sure where I got that principle, possibly from this passage, but I have always tried to live by that thought. It carries so much more than just picking up toys and cleaning shovels. It's an attitude and a spirit that affects our spiritual work.

No one knows for sure how long that they will be with a congregation. Some are with a church for decades, others, just a short time. Imagine if everyone lived by this principle, I am going to leave this place better than I found it. We would all be more diligent about the spiritual work that was being done. We all would be encouragers, trying to help others out the best that we could. Our goal would be to help others, lift their spirits, make the atmosphere warm, cheerful and inviting. Some churches seem to be stuck. You sense it when you walk in. The place is messy, the people seem tired in spirit and the motivation has escaped out of their hearts. They are just going through the motions. It can even be worse. In some places, no one seems to care, and it shows. Well, we can just be a part of all that or we can try to leave the place better than we found it. Invite some families over for a meal. That probably hasn't happened in a long time. Get the family over there on a Saturday and spit shine and polish the place up for the Lord.

(OVER)

Do some yard work about the building. Get there early on a Sunday and greet folks with a smile. Some enter with a frown and they leave with a frown. One wonders what the Lord thinks about that. Get into the hugging business. Pass out hugs like candy, even guys hugging guys. It's great.

Leave the place better than you found it. That spirit drives us to be our best. You may not be the best song leader in the place, but you work and work at it to be your best. You may not be the best teacher but you work and work at it to be your best. This shoddy, halfhearted, indifferent attitude, just do it to get it done, is not giving the Lord the excellence that He deserves. Worship with excellence. Strive to make the place better. Bring ideas to the table. Look around at what you can do. Use your talents to help raise the bar for everyone.

Leave the place better than you found it. Put your all into your spiritual service. The congregation where I am at has a youth lecture every summer. That was started two preachers ago. It was an idea that was shared, loved, developed and has made us better. You don't have to be a preacher to do such things. It doesn't have to be something as grand as a youth lecture, either. It could be a few ladies that get together once a month to have tea and pray. It could be a group of men that meet for a Saturday breakfast to study and grow closer to each other. Maybe it's a game night at someone's home. Maybe it's a teen devo. Maybe it's a group of folks that go sing on a Sunday afternoon. These are things that are being done in many places. A person sometimes thinks, 'I wish the church I was at had things like that.' Well, get it going. You start it. That's the difference. Many will gladly jump in on the band wagon once things are going, but leave the place better than you found it. Don't be one who complains and waits for others to do things, you be the one to start. You make things better than you found it. Sure it takes effort. Sure you have to clean your house and do some cooking. Then after everyone leaves, you have to clean up, unless you have folks who have this "leave it better than you found it" spirit, and they will help with the dishes and put chairs up for you.

Leave it better than you found it-that carries simple things such as cleaning up around your pew on a Sunday. Some families leave it like a ball game. Song books on the floor, papers and wrappers stuffed in the song book rack, crumbs and spills and messes. And they walk away from all that. Shame on them. Leave the place better than you found it. Clean up.

My wife and I were at a place to eat recently. The person serving food dropped a chip on the floor. It was right where people would walk. My wife just picked it up without thinking. Leave it better than you found it. My old friend Jim Babcock, who passed away recently, retired school principle, was often seen at the local Walmart picking up trash before he walked in. Why did he do that? It was his community and he wanted to leave the place better than he found it. When he left this world for next, he left this place better. His way touched and changed many lives, including mine.

Leaving it better than you found it can only be if one is willing to get rid of the selfishness in them. When we start asking, "Why should I?" then we are not ready to leave the place better than the way we found it. Why should I doesn't enter the picture. Nor does, "why isn't anyone else?" Don't worry about others. Do what you can.

This isn't something that just happens on Sunday and only at the church house. It's a spirit that carries us everywhere. At work today, leave the place better than you found it. This is true in appearance as well as spirit. The same goes for school. The same especially goes for home. The cheerful, thankful, optimistic spirit tends to be contagious to others. You'll see others getting the idea. Leaving the place better than you found it is the work of God's shepherds today. They come on board with a flock of God's people and they are to care for them and help them. Leaving them better than when they came means putting the attention and care into the work that needs to be there.

Are you leaving things better than when you came?