



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 # 1452

Proverbs 15:26 *“The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.”*

Proverbs, the book of contrasts, helps us so much with learning how to make the right choices. The words are simple, true and extremely practical. Our verse today deals with talking to someone, and especially, responding to what someone has said to us. Conversations. The day begins with conversations before we leave the house. Getting everyone on the same schedule and who is going where after school. Then it's off to work we go, where there are more conversations. Most of these surround work but there is the occasional chit-chat about what are you doing this weekend. Phone calls. Emails. Texts. Back home and how was your day? Our world is filled with conversations. Some are meaningful and some are very shallow and some are simply sharing information.

Our verse today reminds us of the importance of putting thought into what we are saying. Think first. The book of James would say, 'be quick to hear and slow to speak.' The righteous ponders how to answer. There is some stewing going on in the mind and the heart of the righteous. He's careful. He chooses his words wisely. In contrast, the wicked pours out any and every thing that is in his mind. Some of it is inappropriate. Some of it will cause harm. Some will hurt the feelings of others. Some will do damage to the image of the work place or the church. The wicked will spread secrets. The wicked will say mean things. The wicked has no filter and no regard for what is said. He justifies his ways by saying, "I just call it the way I see it," as if that excuses his rudeness and offensiveness. The wicked has made some cry by what he said. The wicked has made some mad by what he has said. He could have said things better, but he doesn't take the time to ponder. He just pours out whatever comes to mind. He ignores Solomon's Ecclesiastical wisdom, "There is a time to speak and a time to be silent." Not for the wicked. If he feels like it, he'll just say it. Most of us have felt the daggers from such a mouth. It hurts.

Our attention is upon the pondering righteous. He's thinking before he speaks. He is searching for the best way to say what ought to be said. He is considering the person he is talking to and considering how best to help him by what he says. The righteous understands nagging doesn't work. He knows yelling isn't productive. He knows name calling usually just insults a person. He ponders. He thinks. He runs this thoughts through all kinds of filters before his mouth opens.

Most understand this application when asked a Bible question. We give it some thought. We are careful to be accurate and helpful.

(OVER)

The difficulty with our passage is when we are in a heated conversation, when there are disagreements, when it feels that we are losing the argument, then we open the flood gates, stop the pondering and out comes anything and everything that is on our minds. Couples may say things that they shouldn't, all because they were upset with each other. Brethren say things that hurt and do a lot of damage, just because they are heated and are not thinking.

Pondering takes time. That's the trouble. We want to microwave our words and get them out as fast as we can. Pondering involves not only word selection, but considering the person who is going to receive those words. Pondering also involves the tone in which those words are sent. The volume of our voice, how rapid we speak, how little we hear the other person. This is really hard for parents. Teenagers like to push buttons and the limits with their parents. They sometimes will say things without thinking. Pondering doesn't work with most teenagers. It takes time and maturity to develop pondering. So, your teenager comes home and declares that he is going to quit school, join a band, dye his hair pink and travel across the country with his freeloading friends. That'll get your blood pressure going! Your sensitivity meter will redline quickly. Out goes the pondering. Out comes screams and declarations that he is an idiot and lacking all sense. You're probably right, but your words, without pondering probably will not help the situation. Take a breath. Say little. Let him tell you his little scheme. Flip on the pondering in your head. Get to thinking what ought to be said first. Be careful. Be wise in what you say.

I expect most of the trouble we get into with our mouths is because we fail to ponder what to say. We just say whatever we feel like saying. The same goes for posting things on Facebook and other media sources. Venting your frustrations to the world can cost you your job if you openly complain about the company. It lessens your influence on others when you complain about fellow Christians. Ponder who might see what you post. Ponder if that is the best thing for you to do.

I have written letters that were never mailed. I needed to get some things off my chest. I pounded those keys on the computer, vented and vented my feelings and then tossed or deleted what I wrote. Some things simply should not be shared with others. Some things do not help. It's hard to get into a dog fight, when the other will not fight. Elsewhere in Proverbs we learn about the soft answer turning away wrath, and a word fitly spoken. In the N.T., multiple times we find answering with gentleness or kindness. There are times when difficult things need to be said. Jesus did that to the Pharisees. Parents do that. Shepherds have to do that. Pondering doesn't mean looking the other way. Pondering doesn't mean never having to be the bad guy. Pondering isn't excusing wrong or justifying bad behavior. Not at all. Pondering means you have given thought to what you say before you say it. What is said may be hard, tough and pointed, but it was given thought and careful consideration.

So, give it a try today. Before you say something, hold the thought, think about it first and then, if it is fitting and right, say it. If you catch yourself thinking, "I probably shouldn't say this," then DON'T. That's the pondering part. It's trying to help you be helpful. The more you ponder, the less you will explode. The more you ponder, the better will be what you say.

Try pondering today...it may make for a better day!

Roger Shouse