



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 # 1561

John 6:7 *“Philip answered Him, ‘Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little.’”*

This week our Jump Starts are looking at the idea of making plans. Some are good at this. Others, need to be led and convinced. Some seem to have that internal vision where they can just see things. Artists are this way. They can look at a blank canvas or a block of stone and before they pick up a chisel or a paint brush, they can see in their mind what they want to create. Writers are this way. Film directors are this way. Composers are this way. Many in the business world are this way. It's a gift that not everyone has. Some are amazing at organizing and finding space when there doesn't seem to be any. The creative mind is one that plans. How wonderful it is to get those creative juices flowing spiritually. This is what we are working on this week in our Jump Starts.

Our verse comes from the miracle of the feeding of five thousand. All four Gospels tell this story. One account tells us that there were five thousand men, not counting the women or children. The number may well have reached 10-20,000 easily. Can you imagine having to feed that number? It was getting late, the disciples ask Jesus to send the people home. The disciples did that often. Getting rid of people seemed to be their quick solution to things. Some are still doing that today. Jesus asked Philip, "where are we to buy bread, that these may eat?" Jesus knew. He was testing Philip and the others. He wanted to see how they would deal with us. Faith should have answered the question for them, but they were not using much faith at that moment.

Our verse is Philip's response. It is very revealing. We need to look at it because layered within it are lessons about planning. Philip's answer tells us three things.

First, two hundred denarii would not be enough. Two hundred denarii was a lot of money. One denarii is what the laborers earned in a days work according to Matthew 20. Two hundred of those would equal about 200 days wages. Nearly a year's income. Who carries that around? Jesus and the disciples didn't have much money. There is a problem.

Second, Philip's calculations were based upon giving everyone "a little." He wasn't going to give them much. He was thinking about how much it would take to just get by. That's how many folks think, just get by with as little as possible. Small prayers. Small plans. Just get by. That's revealing. When Jesus multiplied the food and the crowds were fed, the text states that they ate "as much as they wanted...they were filled" (11b, 12a). Jesus didn't give them just enough to get by. He filled them up.

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He filled them up so much that there were a dozen baskets left over. How convenient, twelve apostles and twelve baskets-not with just some fish and bread, but again the text says, the baskets were "filled." Jesus doesn't deal with getting by. Jesus is always doing things to the max.

Third, Philip saw the problem, no food and too many people, but he never saw a solution. He had no answer. He had no ideas. He was stopped. He saw that this was impossible. He saw that there was nothing that could be done. I expect if it were up to Philip, the people would have been sent home hungry. Too bad, we just can't do anything about it. All problem and no solution. But remember, this same Philip had seen Jesus heal lepers, calm storms, cast out demons and continually rewrite the definition of "impossible." No, there was no food. No, there wasn't any money. But they had Jesus. With Jesus, this isn't a problem. He can do anything. It was His idea to feed the people. He wanted this done. Surely, He knows something. Philip never thought those thoughts. He never turned to the Lord and asked for help. He saw what couldn't be done and he was stopped. With Christ, all things are possible. I guess Philip didn't know that yet.

The experience of Philip is what many families and congregations go through. They know what can't be done. They see the problem, but they have no idea of what to do. This is where the creative, Biblical mind that plans and sees things helps.

Everyone wants the church to grow. The question is "how?" What's the plans? Some want to still go around and knock on doors. That worked great in generations past, but today most doors would be answered with a stern "WHAT?" We need better plans.

We want to keep our young people strong spiritually. What's the plan to do that?
We want our children to have an interest in God. What's the plan to do that?

Across this land, we see churches that are stagnate and dying. They have no idea what to do. Across this land, many young people are following the world and dancing with Satan. Some see this, but they don't know what to do.

Leading, whether it's in the home or the congregation involves and implies having ideas, plans, direction and a knowledge of where to go and what to do. Looking beyond the present to the future is what helps us shape our decisions today. There are a lot of talented people sitting on the sidelines of life waiting for someone to tell them what to do. They are willing, but they need direction, guidance and a plan to follow. It seems that sometimes we may seem to be stuck on the merry-go-round. Round and round we go, but nothing really changes. It's the same scene over and over.

Part of planning is taking an evaluation of things. What works. What isn't working. What needs to be adjusted. What needs to be pitched. Have you thought about that? We must never leave the old, old message, but we can certainly adjust our methods about how we use and teach that message. Maybe two sermons on Sundays isn't working. Make some adjustments. Maybe quarterly classes isn't accomplishing what needs to be accomplished. Try something else. Maybe the format of a Gospel meeting doesn't do what we want. Do something else. Don't get stuck going round and round and round and complaining that things are not good, without doing something. Evaluations leads to making adjustments and plans. We do this in our homes. Too many kids and too few bathrooms leads to adjustments and plans being made. The more we put those thoughts spiritually, the better our families and our congregations become.

Shepherding means leading. A person must know where they are going in order to lead. I was following someone one day. He was leading me to a place to eat. I'd never been there before. "Follow me," he said. I did. Before long, we were both turning around because he didn't know where he was going. We can certainly do better than that with the souls of our families and congregation.

Philip saw a problem. He never saw that the solution stood right before him. May we do better.