



# THE EXHORTER

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***“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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***John 10:10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."***

He has cancer. There was a surgery. It was declared a success. A series of complications followed. But all in all, he was getting stronger and the outlook was good. Recent tests showed that the cancer returned. It returned with a vengeance. Aggressive and spreading rapidly, doctors declared that there were only weeks left to live. He claimed that his fight is over. The person I refer to is Charles Krauthammer, the national commentator that is often seen on Fox News. He wrote a piece, letting his friends and the world know of his condition. His final sentence written in the letter that has been published in many newspapers stated, "I am sad to leave, but I leave with the knowledge that I lived the life that I intended."

I have lived the life that I intended. That is a remarkable statement. Life is full of choices, opportunities and turns. Few people can admit to what dying Krauthammer wrote. Most have not lived the life that they intended. Sitting in a jail cell, or, sitting in divorce court, or feeling useless and miserable, is not the way folks planned out their lives.

Our verse today, reminds us that the Lord came to give His followers an abundant life. There are two aspects connected to that abundant life.

First, it is life eternal that begins now. The good life in the Lord doesn't start once we are in Heaven. I feel that's the concept that many have. Just hang on long enough until we are out of here. Tough, miserable, awful is this life, but once we get to Heaven, all will be fine. The abundant life is found in Christ and it is found now. Joyous, thankful, living with a purpose, making a difference, following the Lord, this is what God had in mind.

Second, the abundant life is found in making the right spiritual choices that keeps us close to the Lord. More important than living the life that I intended, as the dying TV commentator claimed, is to live a life that God intended. Even following God, life will have twists and turns and we even find ourselves in places and opportunities that we never dreamed of. Many of us started off in college with grand dreams and high hopes that quickly changed by our junior year as we switched majors and switched directions that we intended to follow. Yet, we have chosen to still follow God. Some of us are single parents now, something that we never intended.

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Yet, we have chosen to still follow God. Some of us are living in locations that we never intended. Yet, we still follow God. Some of us have taken in aging parents or have had to bury a child. Yet, we still follow God. There are things we never intended, or even saw ourselves doing, but here we are, and through it all, we still follow God. That is the life that God intends.

I have lived the life that I intended. Is that even possible? What does that life even look like?

We have just finished the season of high school and college graduations. The question always asked at those occasions are, "What do you plan to do next?" What do you intend to do with your life now? Living without Jesus, certainly makes life long, lonesome and hard. "Out of sight, out of mind," is how many deal with God. They don't think about Him, so maybe He'll just go away. He never does.

Dreams change because of changing circumstances. Things around us change. We even change. But because we do not follow those dreams any longer does not mean we are not living the life that God intended. God expects us to be righteous, holy and pure. He wants us to worship Him. He wants us to talk to Him. He wants us to know His word and use that as a foundation of our lives. Now, we can do that whether or not we ever went to college like we planned to. We can do that whether or not we ever started a business like we planned to. We can do that whether or not we retire early like we planned to. Many of our plans are based upon opportunities, health, finances, and other people. Those things are always changing. Companies go out of business. You are transferred to another state. Open doors of opportunities close. That's life. If you asked me when I was a college freshman, do you plan to get up every morning and write something that people all over the world will read? No, would be the answer. As a college freshman, do you plan to preach every Sunday for the rest of your life? No. But, ask that college freshman long ago, do you plan to follow Christ and go to Heaven? The answer was Yes. And the choices that came and the choices that were made reflected that.

Don't worry if you don't mark off everything on your bucket list. Many folks, myself included, have never made a bucket list. Pursuing what I want to do is not nearly as important as pursuing what God wants me to do. Bucket lists have a sense of selfishness it seems to me. Here's what I want to do and I am going to do it, just doesn't appeal to those whose life intentions are to walk with the Lord.

Now, the greater question is, "Am I living the life that God intended?" This is not about what career I have chosen, or where I live, or how large my family is, or what hangs on the walls of my office. It's about my walk with the Lord. Daily choices. Life choices. Through the mountain tops and through the valleys. Not for a moment, now and then, but forever. Following the Lord. Becoming a person of integrity and character. Reflecting the Lord by goodness and good deeds. Knowing that when our final breath is taken here, we will be swept by the angels of Heaven into Paradise, where a lifetime of choices have pointed us.

Rich, famous, powerful, remembered-so many chase those things. A few find them, but they find that something still is missing. It's a vain world that is empty, meaningless and selfish. It's artificial and fake. But there are those who have found the Lord. They have followed the Lord all of their lives. They are common people. Few know them or recognize them. But they are known in Heaven. God's people. They have walked and walked with the Lord for decades. And for these wise people, they have lived a life that God has intended. No regrets. No looking back. And realizing that the best is yet to come.

Are you living as God intended? Why not?

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)