



# 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](http://prchurchofchrist.org))

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***James 5:11 "We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful."***

You have heard of the endurance of Job, James writes. We certainly have. Job was smacked in the face and his legs were knocked out from under him by Satan's aggressive and hurtful attacks. Satan didn't hit Job once and sit back and see how he would take it. On multiple fronts, all at the same time, Job was ruined financially, emotionally his heart was crushed, and he was plagued with ill health. About every way and every direction Job looked, he hurt.

We are studying the book of Job on Sundays. Fascinating book. Very old book. Book too often limited to the subject of suffering and not of God and faith. You and I know more about the background as to why Job suffered than he ever did. We were allowed to listen in on God's conversation with Satan. That conversation bothers us. Why is God even talking to Satan? Why doesn't God fling Satan to Pluto for a million years?

The book of Job is long and tedious. Friends come. Arguments and debates begin. And the weary reader feels what the weary Job felt during all of this back and forth. Job's friends point fingers but they never open a hand to help. They love to blame but they don't do much to sympathize. They feel that they can sit in God's chair and figure out the universe, but they can't sit in Job's chair and offer kindness. Job's friends do nothing more than pick the scabs of a hurting heart. Job is not better because they are there.

The long sections of debate and verbal exchanges begin because Job wishes he was never born. At the least, he wished he died the day he was born. His friends feel compelled to respond to that. And, with that, a long thirty plus chapters of conversation takes place. Job's friends missed it on many points. Their theology was wrong. Their compassion was missing. And, they did not understand the plight of a hurting person.

Here are three things that we shared in our class Sunday:

First, hurting people are often not rational, Biblical, or make sense. They are hurting. Grief, shock, medicine can take a toll upon one's thinking. They may say things that are opposite of what they believe. The pain can take over reason in one's mind.

Second, hurting people often just want to rant. They are not interested in conversation, answers or reason. This is where Job's friends missed it. This is where we often miss it. A hurting person is just crying out to anyone who can listen. They may complain. They may distort things. They may exaggerate things.

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They are hurting. We remember as Job 1 ends that Job did not sin, he did not blame God and he continued to worship. A grieving heart is not an excuse to say blasphemous things, to cuss or to display a lack of character. Job's friends felt compelled to answer Job's rants. They should have sat in silence. Rather than trying to reason with someone who at the moment is not reasonable, give them some space and time. Allow them to settle down some. Cry with them. Hug them. Sit with them. But, the immediate is probably not the time to engage in a deep conversation about "why."

Third, storms in our lives can rock our faith if our foundation is not strong. This is the point Jesus makes about the wise man and the foolish man who built their houses. I doubt the foolish man built his house on the sand during the rain. He couldn't have done that. He built it in the sunshine thinking that storms will never come his way. Satan's goal was to make Job's faith collapse. He wanted to destroy Job's faith. He hit him hard, extremely hard. There are some aspects in which Job would never recover. You do not replace children. Each person is special and unique. You may have more children, but they never replace the one that was lost. It is imperative that we understand that our foundation must be built and secure during sunny days. Each Sunday your preacher is not just presenting a good sermon, he is handing you a brick. A brick to be used in your foundation. Build it strong. Build it deep. If you wait until the storms are on the horizon, when the wind is blowing hard and the rain is falling fast and the flood waters are rising, it's too late. You can't bail water and lay a foundation at the same time. Those are not the days to be asking, "What do I believe?" If you don't know by then, your house is coming down. Use opportunities of health and good days to feed your faith and to grow strong in the Lord. Storms are coming. They always do.

One lesson we take away from this is to understand that when people hurt, give them time to heal. They may heal physically a lot faster than they will emotionally, mentally and spiritually. There will be time for talk. Just because someone shouts out some questions, does not mean that they are in the frame of mind to listen or understand what needs to be said. Wait until the funeral is over. Wait until they are home from the hospital. Let them know that you are near and you will be there.

I believe the book of Job would have taken a different turn, had Job's friends understood what we have just revealed. Had they continued to just sit. Had they said little. Had they allowed Job to rant without reply. Had they brought some food. Had they offered to help rebuild fences, purchase some livestock or brought some chicken soup, that would have been better than trying to straighten out Job's confused heart. There is a time and a place for sermons. There is a time and a place for straight talk and warnings. But there comes a time when we need to be a gentle breeze, like God was to Elijah when he was hiding in the cave. There was an earthquake, but God wasn't in that. There was a fire, and God wasn't in that. There was a mighty wind and God wasn't in that. But a gentle breeze came, and that's where God was found. Solomon tells us that there is a time to speak and a time to remain silent. Getting that right time is essential.

Too often we can be too nosy and all that does is pick more scabs. We want to know details. We ask questions. We ask and ask and often much of it isn't our business. We try to analyze and fix things that cannot be fixed. Often, it's not our place to fix them. When we understand that hurting people hurt, comfort will be our number one goal rather than answering all their questions.

You and I often get to stand in the shadows with Job's friends. I only hope that we do a better job than they did.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)

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