



# 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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***1 Corinthians 13:4 "Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant"***

His name is Leo. A lot of folks do not like him, but I sure do. Leo is a dog that belongs to one of my sons. He's red and resembles a large fox. And, Leo is loud. He can be real loud. He can be annoyingly loud. He's one of two dogs that my son has. Many gladly will dog sit or keep the other one, but no one wants Leo. Some have even said that he's Satan's dog. But I like Leo. We get along just fine. We were babysitting the other day which included dog sitting. Within a few seconds, Leo was barking happily and laying of the floor so I could scratch him. His tail was going back and forth. He was certainly a happy dog.

That got me to thinking about people. There are times when I wish people were like dogs. Give the dog some food, scratch his head a little, and he'll be your friend, even after you hollered at him to be quiet. People aren't like that. Some dogs are not like that either. Some are just mean. Some remember and can't seem to move past things. Some would rather sit alone than to apologize or forgive someone else. That's mostly true of people, not dogs.

The second definition that Paul attaches to love is the word kindness. Love is kind. Kindness is something that begins on our insides and it works its way out to doing good things. Kind words. Kind heart. Kind actions. Love is kind. Love sees good and love remembers good.

I've noticed that some folks are just kind all the way to their core. They are kind in their words. They are kind in what they do. They are always looking for ways to help others. But then there are those who just seem to be so mean. They are just the opposite of kind. They love causing trouble. They do not seem to be bothered that others get bothered.

It's easy to think that some just come one way or the other. Some are just born kind and others are just mean from the start. I don't think that's it at all. I think a person who grows up around kind people tends to lean that way. And, those who grow up around bullies, selfishness and meanness, tend to be that way. But, there's more. As a person grows, they have within them the power to change. That change comes from seeing what is right and what is good.

The influence of Jesus Christ turns a selfish person into a servant. It can smooth even the roughest edges off of a heart. It can turn the eyes off of self and on to others. Jesus makes all the difference. The kindest people are those who are standing nearest to Jesus. It shows. Generous. Thoughtful. Helpful. Serving. Sacrificing. Giving of time, heart and energy. Why are they like that? Because Jesus is. You can't stand next to Jesus and not be changed.

(OVER)

Now, what is troublesome is to run into Christians who know the book but they really do not know the Lord. They are ready to throw the book at others when they make mistakes, forgetting how Jesus treated the woman caught in adultery. Some would love to lock the doors and keep certain ones out, forgetting that Jesus invited Himself to the home of Zacchaeus, as well as, included Matthew to be among the chosen ones. Tax collectors, the both of them, and there is Jesus right with them. We can know the doctrine but not the heart of God. We can know the rules, but not the spirit behind the rules. We can easily turn the church into a "us" verse "them" concept. We are in, but they are out. The Pharisee who prayed in the Temple was like that. He was glad he wasn't like the publican, and he was quick to brag about how good he was, but he failed to realize that he was standing in the temple, talking to the God of Heaven and Earth.

It's not in the Bible, but can you imagine instead of that arrogant Pharisee praying, it had been Jesus. Wonder what Jesus would have done had He looked over there and saw that publican praying? Wonder if the Lord would have waited until the prayer was finished and then went over there and talked with him? Wonder if the Lord would have invited the publican to get a bite to eat with Him? Wonder if the Lord would have thanked him for praying? We can see Jesus doing all of those things. Why? Because that's what kind people do. And, Jesus was kind.

Kind people do not read the riot act to others. Kind people put down the radar gun. Kind people build up. They compliment. They find the right way to say the right words. They give hope. They do not destroy the other guy, even if he made a mistake. They are not looking the other way, but they realize that they have made mistakes and have been forgiven by God. They are willing to help others find the forgiveness of God. There has been far too many young preachers that were nearly destroyed by folks who lacked kindness. They butchered these young guys because they made a mistake or weren't doing what they thought they ought to be doing. And, many of these young guys quit preaching. It broke their hearts. Chewed up and spit out and expected to get back up in the pulpit the next week and face a crowd of tormentors again.

There are certain things that we just ought to expect in life. When I fly, I expect the pilot to know what he's doing. I don't know what all those buttons and switches do, but I expect that he ought to know. I expect my doctor to have a pretty good idea of what's going on inside of me when he looks at all the tests and blood work from me. I may not know whether those numbers are high or low, but I'm expecting that he knows. When a person walks through the front door of their home, he expects love, appreciation and joy. Our homes ought to be an oasis, not a battlefield. It ought to be good to be home. And, in this list of what we ought to expect, should be, kindness from brethren. We ought to be kind because we ought to be standing close to Jesus. Kind words. Kindness expressed in forgiveness and apologies. Kindness illustrated through grace, hope and joy. We ought to love to come to worship because we get to be around kind people who love us. It's not always that way at work or in the neighborhood. But in the church building, we are more than brethren, we are family and we are friends. We like one another. We are kind to one another.

Love is kind. When kindness is missing, so is love. You can't have love without kindness. Love is kindness. No kindness, no love. That's the problem. Some folks just don't love.

Leo the dog is a good reminder. Speak nice to him, pat him on the back, and you'll have a buddy. He'll wag his tail, even though you are not the one who feeds him and owns him. He doesn't care. He simply recognizes kindness.

I guess that's why I like Leo. I'm a lot like that. I like being around kind people. Scratch me on the head, give me a little food, and I'll be your buddy for life. I might be a little loud like Leo, but give us a chance and we're both pretty easy to get along with.

Remember, money will buy a fine dog, but only love will make him wag his tail. There's a lot of truth to that. Love is kind.

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)

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