



# 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*

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July 14, 2019

## Jump Start # 2337

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***Judges 14:2*** "So he came back and told his father and mother, 'I saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife.'"

Spring is in the air and so is romance. There are many young people that I know all over the country that are dating seriously and several are engaged. Wedding plans are in full swing for some of them. June is the month of weddings, and I will be performing the ceremony for one couple that worships where I preach. Spring and romance. Exciting times. Happy times. But with our verse today, we also see dangerous times.

So many of the young people are seriously dating and marrying those who are not Christians. And, yes, many have been converted after they were married, but it's also true, that many have weakened their faith and made compromises because their spouse is not a Christian. I see red flags and danger on the horizon. Far too many are happy about these arrangements. A good job. Owning their own home. A master's degree. A nice family. Good looking. Yet, nothing is ever said about the spiritual side of things. We are so happy for a young couple, but where will these choices lead spiritually?

Our verse today are the first words recorded from Samson. He saw a woman and he wanted to marry her. She was a Philistine. His parents urged him to find a wife from among "our people." But Samson wouldn't listen. He wouldn't have anything to do with that. He wanted this Philistine and that's where his heart was set. God would allow this connection with the Philistines as a bridge for Samson to fight and destroy many of them. But he paid a terrible price in doing this.

Now, here are some thoughts:

First, without any guidance, teaching or conversations, our kids will follow the crowds. They will look for the person who makes their heart skip a beat or two. Waiting until your child is a teen is nearly too late to be driving these lessons home. If you want your child to follow God, even in their marriage, then you must put God before all things. Worship must come before all things, including ball games. I wonder if we make God important, but not the most important. Therefore, we can push God to the background when it comes to doing things we want to do. With this thinking, God doesn't enter the

picture when dating or marriage. About the only time some think about God, is when they must make a decision about who is going to perform the ceremony. Bring the preacher and the Bible for a few moments and then get both of them out of our lives as quickly as possible.

Our kids need to look beyond the surface to see what the person they are interested in is like. Are they only interested in self? That will make for a sad marriage. Are they always talking bad about others? Are they kind, decent, and good? Let's face it, our looks change as we age, and usually it's not for the better. And, if the sole reason one is with another is because they make a person happy, what happens when that stops? That person will move on to find someone else who will make them happy. The purpose of marriage is not to make the other happy. That is starting on the wrong foot. That is yet another chapter in the disasters of marriage.

Second, we marry who we date. If you date a frog, you'll marry a frog. If you want a prince, then you must date a prince. If you want a Christian, then you either date a Christian or you start some serious Bible conversations before the talk of love, rings, and wedding takes place. If the person isn't interested in the Bible before the marriage, what makes you think that they will be interested after the marriage?

Samson hung around Philistines. It doesn't surprise us that he married a Philistine. If you want to marry a Christian, then stop dating Philistines. As long as you hang out with Philistines, you'll probably marry a Philistine.

This is so much more than just having someone to go to church with. It's about someone sharing life who loves the Lord and are on the same page with you spiritually. For about the past month I have worshipped alone. Oh, I've been in church buildings full of people but my wife has been recovering at home from surgery or I have been on the road in other places. But even then, I'm not alone. I can come home and talk to her about worship. I can tell her about the songs we sang. I can tell her about the lessons. I can tell her about who is sick. We can talk about concerns. We can enjoy good news about spiritual things. These past few months I have been in many, many homes. Preaching on the road, members invite me over to their homes. Others are there. We share a meal, life, stories, joys and concerns. But in all of these homes I've been to, not one of them, not one, was a home in which one was a Christian and the other wasn't. That doesn't happen. The person who is not a Christian doesn't feel comfortable around the "church people." They don't like talk about the Bible, because they are not interested in the Bible. You won't find much hospitality taking place among Christians when one in the marriage is not a Christian.

It's hard to share things with your mate when he is not a Christian and does not understand nor has any interest. But there's more.

What movies to watch. The Christian has guidelines. The Christian isn't comfortable with foul language, immodesty and blasphemy on the screen. The one who is not a Christian, has no problems. Right there, a fight takes place about what to watch. The Christian often caves in and compromises just to please the spouse. But there's more.

What about the kids? How are they going to be raised? Discipline? Church services? Teaching them about life, love, marriage and God? But there's more.

What about giving? But there's more.

What about when the parents die, or one of the kids is in the hospital. Prayers? Can there be real comfort when one doesn't even know what he believes? But there's more.

What about leading the family to Heaven? What about Biblical leadership in the home? What examples are the kids seeing every day? We can share everything, but not one of the greatest things of all, our faith?

I know a young lady that married a young man that everyone said was a good guy. He's nice. He's a great catch. Everyone was so happy. He pulled her away from the Lord and now they do not follow the Bible. He's such a good guy, her family keeps telling me. Would we use that same expression on the serpent in the garden? Of all the animals, only the serpent talked to Eve. He's so nice to do that. NEVER. He pulled Eve away from God. A person isn't "good" when they cause one to stop following the Lord. A good person will help you follow the Lord. A good person will make you accountable and raise the bar spiritually for you. A good person pulls the best out of you. A good person honors the Lord and walks with Christ daily.

Stop calling these people "good" who are pulling our young people away from Jesus.

We should want our kids to marry someone who is kind. One who listens. One who cares. One who puts the other first. One who is thoughtful, thankful and knows the Lord. We want our children to marry someone who will help them get to Heaven, not one who stands in the way or pressures them to compromise. How active have they been spiritually? How seriously do they take things spiritually? Do they just sit like a pew potato, or are they engaged in worship? Do they teach? Are they active in hospitality? Do they talk about the Lord outside of the church building? Are they more concerned about character or appearance? Do they love what the Lord loves? If our children marry someone who doesn't follow the Lord, what will keep them from walking away from the marriage? Divorce and misery in marriage are two of the saddest places to be. This is not the way God intended things to be. But far too many end up there. Far too many find themselves unable to lead God's people because they made wrong choices years ago when it came to dating and marriage. Who you date, is who you will marry.

It's time to return to thinking spiritually and Biblically about all of life, including dating and marriage. Finding the right person is just as important as being the right person. We want a prince, yet, we remain in the swamp with the other frogs. Maybe it's time we stepped up our spiritual life as well. It's not only about finding someone that will help you get to Heaven, but someone that you can help get there as well.

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)

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