



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

September 29, 2019

## Jump Start # 2312

---

***Judges 2:10 "All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel."***

It was a family that I have known for decades. It's a large family. It started with me knowing the grandparents. Knew them for years. One by one, I came to know the grown children and their spouses. Then, I came to know the grandchildren. And now, the grandchildren are married and starting their families. We are talking about 40-50 people. I know most of them.

The other day this huge family gathered for a funeral. Grandma had died. I was asked to speak a few words. Grandma was related to the infamous bank robber, John Dillinger. The story goes that grandma's dad actually went to Chicago to help identify the slain bank robber. Not sure about that.

This family, as with most families, has had its share of drama, issues and stories that they'd like to forget and put behind them. But something remarkable stands out about this family—they are all N.T. Christians. Grandpa and Grandma were. That's how I got to know them. Their four children are. They all married N.T. Christians. All those grandkids are N.T. Christians, and those that are married, have married N.T. Christians. It's amazing! This huge family, and other than the little ones, just about everyone is a N.T. Christian. That's something I talked about during the funeral. Those things just do not happen on their own.

And, this is where our verse comes in. The book of Joshua ends and Judges begins. Not only is it a transition in leadership, but it's a change in generations. Joshua's generation served the Lord. Unlike their parents who all died in the wilderness because of unfaithfulness, Joshua led the people to the Lord. They were committed. But that generation died. There arose a new generation. This new generation did not know the Lord. The following verses show the details of this: they forsook the Lord, they followed after other gods, and they bowed to idols. The wheels came off. The nation crashed. They had forgotten about Joshua, Moses, the Ten Commandments and all that the Lord had done. God fed the nation in the wilderness. The Red Sea parted. There were ten plagues. The walls of Jericho fell. But for these people, that was ancient history. Without instruction, without guidance, the weeds took over the heart and they left the Lord. For the next four hundred years, the length of the judges, a continual cycle is repeated over and over. Punishment, repentance, deliverance and falling away.

How does one keep faith going throughout generations? How is it that this one family can have so many Christians? Luck? Magic? It's none of those things.

(OVER)

First, God's word must be lived, practiced and applied daily. Faith is not a Sunday thing, but everyday part of our lives. The little ones need to grow up seeing the importance of worship. Putting other things before worship sends a message. It tells the heart that God isn't always first. Do what you feel like doing and then if you have time to worship you can. Such thinking doesn't make for convictions of the heart. God is talked about at home. God's word is read at home. God is as much a member of the family as anyone else.

Second, every person must decide for themselves about the Lord. Faith isn't inherited. We may grow up seeing it but many walk away, or in some cases, run away from it as soon as we can. God is good. God's way is always right. That's the lessons that must be taught. The purity of God's word must be understood. It's not about the church. It is all about God. Concepts of worship, marriage, faithfulness, holiness-these are the basics that are talked about around the kitchen table. The questions the little ones ask demand a Bible answer.

When I read our passage today, I see all kinds of red flags. "Another generation arose that did not know the Lord," why? Why did they not know? Was it assumed that they would just naturally follow the parents? Was it assumed that if the parents knew, the children would know? There seems to have been a breakdown in teaching. Were the parents too busy? Did they just take them to "church" thinking that was enough? Generation one must teach and show generation two. There is not going to be much hope for generation three if that doesn't happen.

I meet people like we read about in our verse today. The parents or grandparents followed the Lord. They don't. They have complaints, issues and problems. Most times it's about the church. Rarely do they want to take those discussions to the Bible. It's the church they claim is too narrow. But could it actually be that truth is narrow and they are kicking the cat because they are really mad at the dog? The church doesn't make the rules. The church doesn't set the policy of right and wrong. All that comes from God. All that comes from the Bible.

Third, everyday God must mean something to me. I can trace my spiritual heritage back five generations. But there are lots and lots of family all through there that didn't stay with the Lord and like ancient Israel, decided to worship as they wanted to. So, here I am today. Is it because of my parents? That may have shown me things and got me pointed in the right direction, but now, it's up to me. Everyday I must make choices. My faith or the lack of faith, directs those choices. I preach. I do that because it was my choice. My children are all Christians. We have shown them and taught them. But today, it's their choices.

I have seen families all together at worship. But when mom and dad are out of the picture, the kids start falling off one by one. Why? Obviously, they were there because of the parents and not the Lord. Every day, do I pray? Every day do I open God's word. Every day do I think about helping others? Every day do I watch what I say? Every day. When faith is alive and real, we own it. We do these things because we want to.

Finally, one of the greatest lessons is applying the grace, forgiveness and love that the Lord wants us to have throughout our family. Sometimes, it is family that hurts us the most. Sometimes it is family that frustrates us the most. Sometimes we can hold to the doctrine of Christ, but we forget about the spirit of Christ. Some family members journey to the far country. Do we allow them back, like the prodigal's father? Some family members have said and done things that are mean and hurtful. Do we hold that over them the rest of their lives? I wonder if why some have walked away is not because of what the Bible teaches, but because of the way Christians have behaved. We must move past that. We follow Christ, not the church. Jesus is our Savior, not the church. The church, like we are, is a work in progress. We are merely reformed sinners who do have a past. We are far from perfect and we still need a lot of improvement. How we present that, or whether we admit that or hide behind our pride is something that family recognizes.

One of the greatest fields of evangelism is around the kitchen table. We worry more about going overseas sometimes than we do sitting down with a prodigal in the family and simply having a conversation. Treat them the way you would want to be treated. Love, kindness, gentleness will do more good than beating one over the head.

Legacy-what's your spiritual legacy looking like? I think it's interesting that most people in the world would be fascinated about being connected to Dillinger. But this family doesn't talk about it. They are more interested in being connected to Jesus. And, that, speaks volumes! And, that may be just one reason so many of them walk with the Lord.

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)