



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)

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Acts 8:4 *“Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.”*

The book of Acts reveals two fascinating details of the early church. First, we find continual upward growth. The church grew. Numbers are given as evidence. Three thousand. Then, five thousand. Then, the word used to describe the growth is "multiplied." Village after village, the Gospel was taken.

The other fact isn't as obvious, but it's there. The secret to this growth was conversations. People talked about Jesus. There wasn't a printing house cranking out tracts. There wasn't videos introducing congregations. No social media. No mass media. No print media. Most didn't even have Bibles in hand to study with others. Word of mouth. Conversations. Life lessons shared. That's how it began and that remains the best method.

Sometimes I wonder if today we do everything except the conversations. We have so many tools and so many ways to show a person the word of God. We have videos of the Bible lands to show a person what the places actually looked like. We have maps. We have interactive tools. We have fill in the blank sermon note cards. Lots and lots of methods, ways and information at our finger tips. But still, what we need are conversations.

We need friends to talk to friends about Jesus. We need them to tell them how they have come to believe that Jesus is real and what the Bible says is true. We need to have friends sharing the wonderful ways that God has changed their lives. It's not the programs at the church. It's not the get togethers and the fun times, the deciding factor must be Jesus. Friends who will tell friends about Jesus.

We need family members to tell other family members about Jesus. We need them to show family members in the Bible just what the truth is. We need them to not be afraid but to courageously answer the questions people have. The concerns today are not about Calvinism, but rather, why do the innocent suffer? If God is so good, why is life hard? What about abortion? What about gender identity? What about right and wrong?

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This is what is on the minds of others. What they want are serious answers to their serious questions. Not something cute. Not something that makes very little sense. Not something that is simply repeated and not thought out. Real answers for today's questions. Conversations. Conversations that include Jesus. Conversations that are built upon the Bible.

We need neighbors to have conversations with neighbors. We need co-workers to have conversations with co-workers. We need conversations with the people that serve us in restaurants, and in hospitals and in other areas of life. And, we need conversations at home. Mom, dad and the kids, all talking about God's ways. It's not sermons, nor lectures, but conversations. There are so many things that happen at school every day. These are wonderful times to take a person back to the Bible way. Remind. Teach. Illustrate.

Conversation-that's not the Sunday sermon. There, the preacher does all the talking and the audience does all the listening. Conversation is give and take. It's listening, as well as talking. It's asking questions as well as answering questions. It's not pressure. It's not threatening. It's engaging, inviting and including someone into a conversation that you are in love with, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We can talk about sports so easily. We can talk about politics, even with those we disagree with. We can talk about the weather. We can talk about cooking, movies, TV shows, the traffic, the kids, the grandkids and just about anything and everything, except when it comes to the Gospel. When we transition to that, it seems our tone, our facial expression and everything becomes so serious and we become so uncomfortable that it is obvious. It shouldn't be that way. Maybe if we had more spiritual conversations with brethren outside of the church building, we'd become more comfortable talking with others about the Gospel. Too often, we enter a religious discussion with the goal of either changing someone or at least getting him into the baptistery. Maybe we ought to simply have a conversation and let the Lord work on the other things. Sow the seed. God will take care of the rest. Don't focus upon the end result. Enjoy the conversation. Make it enjoyable for the other person. Make it comfortable. Build bridges and relationships. In time, more conversations.

Those early disciples scattered and preached the word. Conversations are a starting point.

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)
