



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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Jump Start # 2257

1 Corinthians 7:1 "Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman."

Those who have looked deeply into 1 Corinthians, understand that much of this letter is answers to questions that the Corinthians had asked Paul. Those questions are marked by the expression, "now concerning." Our verse is the first of a series. It begins, "Now concerning the things about which you wrote". But others followed:

- Now concerning virgins (7:25)
- Now concerning things sacrificed to idols (8:1)
- Now concerning spiritual gifts (12:1)
- Now concerning the collection for the saints (16:1)

It is great that these brethren felt comfortable asking Paul these questions. There are some lessons we learn from this:

First, people will always have questions. Often fitting the Scriptures into our lives isn't a smooth or easy fit. There are conflicts, questions and situations. I have found that kids will ask anything in a Bible class, but often adults are reserved. Some will wait until the class is over and then ask the teacher in private. We all come to the Scriptures with a background, past, issues and baggage. Working through all of those things to fully understand what God says often presents challenges and questions. There's nothing wrong with asking questions.

Second, we ought to create an atmosphere and a trust where people can freely ask questions. Some, like to be silly. They use every opportunity they can to show off, be cute and bring laughter to a room. It doesn't take too much of that to then conclude that person just isn't serious. People in fear do not ask questions. Far too many do not know what is going on within the congregation that they belong to. Communication is limited and asking questions is not allowed. Silence is soon replaced with suspicion.

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Third, the questions that the Corinthians asked were of a practical manner. They were wanting to know how to live as God directed. Theories, ideas and principles are important, but of a greater importance is how to live the message that God has revealed. How does one parent the way that God wants? This concern brings questions. We want to get it right and when we are not sure, we want to learn better.

Fourth, although we have no living apostles today, we have their words to help us. But sometimes, we want someone to tell us details. Just tell me what to do, is what many expect. Could this be why older women were to teach younger women? There may have been questions and who better to ask than someone who has already traveled ahead of you.

Fifth, some practical answers fall into the realm of judgment and there isn't a specific answer or a specific right or wrong. For instance, someone asks you, how much should I give on Sunday? We show them guidelines. We talk about principles of faith. We explain the importance of money in the kingdom. We remind them of the great things being done with the money. We take them to Bible classes and sermons about giving. But, that's not what they are looking for. They want you to tell them a specific dollar amount to give. Should I give \$100 or \$300? What you and I might do, given the exact circumstances, may not be what this person would do. And, who ever has the exact same circumstances? So, guidelines are given. But in doing this, we must be careful that we are not putting ourselves in the place of making that decision for them. We are not the standard. We are not the bottom line.

Sixth, some answers are complicated. Have you noticed that in Corinthians? The question about idols, chapter eight, is answered in 13 verses. The spiritual gift question consumes three chapters. Paul does more than give a simple answer. He explains. It's the idea of giving someone a fish or teaching them how to fish for themselves. Explaining things will help in the long run. They help us. So, this tells us that with some questions, we must not be in a hurry. Walking out the front door of the church building, in a hurry to get to a place to eat, probably isn't the best setting to answer questions. Understand this and find the proper setting to give the question a real explanation.

Seventh, some questions are not going to be answered directly by the Bible. When I was a kid, we had this black magic 8 ball. You'd ask some question and turn it over and there was the answer. It wasn't really answering that question. A series of the same answers kept coming up over and over. As kids, we didn't know that. So, should you move? There are principles that need to be considered, but trying to find a definite Yes or No, isn't going to be found in the Bible. We are to walk by faith and not by sight. Sight walking has definite answers for every step. No faith is necessary. It's all there. Faith walking means making decisions, trusting God and walking with the principles He has given us.

Eighth, the Corinthians took their questions to an inspired apostle. They didn't ask pagan neighbors. They didn't Google answers. They knew who would know. They asked Paul. Do you know who to ask? Do you know who would know what the Bible says? Could you ask that person?

Finally, how we live is not up in the air and everyone and anyone has their own thoughts. God has designed righteous living. This is where He wants us to be. It doesn't change with time. Culture doesn't reshape it. Popular opinion doesn't affect it. Our lives are to glorify God and our lives are to reflect righteousness. From that standpoint, and with Scriptures in hand, we are able to map out a life that pleases the Lord.

Questions...what do you do with them?

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)

