



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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Ezekiel 22:30 "I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one."

Our verse today is one of the favorites that comes from the book of Ezekiel. God was looking, but no one was found. God wanted someone to stand in the gap. No one would do it. The tide of God's wrath was not turned because not one righteous person could be found. Prophet, priest, prince—no one.

And, in our times today, we are in the need for a man to stand in the gap. There are two major areas that men are needed. First, in the home. Far too many men are absentee, unplugged and not involved. They bring home the bacon, but they much too often do little else. Raising the kids is left to moms or our culture. Drug use, gender confusion, poor work ethic, and massive selfishness may well be the result of a lack of male leadership and role model in the home.

The other place where men are need to stand in the gap is in God's kingdom. The church is starving and hurting from a lack of leadership. Men could, but they don't want to. Leading, whether in the home or the church is an incredible responsibility but also an incredible blessing. Molding lives, mentoring, and shaping hearts is just a great, great honor to be involved in.

Consider some great traits of leaders:

First, good leaders have the vision to see what needs to be done. Many will do something if they are asked, but the leader is the one who sees what needs to be done first. He knows how things could be better. He is always trying to find ways to engage others, offer encouragement and strengthen hope.

Seeing the potential and what could be, leads to goals, plans and making adjustments that will benefit all. The one who is content, satisfied and even pleased with less than standard service will never raise the bar on those he is influencing. Just getting by is enough for this guy. But a true leader will find ways to make things even better. We must excel. Being an average Christian isn't good enough, and should never be good enough. I saw an interesting definition of what average is. Put one hand on a hot stove and the other hand in your freezer. Take the high and the low and then average it. And according to that, you should be comfortable. But you won't be. One hand is freezing and the other is fire. So, average isn't a good tool to measure by.

(OVER)

Second, good leaders have faith in others. He believes in others. He will not try to do everything himself. He can't. He believes that others can contribute and even bring great ideas to the table. Because a good leader believes in others, he will be one of the best cheerleaders the church has. He'll support young men giving their first lessons. At home, he'll praise his children for doing good jobs.

Third, good leaders are transparent and have great communication. One of the saddest things I hear is when people complain, "We don't know what's going on around here." There are times for the shepherds to keep things among themselves as they work with the delicate situations in the lives of others, but there is also a time to let the church know what is going on. Discipline. Goals. Plans. Special needs. All of those things come from two way communication. Shepherd, nor dads, are mind readers. They can't know unless we tell them. They might pick up on some things, but many of us are very good at wearing masks and keeping things very close to the vest. Then when things start unraveling, too often, we complain that no one helped. They couldn't because they didn't know. An atmosphere in which people are not afraid to speak their mind in kindness is healthy and good. Talking to the shepherds should not be viewed as going to the principle's office.

Fourth, good leaders must have the conviction to do what is hard. There are so many wonderful upsides to leading, but there are times the leader, whether in the church or in the home, must be the bad guy. He must say what needs to be said. He can't allow how others view him as a reason to back away from what needs to be done. Discipline—in the home and in the church are not some of those precious memories that we always hold on to. Those are tough moments. But a good leader realizes that discipline is a teaching moment and people can be made better through it. A man who doesn't have a backbone, won't do well in those moments. A man who can be talked out of things won't do well in those moments. Those times are packed with emotions and energy. The good leader stays the course and keeps pointing towards the Lord.

Finally, a good leader extends praise generously and doesn't blame others. He makes others feel good. He recognizes the good that others are doing. Pats on the back, an occasional shout out are common from good leaders. Our political climate could learn from this. Every time something backfires, the blame game begins and rarely if ever, does the buck stop here, as President Truman said. At home, this hurts. In the church, this hurts. This leads to a separation between the leaders and others. This kills the spirit of motivation and the desire to volunteer. Getting blamed enough times and a person just quits.

A man in the gap. God couldn't find one in Ezekiel's days. I wonder if He could find one today?

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)
