



# 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***

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. ([prchurchofchrist.org](http://prchurchofchrist.org))

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***1 Corinthians 1:2 "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ their Lord and ours."***

The other day I was preaching about the role of shepherds in the church. I made reference to the typical and common view that so many have of God's organization. They see it as a straight vertical line, a line of command and power. Jesus, of course, is at the top, then the elders, then the deacons, and at the bottom are the members. This way of thinking has led to the idea that the elders are in control and that it's a promotion to go from member to deacon and from deacon to elder. This thinking has turned shepherds into bosses who are more interested in managing the finances and making executive decisions that everyone else carries out. The church, when this happens, models the business structure.

The proper role of God's organization is a horizontal line, not vertical. Jesus, of course, is above all of us, but the shepherds are out front leading the flock. We are all in this together and we are all on the same line.

This misunderstanding about the structure of God's organization not only leads to the CEO concept, but it devalues the members into being peons that have no say. I've heard people say, "I'm just a member here. I don't count." And, with that mentality, it's just a step away from someone dropping out, believing, they don't need me.

Our verse today, opening the letter to the Corinthian church shows us how God views each of us. You are not "just a member." Sanctified saints, is the language we find here. And, it's good reminder for us to think about the role of the member.

First, every Christian is washed in the blood of Jesus Christ. We all have been redeemed, justified and forgiven. That's not a little thing. That's not a "nothing." That's huge. That demonstrates God's love for you. You belong to Christ. You are part of His body. You are in the Kingdom of God. You are Heaven Bound. You are a soldier in God's army. "I am only a member." Are you kidding? You are part of the redeemed. Lift your head and honor the God that saved you.

**(OVER)**

Second, you are partnering with God in the greatest work in the world. God works with us and through us to fulfill His divine purpose. You are light in a dark world. You are a voice that points people to Jesus. Your attitude, your example, your walk with Jesus, illustrates and demonstrates to the world what the Lord can do. God has changed you. You walk by faith and have a purpose and a plan in life. You are headed somewhere, and your choices show that. Just a member? I don't think so. God trusts you so much that He has put His word in your hands, His will in your heart and opened the doors of opportunity for you to serve.

Third, there is not a moment in time when you cannot access God through prayer. Just a member? I don't think so. Now, if I was to pick up the phone to call the President, I wouldn't know where to begin, and there would be so many layers of secretaries that would prevent me from talking personally to him. If I wanted to call the Purdue basketball coach in the middle of a game, I couldn't reach him. I never see him on the phone during the game. I often talk to the TV while my team is playing. I coach from the couch, but no one hears me, except my wife, who usually leaves the room. There are times when I want to talk to my kids, but they are busy at work and I have to leave a message. But with God, anytime, any place, any circumstance you can reach Him. He is never too busy for you. He never has angels that direct your prayers or answers them for Him. You think that you are just a member? Look what you can do? You can pour your heart out to the One who truly understands you, knows you and loves you. You can do this while you are driving down the road. You can do this while you are sitting in the doctor's office. You can do this while you are taking a walk in the neighborhood. You can do this while sitting in a pew, on a couch or in the dentist's chair. It is amazing that God hears us.

Just a member? I don't think so. Your eternal destiny has been changed because of Jesus Christ. You have salvation which the mighty people of the Old Testament could only dream about. You have what angels long to have. Weekly, if not daily, you get to praise the Lord. We don't have to go to Jerusalem, find a priest and have him do most of the work for us. From your heart, you can thank the Lord. You can praise His great name. You can bring glory to the Glorious One.

And, may I say a word about our sisters in Christ. So many feel like a second class citizen because they cannot preach or pray before the assembly. Some feel left out. Some are seeking new ways to define God's word so they can work their way into serving in public worship. You are not SECOND RATE, SECOND CLASS or anything else. You are blood bought, redeemed and can honor God in a number of ways. It was a woman who was first to the empty tomb. It was women who financially supported Jesus. It was through a woman that the Christ child was born. Women don't count? Best look through that Bible of yours one more time. Sarah. Rahab. Timothy's mom. So many wonderful and godly women who found a way to use their talents in furthering God's cause.

I'm just a member and I don't count...stop saying that. Lift your head up. Open your eyes. Stop the pity party and realize that God is counting on you to do what you can. All of us are important. All of us have a place and a role.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)

