



# 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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## Jump Start # 3264

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***Ecclesiastes 2:17 “So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind.”***

We have fired up our Deeper Bible studies once more. This is something we do with the congregation I’m with. It’s part of our system of groups. Folks sign up and I teach. This class meets twice on Tuesdays, morning and evening. And, this round of studies we are looking at Ecclesiastes. Everyone has their own Ecclesiastes journal in which they can write their own notes in.

Ecclesiastes is a tough book to begin. Lots of question. Tradition tells us that Solomon wrote this, but there are some problems with that. There is no clear and absolute answer. If Solomon did write this, when did this fit in his life. Historically, it sure seems that his life fell apart at the end. Then, there is the flow of Ecclesiastes. Some picture it as a dark, depressing journal of a man who can’t find the answer to “What’s the point?” Others, make it very hopeful and encouraging. That horizontal view, “life under the sun” sure has a lot to do with understanding this book.

Throughout Ecclesiastes, observations are made. Statements such as, “I saw” are repeated often. And, from observations, perspectives and conclusions are made. Thus our verse today. What a sad statement, “I hated life.” Sounds like a teenager who just got grounded, not the son of David who was blessed with wisdom. Yet, our verse must be balanced by the number of times Solomon says, “enjoy life.”

And, those thoughts help us to think about perspective. The right lens you look at life through makes all the difference.

First, some only see life through their own eyeballs. Everything is based upon what it means to me. Me becomes the focal point. My happiness. My value. What do I get out of it. There are some who even look at worship this way. “I don’t get anything out of church,” is a statement made from a selfish perspective. “I don’t like that hymn,” or, “I don’t like the way that guy leads a prayer.” Everything is wrapped around self.

(OVER)

Second, our perspectives can change. That's a good thing, a very good thing. We don't come into this world with a heavenly perspective. As newborns, we are only interested in food and clean diapers. That's it. That's our world. We cry without any consideration as to where we are or what time of day it is or how tired our parents are. But as we grow, that changes. It especially changes when one comes to Christ. The golden rule, seeking the kingdom first, having the mind of Christ, changes our thinking. Instead of seeing things only through our eyeballs, we see things from God's point of view. A cup of cold water, insignificant as it is, is meaningful to Heaven. Consequences matter. What and how we say things matter. Even our value system and definitions change when we come to Christ. Success defined by the world is based upon the brands you wear, the type of car you drive, the square footage of your house, what neighborhood that house is in, what school you attended and how much wealth you have. In Christ, character, integrity, having a heart of a servant is what catches the eye of the Lord. It doesn't matter where you live. It's not what you have, but what has you.

Third, as our perspectives change towards Heaven, we notice that things that we were once obsessed with, no longer moves the needle in our hearts. I saw a young guy zipping through a parking lot the other day with a bright yellow sports car. There was a time in my life I would have thought, "How can he afford that, and I can't?" Not anymore. My first thought was, "I wonder how much he's paying for insurance?" Then, "he sure can't put much in that car." Perspective changes. I'm pretty certain that I am going to exit this planet without ever owning a bright yellow sports car. Do I feel cheated? Do I feel empty? Not at all. We have a brother in our church who collects money to help Christians in Africa. I'd much rather do that than have a yellow car. The heavenly perspective changes us. I'd much rather sit in an assembly of Christians and sing hymns for an hour than sit in a theatre watching a movie that has no lasting value.

When one stays with Ecclesiastes, he realizes that Solomon wasn't in the dumps. He wasn't suicidal. He didn't even hate life, as our passage states. Life under the sun doesn't offer much. There is little to hope for when one has a horizontal view of life. You work all your life and then you die. Your dog at home has it better than you do. You feed him. You take care of him. All he does is wag his tail and sleep most of the day. In the end, both you and the dog die. You have killed yourself with stress and hard work only to leave all of this stuff to someone else. That's horizontal living. That's life under the sun. But with a vertical view, life ABOVE the sun, things change. We work so we can glorify God. We are blessed so we can bless others. There is a purpose other than sleeping and eating. Under the sun, we miss that. Under the sun we can't see that. But it's ABOVE the sun that we get that right perspective.

I've known brethren who have worshipped God for six to seven decades of their lives. Can you imagine how many hymns they sung? How many times have they taken the Lord's Supper? How many sermons have they listened to? And, what did it do for them? It gave them hope, assurance, forgiveness and that Heavenly perspective. They faced death, not with fear, but with hope. They walked with the Lord. They loved the Lord and He loved them.

Life under the sun stinks. But life above the sun is glorious and brilliant. It's all about perspective.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)

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