



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 # 3236

Joshua 3:4 But let there be some distance between you and it, about three thousand feet. Don't come near it! You will know the way you should go, even though you've never traveled this way before.”

Moses was dead. Joshua was now the new leader at the helm. He had been Moses' sidekick for a long time. He was up on the mountain when Moses got the stone tablets. He was one of the spies in the new land. A warrior, a leader, and a man of God, Joshua was now called to take the people of God into the new land. The ark of covenant would lead them. They were to put some distance between the ark and themselves. The ark would be their GPS. It would be the direction that they would follow.

And, the passage ends with expression, “you've never traveled this way before.” Such a statement is fitting as we begin a new year. It well sums up where many are. For instance:

- Some will be getting married this year. They have never been this way before. It will be a new experience. A growing, sharing and learning time.
- Some will have their first baby born this year. They have never been this way before. It will be a new experience. Bottles, diapers and midnight feedings. What a wonderful journey to be parents.
- Some will be starting new jobs this year. A change. A new place. New faces. New challenges. A huge learning curve. New possibilities.
- Some will be connecting to a different congregation this year. A move, a change and now you are part of a new church family. So many faces and names to learn. So many new and exciting opportunities.
- Some will be finding what it is like to journey alone this year. A death. A funeral. Tons of paperwork. And, now the house sits quiet.

(OVER)

We have never traveled this way before. New roads can be scary. New places can cause us to hesitate. Some would like things to remain the same, but often it can't. Life, like a river, is always moving. It's changing. Few things stay the same. Change is hard for some people.

As we travel down 2024, what can make the journey easier? What can help us?

First, talk to those who have made similar changes. Listen to their words. Listen to their regrets and mistakes so you do not have to repeat those.

Second, understand that you may be traveling down roads you never have before, however, the Lord has. The Lord was already in 2024 before you were. The Lord is in eternity. Faith, trust and hope in the Lord are the tools and the power that enables us to push forward.

For Joshua, they had never traveled those roads before. God had. God faced the Egyptians and was victorious. Red Sea. Plagues. God knew of Jericho long before Joshua ever saw it.

How does one return home after a funeral? He does that knowing that God is there. How does one walk through the doors of that new school or new job for the first time? He does that knowing that God is there. Our faith in the Lord can make all the difference.

Third, new chapters in our lives can be both adventurous, exciting, and scary. But new chapters, new roads, new doors open, can take us to places that allows us to shine brighter and stronger for the Lord. They can use talents that we didn't know that we have. Getting out of our comfort zone is a good thing to do. It keeps us fresh, sharp and on top of things. We can become stale and stuck sometimes.

Why not try something new this year for the Lord? Have you ever lead singing? Practice and practice at home and give it a try? Have you ever offered a short lesson on a Wednesday night or taught a Bible class? Give it a try. Have you ever invited a family from church over to your home for a meal? Give it a try. Have you ever invited someone to worship? Give it a try.

Push yourself this year. We have never traveled this way before. That's ok. God has. He's already there waiting for you. Give it a try.

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)
