



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 # 3345

1 Corinthians 7:10 "But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband."

Recently, Jason and I gave a one-two, back to back, Sunday morning and Sunday evening sermons on marriage. His focus was upon those soon to get married and recently married, the foundation of marriage. My focus was upon those who are married. As our verse states, "to the married..." These lessons are on our website and all the social media outlets we post on. It would be good to share with others. June is the month of weddings. We've had many weddings within our church family lately.

In doing a little digging around, this is what I found. There is a divorce every 36 seconds. So by the time it takes you to read this Jump Start, there will have been around eight divorces. The most common age for divorce is 30. Stats remain constant that 50% of first marriages end in divorce. The number increases to 60% for second marriages and a whopping 73% for third marriages. Most divorces occur during the first or second year of marriage and the fifth to eighth year of marriage.

Within our verse today are the words, "the wife should not leave her husband." Do not think of the American concept of separation or legal separation. That wasn't known when those words were penned. "Should not leave" means divorce. Don't get a divorce. And many don't. For some, it's still the stigma that someone failed in that relationship. For some, it's the kids and the grandkids. For some, it's just too much hassle and messy. So, some stay married, but they aren't really married. They act more like brother and sister or roommates than husband and wife. They tolerate each other and try not to irritate each other, but the relationship is not bliss. If they could do it all over again, they wouldn't, at least not with that person.

So, here we are. To the married, the apostle says. What are some things we ought to be seeing in our marriage? What are some road signs as we put the miles on?

First, love deepens. There are some similarities between a creek, a river and the ocean. They all have flowing water. Each has a bank or shoreline. They have fish in them. But there are some

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major differences in the width and the depth. I've jumped across many creeks. Can't say that I have ever jumped across a river and no one can jump across the ocean. I have waded in the middle of creeks. Won't do that in the middle of a river and certainly not in the middle of the ocean.

And, as the difference between a creek, a river and the ocean, so is the love between a husband and wife through the years. It's the depth that truly makes the difference. The appearance, the outside is important, but in time, it's the depth and the quality that one truly is amazed with.

Second, grace abounds so much more through the years. Early in a relationship there are several things that can bother and irritate you about another person. A lot of time is spent trying to change the other person into your liking. But grace and love shows that there are things about that person that makes them just the way they are. Patience grows with love. Had you asked me when I was single if I could distinguish between Mozart and Beethoven, not only would the answer be "No," but I didn't care. Through years of going to so many classical concerts with my wife, I have changed. I enjoy that so much and in turn she now knows more about the Beatles than I do. You bark less through the years and learn to help each other out more.

Third, as one grows in Christ, the relationship becomes richer and more meaningful. There is a shift from my happiness to let's do things for someone else. Less about self and more about the Lord. The geometric principle of the triangle is so true in marriage. At the base, is the husband and wife. At the top is the Lord. As each side gets closer to the top, the sides get closer to each other. And, the opposite is true as well. As the sides move down the triangle, away from the top, the sides become farther and farther apart. This being a true principle, the best thing one can do for their marriage is get closer to Jesus. If both are doing that, they will get closer to each other.

And, here is what happens. Rather than bitter, they become better. Rather than being a curse to each other, they become a blessing to each other. Rather than being a pain, they become joy. Rather than an example to avoid, they become an example to follow.

Through the years, the godly couple become a team, working together. Like a Prisca and Aquila, together, they invite people into their homes. Together they teach and encourage. Together they make lives better. Together.

And, people notice. They see a godly couple who are serving the Lord. They see a couple who are an example to others. Some may be grandparents by now. But rich in love and deep in faith, that old river keeps flowing and flowing, with its destination, not the ocean, but Heaven.

To the married...don't take each other for granted. Don't allow things to get stale. Don't stop growing in the Lord. Be a blessing to each other and to the Lord. Be an example for those just starting out. A lot of love. A love of grace. A lot of forgiveness. And, a whole lot of Jesus. And, those ugly divorce stats, won't mean a thing to you.

To the married...

Roger Shouse (Used by Permission)

