

## “Exhort One Another Daily”

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The word “exhort” appears 16 times in the New Testament. Nine times it is used in reference to someone being exhorted by an apostle (Acts 2:40; 27:22; 2 Corinthians 9:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:1; 5:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:12; 1 Timothy 2:1; 1 Peter 5:1; and Jude 3). Seven times it is used in reference to the Christian’s duty to exhort others (1 Timothy 6:2; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9; 2:6, 9, 15; and Hebrews 3:13).

The word “exhort” means to “urge strongly, to incite by argument or advice; to give warnings or advice; to make urgent appeals.” The kindred word “exhortation” means “language intended to incite and encourage” (*Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, p. 397). Subjects concerning which the Bible specifically says the apostles exhorted included: salvation, safety, benevolence, keeping God’s commandments, warning the unruly and comforting the weak, not gossiping, and prayer. Subjects concerning which the Bible specifically says Christians are to exhort include: submissive in service, preaching, convincing gainsayers, being sober-minded, godly living, not departing from God, feeding the flock, and contending earnestly for the faith.

In the collective effort of churches of Christ to restore the church as it was presented and preached in the first century, exhortation is one key area deserving of much more attention than it is receiving. Exhortation is merely tolerated coming from the preacher; we understand he has a sacred duty and specific charge to exhort the congregation (2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 2:15). His efforts alone in this connection are not enough as is evidenced by declining attendance figures, empty pews and vacant sections of pews like a checkerboard scattered through the auditorium, declining resources with which to advance the cause of Christ, and more members still in the community off the church roles rather than on.

A closer look at the passages of the Christian’s duty to exhort reveals that of the seven references five are specified to the preacher (1 Timothy 6:2; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 2:6, 9, 15), one specifies exhortation as the elder’s duty (Titus 1:9), and one shows exhortation as the collective duty and responsibility of every Christian (Hebrew 3:13). Perhaps we could strengthen our resolve to restore the Lord’s church as it existed in the first century out here in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by reading, becoming familiar with, memorizing that passage of Scripture, and implementing it or putting it into practice today—*right now!*

The Bible says, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:12-13). We must be watchful lest through the power of deceit we, and those around us, become hardened in heart and begin our departure away from God and the worship and service of God. Standing against this possibility, the Lord commanded that we “exhort one another.” The frequency with which we are to do this “urging, inciting, and encouraging” is daily! *Do not let the sun go down today without exhorting a fellow Christian to remain faithful to the living God!*