

Enthusiasm Makes the Difference

Some people view Christianity like the little boy who saw a cow standing in the field and told his daddy that the cow would make a good Christian because of her long face. A deacon in the church once said that he never expected to have a happy day in his life. Thank God we don't have any deacons like that here.

A young Christian woman said, "I am sick of life. I wish they would stop the world and let me off."

Some Christians believe that if a thing is joyful, it is bound to be sinful. One brother worried that it might be wrong to use humor talking to God. I think that God may use humor when talking to the angels about us.

There are a lot of humorous situations written in the Bible.

The devil has convinced some church members that it is a sin to laugh. One of them said, "Here I am enjoying life, and I am sure there is something that I ought to be worrying about." Some people feel bad when they feel good for fear that they will feel worse when they feel better. You can think yourself into feeling miserable.

All of this in spite of the fact that Jesus said in **John 10:10** "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." Christianity is a religion of enthusiasm, excitement, and zest for life. If you had a red pen and marked every passage that was filled with joy, zeal, and determination in the New Testament, you would have a very colorful Bible. Listen again to the words of the apostle Paul in **Colossians 3:23-24** "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ." This is similar to **Ecclesiastes 9:10** that says "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might."

Enthusiasm comes from a Greek word literally meaning "in god" or "god in you". It means to be inspired or possessed by a god. Enthusiasm also is used to describe an intense interest, passion, fervor, or zeal for something. Enthusiastic people live with excitement, energy, and eagerness and more often express their emotion with joy.

Look at the Jerusalem church in the first century.

We have pointed to them as our example for the plan of salvation and how we worship God. But we still need to restore their determination, zeal, and enthusiasm. They acted like they really believed that the gospel of Christ was the greatest, grandest, and most glorious thing that the world had ever known - **Acts 2:41-47**. They had a passion for evangelism. They were excited about prayer and worship. They enjoyed being with one another. They were dedicated to caring for one another.

The Jews persecuted the Christians in the young church at Jerusalem, but they could never dampen their zeal nor extinguish the flame of their enthusiasm in their hearts. It is easy to see why the church grew from 3000 on Pentecost to about 5000 men plus women and children in just a short time - **Acts 4:4**.

Peter and John could not contain their passion for telling others about Jesus - **Acts 4:20**.

In the face of persecution the apostles remained enthusiastic about their message - **Acts 5:41-42**.

The preacher, Philip, was so thrilled with his message that he **ran** to meet the Ethiopian treasurer - **Acts 8:30**.

If we truly believe that we must restore New Testament Christianity, then we must restore the enthusiasm of the first century church. Let's show more excitement about the work of the church. Enthusiasm makes the difference!

Christians have something to be enthusiastic about.

We have forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the hope of heaven, and the fellowship of God's family here on earth. These things are worth more than all the world, yet some of us are not as enthused about the gospel and our spiritual blessings as the average salesman is about his product.

Enthusiasm must be guided in the right direction.

Romans 10:2 warns us about zeal without knowledge. Enthusiasm does not mean that we should tolerate sin and accept all ideas. Our enthusiasm must be expressed within the boundaries of the Scriptures. If we allow our enthusiasm instead of the Bible to guide us, we will become like those who think that religion is better felt than told. Perhaps this is one reason some of our brethren have gone with the progressive movement of the "entertainment church" that directs worship toward the audience of the people rather than God. They also have bought into the idea of "inclusiveness" that accepts everyone who believes in Jesus and minimizes the need for baptism to be saved. Their enthusiasm to be involved with other religious groups has also softened their teaching on basic Bible doctrines.

The main focus of this lesson however is generating enthusiasm to the glory of God.

Enthusiasm makes the difference in every aspect of our life.

- **Romans 12:11** commands us "not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."
- In **Galatians 4:18** Paul told the churches of Galatia that "It is good to be zealous in a good thing always."
- **Titus 2:14** says that we should be "zealous for good works."
- **James 5:16** says that "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."
- **Colossians 4:2** says to "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving:"
- **1 Peter 4:8** says "Above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins."
- We should always teach with enthusiasm. Learning need not be dull, dry, and dead. Learning can be fun. Put life, vitality, and enjoyment into your teaching. If your gift is teaching, put your heart into it - **Romans 12:7**.
- We should worship with enthusiasm. Jesus said in **John 4:24** that we "must worship in spirit and truth." We must strike a healthy balance between worshipping "decently and in order" (**1 Corinthians 14:40**) and worshipping with enthusiasm, excitement, fervor, and passion.
- We should sing with enthusiasm - **Colossians 3:16**.
- Enthusiasm build better families - **Colossians 3:17-21**.
- Enthusiasm will make you a better employee - **Colossians 3:22-24**.

Enthusiasm motivates people.

Enthusiasm opens new doors and closes more sales. A sales manager told his team one time "If you show up without enthusiasm, your fired." Enthusiasm changes things, people, situations, and attitudes.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said that "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."

Enthusiasm is the maker of friends. It makes you smile and others smile with you.

Enthusiasm is the inspiration that makes you wake up in the morning and live.

It puts a spring in your step, new life in your heart, a twinkle in your eyes, and confidence in yourself.

Enthusiasm is a contagion that laughs at quarantine and infects all who come into contact with it. It's like a disease that's highly contagious and no one is immune to it. It is more contagious than the measles. It rubs off on people. If you've got it, everyone around you is sure to get it. It spreads, fast! Enthusiasm is a magnet that draws a group together with irresistible force and electrifies them. Enthusiasm! If you have it, give it to everyone. If you don't have it, then get busy and develop it.

You can develop enthusiasm.

Act enthusiastic and you'll be enthusiastic. Physical activity can charge up your body and emotions and pump up your enthusiasm. Athletes, entertainers, and professional speakers all build their enthusiasm this way.

Williams James said that you cannot feel your way into a better way of acting. But you can act your way into a better way of feeling. Emotions respond to physical action.

You can also use self-motivators to change the way you feel and motivate yourself to action. I begin my mornings with achievement affirmations. I am not naturally a morning person. I don't jump out of bed with enthusiasm. There is no such thing as getting up on the wrong side of the bed. It's what you put in your head that matters.

Here is how I start my day. I usually talk to myself in the shower. My favorite is from **Psalm 118:24**, "This is the day the Lord has made; I will rejoice and be glad in it." I also repeat, "I feel healthy! I feel happy! I feel terrific!" "I am enthused! I **am** enthused! I am **enthused!**" "I like people! People like me!"

Is this hypocritical? No! I am not trying to fool anyone else. I am simply feeding my mind mental vitamins. I will become what I feed my mind each morning. Why don't you try feeding yourself mental and spiritual vitamins every morning. You don't have to be loud, wild, and colorful to be enthusiastic. Enthusiasm can be generated in numerous ways. Everyone has a different personality, but everyone can be enthusiastic.

Your enthusiasm will also have an impact on other people. Enthusiasm makes the difference!

Remember **Colossians 3:23** "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men."