

Enthusiasm

By Bill Denton

INTRODUCTION

A. Illustration

A man who worked in an office constantly complained about how badly his feet bothered him. When asked about it, he explained that his shoes were too tight and his feet were killing him. His coworkers said, “Well take them off. We don’t mind. Go without your shoes.” He responded, “All day here at the office I take criticism from the boss who doesn’t appreciate my work. Then when I get home, my wife will start in to criticizing me for not having brought home more money. Then my mother-in-law will start telling me what’s wrong with me and what a no-good son-in-law I am. Seated in the only comfortable chair in the house will be my no-good brother-in-law who hasn’t worked in 30 years. Before long, everyone will run screaming through the house demanding to know what’s for supper. The only thing I’ve got to look forward to tonight is taking my shoes off!

1. Now you may be wondering what that little story has to do with our series on simple evangelism
2. For the guy in the story, life was just a misery – it’s pitiful when the only thing a fellow looks forward to is taking off his shoes
3. But I wonder if this isn’t something of the way some folks think about church
 - a. it’s almost as painful as that guy’s shoes
 - b. relief comes when they just get outta here!

B. Neither life nor church was meant to be a misery

1. Life becomes a misery, largely by what we make of it, even what we make of problems we face
2. Church is the same – it is largely what we make of it, and what we make of it greatly affects our effectiveness in reaching the lost

C. I want you to think about the fact that enthusiasm is a key factor in success at any endeavor, and especially so when it comes to reaching the lost

1. Paul J. Meyer – “The longer I live the more certain I am that enthusiasm is the little recognized secret of success. The difference in actual skill, ability, and intelligence between the ones who succeed and the ones who fail is usually neither wide nor striking. But if two men are equally matched, the man who is enthusiastic will find the scales tipped in his favor.”
2. Enthusiasm will make every effort of the church better and help us to find success more easily

I. HOW TO THINK ABOUT ENTHUSIASM

A. The word comes to us from the Greek language

1. It combines two words $\epsilon\nu$ and $\theta\epsilon\omicron\sigma$ = lit. God in you, or God within, with the idea of being possessed by God
2. Defined
 - a. absorbing or controlling possession of the mind by any interest or pursuit; lively interest
 - b. an occupation, activity, or pursuit in which such interest is shown
3. Yes, enthusiasm, especially as applied to religion, can become something negative and refer to a zealous, emotionalism without rational thought
 - a. but anything can become misused and abused
 - b. we must not let the mistakes of some deter us from experiencing the very positive aspects of enthusiasm

B. Some would say that for real success to happen in anything, enthusiasm is essential

1. It may surely be true that some will stumble onto success even if they aren't very enthusiastic about things, but it would probably be rare
2. The truth is that enthusiasm is powerful in several ways
 - a. enthusiasm sets the atmosphere
 - b. enthusiasm motivates
 - c. enthusiasm encourages
 - d. enthusiasm promotes creativity

C. One of the things that would help us create the kind of church that draws people is to develop some enthusiasm

1. People will listen to enthusiastic sermons but they won't listen to unenthusiastic sermons
2. People love enthusiastic singing, but they can't stand unenthusiastic singing
3. The whole church experience is different when people are enthusiastic about being together, about fellowship, about worship, etc.
4. Enthusiasm draws people, engages people, and helps them connect to something – lack of it leaves them cold and lifeless
5. We need to be enthusiastic about everything we do
 - a. be careful with that one – some people are too enthusiastic about getting out of here, or maybe not coming at all
 - b. understand what I'm saying – it matters how we do what we do

II. ENTHUSIASM IS THOROUGHLY BIBLICAL

A. Consider the following

1. Ecclesiastes 9:10
Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; . . . NASU
2. Romans 12:11
Do not lag in zeal, be enthusiastic in spirit, serve the Lord. NET
3. Colossians 3:23
Whatever you are doing, work at it with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not for people, NET
4. Don't you think this applies to whatever we do as Christians, and as a body of people together?
 - a. apply these verses to our church assemblies – it might make all the difference in the world
 - b. apply these verses to our efforts to reach the lost – it might make all the difference in the world there too

B. Consider Nehemiah

1. He had a dream in his heart for the city of his forefathers
 - a. It had been destroyed by the Babylonians, and years later, it still lay in ruins
 - b. Nehemiah's dream was to rebuild the walls and help bring the city of his homeland back to a place of stature
 - c. Don't miss the place of enthusiasm in Nehemiah's success
2. He faced a pile of challenges a mile high
 - a. He was working with a defeated, discouraged people
 - b. The task itself was monumental
 - c. He faced opponents who scoffed at the effort and derided the whole project as feeble and worthless
3. Nehemiah 4:6
So we built the wall and the whole wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. NASU
 - a. NET – The people were enthusiastic in their work
 - b. NIV – the people worked with all their heart
 - c. Amazing things happen when people are enthusiastic

III. THINGS TO BE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT

- A. Be enthusiastic about the Rodenberg Church of Christ – your attitude about church in general
- B. Be enthusiastic about our assemblies – about what we do, how we do it, etc.
- C. Be enthusiastic about being a Christian – affects what you communicate to others about your faith
- D. Be enthusiastic when you talk about Bible study, sermons, etc. – affects what others hear about opportunities to learn
- E. Be enthusiastic when sharing how God has worked in your life – a key factor in opening doors for others
- F. Be enthusiastic about inviting others to church assemblies – sets the stage for what people expect
- G. Be enthusiastic about your brothers and sisters in Christ – affects fellowship
- H. Be enthusiastic about the possibilities of God's work in our lives – gives people hope

CONCLUSION

- A. It's time we abandon the dull, drab, boring, uninteresting, hopeless brand of Christian faith
 - 1. It's not biblical anyway
 - 2. Let's opt for something more exciting, with some zip and pizzazz, something interesting and full of zestful life, something full of hope
- B. Invitation