The word enthusiasm is derived from two Greek words, _en_ meaning “in” and _theos_, which means “God.” To be enthusiastic is to be energized and inspired by God. A Biblical counterpart to this word is _fervent_ from the Greek word _zeo_ meaning “to boil with heat, be hot.” It is used metaphorically of “fervency of spirit,” as in boiling with genuine love for God and others.

Another Biblical term for enthusiasm is _zeal_, which comes from the Greek word _zelos_ meaning “excitement of mind, ardor, fervor of spirit.” _Zelos_ is ardor in pursuing, embracing, or defending someone or something. Another word for enthusiasm is _earnest_. The Hebrew word _charah_, translated _earnestly_, means “to be hot, furious; to burn; to blaze up; to be kindled.”

A Biblical expression for enthusiasm is to “leap for joy,” and is expressed by the Greek word _skirtao_, meaning “to jump, to leap.”

**Commands to Be Enthusiastic**

Every believer is instructed to be enthusiastic in the basic matters of Christian living. “Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; _fervent in spirit_; serving the Lord” (Romans 12:9–11).

Scripture identifies specific areas in which to be enthusiastic and then adds further instruction on how to do it. “But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing” (Galatians 4:18).

**What Are We to Be Enthusiastic About?**

- **Be enthusiastic about God.**
  
  Paul was “_zealous_ toward God” even before his conversion. (See Acts 22:3.) However, he had “zeal without knowledge.” He was zealous of the religious traditions of his forefathers. (See Galatians 1:14.) When he became a believer, however, he transferred that same zeal to advancing the kingdom of God.

  Noah Webster’s _American Dictionary of the English Language_ (1828), defines enthusiasm as a “...violent passion or excitement of the mind, in pursuit of some object, inspiring...confidence of success. [It is]...the same heat of imagination, chastised by reason or experience, [that] becomes a noble passion...[and] an ardent zeal...[It] forms sublime ideas and prompts to the ardent pursuit of laudable objects...Such is the _enthusiasm_ of the patriot, the hero and the christian [sic].”

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“Be filled with the Spirit,” and “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.”

—Ephesians 5:18 and Colossians 3:16

Maintaining enthusiasm requires continuous fellowship with the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

“Quench not the Spirit.”

—1 Thessalonians 5:19
• Be enthusiastic about loving others.

“Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins” (I Peter 4:8). The Corinthian believers exercised fervent love toward Paul. Titus “told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more” (II Corinthians 7:7).

Fervent love is possible only if we first purify our souls by obeying God’s truth. Otherwise we will have a mixture of affection with wrong motives and desires: “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently” (I Peter 1:22).

• Be enthusiastic about prayer.

“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). One of Paul’s co-laborers joined him in having this mind of prayer for other believers: “Ephaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis” (Colossians 4:12–13).

• Be enthusiastic about good works.

All believers are to be enthusiastic about doing sacrificial works that will benefit others. These works must be done without any motive of personal reward or glory. They should be carried out so that others get the credit and God gets the glory. Jesus Christ “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). Based on this, we are able to “provoke [one another] unto love and to good works” (Hebrews 10:24).

The enthusiasm of the Corinthian believers in giving an offering for needy believers motivated others to follow their example. Paul wrote, “Your zeal [in giving] hath provoked very many” (II Corinthians 9:2).

• Be enthusiastic about repentance.

The same zeal we are to have in serving God and others, we are to have in maintaining a good conscience toward God and man. The Laodicean believers, for whom Epaphras earnestly prayed, lacked enthusiasm. They were not “hot” for their Lord; they were “lukewarm.” God reproved them for this condition and warned them to repent.

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. . . . As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (Revelation 3:15–16, 19).

• Be enthusiastic about trials and reproaches.

Jesus taught us to “rejoice, and be exceeding glad” when we are persecuted for Christ’s sake. (See Matthew 5:12.) Paul took “plea-
sure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake” (II Corinthians 12:10).

**How Do We Generate Enthusiasm?**

Genuine enthusiasm is not something we activate by our own energy. Harmonious interaction with the Holy Spirit of God produces enthusiasm. For this reason, we are to “quench not the Spirit,” nor grieve Him with things in our lives that displease Him (I Thessalonians 5:19; see also Ephesians 4:30).

It is important to distinguish the enthusiasm of our spirits from the excitement of our souls. Those who try to stir up enthusiasm in their minds, wills, or emotions will eventually experience depression and burnout.

Enthusiasm in the soul is like a candle. It gives light, but it is self-consuming. On the other hand, enthusiasm generated in the spirit is like the flame of an oil lamp. As long as we are filled by the Spirit of God and the Word of God, enthusiasm, like an oil-filled lamp, will burn indefinitely.

The Psalmist describes the way in which the spirit encourages the soul in enthusiasm, because it is possible for the soul to be sorrowful and the spirit to be enthusiastic at the same time. “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God” (Psalm 42:11).

**Who Demonstrated Enthusiasm?**

- Paul was a champion of enthusiasm. His fervency and zeal for the Lord caused him to pour out his life for believers on the altar of sacrifice. (See Philippians 2:17.)
- Apollos was “an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures . . . . Being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord” (Acts 18:24–25).
- Regarding the household of Stephanas, Scripture states “that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints” (I Corinthians 16:15).

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**Personal Evaluation**

**How enthusiastic are you?**

- Do you give energy to all those around you by being enthusiastic?
- Have you experienced the indwelling of the Holy Spirit through salvation in Christ?
- As a believer, have you asked your Heavenly Father to fill your life with the Holy Spirit?
- Do you experience emotional drain or depression by trying to act enthusiastic with your emotions rather than through God’s Spirit?
- Do you fill the “lamp” of your spirit with daily fellowship with God through His Spirit and His Word?
- Do you give everyone a warm, enthusiastic smile, or only those who are your close friends?
- Do you get more excited about sports than the challenge of the Christian life?
- Do you read novels more fervently than you study the Scriptures?

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Enthusiasm is expressing to those around me the power of God’s working in me.

Enthusiasm turns ordinary actions into extraordinary achievements.

“Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.”

—Zechariah 4:6

Enthusiasm is the secret energy of those who are truly successful.

“Wherever you are, be all there. Live to the hilt every situation you believe to be the will of God.”

—Jim Elliot

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