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Equipping the Church for the Work of Ministry

ZEAL AND ENTHUSIASM

Essential for Every Believer

What Christians Believe Series

Tony Case



What does it mean
to have Zeal and
Enthusiasm?



Why do I Need it?
Doesn't the Bible
speak for itself?



How can I Revive
my lack of
Enthusiasm?



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admin@tcministries.org.au
www.tcministries.org.au

ZEAL AND CHARISMA

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this" (Isa 9:6-7 NIV)

When I was involved in a traditional denominational church many decades ago there was great resistance to Pentecostals, or 'Charismatics' as they were known in the late 60's and early 70's, because of their overt enthusiasm and 'wild, unruly meetings'. But it was this very enthusiasm, coupled to what I perceived as a genuine love for Jesus, that first intrigued me and then drew me inexorably to a type, or style, of faith expression that I eventually joined wholeheartedly, and have faithfully followed since the mid-1970's.

I have never seen the need to go back on this decision, even if those days of overt enthusiasm and outrageous expression tempered over the years as Pentecost became more acceptable on the world stage. There is nothing quite like genuine heartfelt zeal, coupled to unmatched enthusiasm for God.

As an older teenager I was swept up into Christianity in early 1970 when the wave of Charismatic Renewal was spreading through traditional churches in the UK, and across the world. What attracted me was the exuberance, the excitement, the 'over-the-top' nature of the meetings. They were so different from anything we had ever experienced that many young people in my circle made commitments to Christ that have lasted a lifetime. God was certainly moving by His Spirit through young people at that time.

The big deal about this well-documented and now historical Charismatic Renewal was that this move of God was primarily focused on young people, and the more traditional churches.

Pentecostals and Charismatics

The term 'Pentecostal' comes from the word 'Pentecost', which was the second of the great Jewish feasts celebrating the end of the spring wheat harvest (Exod 23:14-17).

The Holy Spirit first fell on the early church on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), and it is from this experience the modern-day Pentecostal church derives its name.

The word 'charismatic' comes from the Greek word 'charisma' (1 Cor 12:4,11) which means 'gift of grace', or 'free gift'.

Consequently 'Pentecostal' and 'Charismatic' can be interchangeable terms for people who believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the experience known as the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, with its teaching on the speaking in tongues, and other spiritual gifts.

Commonly, Pentecostals tend to describe the denominations and churches who hold to these doctrines, whereas the term 'charismatic' is used to describe more traditional denominations who have members who have received a "Pentecostal" experience but have chosen to remain in their more traditional churches.

However you choose to describe yourself, or the ministries of such churches, there can be no denying the impact these twin movements (Pentecostal and charismatic) have had on the worldwide church scene over the last half century.

Half a Century of Exponential Church Growth

While many traditional denominations are in decline, and have been for many years, the Pentecostal movement continues to increase exponentially right across the world. The effects of this 'Charismatic Renewal' of the late 60's and early 70's were felt everywhere, beginning in the US, then the UK, and then in many other countries. It was a well-documented move of God. Statistics at the time found that by the mid-1970's there were believed to be some 20 million Pentecostal/Charismatic believers in the world - a significant increase on any previously estimates. By the mid 1990's this number had grown to some 400 million (G. Gibbs 09/02/97). In 2025 Wikipedia states on the subject of Pentecostalism:

“Worldwide Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity numbers over 644 million adherents” and “Pentecostalism is believed to be the fastest growing religious movement in the world.”

Despite its many denominations, the Pentecostal movement is now well established, and surprisingly consistent in their statements of doctrinal belief. Many believers in the more traditional denominations today also describe themselves as charismatic, making it a movement that transcends both traditional and non-traditional Christian churches. It truly is a world-wide phenomenon that is not always acknowledged or understood.

As of 2025 those that claim Christianity as their religion number around 2.4 billion of an estimated world population of 8.2 billion. Approximately half that number are Catholics, with the remainder being Protestants. Christianity consistently remains by far the largest religion in the world. Never imagine for one minute the Holy Spirit isn't active and productive in reaching out to lost people everywhere with this awesome message of salvation in Jesus Christ. Wherever church revival and growth are evident, zeal and enthusiasm are always part of the equation.

Catholics and Protestants

For those claiming to be Catholic overall numbers remain steady, though Catholic church attendance is generally shrinking across the West, it is flourishing in many third world countries. Since the days of the Charismatic Renewal of the 60's and 70's a surprising number would lay claim to being 'born-again', a movement within the Catholic Church that began in 1967 during a weekend retreat at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh where Catholic students and faculty experienced a renewed outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This was signified by an emphasis on a personal relationship with Jesus, an active reliance on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and expressive worship. My understanding is that this is still evident today in many parts of the Catholic church.

As Peter was persuaded to declare after seeing the Holy Spirit poured out on Gentiles for the first time in Cornelius' house:

“Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:34-35)

Pentecostals are generally considered Protestant, and their churches hold to such common Protestant declarations as the Apostles Creed and the Westminster Confession. But let us not exclude our Catholic brothers and sisters, many of whom share a common bond in regard to the moving of the Holy Spirit in their midst.

Zeal – God in You!

The zeal of God, and the zeal for God, are tremendous things to behold. It can be defined as having a deep, burning passion, intense devotion, and dedication to God, His honour and His Purposes.

- ♦ They caused Jesus to set His face like a flint towards Calvary (Luke 9:51).
- ♦ They caused the early church to lay down their lives for what they passionately believed in.
- ♦ They have been the driving force behind every revival that there ever was, or ever will be.

It is the most absolutely unstoppable force in the universe. With it we can move mountains and raise the dead back to life. Without it we can do little, if anything.

Zeal or enthusiasm is the natural outworking of faith, and faith moves mountains (Mark 11:22-23), for nothing is impossible with God. Faith and enthusiasm, which means '**God in you**' – are an unbeatable combination! So what does it mean to have God in you?

The word **enthusiasm** comes from a Greek word, '**entheos**'. '**Theos**' means '**God**' and '**en**' means "**in you**". Enthusiasm literally means '**God within**', or '**God in you**'

This is what happened when the Holy Spirit came down at Pentecost and put His fire into a group of frightened disciples who henceforth turned their world upside down with their irrepressible zeal and enthusiasm for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“And when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4)

ZEAL AND JESUS

We don't always think of Jesus' ministry in terms of zeal, but without it I doubt He would have been able to achieve half as much as He did.

Jesus was zealous and enthusiastic. He was an inspirational leader and had an attractive and relevant message for His people. Zeal for the house of God consumed Him:

“And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated. And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers, and overturned their tables; and to those who were selling the doves He said, “Take these things away; stop making My Father’s house a house of merchandise.” His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘Zeal for your house will consume me’” (John 2:14-17)

Jesus was enthusiastic to the point of being offensive, especially to religious leaders of the day. His fervour for His kingdom message, and His opposition to the religious system in place at the time, were equally forceful and passionate. There is no way people could be neutral about Jesus. Love Him or hate Him, there was no middle ground.

If we want to replicate the works of Jesus in our generation, or see even greater things done in His name than He performed when on the earth, we won't do it by being apathetic towards the gospel, or by being dull or uninteresting in how we present our message, whether it be in word, song or deed. Even Jesus Himself declared:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father” (John 14:12)

ZEAL AND THE EARLY CHURCH

The early church had a zeal for the gospel rarely matched in succeeding generations. They managed to turn the then known world upside down in their lifetime (Acts 17:6), and they did it without technology, mass media outlets or digital sound systems. They were driven by vision. They were goal-oriented and mission driven. They had passion, which is just another word for zeal.

“I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it. Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win” (1 Cor 9:23-24)

The Bible clearly teaches the importance of having goals. Another word for goals is vision. Proverbs declares that:

“Without a (progressive) vision, the people perish” (Prov 29:18)

Some translations say that the people go about ***“unrestrained”***. I sometimes wonder if the source of apathy in many Christians today isn't connected to a certain lack of vision for the things of God.

The inference of the above passage is clear. Unless a group of people are unified under a common banner, for a common purpose, have a clearly defined strategy and are goal (vision) oriented, they will not succeed!

“Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified” (1 Cor 9:25-27)

Paul was clearly goal-oriented – a man of vision, energy and accomplishment! He had zeal and was enthusiastic about everything he did – even before he was saved! People of vision are passionate people, and can be very persistent! They can't be held back or kept quiet. They are motivated, with a kingdom purpose that is hard to ignore, hard to silence. They are enthusiastic, and their faith and zeal can move mountains!

We must roll up our sleeves, put our hand to the plough, be passionate and enthusiastic about what we are doing, and only then will we reap the harvest!

“... But I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:12b-14)

As stated clearly in the book of James (and I paraphrase):

Some talk, and some do . . . but it's those that do who get the job done” (James 1:22)

The early church was very much goal-oriented (Matt 28:18-20). They had vision, purpose, passion and enthusiasm. They were so determined to fulfil their God-given mission that they were quite prepared to lose their lives in the attempt! Motivated and focused on what Jesus told them to do, they were so successful that they turned the world upside down in their lifetime, and the church of Jesus Christ prospered and multiplied as a result.

To neglect having definite, positive objectives (aims/goals) in any endeavour is contrary to sound biblical teaching and a major source of under-achievement in the Christian world.

To try and pursue any goal, whether worthwhile or not, without zeal and enthusiasm is a recipe for failure. We must learn how to communicate our message much better than we have in the past if we are to see a great outpouring of the Spirit of God in our time, and enjoy anything like the revival fires that are sweeping so much of the Third World, but by-passing so many Western countries. It would be embarrassing if it wasn't so tragic.

ZEAL AND SCRIPTURE

The Bible repeatedly talks about zeal, from both God's and Man's perspective:

"For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and out of Mount Zion survivors. The zeal of the Lord shall perform this" (2 Kings 19:31)

"Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done with zeal for the house of the God of heaven, lest there be wrath against the kingdom of the king and his sons" (Ezra 7:23)

"Because for Your sake I have borne reproach; dishonour has covered my face. I have become estranged from my brothers and an alien to my mother's sons. For zeal for Your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me (Psalm 69:7-9)

"And he put on righteousness like a breastplate, And a helmet of salvation on His head; And He put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle" (Isa 59:17)

The Bible is packed full of examples of God's zeal, or the zeal of His servants.

- ◆ It is the zeal of God that accomplishes great things.
- ◆ It is the zeal of God that gets the job done best and soonest.
- ◆ It is the zeal of God that inspires men to achieve extraordinary things.

We are far too used to accepting a level of ordinariness, or mediocrity, with low expectations and low achievement in the Western church. This attitude needs to change, and thankfully is changing in many vibrant and exciting churches across this great nation of ours!

Why do we get so enthusiastic about dating, ball games, movies, concerts, birthdays, Christmas, new babies and so many other things, and not understand that this same enthusiasm and passion is needed in the church if we want to see great things accomplished for God! If we stand like zombies through a worship service, or harbour critical thoughts or unforgiveness in our hearts, can we really expect God to move in our midst? ***Or maybe we don't expect God to move?***

If Christians were to aim for similar results in the world as they sometimes aim for in church they might find themselves on welfare! We must seek to break the mould of traditional 'churchianity' and get excited about what God can do, and what He wants done!

Sometimes we can be so intimidated by the world we are loath to take the Word of God seriously, and enthusiastically, and miss out on seeing great things accomplished in the name of Jesus! We can also be quite religious at times, and we know what Jesus said, and thought, about such people, don't we? (Matt 23)

"I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images ... Sing to the Lord a new song, sing His praise from the end of the earth ... The Lord will go forth like a warrior, He will arouse His zeal like a man of war. He will utter a shout, yes, He will raise a war cry. He will prevail against His enemies" (Isa 42:8,10,13)

We must determine for ourselves what our response will be to the zeal of God. Will we rise up like a "man of war" when the need and the circumstances warrant it? Will we "sing to the Lord a new song?" in our enthusiasm and passion for God and His purposes? It is the zeal of God, and our zeal for God, that enables us to raise a war cry, to command the victory, and to prevail against all our enemies!

ZEAL AND THE CHURCH OF TODAY

Now we come to the crux of our topic – zeal in the church of today! We have to ask ourselves such questions as:

- ◆ What if I feel I don't have any?
- ◆ Do we really need it?
- ◆ What is the appropriate way to express it?

Now, to do these questions justice we need to get a couple of things straight.

Firstly, we all have zeal for something. It is one of the basic building blocks of life which is part and parcel of our human genetic code. If someone doesn't have zeal for anything we consider them lacking, boring, and unattractive. If they seriously lack any enthusiasm for life at all then we medicate them, call them depressed or worse, and even lock them up in extreme cases. So it's better to be enthusiastic about something than enthusiastic about nothing.

Secondly, we definitely do need zeal. Nothing happens in life unless someone, somewhere sells something to someone else who may or may not have been looking for it at the time. People sometimes get offended when we align sales, marketing, business and church in the same sentence, but they shouldn't. There are so many similarities and so few dissimilarities it makes for a fascinating and enlightening study. We should never dismiss arbitrarily and without proper research things we don't fully understand.

Thirdly, there are appropriate and inappropriate ways to express zeal and enthusiasm. There are common codes we observe – some cultural or traditional, some biblical, some because of personal preference. We could call these '*reasonable codes of conduct*'. They are mostly commonsense things and not really relevant to this topic because if you don't know or understand them you may need help on a completely different level.

In Conclusion

If we struggle with any kind of zeal and enthusiastic, then we have two choices:

1. We can put a smile on our dial (face) and fake it till God helps us make it, or;
2. Stop doing whatever it is we're miserable about and find something to do that we can be excited and passionate about, especially regarding things of God.

- IMAGINE A CHURCH -

- ✿ **Imagine a church** ... full of people who are so extraordinarily committed to their faith in Jesus Christ and their gospel commission that their spiritual life is contagious. They share their faith on a daily basis, and everywhere lost people are being restored to the kingdom (*like in Acts 2:47*).
- ✿ **Imagine a church** ... that grows constantly and continually - on all fronts! At a time in Australia when many churches are stereotypical and declining, imagine a church with a constant stream of new members and growing influence in the community.
- ✿ **Imagine a church** ... that really helps people “grow up” into strong, balanced and mature followers of Christ, radically equipped to minister for Him. A church that empowers ordinary Christians to do extraordinary things for God.
- ✿ **Imagine a church** ... that the surrounding community takes notice of because it is making a real, tangible difference to people's lives by meeting real, tangible needs – and it shows!
- ✿ **Imagine a church** ... that is a truly loving, open and friendly family, where anyone from any walk of life can quickly make friends, network and integrate, and where there is genuine care and genuine love shown to them from **the very first meeting they attend**. Imagine a network of small groups formed around common interests and common goals, where each one is encouraged and empowered to overcome the obstacles and difficulties in life, and succeed at whatever level they desire.
- ✿ **Imagine a church** ... where everything is undergirded by prayer. A supernatural church that is not frustrated or overwhelmed by difficulties. A church whose goals and projects are God-ordained, God-oriented and God-blessed.
- ✿ **Imagine a church** ... that claims the harvest, inspires other churches by their success, and positively affects and even transforms their community in the process. Jesus declared that the harvest is plentiful (Luke 10:2) but the labourers are few. Right after this he summoned his disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits and to heal the sick, as sent them out to accomplish his will.
- ✿ **Imagine a church** ... with a passionate heart for lost people and a desire to share its message at every level and walk of life in our community. Imagine the greatest church you can imagine, and then believe God that it can be done!

Now, imagine that you are a part of that church ...

... and do what you can, whenever you can, wherever you can ...

... to make it happen!