

Character Helps

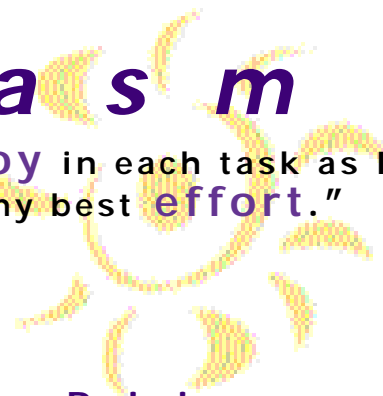
To help encourage each other to practice good character monthly so that we, and all those whose lives we touch, may experience its valuable benefits.

March 2001

Thoughts ⇨ Actions ⇨ Habits ⇨ Character ⇨ Destiny

Enthusiasm

"Expressing joy in each task as I give it my best effort."



I WILL...

Be An Energy-Giver

Everyone loves and respects an energy-giver. These are the people who never need to be reminded of their work. They volunteer to do task others would resist. Energy givers maintain a good attitude while they work. A giver of energy gives energy. Energy-takers and energy-wasters, on the other hand, are the ones who float through life without contributing much to anyone's goals but their own. Ask daily, "Am I giving or taking energy?"

Smile

The most attractive thing you can wear is a smile! A smile is contagious. A smile comes naturally when you see another person smiling. Smiling improves health. Experiments were made with actors. They were told to use expressions unrelated to the way they were feeling. During these tests, their heart rates rose and fell according to their expressions. A smile does more than improve health and make your face attractive. A smile brings beauty from the inside out.

Treat Every Job As Important

If you enjoy a job, enthusiasm comes naturally. It is difficult to be enthusiastic if you do not feel enthusiastic. Practicing enthusiasm will give new perspective to menial tasks. Everything we do has an end result. Keeping the end result in view will build enthusiasm for those difficult tasks.

Put My Whole Heart Into What I Do

Successful lives require effort. Success requires going the "second mile." Extra investment pays off in the long run. Giving half our best yields half the results. The Lord is our example. He went the extra mile for us.

Not Be Discouraged By Failure

It's easy to become discouraged when met with discouragement. Enthusiasm is seeing beyond the failure to the lessons and benefits of the failure.

"Rejoice evermore. Quench not the Spirit."

I Thessalonians 5:16,19

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Enthusiasm in Nature

Imagine yourself floating on an inner tube off Shell Island. All of a sudden the water around you begins to stir...you feel something beneath you. Just a few feet away, the water explodes as a 50-foot long, 50-ton humpback whale soars up into the air! When a whale makes a splash, they make a big splash! Scientists can't tell us why whales like to do this. This action is called "breaching". When this happens, it can be heart-stopping to watch Humpback whales have a huge fin at the end of their tail that allows them to go very fast through the water. At about 20 miles per hour, the whale flips up its tail, which sends the whale's body straight up through the water's surface. While in the air, they lean backwards and crash into the water



with a big splash. Not only does the humpback whale make big splashes, it also makes big bubbles. They catch their food by making a net using bubbles. Taking a deep breath they dive into the water and blow a steady stream of bubbles trapping the fish. Whales catch and eat over 1,000 pounds of food at every meal! Whales not only make a big splash and big bubbles they also sing a big song. The humpback whale shows enthusiasm. But enthusiasm is not always doing things big. Enthusiasm is doing the right thing, the right way, with the right heart, at the right time. We can learn from nature through the example of the whale. Do what you can, the best you can, in God's strength

Enthusiasm in History

Theodore Roosevelt was known by his enthusiastic smile. As a child he enthusiastically exercised to overcome his illness. When he started exercising he could barely do one push-up. He never gave up. He kept trying until he was able to run and play outside. He worked and exercised with his whole heart. These times not only strengthened his physical body, but also his character. Theodore Roosevelt went on to be an adult and leader of American troops that fought the Spanish on the island of Cuba. He realized his task would not be easy. He was not afraid to lead even in the face of insurmountable odds. He led his volunteer troops to Kettle Hill. The men felt encouraged as they followed their bold and courageous

leader. Theodore's example gave energy and strength to the tired soldiers. In the face of danger his smile from ear to ear gave them hope that they might possibly see victory. Theodore and his men continued to pursue the Spanish until they captured not only Kettle Hill, but also another hill as they continued to pursue the retreating enemy. The Americans won the war against the Spanish and the men were able to return to their homes. Theodore became famous for bravery as "Lieutenant Colonel of the Rough Riders." He was not famous because he won but because he did not quit. He continued in the face of all the odds. He led people to victory because he was a winner himself.

Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm in Daily Life

At Home

The most challenging place to show enthusiasm is at home with those who know us best. Home is the true test of character. Home is the place where preparation for each day and life takes place. God places within families every characteristic and conflict we need, to prepare us for life. If we can't get along with our families and show enthusiasm, it is doubtful we will successfully do either away from home.

At Work

Wake up with purpose. In our routine we forget our presence on the job makes a difference. It's difficult to be enthusiastic if you don't feel enthusiastic. When you are around people who are enthusiastic they motivate you. Purpose to be that person. You can spark enthusiasm at work. We are to be salt and light. Being enthusiastic is a way we can fulfill this command of our Lord. Our attitudes make a difference in

our work place and in this world. An enthusiastic worker is valuable. Purpose to be enthusiastic for one week. See all tasks, conflicts, circumstances and situations as God sees them.

At Church

Enthusiasm honors the Lord. Allow the songs we sing, the words we say and hear to penetrate deep within. The Holy Spirit will use these to alter attitudes and soften hearts. Show enthusiasm by being on time, greeting everyone, and giving leadership undivided attention.

In the Community

As Christians we are saying, "Lord, teach us character." It is saying we have decided and are determined to make a difference in our community and in our world. Developing character will conform us into the image of Christ. Character will cause those around us to ask of "the hope" within us. Character will provoke love and good works.

Enthusiasm

<i>Energy-Giver</i>	<i>Energy-Waster</i>	<i>Energy-Taker</i>
♦ Praises others and passes on credit	♦ Criticizes others and expects credit	♦ Takes credit to self
♦ Out-going; makes friends	♦ Self-centered or divisive	♦ Talks only to friends (cliquish)
♦ Flexible; willing to work with change	♦ Inflexible; stubborn	♦ Adjusts as required, but murmurs
♦ Enjoys learning new things	♦ Resists new ideas	♦ Learns, but does nothing with it
♦ Alert to jobs needing to be done	♦ Tries to get out of assignments	♦ Waits to be asked
♦ Consistent good character	♦ Poor or negative character	♦ Character based on "how I feel" now

Enthusiasm in the Heart

Every individual will benefit by growing in the monthly character qualities. Practicing the action steps for the monthly character quality will help develop it as a habit. These habits will then promote benefits, such as: helping one to reach full potential; enhancing self-acceptance, self-confidence and self-satisfaction; increasing productivity and accomplishments; improving relationships; benefiting others; and contributing to success.

Individuals can have different motivations for developing and practicing good character qualities. These may vary from selfish desires for personal gain or acceptance, to unselfish desires

"...the Lord looks beyond the outer appearances to our heart - it is the center of our life!"

to please others or do right. For the Christian, the motivation should stem from our supreme reason for living - to love and please the living God Who loves us infinitely:

"The most important one [commandment]', answered Jesus, 'is this: ... Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'" (Mark 12:29-30).

Practicing and developing one of the 49 monthly character qualities, when motivated by love for God, does bring pleasure to God. Since each of the 49 qualities are characteristics of Jesus Christ, practicing the character quality is endeavoring to develop that character quality of Jesus. This initiative complies with the commandment to "be holy, for I am holy", i.e. have character like Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:16). And since keeping His commandments is the key way in which we demonstrate our love for Him (John 14:21), we demonstrate our love for Him in endeavoring to develop character like Jesus. Developing in Christlike character brings pleasure to God as Father, seeing His children grow-

ing up into His own likeness. It also brings Him pleasure because in becoming like Christ we become more like the perfect human He had designed us to be (Genesis 1:27, Colossians 1:15), and thereby we are able to experience more fully all He intends for us to be and to do.

A key to pleasing God is our heart. The heart is the innermost center of our life. According to Scripture*, it is the center of thoughts, feeling and affections, and the will. It is also the center of the moral life: it is, for example, the concentration point for all moral conditions from the highest love for God down to self-deluding pride and hardening; the laboratory and origin of all that is good and evil in thoughts, words and deeds; the rendezvous of lusts and passions; the place where God's natural law is written in us; the seat of conscience; the dwelling place of Christ and the Holy Spirit in us; the receptacle of the love of God; and the closet of secret communion with God.

Little wonder that the Lord looks beyond the outer appearances to our heart (1 Samuel 16:7): it is the center of our life! The question is what does He find? Thoughts, words, actions and aspirations pleasing to Him? A heart motivated by ardent affection for Him? A heart submitted to making Him #1 in life? A heart of love for Him that brings Him pleasure? Or a heart that is displeasing to Him? A sinful heart - the heart of a person who is thereby grieving God and quenching His Spirit (Ephesians 4:30, 1 Thessalonians 5:19), whose intimate relationship with God is blocked and is not experiencing His love and power (Isaiah 59:1-3), and whose efforts in life (e.g. building good character) may not have eternal value (1 Corinthians 3:11-15)?

Clearly the proper Christian motivation for building good character is love for God with one's whole heart - a love to which God in turn responds with love and power. This loving relationship can be restored at any time through simple steps of confession. In this process I ask God to forgive me for unconfessed sins, and to

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restore intimacy in our relationship:

1. I ask God to reveal every sin. (Psalms 139:23-24)
2. I confess and commit to forsake each sin specifically and individually. (Proverbs 28:13)
3. I make restitution to others when necessary. (Matthew 5:24)
4. By faith, I accept God's forgiveness. (1 John 1:9)

- my thoughts, words, actions, motives, hobbies, work, etc. For then He can release His power, joy, knowledge, etc. unbridled in me and through me, which will result in bountiful love and blessing for Him, me and others. Thus He commands me to be "filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18), to turn over to Him control of every "room and closet of my house", to let Him fill every facet of my "house" as "head of the household". With the power of the Holy Spirit controlling my life, I will then be able to exhibit the character quality of Enthusiasm with His great, divine energy.

Will you join me in these steps now? And will you join me each morning, before setting off to begin practicing the current monthly character quality? The blessings for the Lord, us, and others depend on it.



Enthusiasm is a word derived from the Greek, meaning "to have God inside." Because God is a God of power and energy, the term is often associated with fervor and zeal.

Enthusiasm has special meaning for the Christian. When a person enters into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, and thereby

Being continuously filled with the Holy Spirit is a simple process:

1. I must desire to be filled - to turn control over to Christ. He will not force it. (John 7:37-39)
2. I confess my sins and repent. (See steps above)
3. I yield myself totally to Him as the Lord (managing director) of my life. (Romans 12:1)
4. I receive the filling of the Holy Spirit by faith. (Ephesians 5:18, 1 John 5:14-15)
5. I thank Him and believe on the basis of His Word that he now controls me. (Hebrews 11:6, Romans 1:17)

"Enthusiasm is a word derived from the Greek, meaning 'to have God inside.'"

becomes a Christian, God the Holy Spirit (and Spirit of Jesus Christ) immediately comes to indwell (take up residence in) that person's heart (1 Corinthians 3:16). With God comes all of His characteristics of infinite love, power, knowledge, truth, holiness, etc. But the Holy Spirit of God desires not merely to "dwell" in my house, but also wants to become "head of the household" - to be in control of my "rooms"

If I stumble or become aware of an area I have not turned over to Him as Lord, I "breathe spiritually", exhaling [step 2] and inhaling [steps 3 - 5]. Will you join me?

*Unger, Merrill F., The New Unger's Bible Dictionary, Moody Press, 1985.

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