

## HOW TO LIVE IN ENTHUSIASM

Feb. 6, 2022

Rev. Dr. Michele Whittington (Guest Minister)

So this morning we are going to look at the idea of enthusiasm. **[Congregant: "Woo hoo!"]** Woo hoo! I love it! enthusiastic response! **[Congregation laughs]** Enthusiastic response! Perfect!

Living in enthusiasm. And I love a quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson, who is often referred to as the father of New Thought. He had something very powerful to say about enthusiasm:

*"Every great and commanding movement in the annals of the world ..."*

That's kind of a big statement there!

*"... in the annals of the world is due to the triumph of enthusiasm. Nothing great was ever achieved without it."*

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm. So we're going to dig into that word a little bit today. And I love digging into words. It makes me very happy to look at words and definitions. As a matter of fact, as a younger person, I used to do a couple of strange things. I liked to read the dictionary. **[Congregation laughs]** Very odd, I know. Read the dictionary. And I loved grammar books. Loved grammar books. **[Congregant: "Yeah!"]** Oh, good; I've got another grammar enthusiast there. *Strunk and White's Elements of Style* -- best book ever on grammar. And they've even come out with an updated version of it, like 19 .. or 2020 or so. So I've read that one now, too!

So anyway ... I tell you that just to give you a little insight into my quirkiness, but also to say that I decided to dig a little bit into the word enthusiasm and see what we might find. And so I decided to live on the wild side a little bit, and not go to *Webster's Dictionary* but, instead, to the *American Heritage Dictionary*. Really, really walking wild here. **[Congregation laughs]** And see what the *American Heritage Dictionary* had to say as definitions for enthusiasm.

So there are actually three. And I'm going to give you two right now, and I'm going to save the other one for a little bit later. But I'll get to the other one later. So the first two definitions are kind of the same, but they're both listed, so I'm going to share them with you:

*"Great excitement for or interest in a subject or cause."*

Number two:

*"A source or cause of great excitement or interest."*

Kind of the same thing, but there it is. So I liked that; I thought, *"Oh, that's good. But I don't know; it's not enough. I need more. I want more."*

So I love the Internet. And, by the way, it makes ministers' jobs so much easier ... **[spoken in quaky, "elderly" voice]** Because I remember the days before the Internet. I was a minister, and you didn't have all this research!

But anyway, now you can just look it up, and it's there. And so I decided, *"Let me look up ... Where I could look for more words for enthusiasm?"* I had the bright idea: *"Let me go to the crossword puzzles."* I love also crossword puzzles. And I thought, *"I wonder if I looked up answers -- crossword puzzle answers to the clue 'enthusiasm' -- what would I find?"*

Well, I found over 200 answers to the clue 'enthusiasm' for crossword puzzles! So I just thought I'd just share all of those with you this morning ... **[Congregation laughs]** And that will basically be my talk! I'll just give you all those words, and then we'll be done.

Alright; I won't quite do that. But I do want to share with you some of them, because they're fun. And, as you listen to them, I want you just to feel the energy of them. Just feel if anything happens in your body as I'm sharing these words. I get kind of "tingly" as I listen to these words! So just notice how you

feel in your body and emotionally when you hear these synonyms -- we'll call them synonyms -- at least, according to the crossword puzzle they are .. for the word "enthusiasm." So, Greta (the sign language interpreter), you ready for me? Okay! **[Laughs]** Here we go!

Appreciation. Ardency. Bliss. Bounce. Buoyancy. Cheerfulness. Delight. Determination. Devotion. That's a beautiful one, isn't it? Devotion.

Ecstasy. Effervescence. Beyond what you find in the Alka Seltzer cup, right?

Elation. Enjoyment. Excitement. Exhilaration. Expectancy. You still with me? Okay; good ... because we're about halfway done. **[Congregation and Rev. Michele laugh]** These are in alphabetical order, by the way, if you hadn't figured that out. You did figure that out, right? Exactly!

Okay; Exuberance. Fervor. Flare. You kind of feeling these a little bit?

Gaiety. Get Up and Go. Glow. Guts. I like that one.

Happiness. Heartiness. High Spirits. Inspiration. Joy. Liveliness

And my favorite: Moxie. **[Congregation laughs]**

Optimism. Passion. Perseverance.

My second favorite: Pizzazz. Positivism. Resourcefulness. Sparkle. Sprightliness. We're getting through the alphabet here, aren't we?

Spunk. Thrill. Vigor. Vitality. Vivacious. Wholeheartedness. Zeal. And Zest.

Whew! **[Congregation laughs and applauds]** That was a list! Yeah; that was a list! And that's what I'm talking about: enthusiasm! Not just enthusiasm, but we might take all of those words and put them together and say those are synonyms for "enthusi-usi-usiasm." That was a term coined by one of my mentors, Dr. Domenic Polifrone from the Hollywood Church of Religious Science. He used to talk about enthusiasm. I love that!

I believe we're meant to live a life of enthusiasm! That's why we're here; to do that.

But you might be thinking right now, "Yeah, Michelle; that sounds all well and fine. Well and good. But I've got 'stuff.'" That's a spiritual term, by the way. "I have 'stuff.'" **[Congregation and Rev. Michele laugh]** "I've got stuff going on in my life that's challenging. I have challenges in my life."

Or, just look at the world if you want to see challenges. You can see challenges everywhere. We look. "So why am I supposed to listen to this chick up there on the stage telling me to be enthusiastic when life is tough?"

Well I am suggesting that we be enthusiastic. And I want to dig in to that a little bit by looking at: what exactly does the word 'enthusiasm' mean? I mean, we've got all these synonyms, but -- again, I love to look at words, and dig into their core. Like, what is the root word, and what does that mean to us for "enthusiasm"? So we're going to look at that. And then: how do we enliven or activate enthusiasm in us and through us? So that's our mission this morning. What does it really mean? Really mean? And how do we activate it?

Being the lover of words and loving to look at words, I decided to look up the root -- the meaning. Where did the word "enthuse" -- which, of course, is the root of "enthusiasm." Where did "enthuse" come from? And it's actually founded in a Greek word. Two Greek words: "en" and "theos." Theos.

Now back at my former church -- I see some of you sitting out there, and I love it! I used to ... and it was, by the way, a much smaller Sanctuary ... a much smaller Sanctuary than this. But I loved to ask questions and get responses. And I always had a bowl of chocolate up here. Right? I had a bowl of chocolate, and if you gave me the right answer, I would toss chocolate! **[Congregation applauds; Rev. Michele laughs]** Yeah; next time I might have to bring some chocolate. But I don't know if I could make the back row. So if I do ever toss chocolate, you can't answer back there, because I just ... I won't/can't make it! **[Laughs]**

I don't have chocolate today, but I still would like to ask: Anybody know what "theos" means? [Congregant shouts out: "God"] Thank you! God! Theology is the study of God! So the word "theos" means "God."

"Enthuse": God within. God within! That's what the word means!

So enthusiasm is expressing our God-filled-ness. Enthusiasm is expressing the God within us. Hmm. That puts a new spin on that word, doesn't it? And because of that, it is not a result. Enthusiasm is not a result of something good happening to us. Or even anticipation.

You know, I'm enthusiastic. So I was, in fact, enthusiastic to come here and be with you this morning. We often think that enthusiasm comes because of something that's going on out here. But really enthusiasm is in here, and it causes the stuff out there.

So I told you I would tell you the third definition according to the *American Heritage Dictionary*. And I'm going to share with you the definition, but then I'm going to change it just a little bit. Because I like to do that; I like to just change things just a smidge. I've been known to give a quote by Ernest Holmes or Charles Fillmore -- or anybody -- and then say, "*And now I'm going to make it a Michele-ism. I'm going to change it a little bit.*" I've been known to do that with Jesus' quotes, too; I think that might be a smidge sacrilegious, but I've done it anyway!

So here's [**laughs**] the definition first from the dictionary. The third definition of "enthusiasm."

*"Ecstasy arising from supposed possession by a god."*

I'm going to remove the "supposed"; I'm going to remove the word "a," and I'm going to simply say:

*"Ecstasy arising from possession by God."*

Isn't that nice? Enthusiasm is ecstasy arising from possession by God. So it is a natural part of who we are! We are naturally enthusiastic! And, again, it's a cause, not an effect.

So say with me: "*Enthusiasm is a cause.*" [**Congregation**]: "*Enthusiasm is a cause.*"

*"Enthusiasm is my cause."* [**Congregation**]: "*Enthusiasm is my cause.*"

Nice! I'm going to give you an opportunity to say a couple of affirmations later ... and I do expect more enthusiasm when you say them. [**Congregation laughs**] I'm just giving you a heads up on that.

Ernest Holmes, the founder of Religious Science in my lineage says:

*"Enthusiasm is a complete assurance and confidence that there is a Power within us greater than we are, but that we can use. It should be our purpose to awaken this joy in us again and again, and enter into the game of living; not sitting on the sidelines as though we were isolated, but on the field ourselves. It is God's enthusiasm and it becomes ours upon acceptance."*

It is God's enthusiasm, and it becomes ours upon acceptance! So that last line is how we activate it.

So the second thing we're going to talk about this morning is how to activate it. And now we know our God selves -- the enthusiasm that is innately within us: How do we activate it? By accepting it! It really is that simple! It's not some deep esoteric thing that we have to concentrate on, or it's not some ritual that we have to engage in ... We simply have to accept it! Accept that that is who and what we are. And when we place ourselves in that acceptance, and we live from our innate enthusiasm, we get into the flow. We get into the ever-creative "tide" of life.

So I want to be clear that I am not ... I don't think and I'm not suggesting that enthusiasm means denying facts. There are facts in our lives that perhaps "suck-eth." [**Congregation laughs**] That is also a very spiritual term. They just do sometimes. They just do! Or situations out in the world "suck-eth," as well.

So being enthusiastic does not mean I'm denying that, does not mean I'm not dealing with that. I'm not spiritually by-passing that. You all know what that term means, right? Spiritual by-pass is: **[in syrupy falsetto voice]** "It's all good; it's all God! I don't hurt right now; it's okay."

No! If you hurt, you hurt! And, at the same time -- as we are allowing ourselves to be human and feel what we feel -- we can tap into that innate enthusiasm. And when we do that -- because it is a causative power -- we have an ability to shift conditions and circumstances. Because that's the way life works!

So I want to give you some examples of when you step into your enthusiasm, how things can change. And I'm going to use -- I want to point this out so you can catch it -- I'm going to use some of those cross word puzzle synonyms for enthusiasm as I share with you ways in which things can change.

So when you awaken your innate enthusiasm for life, and bring that awakened-ness to all that you, shift does happen. And let us just be clear that I said "shift." [Congregation laughs] And it's a shift toward the good, toward the hole -- W-H-O-L-E - -and toward the loving.

It means when you zealously embrace the fullness of the life that you have been blessed with, you become a blessing.

It means when you share your gifts with heartiness and joy, you have more opportunities to share your gifts. And we all have gifts to share!

It means when we bring vitality and get up and go to everything we do, we have a feeling of more aliveness than we've had prior to that.

It means when you are passionate about the idea of coming from your sacred self -- from your divine nature -- then you become a walking, talking, living testament to Source, to Spirit, to God. And other people will see it in you, and they'll want "*what she's having*." Oh, no; that's a line from a movie. We won't go there! **[Congregation laughs]** They'll want that; they'll say, "*How did you get that?*" And you'll say, "*I got it from Unity of Phoenix! Come here!*" See? That's how you market! That is how you market this amazing church! You bring passionate feelings coming from your spiritual core!

It means when you are spunky, you're a magnet for your good!

And it means: when you have "guts," you move forward despite your fear, and you do great things.

So I have a question for you on that one. I know some of you out there have something great that has been niggling at you that you're ready to step out and do. That you're ready to experience, to express, to be. There's something there that Spirit is nudging you, "*Go do that.*" And yet, you're afraid. You're fearful. And you haven't done it yet, because you've let the fear stand in your way.

Alright; be brave here and raise your hand if that's true for you. Oh yeah; look at that! Yup, yup, yup, yup, yup! So to you who raised your hand, I say, "*Get some guts, friends.*" Which is another word for enthusiasm! And take one step. It could be a baby -- *pequeno!* -- baby step! But take a step! And your assignment -- your homework -- for this week is ...

Even those of you who did not raise your hand, I suspect there is something that ... There is something there; you were just being share. You haven't quite got the "guts" thing yet. **[Congregation laughs]** But that's okay! That's okay! You'll get it! I know what's happening right here in the front row; I see it.

**[Laughs]**

So I want you to take a step in that direction. Little step; whatever it is. And I invite you to do that before Wednesday. Now why do I say before Wednesday? Because, by Wednesday, you will have completely forgotten about this. Totally forgotten. You will know, "*Maybe she said to do something, but I don't remember what that was.*" So if you do it before Wednesday -- I'd even suggest before Monday evening, just to be sure! -- but before Wednesday, take that step in spite of your fear, and move forward and do great things that you are meant to do.

So a couple more. What does it mean?

It means when you bring flair to all you do, you get noticed in the best ways possible.

And it means when you live from bliss, you live in bliss.

Once again, the power of enthusiasm is to create, not just to react. The power of enthusiasm to be responsible, not just responsive. The power to be a cause for good in your life and in the lives of others. The power to do great things is found in your enthusiasm.

So I'm going to ask you to say somethings with me, and I already gave you notice. [Congregation laughs] I gave you notice that I want you to say this with zest, zeal, wholeheartedness, ardor, fervor. In other words, enthusiasm! Are you ready? Okay! Here we go!

*"I have the power to be the cause for good."* **[Congregation]:** *"I have the power to be the cause for good."*

*"I have the power to do great things."* **[Congregation]:** *"I have the power to do great things."*

*"And that power is found in my enthusiasm."* **[Congregation]:** *"And that power is found in my enthusiasm."*

Eh. **[Congregation laughs]** Not bad ... I'm saying not bad. But I do think we can do better. So I want you to sit up straight. Come on. Sit up straight! Put your shoulders back. Oh, look at you! Look at you! I love that! And I want you to say with great enthusiasm:

*"I have the power to be the cause for good."* **[Congregation]:** *"I have the power to be the cause for good."*

*"I have the power to do great things."* **[Congregation]:** *"I have the power to do great things."*

*"And that power is found in my enthusiasm."* **[Congregation]:** *"And that power is found in my enthusiasm."*

Give yourselves a hand for that. Very good! Nicely done! **[Rev. Michele and congregation applaud]**

So now here's your second assignment. Remember your first assignment was go take that step. Your second assignment is going to be right here in this room. I am going to read again that list of crossword puzzle answers to the clue "enthusiasm." I'm going to read it slowly; I was requested from way back in the room in first service to slow down, so I really appreciated that. I will try to say it slowly. And if anybody thinks I'm going to fast, just holler at me. I don't mind.

But I'm going to say the list again, and I want you ... Actually, if you have something to write on, it would be great. Or I will ask -- which is not a request usually made from the pulpit -- to pull out your cell phone [laughs] and write in your Notes. Take a Note of a word -- or a few words -- that, like, resonate with you. Like, really resonate with you. Like, I said my two were "Moxie" and "Pizzazz." Love those words!

So I want you to identify a word -- or two or three; however many you want -- that can be your sort of touchstone words for enthusiasm. Okay; are you ready? Okay. So here we go again with the list:

Appreciation.

Ardency. By the way, if you need to know how to spell any, just holler I'll spell it.

Bliss. Bliss!

Bounce.

Buoyancy.

Cheerfulness.

Delight.

Determination.

Devotion.

Ecstasy. Ecstasy ... not spelled with an "X," by the way! Ecstasy!

Effervescence.

Elation.

Enjoyment.

Excitement.

Exhilaration.

I'm going to pause and do a check. Anybody found a word yet? Okay. Because many of you have found a word already. Obviously, we're not done yet. Megan, are you really trying to write every word.

**[Congregant responds: "No; I've got three."]** Oh, good! Okay; I'm just seeing a lot of this ... Okay, then, you're texting; you've got to stop that! **[Congregation laughs]** Because I'm seeing a lot of activity there! **[Laughs]** Okay, here we go.

Did we do Expectancy already? Did I already do that line? Exuberance? Did we get that one? Okay, so who's not paying attention? Some of you are saying "yes," and some of you are saying "no." So I'm not sure whether I got that line or not; we'll do it again just in case.

Expectancy.

Exuberance.

Fervor.

Flair.

Gaiety.

Get Up and Go.

Glow.

And here's: Guts. Guts!

Happiness.

Heartiness.

High Spirits.

Inspiration.

Joy.

Liveliness.

My favorite: Moxie.

Optimism.

Has anybody found anything in the list in the second part of the list? Okay; good! Good, good, good, good, good. If you haven't found yours yet, we've only got about 10 more to go. So let's kick it up and find it here!

Passion.

Perseverance.

My second favorite: Pizzazz.

Positivism.

Resourcefulness.

Sparkle.

Sprightliness.

Spunk.

Thrill.

Vigor.

Vitality.

Vivaciousness. That's a good one, too.

Wholeheartedness.

Zeal.

And last, but definitely not least: Zest.

Everybody get one? Yeah? More than one? Alright!

So on the count of three -- I'm going to count it backwards -- I want you to yell out with great zest, enthusiasm and zeal your word. If you have more than one, just pick one. Alright? Are you ready? And I want you to like blow my hair back! **[Congregation laughs]**

### 3 -2 - 1! **[Congregants yell out their words]**

So here's the cool thing. I couldn't ... I did hear "Inspiration"; I don't know where that came from. I heard that one from the front. But I couldn't really understand many of what you said. But the feeling of getting that; we are very lucky to be up here, because it felt so good to have that wave of that energy of enthusiasm coming at me. Just like it feels to the world when you send your enthusiasm -- or your zest or your zeal or your ardency or whatever your word was -- out into the world.

I love Charles Fillmore's statement that he made was he as 90-something years old. Some of you will know this statement; it is so amazing:

*"I fairly sizzle with zeal and enthusiasm and spring forth with a mighty faith to do the things that are to be done by me today."*

So your assignment -- your mission, should you choose to accept it -- is to do the things that are to be done by you today. To do the amazing things that you are meant to do. To go out and create your good through your enthusiasm -- enthusiasm -- for life!

So I always like to end on something brilliant. [Congregation laughs] Sometimes it's more difficult than others to come up with that! But something that will really anchor it; bring it home for you. Like just say, "Yeah; I got that! I'm grounded in that."

And so I'm going to do that this morning perhaps in a slightly different way. I'm going to tell you about the farmer who had a pig. **[Congregation laughs]** He had a sow, actually -- a female pig -- that he wanted to breed. He wanted to have piglets. And so he learned of a farmer across, a ways across, who had a boar.

He called the farmer and said, *"May I bring my pig over to breed with your boar?"* And he said, *"Of course; yes!"*

So that next morning, the farmer loaded his sow in the truck and he hauled her over to the other farm. Put her in the pen. Let them do their thing; gave them their privacy. Went in to have coffee with the other farmer. And he said to the other farmer, *"So is there any way that I'll know that this 'took'? Any sign that she'll give me to show me that she's pregnant?"*

And the farmer who owned the boar said, "Oh, absolutely! It's easy; it's simple. Tomorrow morning, if she's pregnant she will be walking around her pen in a circle." The farmer said, "Oh, well that's easy enough."

The next morning the farmer very excitedly looks out his window and looks at the pigsty. And, no; she's just lying in the mud like she always did. "Darn it! It didn't take!"

He loads her back in the truck; takes her off to the other farmer's farm. Puts her in the pen. Dah, dah, dah, dah. Let's 'em hmmm. Comes home.

Next morning, with great expectancy again he looks out the window and, uhm. She's lying in the mud once again. So, for the third time, he puts her in the truck. Hauls her off. They do their thing. Comes back. The next morning, he doesn't want to look. He just doesn't want to look. So he says to his wife, "Honey, will you look out the window and tell me what's happening? Tell me what's happening."

And she just says, "Hmmmm."

The farmer's like, "What does 'Hmmmm' mean? Is she lying in the mud like she has the last two days?"

And the wife says, "Ummm. No. No; that's not what she's doing."

"Oh, yeah! So she must be walking around in a circle in her pen!"

And the wife says, "Ummm. No; she's not doing that, either."

The farmer said, "Well, if she's not in the mud, she's not walking in a cirlce, what in the world is she doing?"

The wife says, "She is sitting in the truck honking the horn!"

That, my friends, is enthusiasm! God bless!!! **[Congregants laugh and applaud]**

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