

Enthusiasm + Discipline = Zeal

by Richard E. Bieber

Transforming enthusiasm into holy zeal requires discipline, which involves submitting to divine guidance, refining circumstances, and willed obedience.

Scripture: Matthew 5:4, Matthew 5:10, Luke 5:15, Luke 8:39, 2 Corinthians 1:5, 2 Corinthians 6:4, 2 Corinthians 12:10, 1 Peter 1:7

Topics: "Spiritual Discipline", "Christian Zeal"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the transformation of enthusiasm into holy zeal after encountering Jesus. Enthusiasm, though beautiful, is not enough to sustain us through trials; it must be tempered into a lasting zeal. This zeal is demonstrated through discipline: divine guidance, refining circumstances, willed obedience, persecution, and inward pain, leading to a deep, God-given zeal that drives believers to serve tirelessly and endure hardships without losing faith.

Transcript

When Jesus ordered the people he healed not to tell anyone, it wasn't exactly that they were disobedient, they just couldn't keep it to themselves. They had to tell someone. If that kind of enthusiasm doesn't spill out of your life after you've met Jesus, something is wrong. When a man is touched by the finger of the living God, it's going to shake him out of his apathy, he's going to come alive, he's going to open his mouth and praise God, he's going to tell somebody. And the multitude marveled and glorified God who had given such power to men.

And all the people when they saw it gave
praise to God.

Fear seized them all, and they glorified
God saying: "A great prophet has arisen
among us! God has visited his people."

They got enthused.

I'll go so far as to say that if you have never tasted

this awe,

this fear,

this wonder,

this joy,

it's doubtful whether you have ever met Jesus. Maybe
you've been sitting in church all your life, but you
haven't met Jesus.

When you meet Jesus, you don't sit there half asleep,
or split hairs over doctrine. When you meet Jesus
your whole being comes to the end of itself. All your
phony pretenses break and you're on your face. Next
thing you know, you're praising God and you don't care
what your friends think. You have some enthusiasm.

One of the signs that Jesus is paying a special visit
to your assembly is enthusiasm. You often find this
enthusiasm among the young, frequently outside the
our churches in some informal setting.

There are people who have a little zip. I don't mean
the ones with enthusiastic fronts, who say, "Praise
the Lord!" off the top of their heads. I mean the

ones whose hearts are running over with thanksgiving and glory to God.

One of the signs that Jesus is visiting an assembly is enthusiasm, life, joy. Those who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness get filled. Those who are seeking God with a whole heart get to know Jesus as they never knew him before and it shows.

But, enthusiasm is only the first phase. The joy of that wonderful day when Jesus came into your life won't carry you through the storms that lie ahead.

What happened to those people who spread the word all over the land of the wonderful things Jesus was doing? What happened to those people who gave him a King's welcome? ("Hosannah to the Son of David") They killed him within a week.

A bucket of cold water in the face, and your enthusiasm is dead. One false rumor, one lie of Satan, and your enthusiasm turns to hatred. On the day that your prayer is answered you think you have enough gratitude in your heart to last ten lifetimes. You can't do enough for Jesus. A month later, it's all gone. Enthusiasm does not last. It will not hold.

Granted, there are people, whole churches full of them, entire prayer groups, who seem to maintain enthusiasm for a long time. Five years - ten years. But it's the enthusiasm of a geranium in a hot house. The enthusiasm of a pampered child who has no idea how rough things can

be out there. They're "praisin' the Lord" all right.

But they're careful not to get too close to the place
where they might get hurt. They steer clear of the guy
who just might kick them in the teeth. They select
their fellow believers with care so as to be sure no one
will ever hurt their feelings. But, sooner or later,
they're caught off guard, down comes the bucket of water.

Their enthusiasm ends.

Enthusiasm has to be transformed into holy zeal. If it
had been enthusiasm driving Jesus to turn over the
tables of the money changers in the temple, they would
have had him arrested in five minutes. It was zeal....

"Zeal for thy house will consume me..."

and nobody can stop zeal, not even Satan. Enthusiasm
lasts until the first smack in the face. Zeal goes on
and on and on. Enthusiasm is beautiful, inspiring,
until its feelings get hurt. Zeal can't be hurt.

If it had been enthusiasm that drove Paul and Barnabas
forth from Antioch to take the gospel all over the Roman
world they would have quit by the time they got to
Cyprus. It was God-given Spirit-fired zeal that drove
them from city to city, from stoning, to beating, to
prison, through hardships and hunger, through one problem
after another, on and on, never looking back,
never giving up.

First, we have to get that enthusiasm. God give us more
of it! Tear down those pretenses and those reserves;

rip away those fears until every soul reading these words is rejoicing in victory of the Lamb with all their heart.

But then our enthusiasm has to be converted into holy zeal. God has to take the enthusiasm which he has given us and toughen it and temper it until it's the kind of zeal which will take us all the way to our cross.

Even our Lord was not permitted to have enthusiasm more than half-a-day. When he came up out of the Jordan and heaven opened and the Spirit descended on him, his heart was bursting with joy. The anointing had come. How long he had waited for this! But even for the Son of God, enthusiasm had to be tempered through discipline.

So, the Spirit drove him into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. And When Jesus walked out of that devil-haunted wilderness, his enthusiasm was transfigured into holy zeal.

Zeal to do the Father's will.

Zeal for the Father's house.

Zeal for the salvation of our lost race.

Zeal that was still there when he hung dying on the Cross.

And every man or woman who has ever followed Jesus with more than superficial obedience, has had to have their enthusiasm tempered into zeal-- through discipline.

Discipline!

God has to put us through discipline: training.

1. The discipline of divine guidance -

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit

into the wilderness to be tempted
by the devil.

Led by the Spirit into a wilderness!

After every outpouring of the Spirit, after every vision, the Spirit will call you into a wilderness of trial where it's all made real. You can walk away from that wilderness, you can pretend you don't hear, but you know the Spirit is saying, "this way, this way".

Jesus was not led by the Spirit to set up headquarters in Jerusalem.

Jesus was not led to start a revival campaign in Galilee.

He was led into a wilderness of trial.

He could have avoided it as many of us are doing. He could have postponed it. But Jesus could not begin his ministry until he submitted himself to the discipline of divine guidance, that takes him right through Satan's wilderness.

And our work waits until we submit to the discipline of divine guidance. The Spirit is not leading a single one of us on the road to fame, success and power. He's leading us to the wilderness. Are we following?

2. The discipline of refining circumstances.

In afflictions, hardships, calamities,
beating, imprisonments, tumults, labors.

Hard circumstances.

Things going wrong.

Confusion:

"If only things would quiet down so I could be a Christian." "How can I concentrate on Jesus when every thing's in an uproar all the time?"

"O, for a little peace!

O, for a few quiet days!

O, for a little relief from the pressure!"

You're kicking against the goads God is sending your way for your own good.

If we're ever going to be anything but hot house geraniums, we're going to have to go through the discipline of refining circumstances. Anybody can follow Jesus when things go right.

Can you follow Jesus when things go wrong? God is letting that confusion and chaos and calamity come for your own good.

He's training you. It's necessary. And it's worth it.

3. The discipline of willed obedience in the middle of the confusion.

By purity, by knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, truthful speech.

In those days of your first enthusiasm you began to walk a new path. It was easy. You hardly had to think about it. You didn't want that old life anymore. But now, in the middle of the desert with devils all around like howling wolves, the winds blasting dirt in your face, the tempter comes back and pulls one temptation out of his bag after another.

"How about a little break from all this purity?"

"Why don't you smash that guy's jaw?"

"Why don't you soften the message a little?"

"They're making a sucker out of you!"

You're tempted, really tempted, but you will to obey God. And, as you will to obey, the Holy Spirit gives you all the strength you need.

4. The discipline of persecution -

as imposters and yet true, as unknown and yet well known, as dying and behold we live, as punished and not killed.

Lies begin to circulate. You start getting the cold shoulder from your friends. The word is out that you've flipped. It's part of the training.

You have to be able to endure persecution, not theoretically, but in fact. Just be sure that none of the accusations they make against you are true. Be sure that you're not an imposter, or a busybody, or anything but a fool for Christ.

5. The discipline of inward pain -

as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing,
as poor, yet making many rich,
as having nothing and yet possessing all things.

Long before He felt the nails going into His hands, the pain was in His heart. Jesus wept for Jerusalem. His heart broke for those multitudes. And out of that inward sorrow flowed life and power, healing and

salvation for the world.

People say, "Doesn't God care about what's going on in this world right now? Doesn't he see?" If they only knew! God opened the door to heaven for this perverse race at a cost we'll never fathom: the death of His Son. And the multitudes walk right by that open door, deliberately taking the road that they know leads into darkness, and you think that doesn't cause God pain? Now God gives you a taste of His own sorrow for this world and what it's doing. It's like having a sword in your heart that can't be pulled out.

"As sorrowful ,yet always rejoicing,
as poor yet making many rich....."

Now you have zeal.

It's no longer enthusiasm but holy God-given zeal.

You are able to go out there and serve, taking whatever the world dishes out, and still keep singing praises to God, and seeking the lost and binding up their wounds.

You don't get sour,
you don't get bitter,
you don't sit around feeling sorry
for yourself,
you keep right on going.

The days that lie ahead are going to separate hearts that bubble with enthusiasm from hearts that burn with zeal. Enthusiastic Christians are going to be

struck dumb. They're going to crawl away and disappear
in the mist.

The only believers left will be those who travel the
road of discipline, build their lives, not on the sand,
but on the rock of reality, walk through their baptism
of fire, obey, when everything else is
going wrong.

These saints of God will keep going, driven by a zeal
that Satan himself can't quench. They'll still be doing
the job when the King comes back.

May we be among them.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/richard-e-bieber/enthusiasm-discipline-zeal/>

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