

THE

# HARVESTER

"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." [Luke 10:2]

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## PUT ENTHUSIASM INTO IT!

One thing that really makes a hard job go easier is good old-fashioned enthusiasm! Somehow enthusiasm makes the work more pleasant and joyous. It makes things move along faster and seem more significant and rewarding. Daily chores would never be dull if we put some 'enthusiasm' into them. Without enthusiasm, life would never reach that upper level of ecstasy.

Now let us consider our spiritual life and how does 'enthusiasm' affect it? Is there any enthusiasm at all? Can it be seen by others? Do we feel any excitement when we are called to Christ? Are we eager to serve our Lord under any condition that may exist? Or are

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we cold and robot-like members of the church who see the life of a Christian as nothing more than a dull routine? Maybe we lack E-N-T-H-U-S-I-A-S-M! And maybe we do not have this special gift because we do not know what it is or what it can do.

The dictionary meaning of 'enthusiasm' is: a great or intense feeling for a subject or cause. It can also be defined as "an excitement of the mind". If we truly have this thing called 'enthusiasm', it means we get "excited" about helping others who are less fortunate than we and this "excitement" fills both our minds and our bodies! It means we are "eager" to attend church services and gospel meetings. We are eager, too, for any opportunity to preach the Word to lost and dying souls and we do take advantage of those opportunities! Enthusiasm also means that we have a very strong desire for Christianity, that there is no better way of life ... period! Now, let us ask ourselves again: can we say we have 'enthusiasm' in our spiritual life?

There are several things that enthusiasm does for the disciple of Christ. Among others, enthusiasm replaces fear! In speech class I remember being told that to overcome the fear and nervousness of speaking before a group, a person had to learn to become 'enthusiastic' about his subject. In a similar manner, any concern or anxiety that a Christian may feel about his religious life can be easily conquered with ENTHUSIASM!

The secret lies in the fact that enthusiasm is a consuming emotion. It will absorb and overwhelm any fear we may contain. Was it not the Psalmist who described his enthusiasm like this: *"My zeal hath consumed me"* (Psa. 119:139)? His enthusiasm or excited state of mind was so consuming that he declared it

overwhelmed him. Enthusiasm becomes so consuming that we will not have time to be scared! It makes us look forward to positive things. Our minds and our actions become so filled with good deeds and good expectations that there is not any room for things like fear or anxiety or complaining. Enthusiasm gives us optimistic attitudes! Oh, couldn't we use more enthusiasm in the world today?

Enthusiasm is also a necessary ingredient in the part of our faith. That is, it goes hand in hand with our faith. Remember how faith moves mountains (Matt. 17:20)? Well, so does enthusiasm! Haven't we ever seen people get so excited that they were stirred to action? These people have so much enthusiasm that it seems as if nothing is beyond their reach. The apostle Paul was one who was full of enthusiasm to the point that he preached the Gospel to anybody, and I mean, ANYBODY. His enthusiastic faith led him to speak before angry mobs and high ranking officials like Festus and Agrippa. He preached to the hostile Jews and to the idolatrous Gentiles alike. He did not back down or hold off from anyone. Without a doubt, Paul had enthusiasm. How else could such a man have endured the sufferings listed in 2 Cor. 11 without a bit of enthusiasm for Christ in his heart?

A third observation about what enthusiasm can do is that it becomes contagious! Once it is started, it can spread through a congregation stronger than a wildfire. When the Corinth church decided to help the poor saints in Jerusalem, their enthusiasm sparked other congregations in the area. Paul wrote, "*Your zeal hath provoked very many*" (2 Cor. 9:2). Likewise I have seen congregations where perhaps a few members were enthusiastic about the church and its work. And after some time, a small change would begin to

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take place. Suddenly there was more life and energy and spirit. The enthusiasm of a few had spread to the majority of the congregation! Now the members were working together and accomplishing more. Unfortunately, this seems to be the exception nowadays. Most churches today really appear to lack enthusiasm. I'm afraid some congregations show no "vital signs" because their members lack enthusiasm. Is this what the Lord intended?

Finally, I believe that enthusiasm is unmistakable evidence that we love our Lord. If we love Christ, we will keep His commandments (Jn. 14:15). However, we will keep His commandments with ENTHUSIASM! Notice what it says in Eccl. 9:10, *"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might"*. The implication is that when we obey God, we need to put our whole sould into it. We must obey Him actively, energetically, and enthusiastically! If we will set the example and be enthusiastic, then there will be no question whether we love God or not.

The word "enthusiasm" comes from a couple of greek words, 'en + theos', which literally means 'in God'. To truly love God, we have to be IN HIM. We have to be 'enthused'. Does not the scriptures command us to *"love the Lord thy*

*God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind"* (Matt. 22:37)? Tell me, how can that possibly be done without any enthusiasm at all? It simply cannot.

Most of us show very little enthusiasm in our spiritual affairs. We have forgotten that enthusiasm is a wonderful asset for the disciple of Christ. Look at what it can do! It replaces our fear. It stirs us to action. It is very contagious. And it proves our love for God. Therefore, let's put enthusiasm into everything we do!

RAY McMANUS

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. What king mentioned in the Old Testament was forced to become a vegetarian for seven periods of time?
2. Did God actually speak to Jacob during his dream?
3. What is it called, if one does not do the good he knows he should do?
4. What does Proverbs say gives health to the bones?
5. In addition to gold and silver, what did Achan steal?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. What prophet said, "Set up road signs; put up guideposts"? JEREMIAH (Jer. 31:21)
2. Paul told the Romans he planned to stop there on his way to where? SPAIN (Rom. 15:24)

3. What did Jesus say to His mother while on the cross? WOMAN, BEHOLD THY SON! (John 19:26)

4. What prime minister wrote a book of the Bible? DANIEL (Dan. 2:48)

5. What blood relationship was Aaron to Moses? OLDER BROTHER (Exo. 7:1, 7)

## CHOCOLATE CAKE

For those who are true lovers of chocolate, there is almost nothing which tastes better. Chocolate candy bars, chocolate ice cream, chocolate pie, chocolate chip cookies, chocolate milk, and of course, chocolate cake. Freshly baked, moist, mouth-watering chocolate cake topped with chocolate icing. But almost no one eats this type of food without some reservation. It's full of calories, fat, cholesterol and many other things we would rather do without.

Eating a piece of chocolate cake certainly has its advantages. It tastes soooo good. But at the same time it had its disadvantages. Put simply, it can make you fat. So before you sit down to enjoy that piece of cake you mentally ask yourself if you should have it. You are actually weighing the advantages and disadvantages of eating the piece of cake to decide which is more important.

If you really stop and think about it we do this very same thing every day with everything we do. We may not actually think of it in this way, but we are still going through the same basic process. When the alarm clock goes off in the morning you have to decide which is more important: getting a couple of hours more sleep or keeping your job.

On the way to work you have to decide if it's worse to be a couple of minutes late or to risk getting a speeding ticket.

In everything we do there are advantages and disadvantages. Our lives are nothing more than a series of these decisions where we decide which path is more appealing. Sometimes we make the right decision, sometimes we don't. Sometimes we even know one direction is best for us, but we still choose the other. That's like eating a piece of chocolate cake when you are supposed to be on a diet.

Many of these decisions we make are trivial in nature. Others are not. There are some which are of tremendous importance. Decisions which will affect us for the rest of our lives, and beyond. When we make these decisions it is vital that we take the utmost care in weighing the consequences of each path presented to us. And never forget, the eternal consequences of any action always outweigh the earthly consequences.

Living a Christian life requires a great deal of patience and self control. There is a multitude of things in the world which man finds to be pleasurable. The problem is that many of these things are also sinful. We must learn to control our carnal urges realizing that the joys of Heaven will be far greater than anything we could ever hope for on the earth.

All of our lives are unique and take individual paths. But overall there are two paths we can travel. Righteous and unrighteous. We can choose to pursue the pleasures of this life, which amounts to little more than a few crumbs from the cake. Or we can choose to pursue eternal life where the whole cake can be ours, icing included.

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## FOR WHOM DO YOU PLAY?

It becomes obvious, while reading the sports section of the newspaper, that all ball players are playing for different people. Some say they play the sport for a respected coach or close friend. Some play for the good of the whole team. Some will even admit that they are playing to impress those who vote in the ranking polls. And most participants are merely playing for themselves. But everyone is playing FOR someone!

Now let us turn our attention to a more serious game -- the game of spiritual life and the souls who "play" in it. When it comes to religious matters, for whom are we "playing"? Are we playing for the Devil? The god of money? For our friends? Our parents? Ourselves? Or can we honestly say we are doing it all FOR God? For whom do you play?

RAY

<p>Some folks sow wild oats six days a week, then go to church on Sunday and pray for a crop failure!</p>
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Editor's Note: I wish to give credit and heartfelt thanks at this time for those who contributed articles to this paper in 1993. They were: Bart Barrontine, John Clark, Harry Cobb, James McDonald, J.W. Moore, Bobby Ramsey, and Tony Whiddon. I would also like to express my gratitude to members of the Sun Hill Road and Hokes Bluff congregations who have greatly supported this work. They have assisted with the mailing permit, address corrections, financial donations, copier equipment & supplies, and much encouragement! Please remember this paper in your prayers, that it will accomplish God's will in preparing and sending forth laborers into His harvest (Luke 10:2).