

# THE GOOD NEWS GAZETTE

## THINK ON THESE THINGS...

PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9

### ENTHUSIASM

Listening to Earl Nightengale's Laws of Success recently, the topic of enthusiasm was discussed. I enjoy listening to encouraging messages by men and women who have been there, done that, and been successful in life. I'm not talking about having an abundance of possessions or monetary success, but the success that comes with a satisfaction that you are doing what you are meant to do and happy with where you are and where you are going. In Philippians chapter 4, Paul tells the church saints, elders, and deacons at Philippi that he had "learned to be content whatever the circumstances." Paul continues in verse twelve to say, "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want." Next, Paul gives the answer to the secret in verse thirteen. He says, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." Paul is enthusiastically positive about what he can do. He doesn't say he can do some things, but **everything**. The strength and the power to do **everything** comes from God and is bound up in Paul's relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Paul was an apostle and a giant in the faith, but what about me in my world today. These verses seem far easier said than done.

Like steam to a locomotive, enthusiasm is one of the most important factors in moving forward with goals. With enthusiasm, work seems lighter and progress seems faster. Enthusiasm engrosses us with a passion for our pursuit. Enthusiasm charges us with seemingly effortless energy. A lack of knowledge and even competency can be thoroughly overshadowed by great enthusiasm for a desired goal. Enthusiasm is a catalyst for progress. With enthusiasm, our minds, seemingly unsolicited, evoke

plans on how to accomplish dreams and ideas that appear altogether impossible. An absence of enthusiasm can leave a wake of apathy and pessimism that drowns dreams and derails plans.

Pessimism and procrastination are trump cards the devil plays to stifle enthusiasm, prevent progress and sabotage plans. I know these cards well as the devil has played these particular cards quite effectively on me all my life. Sometimes I recognize the play but often don't. The devil pulls out the cards of pessimism and procrastination at my most vulnerable moments. He even uses friends and family to carry out his purposes. Pessimism sneaks up to say, "You can't do that.

You're not any good. No one likes you or what you do." and "Why don't you quit." Procrastination says, "Not today." and "It won't hurt to wait a little longer." It says, "You'll have time tomorrow." Procrastination keeps me busy with the unimportant while pressing out what's very important and even urgently important. Pessimism and procrastination are the reasons why I haven't written this newsletter for two

months. That, and the third card the devil dealt me - pain. Pain with health issues and family concerns, like a wound that wouldn't heal, has limited my ability to physically eat and sleep well for many months now.

This triad of pessimism, procrastination, and pain produced both discouragement and sadness. They robbed me of much of my enthusiasm so that I became less effective and energetic towards the goals I had set. Though I often feel alone during these difficult times, when I really think about it, I know I'm not. No one really is. In fact Christians are told to expect difficulties and trials. First Peter 4:12 says, "Dear friends, do not be surprised at



the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of Glory and of God rests on you.” This passage is counter intuitive to me. Feeling blessed, overjoyed, and happy with suffering is not my normal, physical reaction to problems. It takes some deliberate cognitive awareness and faith to wrap my mind around these verses.

The Bible confirms that the devil watches to take advantage of us in our down and difficult times. First Peter 5: 8 warns, “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” The first two commands of this passage tell me that being self-controlled and alert are key to dealing with the devil and his ploys to harm and steal my enthusiasm. Self-control involves discipline and training. It is an internal skill that must be developed. Self-discipline is not based on what a parent, spouse, or authority figure instructs, requires, or demands. Self-control is based on one’s own knowledge and skill to self-regulate behaviors and actions. Self-discipline, like learning to play an instrument or a sport, requires practice, patience and perseverance.

The second command in this passage is to be alert. Being alert prepares me to anticipate and foresee potential problems in order to avoid them altogether or minimize their effects on my life. In past months, I had become distracted by the many things going on in my life (ploys of the devil). I let things people said discourage and dissuade me. I didn’t hear well the good or positive things meant to encourage me. I let physical health issues overshadow my goals. I didn’t keep foremost in my mind that my “struggle was not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:12)

Because I was not alert, I didn’t get fully-dressed for the battle each day. Ephesians 6:13 says, “Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground.” This passage doesn’t say “if” the day of evil comes but “when” it comes. There is no doubt that the devil will make it difficult for all seeking to serve God. We see the evidence on the news every day. John 10:10 tells us “The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy...” Christians continue to be persecuted all over the world. Men, women and even little children that claim the name of Jesus are being fined, imprisoned, tortured, and executed in many countries around the world, including our own. When the devil gets me distracted without my full armor on, I am less effective in dealing with day to day issues in a Godly way. I’m also more likely to be hurt. The devil likes it when I am off track, discouraged, or feel defeated. That vision of

the devil being happy that he has me off track really ticks me off. On the positive side, this mental picture engages my competitive nature. God has freely provided the armor I need to stand my ground. I just need to put it on. There is a belt of truth, a breastplate of righteousness, readiness with the gospel of peace to cover my feet, a shield of faith “with which you can extinguish **all** the flaming arrows of the evil one” (Ephesians 6:16), a helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. This armor is available to prepare and protect all God’s servants.

I want to become more self-disciplined by getting fully dressed with God’s armor. I want to remember to be alert and watchful for the schemes the devil uses on me, like procrastination, pessimism, and pain. When I am aware of the devil’s game, I am less likely to be incapacitated or handicapped in my effectiveness in the Lord’s service. I will be able to keep the level of my enthusiasm high.

James 4:7 says, “Submit yourselves then, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you.” When I humbly turn to God and away from sin, James says “he will lift you up.” There are two things I like in this passage. First, if I draw close to God, he draws close to me and will take care of me. Second, James says “resist the devil and he will flee from you.” When I recognize and resist the devil, he has no power over me. In fact, he runs from me. How amazing is that? That’s what the verse says. The devil runs away when I resist him. When I am alert, I’ll recognize the devil’s work. I will be able to rebuke him with success. I can know that as I submit to the rulership of God, he will protect and keep me safe even in the difficult and discouraging times the devil sends my way. I will no longer be surprised at the difficulties, and have confidence that though I may receive some injuries or even lose a few battles, Jesus Christ has won the war over sin and death. In that way, I can be overjoyed and feel blessed as I Peter 4 describes. I can know as an adopted child of God, that my Father’s will— will be done on earth as it is in heaven. I can be confident that when God is for me, and nothing can prevail against me. (See Romans 8:31-39) I can, in this new year, renew my enthusiasm for God’s will and work in my life. I can be encouraged and hopefully encourage others to be enthusiastic while living on purpose, alert, self-disciplined, and confident lives in Christ. I think on these things and hope you will too.

**Robin Robbins House**



## What Does the Bible Say?

What authority did Jesus give to the twelve disciples?

Name the twelve apostles.

Who was the brother of Simon?

What was Simon's other name?

Who were the sons of Zebedee?

What was Matthew's job before becoming a disciple of Jesus?

Who was a Zealot?

What is a Zealot?

To what people did Jesus send the apostles?

What were the apostles not to take along on their journey?

What were the apostles to do in towns or homes that did not welcome or listen them?

The apostles were told to be as shrewd as what? and as innocent as what?

What did Jesus predict would happen to the apostles?

Who would give the apostles the words to say when they were arrested?

What did Jesus say all men would do to the apostles because of Jesus?

What were the apostles to do if they were persecuted?

Who did Jesus tell the apostles to fear?

What on the apostle's heads were numbered?

What is the significance of that fact?



What did Jesus say he would do to those who disown him?

Who did Jesus say was not worthy of him?

Who does Jesus say will not lose their reward?

**Answers to these questions can be found in Matthew chapter ten.**

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# Recipes to Defeat Discouragement

Read, recite aloud, repeat, and remember these verses to rid yourself of discouragement and reap a reward of righteousness and rest in our Redeemer.

Joshua 1:9  
 Psalm 27:14  
 Psalm 34:17-19  
 Psalm 55:22  
 Psalm 147:3  
 Isaiah 40:31  
 Isaiah 41:10  
 Isaiah 42:16  
 Jeremiah 29:11  
 Matthew 11:28-30

John 14:27  
 John 16:33  
 Romans 8:28  
 I Corinthians 9:24-27  
 II Corinthians 5:7  
 Galatians 6:9-10  
 Philippians 4:19  
 Hebrews 4:16  
 I Peter 1:3-9  
 I John 5:13-15

## Memory Verse

God is our refuge and strength,  
an ever-present help in trouble.

Psalm 46:1



May you fully  
 bloom in God's  
 garden!