

The Enthusiastic Style – Celebrating the Power of God
Acts 5:12-16, Eph 5:15-20

Well brothers and sisters, it is so very fitting that in our exploration of these nine different ways to grow spiritually... that we end up looking at the Enthusiastic Style - on Superbowl Sunday.

If we were to describe what it is like for those who experience God in the Enthusiastic style, we can make an easy comparison with being an enthusiastic football fan who is super excited about getting to watch their team play for the championship at the Superbowl.

And if you have ever had the chance to attend a Superbowl, or some other championship game – be it the Stanley Cup playoffs, the NBA Championships, the World Series or just a World Cup Soccer game, then you will know what I’m talking about.

There is an undeniable energy and enthusiasm that you experience in being part of it and it is kind of transformational.

Someone who is a sports fan might be the most mild-mannered, quiet and reserved person that you know, but... once they put on the jersey of their favorite sports team and get out to a game, well the team spirit gets a-hold of them and we see normal, laid back individuals go crazy.

They are jumping up out of their seats, cheering and yelling, giving high-fives and hugs to complete strangers sitting next to them, shouting insults at the opposing team, booing the officials and shouting and singing team cheers at the top of their lungs...

In the same way - when an Enthusiastic style person experiences God, and the Holy Spirit gets a hold of them, the enthusiasm and the energy is undeniable and leads to singing, clapping, dancing, raising your hands and shouting amen! Amen?

If you’ve ever been to a worship service in a church tradition that is Enthusiastic style you know what I’m talking about – it is definitely a celebration of the power of God.

Now It might be tempting to call this style Charismatic or Pentecostal – but there are too many stereotypes connected with these terms that can stand in the way of people realizing that their natural style of experiencing God is in these supernatural, powerful, miraculous ways.

And even if this is not your natural style, we might feel an attraction or admiration for this style because of it celebrates the spiritual power and presence of God that is at work in it.

I know many people who have attended an Enthusiastic style worship service who say *“Wow! That was awesome, that was amazing – I never knew people could be so excited about being a Christian, about singing praise to Jesus and being His followers – I wish worship at my church could be like that, I’d want to go every Sunday if worship was like that!!”*

Do you know what I mean? And we might try to encourage our fellow church goers to be more enthusiastic about worship so that it feels more energetic by saying something

like *“You should be as excited to worship Jesus in Church as you are for the Superbowl!”*

And I like how this comic plays that line of reasoning out... *“I tried that, it didn’t work out very well. They asked me to leave! Why’s that? ‘After the Sermon I dumped a Gatorade cooler on the pastor.”*

Now this joke really does make a great point brothers and sisters – so please hold off on the Gatorade, and the point is that you can’t fabricate the Enthusiastic Style by simply acting excited, or by playing or praying louder. The energy and excitement are not the results of pouring out some Gatorade – it’s the result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Now obviously dumping Gatorade on your pastor in a worship service is an over the top example about being excited to be at church – but the real life story of Gatorade is actually very helpful in illustrating why the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is needed and necessary for our spiritual growth and the

differences that experiencing God in the Enthusiastic style can bring about for us.

Back in 1965, the assistant coach for the University of Florida Gators football team asked some of the university physicians to figure out why so many of his players were being affected by the heat and heat related illnesses.

The researchers soon discovered two key factors that were causing the Gator players to 'wilt': the fluids and electrolytes the players lost through sweat were not being replaced, and the large amounts of carbohydrates the players' bodies used for energy were not being replenished.

The researchers then went to their lab, and formulated a carbohydrate-electrolyte beverage that could replace those key components lost through sweating and exercise. They called their concoction 'Gatorade'.

Soon after they introduced the Gatorade formula to the team, they began winning... by simply outlasting their opponents in

the heat, and they finished the season at 7–4. The team's success improved even more during the 1966 season, with the Gators finishing at 9–2 and winning the Orange Bowl for the first time ever in the history of the school.

So brothers and sisters, the importance of the Enthusiastic style and learning about it and growing in it is not so much about how we can make worship more exciting or energetic – but in the how the Holy Spirit empowers us to gain victory over the enemy and to overcome discouragement and disillusionment from whatever opposition we might face.

And if you are feeling beat up and burned out from trying to keep the faith in the midst of life challenges and enemy attacks... or if you are stuck in a rut in your relationship with God and you feel like its plateaued and you're wondering if sitting through sermons and services and helping others is all there is to the Christian life...

If you are looking for the spiritual reality of experiencing God...

Then brothers and sisters you are ready to learn about the Enthusiastic style and more importantly to engage in it for your natural Level A growth or for your opposite style Level B growth. Amen?

So if the Enthusiastic style is your natural style you probably already know that, not only because you feel comfortable and at home in the kind of worship service that I described earlier but because you have probably already had some kind of supernatural experiences with the Holy Spirit.

Maybe you found yourself speaking in tongues, or hearing the Holy Spirit speak to you to tell you to do something, or maybe you just knew some information about someone who was a complete stranger to you, or you have prayed for someone and they experienced a miraculous healing... whatever it was you've experienced something spiritual and supernatural.

And you just experienced it – it wasn't something that you conjured up or made happen.

Which makes sense because we can't manipulate or force the Holy Spirit to do things in our lives – He is the Sovereign God and He does what He chooses to do – and if you are wired for the Enthusiastic style it seems He chooses to work in your life in this way.

So how can you actively work at growing in the Enthusiastic style? Well brothers and sisters its about putting yourself in a position of openness, humility, and obedience with the Holy Spirit. So that as Jesus says in Matthew 25:23 those who are faithful with little will be given more.

You see when you have proven yourself faithful with the experiences the Holy Spirit has initially given you – then you will be entrusted with more. Does that make sense?

Ok then, the first way that you can create more openness and anticipation for experiencing the Holy Spirit is to sit down and read about the Holy Spirit in the scriptures.

Now I know that doesn't sound very enthusiastic and exciting at first – but when you read about the signs and wonders and

miracles and powerful workings of the Holy Spirit that are described in the scriptures this can stir up a desire in you to want to have more of what the Holy Spirit do in your life as well.

So we read the passage from Acts 5 this morning about how the Apostles did signs and wonders among the people in Jerusalem and vs. 15-16 tell how the Holy Spirit was working so powerfully through Peter that people were being healed as he passed by them and his shadow fell on them... amazing! And of course, the apostles were also delivering people from evil spirits and setting them free from the influences of demonization.

Now if the Enthusiastic style is not your natural style you're going to find these accounts to be sensational, and that might fascinate you or it might repel you, so I offer these scriptures verses which speak to that. 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20 says "*Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt*" and Luke 10:20 says "*Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.*"

But if the Enthusiastic style is your natural style I don't think you're going to be dealing with sensationalism – you know this is possible in some way because you've already had some level of experience of it in some way – so the question is whether you will open yourself up to allow the Holy Spirit to do more of this for you.

So, if you are... then the second way to grow is to pray to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to speak to you, work through you, teach you – to do more of this for you... in Jesus name.

The Holy Spirit is one of the persons of the Trinity – He's not a power to be wielded, He is God... and so we can ask Him to work in us and through us to accomplish His signs and wonders and miracles that are used to defeat the enemy and establish His Kingdom.

And of course, we ask this in Jesus name – not only because Jesus said that when He returned to the Father in heaven that He would send His Holy Spirit upon us – but when we ask in Jesus' name, it demonstrates that we are asking the Holy Spirit

to continue to what He did through Jesus, in Jesus' earthly ministry - through us, and this is what we want more of.

So brothers and sisters – believe this and pray this in faith and trust and the Holy Spirit will certainly answer our prayers and address whatever plateau or rut we are stuck in with God and bring us to new places and adventures in our faith, and renew us... so that we are refilled with the Holy Spirit's power to strengthen us for whatever battles we are facing.

Now perhaps you are reading more about the Holy Spirit in scripture and you are praying to the Holy Spirit that you want to experience more of Him – but you are not experiencing anything...

Brothers and sisters, there may be something going on in our lives that is standing in the way of our growth, which is why need to listen to Paul's warning in Eph 4:30 and make sure that we do not "grieve" or offend the Holy Spirit of God.

While the good news is that our sin won't stop God from sovereignly choosing to save us, and experiencing the Holy Spirit starting to work in us applying Christ's forgiveness to us and changing our hearts...

If we want the Holy Spirit to do more in us, but we simultaneously want to flirt with immorality, or hang on to bad habits, or harbor anger in our hearts – this offends the Holy Spirit because you are not giving Him your uninterrupted attention spiritually. This disruption in your relationship with Him needs to be restored if you want to move forward and grow to experience more of the Holy Spirit.

It's just like a regular relationship – if you are doing things that offend a friend or your spouse – you won't be able to move into a closer relationship with them or have deeper intimacy until those things are out of the way.

But the most offensive thing to watch out for in this regard is spiritual pride that can sneak up on you because you are having these amazing "spiritual" experiences directly with the

Holy Spirit, which other Christians don't seem to have in the same way as you do. So, you can see how easily that sets you up to think that you are more "spiritual" and that you are closer with God than others right? We need to get rid of this pride because it offends the Holy Spirit.

That's why we read Eph 5 this morning because Paul encourages us to be filled with the Holy Spirit instead and in vs. 19-20 we are not proud with each other, instead we speak *"to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

So if we follow this exhortation not only does it get rid of spiritual pride amongst us – but it also demonstrates that spiritual growth principle that we've been emphasizing -that spiritual growth is not a private, individualistic endeavor – it's a group thing and it blesses the congregation, and builds it up and Eph 5 is a good example of how that occurs.

Besides – you will not be the only one who has the Enthusiastic style. There will be others who are wired that way as well and its important that you are able to connect with them and share your experiences of the Holy Spirit and learn from each other as well.

Now if you are wanting to grow in the Enthusiastic style as your opposite style – then finding others who are Enthusiastic to help you learn and gain experience by mentoring you in the ways I've just described, is extremely important. Why? Well let me explain by resuming the sports illustrations.

If you look at the nine different spiritual styles insert in your bulletin – you'll notice they are lined up with the three color trinitarian compass. So far we've worked out way from the edge of the green through the red and now we are moving into the blue.

And what I've noticed is that when we're dealing with Green and Red styles, even though they are different – there seems

to be more overlap in the spiritual between the different styles in these two areas.

For example, if you are skilled at playing hockey, you have some overlap in eye-hand and stick co-ordination that can transfer over to playing lacrosse. Or if you are good at football there are some cross-over skills that can transfer to learning to play rugby.

While these sports are not exactly the same, and its not necessarily an easy switch – there are some common skills that can go across, and it seems to be that way as well if you are moving between Green and Red styles.

But I've found that when it comes to the Blue styles, its much more evident that you have to learn a very different set of skills and bring a different set of equipment to play this sport.

For me personally – the Enthusiastic style is my opposite style and when I first began to engage in level B growth in this style back in 2013 by getting involved in the Dunamis Project, it felt

like I was trying to use hockey skills and wear hockey gear to help me learn how to drive a Formula One race car – and you can see how that doesn't overlap at all.

So not only was it difficult and uncomfortable because I wasn't familiar or skilled in it like I am in my natural style... I had to learn to set aside my rational and critical thinking framework and not use that as my main interface for experiencing and relating to God.

Instead I had learn how to sense in my spirit to experience and relate to what the Holy Spirit was doing, practice it – get it wrong, try it again... with a bit more success, and do it over and over again until I became more familiar and comfortable with it – and suddenly I was experiencing the Holy Spirit in very powerful and miraculous ways, which I know have helped me to avoid having my strength become my weakness.

Now I share this because I want those who are in the Blue styles of spirituality to know that I understand how difficult and foreign it seems to be to engage in your opposite style.

I've experienced that as well. In fact, I understand that because the Blue style's natural way of understanding God is through direct spiritual experiences of the Holy Spirit - the whole idea of having a spiritual style and being able to discover that by taking a survey seems pretty – well... unspiritual.

How can you discover spiritual things without the direct experience of the Holy Spirit, or take measure of supernatural things with something so mundane as a survey? There's no sense of the power or the presence of the Holy Spirit in a survey!!!

But this is where the strength of the Enthusiastic style starts to become its weakness, as the experience of the Holy Spirit which transcends our rational interface is misappropriated to justify irrationality, irresponsibility and neglect of God's creational laws, and how creation reveals God.

An extreme example of this is when faith healers proclaim someone has been miraculously healed and that they ought

not to continue taking the medication for their illness because that would be to deny their healing.

But it is also just as much of a weakness of this style to doubt that there could be any meaningful and significant ways to experience God apart from the supernatural and miraculous ways which the Enthusiastic style is most familiar with – do you see what I mean?

That's one of the ways that spiritual pride sneaks up on us in the Enthusiastic style... and brothers and sisters the enemy will use that to keep us from growing spiritually together.

We need our Enthusiastic style people to be strong in their strengths, it helps the rest of us learn and grow and experience the supernatural power and presence of the Holy Spirit... amen?

So here's the catch – Enthusiastic people, if you are going to stay strong in the supernatural and the power of the Holy Spirit, then you need to be humble enough to seek

experiences of God outside of and apart from the supernatural and spiritual ways so you are familiar with.

Does that make sense?

Remember how the prophet Elijah experienced God's supernatural power when he called down fire from heaven to burn up the altar of Baal on Mt. Carmel? Yet afterward when Elijah was having a crisis of faith and fear how did God speak to him? Not through the power of the windstorm or the might of an earthquake – but in a still small voice.

So brothers and sisters – I want to encourage you to pursue more of God, grow in your experience of the Holy Spirit, discover new possibilities in your relationship with Jesus that you did not realize existed.

But we will only be able to do this together – so even if it seems less spiritual to you, take the survey - learn about your style, learn about other different styles, and let's share our experiences of the Holy Trinity together with each other so

that we learn how each person of the Trinity is at work in each of our lives.

And the Enthusiastic Style's strength can help us in this – Let us celebrate the power of God and seek the Holy Spirit's empowerment to be victorious against our pride and the temptation of the enemy to resist growing in our experience of who God truly is as our Triune God.

God is Awesome brothers and sisters – may we all grow in our desire to experience more and more of His power and presence in our lives. Celebrate the power of God brothers and sisters. Amen.