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*Our great God loves beauty.
I do too!*

A little boy got lost at the YMCA and found himself in the women's locker room. When he was spotted, the room burst into shrieks, with ladies grabbing towels and running for cover. The little boy watched in amazement and then asked, 'What's the matter, haven't you ever seen a little boy before?'

CONNECTED

July-September, 2024

A BRIEF VIEW FROM HERE

The last three months have been some of the best days of our lives. Mrs. H and I have both moved into life beyond fourscore in wonderful condition. Yes, we have much of the baggage that goes with many years, but we're still viable and quite involved in the service of our great God. We have nothing but gratitude.

As Granny eased past fourscore, our family rendezvoused in Galveston for a really wonderful celebration of God's blessing to our family in giving us Granny. Good people in your life are huge treasures. God forbid that we take them for granted or neglect them. Twenty-eight days later I passed Go again. Lord willing, Granny and I will celebrate our 62nd wedding anniversary on August 3.

Later in May, I taught *Basic Bible Truths* and saw another new birth into the family of God. What a privilege to be involved in lives at the most basic level, and see new people get saved!

The weekend that the big wind blew glass sides right out of hundreds of high-rise buildings in downtown

Houston, I had just flown to Columbus, Ohio. I have a most precious spiritual son in the ministry, Bro. Aaron Samples who is the pastor of [Grace Baptist Church](#) in Urbana. It was a really blessed time in the Lord. I am so thankful for so many dear friends there. Two weeks later, I was honored to preach for Bro. Thomas George and the [Lighthouse Baptist Church](#) in Missouri City, Texas.

The following Sunday, I had the privilege of bringing the Sunday morning message at [Holts Prairie Baptist Church](#) in Pinckneyville, Illinois. As often as we can, a small group of dear preacher brothers meet for a precious time of fellowship and a little fishing. My, we had a refreshing time! I got home in time to preach for Pastor Mike Bragdon and [Gateway Baptist Church](#) in Gatesville, Texas on June 16. I have many deep roots in that church.

My main job since the last *Connected Newsletter* has been the ministry of writing which God is allowing me to do. I'm about 80% finished with a third volume of *What We Believe*

and Why. At the moment, that book is on temporary hold. In the process of that effort, I became aware that I must write a book on pain, suffering and hurting people. I'm calling it *When Trouble Comes*. I think it will be available on Amazon by this fall.

This book is being written to comfort and encourage people who are in the grip of loss. It may be the loss of a mate or dear loved one, but it could be an injustice. Everywhere you look, there are hurting people. The great prophet Jeremiah spoke for all of us when he said, *"We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble!"* **Jeremiah 8:15**. The book will also have a serious apologetics substance. It will answer the lingering question, *Why?* This will be a book with a spine; that takes about 130 pages. I do not want it to be much bigger, and thus be intimidating. Pray that I can strike the right balance, and that it will bring healing to lots of hurting people.

I'm blessed to have many precious friends who allow me to help them. It is deeply satisfying to answer Bible questions, give advice and be there for people who need a life-rope. For me, I want *"We'll work till Jesus comes"* to be more than merely a pleasant song.

I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

THE MIRROR IS STILL THE BEST PLACE TO START

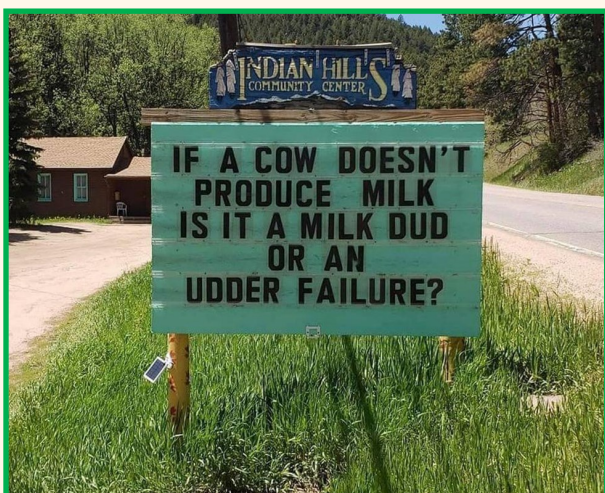
There are mirrors and there are windows. Both physically and spiritually. Where a person spends his/her time speaks pretty loud about their heart. In the mirror, you see yourself. Most of the time spent in a window is looking at someone else. Most of the time we're nowhere near a natural mirror or window as we gaze at the views we see in spiritual mirrors and windows. Usually, we're in these spiritual mirrors and windows to contemplate, and who likes to contemplate on *self*, especially about what's wrong and in need of improvement. Maybe about how great self is and how to promote self's ambitions; but not about that selfish or greedy streak, that short fuse, that impure heart or about the need for humility. The fact is that far more time is spent in spiritual windows than in spiritual mirrors.

Every one of us knows that it is far easier and more enjoyable to stand in a spiritual window than before a spiritual mirror. You can stand in a spiritual window and pick your boss to death. And your mate, your parents, your government with its officials, your friends, your church and even your preacher. If you stand there long enough, you will justify yourself and feel pretty good about how you feel about *"that bunch of trash."* In fact, if you hang around life's windows long enough, you're quite likely to find yourself feeling pretty smug. There's also a fat chance that you might find yourself jealous of your neighbor's financial status, coveting his house or his car and being envious. Lots of people stand in windows and lust. The wrong kind of motives are often conceived in windows. Yes. The wrong kind of sex grows there.

Many life-changing desires (often dangerous and destructive) have been born in windows. A common place where it happens is at the work place, on the job. Everybody can see the lack of morale. The boss has favorites, and is blind to their flaws. You're having to do the work of others; work you shouldn't have to do, but nobody's paying attention; listening. You're underpaid and overworked. You find another job; but before long you discover that the new job has the same or similar problems. At your church, something similar is going on. You left one church because it wasn't spiritual enough, and far too impersonal. The preaching was too shallow, and the music was dead. There were clicks; people were not friendly enough. *"There were not enough people there my age,"* and they didn't have the programs I and my family need. Ironically, something similar is going on at home. *"Our marriage is not fun anymore. I'm getting a belly full of how I'm being treated. And not appreciated or respected. It was just like this in my first marriage."* *"Besides these other problems, I'm having a hard time with some of my friendships. I don't have very many (if any) really close, true-blue friends. I'm feeling pretty isolated and alone."*

The chances are pretty high that you need to go back to your mirror and take a good, hard and honest look at yourself. There's a very high likelihood that you will find more answers than you are prepared to face. This is almost always the place where we find solutions to the problems which are hurting us. Most of do not need a new job nearly as much as we need a new attitude and work ethic. Instead of a new church, we need a new sense of appreciation and a servant's heart. Learning how to be a proactive part of the solution is far superior to fault-finding, nagging and running from problems. Before picking your mate apart, a solid *gut-check* is always in order; and before starting a hunt for new friends, it's pretty smart to check on the kind of friend you are. The grass is rarely greener on the other side of the fence. People have been known to jump right out of the frying-pan into the fire. It is so much easier to be a part of the blaming and wrecking crews than to deal with self. Personal growth is very hard work, but it's well worth the effort. Most people will not face-up to the reality that they are a part of the problem, maybe the biggest part. When that's the case (and it usually is), the problem won't *just go away*. In fact, until it's addressed, you will simply take it with you wherever you go! Into the next job! Into the next church or marriage or friendship!

Jesus, who knows more than anybody about everything, said it this way: *"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye,"* **Matthew 7:3-5**. Friends, we're talking about mirrors and windows; and I'm telling you that the mirror is still the best place to start.



*Tabacco is an Indian weed,
And from the Devil it did proceed.
It will cook your lungs, and stain your clothes,
And make a smokestack out of your nose.*

*"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you,
saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil."*
Jeremiah 29:11

Compassion is passion with a heart.

A BOOK I HAVE RECENTLY READ AND RECOMMEND

The Spirit-filled Life

By Charles F. Stanley

Nelson Books, 2014

Nashville, TN

ISBN: 978-1-4002-0615-5

The Spirit-filled Life is a power-packed book. To many people, even Christians, it will doubtless seem a little like Greek. Though every Christian should live a Spirit-filled life, not many do. It is doubtful that most Christians know what a Spirit-filled life is. Reading this book is a good way to learn.

In clear, easy-to-understand language, Dr. Charles Stanley writes about the Holy Spirit. He writes about who the Holy Spirit is: His presence in the life of every true believer, His reasons for being there, what He produces when given control, the profound difference He can make in a life and how to give Him control. Dr. Stanley also writes about the Spirit's role in churches and the Christian community; and about the consequences of failure to letting Him rule.

Often Dr. Stanley is personal and very candid. He does not write from a *loftier-than-thou* perspective. His personal strengths, weaknesses and first-hand experiences make the book very *down-to-earth* and compelling. His message on the power of the Spirit to transform lives for the better and his insight on the fruit of the Spirit are especially powerful.

This easy-reading book is challenging. It is certain to expose the shallowness and weakness of most professing Christians. The book is divided into three sections: (1) Looking up, (2) Looking within and (3) Looking ahead. The 283-page book has 18 chapters plus 3 appendices. It is definitely a theology book, but you do not have to be a theologian to grasp its messages.

For the most part the book is doctrinally sound; although, like most books, it has weaknesses. Because Dr. Stanley deals with the work of the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ which he views as universal, his local church applications are unclear. He also struggles with the nine special spiritual or sign gifts of the Spirit, and with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. No recognition of the Holy Spirit's role in the special Apostolic Ministry is mentioned.

The Spirit-filled Life is a very insightful book. With the exception of a few weaknesses, I fully support Dr. Stanley's positions on the Holy Spirit and His work. He has expressed very well many great truths. We should never throw out the baby because the bathwater is a bit dirty. How I wish far more Christians had a grasp of these truths! For all who are serious about being the person God wants you to be, I recommend *The Spirit-filled Life*.

WHAT IS THINE OCCUPATION?

In his flight from the Lord, Jonah quickly encountered a storm in the Mediterranean Sea. In their frantic efforts to determine the cause of the storm which threatened to sink their ship, the mariners asked Jonah what his occupation was. He really didn't come clean with them and tell them that he was a preacher running from God's assignment to preach divine judgment to the people of Nineveh. The best he could muster was that he was a God-fearing Hebrew.

Are you a Christian? If so, do you know what your real occupation is? Like Jonah, you may be a preacher; but you may be a police officer or a fireman. Maybe you're a secretary, an attorney or a medical person. The list of professional occupations is very long.

If you are a child of God, saved by His blood and born-again into His family, you are **first and foremost a servant of the most-high God**. Yes! You are bought with the blood of Jesus Christ, and *"ye are not your own, For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"* **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**. The real job of every child of God is to first and foremost represent Him well in all things. We are His *"ambassadors,"* **(2 Corinthians 5:20)**, and He *"hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation,"* **2 Corinthians 5:18**.

Our professions or careers are really not our main lines of work or occupations. If you have been saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, you have been called to a MUCH higher line of work or occupation, a work of an eternal nature. You are now a servant of the most-high God. You hear it straight from such great men as Paul: *"Paul, a servant of God,"* **2 Timothy 2:24**, *"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ,"* **James 1:1** and *"Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ,"* **Jude 1:1**.

Our professions (trades, professions or jobs) at which we make our livings are really secondary to our higher calling. They financially support us and our families. They plug us in to the economy, and make us productive citizens of society; but they're a means to an end. They put us into the marketplace, get us into the lives of people and open doors of opportunities for our real work. Our real work is representing our Lord and Savior well in word and deed. Jesus put it this way, *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,"* **Matthew 5:16**. At the Judgment Seat of Christ, what won't matter is how good a factory worker, electrician, secretary, nurse or IT person you were. What will matter is how well you represented Christ, the lives you penetrated for the better, the souls you reached with the gospel and how much you contributed to the Kingdom's work of our great God.

Oh, that we could get hold of our real purpose, the reason we're here, our real job or occupation! Jesus, who is the expert and final authority on all things put it this way, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you,"* **Matthew 6:33**. When you rise up each day and head to school, you will give your best effort; but fully aware that you're first there to contribute to the work of God and glorify God with your work, your words and your spirit and attitude. When you head to that computer, you're looking for opportunities and ways to demonstrate true Christianity while you do a routinely excellent job as an accountant, secretary or cashier. As a Christian, you're not out there merely to make bricks or money; you're out there to exalt God in all your being.

Friend, do not allow Satan to sell you short. You're not just a common laborer. You're not common and ordinary. You've been saved by the blood of the Lamb of God. You're a child of the King of kings. You're on a mission for Him. You are His representative. Brother, sister, do your job. Don't waste your life away on some mundane job doing things which will not matter to anybody within a few years (possibly months) after you're gone. Give yourself to the job God sent you there to do. Do good work. *"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might,"* **Ecclesiastes 9:10**; but never lose sight of the fact that your real job, your true occupation is to do the work of righteousness every day wherever you are.

ONE DAY KYLE

One day, when I was a freshman in high school, I saw a kid from my class walking home from school. His name was Kyle. It looked like he was carrying all of his books. I thought to myself, *'Why would anyone bring home all his books on a Friday? He must really be a nerd.'*

I had quite a weekend planned (parties and a football game with my friends tomorrow afternoon), so I shrugged my shoulders and went on. As I was walking, I saw a bunch of kids running toward him. They ran at him, knocking all his books out of his arms and tripping him so he landed in the dirt. His glasses went flying, and I saw them land in the grass about ten feet from him... He looked up and I saw this terrible sadness in his eyes. My heart went out to him. So, I jogged over to him as he crawled around looking for his glasses, and I saw a tear in his eye. As I handed him his glasses, I said, *'Those guys are jerks. They really should get lives.'*

He looked at me and said, *'Hey thanks!'* There was a big smile on his face. It was one of those smiles that showed real gratitude. I helped him pick up his books, and asked him where he lived. As it turned out, he lived near me, so I asked him why I had never seen him before... He said he had gone to private school before now. I would have never hung out with a private school kid before. We talked all the way home, and I carried some of his books. He turned out to be a pretty cool kid. I asked him if he wanted to play a little football with my friends. He said yes. We hung out all weekend and the more I got to know Kyle, the more I liked him, and my friends thought the same of him.

Monday morning came, and there was Kyle with the huge stack of books again. I stopped him and said, *'Boy, you are gonna really build some serious muscles with this pile of books every day!'* He just laughed and handed me half the books. Over the next four years, Kyle and I became best friends. When we were seniors, we began to think about college. Kyle decided on Georgetown and I was going to Duke. I knew that we would always be friends, that the miles would never be a problem. He was going to be a doctor and I was going for business on a football scholarship.

Kyle was valedictorian of our class. I teased him all the time about being a nerd. He had to prepare a speech for graduation. I was so glad it wasn't me having to get up there and speak on Graduation Day. I saw Kyle and he looked great. He was one of those guys that really found himself during high school. He filled out and actually looked good in glasses. He had more dates than I had and all the girls loved him. Boy, sometimes I was jealous! Today was one of those days. I could see that he was nervous about his speech. So, I smacked him on the back and said, *'Hey, big guy, you'll be great!'* He looked at me with one of those looks (the really grateful one) and smiled. *"Thanks,"* he said.

As he started his speech, he cleared his throat, and began *'Graduation is a time to thank those who helped you make it through those tough years. Your parents, your teachers, your siblings, maybe a coach...but mostly your friends..... I am here to tell all of you that being a friend to someone is the best gift you can give them. I am going to tell you a story.'* I just looked at my friend with disbelief as he told the first day we met. He had planned to kill himself over the weekend. He talked of how he had cleaned out his locker so his Mom wouldn't have to do it later and was carrying his stuff home. He looked hard at me and gave me a little smile. *'Thankfully, I was saved. My friend saved me from doing the unspeakable.'* I heard the gasp go through the crowd as this handsome, popular boy told us all about his weakest moment. I saw his mom and dad looking at me and smiling that same grateful smile. Not until that moment did I realize it's depth.

Never underestimate the power of your actions.. With one small gesture you can change a person's life. For better or for worse..... God puts us all in each other's lives to impact one another in some way. Look for God in others. 'Friends are angels who lift us to our feet when our wings have trouble remembering how to fly.' There is no beginning or end. Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery. Today is a gift.

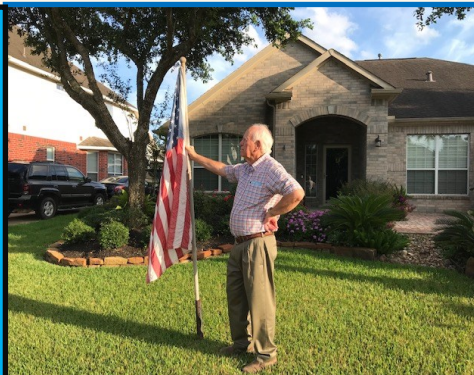
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