



October 2, 2009

Dear Friends:

THE CHICKEN COVENANT

Tyler and I have a special Friday Morning ritual that will have already been completed by the time most of you read this. To celebrate the last school day of each week, we roll out 30 minutes early and head for our customary Friday Morning "Chick-fil-A" Breakfast.

As male creatures of habit, we both order the same thing each week and we find our regular parking place. We eat in the car, laugh, visit and listen to ESPN while I continue to subtly give the daily "come on, you can do it" exhortation in the process.

Then, right before we head to the school, we do the Morning Prayer followed by the quick hug that, under strict orders, must be done before we get anywhere near school property. It may not seem like a big thing but it is a special outing we both look forward to. Martha Stewart would call it "A good thing".

While parked in the same spot, we've frequently remarked about the nonstop traffic flow and full bags of breakfast that go by our car. It seems lots of other folks love their morning chicken biscuit fix, too. The place is popular and the some of our morning business discussions have lead to the guy who started it all, visionary and founder, Truett Cathy.

A few months ago I had the opportunity to visit the "Chick-fil-A" headquarters for a special meeting. After a short drive from the Atlanta airport, you will find the beautiful wooded area that houses the giant operation. A majestic tree lined drive meanders for a while and then opens up to a classy but not overdone building. Mr. Truett, in bronze, is right at the front door to meet all who arrive and, as the doors open, you realize that this is a different kind of business.

From the front door, every person was smiling and their greetings were much more friendly and heartfelt than many of the churches I'd ever been in. First class from start to finish, the place clearly emulated the philosophy of one humble man who decided to take a fresh look at a simple chicken sandwich. I'm not surprised at this worldwide success because I know a bit more of the story. It's the part I like to tell Tyler on Friday mornings.

Mr. Cathy was a hard worker, a man of great character and integrity but he would have been the first to tell you that he was just "a sinner saved by Grace". You see, Truett Cathy was a Godly man who honored God and founded his company on the principles of his Lord.

In a competitive business where all the others grind it out seven days a week, he made a big decision and decided to covenant that Sunday was the Lord's Day and he would honor it as such. And since God Himself had only worked six days, He decided to honor Mr. Cathy by giving him a full seven days of revenue for six days of labor. Guess you could say, God "had it His way".

Yes, the "Chick-fil-A" group is in the business of selling a quality product and they make a good profit doing so. (Sadly, that important founding American concept is being lost, demeaned and vilified in 2009 America.)

I believe they are blessed because of their founding covenants and the blessing continues because they are good stewards. They are generously involved in missions and benevolence across our Nation. I've been especially gratified to see them partner with some wonderful Christian organizations and hero/friends like Bill Gaither for his giant Homecoming events and John Maxwell's EQUIP group in their most effective "Million Leaders Mandate" mission. I remembered Bill and John when I handed my money through the window this morning.

One other personal reflection. It happened in October 2005.

Linda and the boys were still not able to come home after that dumb storm. It had been a rough, draining day and I just needed a break. After four sparse weeks, more food places had finally opened back up and I pulled in to get a snack.

My mind was on overload with stress, aggravation and uncertainty when I had one of those, "Something is familiar, but I'm not quite sure what it is", moments that brought immediate comfort and calmness.

Somewhere between the 5th and 6th chicken nugget, I found myself humming along with the overhead music. I realize that most food places play certain kinds of music to make you eat fast and get out, but I started to mouth the words that were coming out of the overhead speakers, "How Great Is Our God, Sing With Me, How Great Is Our God". In the midst of a "secular" environment, something "spiritual" was permeating and it was like a fresh breeze. For no extra money, my spirit had been fed and I was grateful for the remainder about the Greatness of our God!

In Psalms, David says, "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised!" And just think, he wrote that without ever tasting one of those terrific Peach Milkshakes with the whipped cream oozing over the top of the cup. He would have really been inspired.

I was proud that the management, on orders from the top, had been bold enough to play Christian music in their restaurant. I went up and thanked the manager and the Clearasil Kid behind the cash register.

Earlier this morning I probably reminded Tyler that all it took was an idea, a dream, a never quit mindset mixed with a hard six day week and a partnering relationship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit to become an overnight success. Good insight for a ninth grader and all the rest of us.

As they say in the Holy Land..."Eat More Chikin!"

Michael

