

“Everything, But...”

I love sayings of all kinds. In fact, one of my favorite things to do while on vacation is to go into some of the shops found nearly everywhere in “touristy” sections of beach towns or mountain towns or wherever. And in all these shops there is bound to be one with old metal signs or decorative wooden plaques to decorate a home. For instance, I saw a wooden plaque recently on one of mine and Kim’s excursions that would represent most homes and offices with extreme accuracy. It simply read, *“Roosters crow, but hens deliver.”* And in my office, I’m the rooster, and I get to stand in front of the Executive Committee and other places because I am the “Director” and crow about all that goes on around the association, but the ladies in the office, well, they are the ones who deliver the goods anytime anyone comes in and needs something.

Most of ya’ll know that I have chickens. In fact, Tripp Speer and others call my chicken coop the “Taj Mahal” of chicken coops. Now I’ll admit that it’s pretty nice and all, even has solar panel lights, but it’s still just a chicken coop, regardless of how over the top it may be. My chickens are happy and the hens deliver me eggs every day. But one day Kim, who loves the eggs but is not really all that into the chickens, was watching them when she observed, “You know, that rooster doesn’t do a whole lot, but he sure seems to always have a lot to crow about.” Now quite frankly, I was taken aback by her clear observation and understanding of my chickens, until I realized she was actually talking less about the chickens and more about our home....get my drift. I suspect, a lot of ladies could say the same thing! Could I get an “Amen” from the ladies out there? I know Cindy Sprouse agrees, cause Chuck crows a lot but she gets it done...like most wives!

We have had the chance to travel just a little bit this summer, not straying too far from home, and I have picked up a couple of other cool sayings and signs. For instance, down in Savannah this past weekend, I saw one of these old metal signs and it had a picture of a nineteen-fifty’s lady, complete with a scarf in her hair, smiling and saying, *“I child proofed my home, but somehow they still get in.”* Hummm...let’s see, with three daughters and three granddaughters and one more granddaughter on the way...uh, that’s seven girls in a row blessing my home! Should I buy that sign and hang it...just kidding ya’ll, just kidding! I would never hang that sign in my....

In another store, I saw a sign in a home décor store that read, *“Looking forward to heaven’s streets that are lined with gold, but in this life, everything I ever wanted was found at the end of an ole dirt road.”* Now this saying says less about heaven and more about the fact that if you are sho’nuf country to the core and have a bit of a farmer’s tan and a redneck’s attitude, you probably cherish riding down ole dirt roads. I’ve read that 80% of folks who own 4x4’s never take them off road. But for me, give me an old back woods country road and a mud hole! Yep, there is just something about driving down country lanes and old dirt roads that is great stress relief to me. Kim and Addie both know I’ll make a trip longer by staying off highways and interstates and take the back roads if I have half a chance.

Hanging in my house today is a wooden plaque that hung in my Mom’s house all my growing up days, and it goes like this, *“Pad’ner yo’re welcome to such as we’ve got, the leaks in the roof and beans in the pot, the butter that’s soft an’ the bunks that are hard, the weeds that are grow’n all over the yard. Get up when yo’re ready, be plumb at your ease, don’t worry ‘bout us just do as yuh please, yuh don’t have to thank us or laff at our jokes, sit deep-an’ come often, yo’re one of the folks.”* That is pretty much the mantra of hospitality that we live by in our home and now you know why I write the way I write. I read that a thousand times growing up. Addie Lee has already claimed that plaque as part of her inheritance after the Misses and I have traded in dirt roads for the streets of gold.

I’m running out of space, but I gots one more for ya. BBQ is all the rage these days and tee-shirts have all kinds of BBQ sayings on them....which I love. Well, I saw one the other day in Statesboro, Ga, while Kim and I were visiting two of our nieces who attend college there. The tee read, *“From rooter to tooter, we cook it all!”* Oh man, that one cracked me up! The rooter is the hog’s nose that roots up the ground and the tooter is the...yep, you got it! Reminds me of years ago when we would say something like, “Yep, we cook it all, everything but the squeal.” And I’ve been with many a country folk, especially on the coldest day of the year, which was always reserved for “hog kill’n day” when the whole family would come together and kill several hogs, making sausage and chit’lins and bacon, etc., enough to last the whole year. And at the end of the day or the next day, they’d invite the community over and cook the pudd’n pot. Now, for the uninitiated, the pudd’n pot had the liver, lungs, heart, etc., in it and well, they’d love it. Me...not so much! But they’d cook everything from the rooter to the tooter, everything but the squeal!

Kinda reminds me of the church these days, but in a different way. Seems that churches do “everything, but” the main things. Most church folks will tell you that they are busier than they’ve ever been; yet, churches are declining all over the state and nation. And yes, some are growing, but too many are growing at the expense of other churches shrinking. Too many churches are moving from full time to bi-vocational because they can no longer support full time staff, too many churches are declining in cooperative program support, baptisms, actual disciple making and evangelism. When was the last revival in your church? VBS’s are going from whole weeks to half weeks to one day events. And yet, our people are as busy as they have ever been...doing what I wonder? Could we be doing everything...but, the one thing Jesus told us to do, to “go and make disciples?” Now I know it’s not as simple as all that, but, in the past we would hear sayings like, “keep the main thing the main thing.” I’m just wondering out loud as I watch so many churches plateau and decline, if we have fallen prey to the non-Biblical doctrine of busyness, doing everything except focusing on what we are supposed to be doing. “If my people who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and turn from their wicked ways...then I WILL heal their land.” It might be just that simple...repentance and prayer! Could we be doing everything but raising up the next generation of Christ followers.