

Proverbs 14

Do you want a clean or a dirty stable?

Proverbs 14:4

I have a question for you today. Do you want an empty stable or a dirty stable? Or perhaps a better question: Do you want an easy life, or a fulfilled life?

Proverbs 14:4 tells us that without Oxen, the stable stays clean, but you need Oxen for a strong harvest, so in other words, the farmer who doesn't have any animals doesn't have to get up early every day to feed and clean out the stable. He can have a nice lie in, watch TV in bed, have a late breakfast and lounge around all morning, while meanwhile his neighbour who has a shed full of animals spends half his morning shovelling straw and goodness knows what else about the place, feeding them and taking them out on the land to plough the fields and sow the seeds for the season.

I wonder in this hypothetical agricultural scenario if the second farmer walks past the first farmer's empty stable and sees how pristine it is, looks up to the bedroom window where the light is still off and the curtains are closed and wonders why he's working so hard? Perhaps he even wishes he was in bed himself and not bothering. It would be far less work if he didn't have the animals.

It's easy to envy others and the situations they appear to be in. When others seem to have it easy, and it never seems to be much effort for them either! But as Proverbs says, you need Oxen for a strong harvest! It's the end result that is important. Yes the farmer had to go through some toil and hard work, but ultimately in several months time when he has a field full of crops to harvest, he will be the one smiling and all that

effort will have been worth it. The farmer with the empty stable? well he's probably still be in bed. He must be a teenage farmer! And he won't be reaping the rewards of his lack of efforts.

So don't look at the outward appearance of someone else life and think, I wish life was that easy for me! It's what's going on inside that counts. What foundations are you letting God lay in your life? and what harvest are they leading you to?

This is what American Pastor Louie Giglio refers to as the difference between curb appeal and character reveal.

When you buy a house, the estate agent will talk to you about the curb appeal of a house...

When we first moved into our house, our friend Jon told us that it looked like a photo from a John Lewis Catalogue. He meant it as a huge compliment (it could have been worse. He could have said it looked like a pound land catalogue)

But it looked like that because it hadn't been lived in yet. Life hadn't happened there at that point. Now we have a baby, life has definitely happened now. I thought I had a lot of clothes and shoes and stuff but I've got nothing on this kid! There's stuff everywhere, the floors aren't mopped as often as they used to be, but there is life. And as a new parent I can tell you in Jesus' name that it is life to the full

John 10:10. Not life to the half, not life to the easy, but life to the full! living to the max in the light of God's grace. Does life to the full come without it's challenges? no it does not. It's tough, really tough but it is good to feel alive.

Do you feel alive today? If you don't then maybe you need to ask God what is missing in your life, and ask for him to provide fulfillment.

Matthew 14: 22-33 - Jesus calls Peter out upon the waters from the safety of his boat

This is Peter's character reveal moment. This is where he has the chance to commit to an empty stable, or a dirty stable, easy life or full life. Stay in the boat, or follow Jesus out upon the water.

Peter is a fisherman, so for him he's probably more at home in a boat than he is on dry land. The boat is his comfort zone.

But when he sees Jesus walking across the water and calling him out to join him, he has a dilemma. The choice between following his rabbi, which means everything to him, or staying in the boat where it's safe and easy.

He wants to live life to the full, and he wants to follow Jesus, but it's full of risk and maybe it's the fear of the risk which causes him to start sinking. He takes his eyes off Jesus and worries about everything else around him.

Jesus catches him and calls him up on his lack of faith saying "why did you doubt".

Do we like Peter doubt that Jesus will be there for us when we step out boldly in faith and say "yes I want life to the full?"

So, do you want an empty stable or a dirty stable? because ultimately the choice is yours. I know what Jesus wants for you. He wants an abundant harvest in your life. He doesn't say it's going to be easy, in fact

he tells us in no uncertain terms that it's going to be really tough at times. But he invites each one of us to get out of the boat, out of our comfort zones and he promises us that he is right there with us. So I'm choosing the dirty stable, and I invite you all to join me!