

Mister Charles

The other day while mowing the yard I got to thinking about Mister Charles. Let me back up a little and explain who Mr. Charles is and why I was thinking about him. I went to J.B. Atkinson Elementary School in the Westend of Louisville. A school which contained grades 1 through 6 and eventually added Kindergarten. I remember in each class we had to write our name, grade and J.B. Atkinson on every paper turned in. Why we had to write J.B. Atkinson on each paper? I have no idea. It's not like a student from another elementary school was going to randomly show up and start turning in math homework. But those were the rules.

There were four classes for each grade, on average probably 25 students per classroom. You do the math and you can see, this was a good size school. Mister Charles was not the principle or a teacher but he kept the school going from day to day. Whenever a door needed fixing, a window broke, or cleanup was needed in a classroom, Mr. Charles was called on the intercom. You might have guessed by now; Mister Charles was the janitor at J.B. Atkinson Elementary School.

Rarely did the students speak to him or even give him a second thought but his importance was stressed to us one day. For some reason, Mister Charles name was said with the customary "would you please go to" fill in the blank. At which time some of the students spontaneously called out Mr. Charles name in a mocking manner. Our teacher immediately stopped the class and reprimanded those students. She stated how important Mister Charles was to our school and how hard he works. Needless to say, all joking stopped. It was true, Mr. Charles was always at the school before us and there after we left. Every chalkboard was hung, every creaky door un-creaked, every mess cleaned up. He was often overlooked due to his efficacy. Due to the passage of time, I dare to say Mister Charles retired and is no longer with us.

What brought Mister Charles to my mind? I got to wondering how many Mister Charles or Ms. Charles there have been in my life. How many people who worked tirelessly to provide what was needed in the classroom or somewhere else. I dare say we all have folks we would thank if we realized what they did for us.

We can apply this to our neighbor who pick up trash left from passing cars. The elderly lady who keeps her eyes on the children as they walk to school. A woman who lived across from us went to the local elementary school and became the designated "School Grandma". How about the co-worker who does nice things

without expecting a thank you? I can think of those inside the body of Christ. The Bible Class teachers who spend a good deal of their Saturdays working on bulletin boards, finding pictures to color, and trying to make the class memorable. The person who takes time to make a phone call and ask if you are alright or if you need anything.

I wonder how many Mister Charles there have been in my life? How many have been fellow Christians? These are Jesus' words about greatness in the Kingdom of God, "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave...". (Matthew 20:26-27.). May be the better question is, how many times have I been a Mister Charles"? – Dennis Tucker