

The Container Store is a national chain of retail outlets founded and headquartered in Dallas, TX. It is a department store where all the departments are full of things that hold, organize, and contain your stuff. Our society sustains this \$800 million enterprise that focuses on storing and organizing the things we buy and own, as well as a \$38 billion self-storage industry that allows us to keep the stuff we buy that we don't have room for in our homes. Materialism and the acquisition of things would be a great topic for discussion for some other day. I think it is funny that **the name "Container Store" is somewhat redundant**; by definition, you **store** stuff in a **container**. The word vessel comes from the Latin "vas" and is also the root of our word "vase." It means just what we think that it means – a thing that carries or holds or stores some other thing. A cargo ship, an artery, and a cooking pot are all vessels. And, surely in the context of this letter, the concept that your body is a vessel that can be filled should bring to mind a scripture:

*Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to **abstain from wickedness**." Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, **if anyone cleanses himself** from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. (2 Timothy 2:19-21)*

This scripture goes on to give us all some really good advice (no surprise there...) so you will certainly benefit if you read the whole chapter. We know that cargo ships are supposed to hold cargo, arteries are meant to hold blood, and cooking pots hold food; it seems from the scripture that our bodies should hold honor. These containers, however, don't need to hold what they are meant for. You could fill a cargo ship with seawater. Or you could fill arteries with chocolate pudding. And as the scripture says, you can fill your body with dishonor. **Things are simply better when vessels are filled with what they were meant for.**

*And do not get drunk with wine, for that is wasteful, but **be filled with the Spirit**, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; (Eph 5:18-20)*

Once again, I encourage you to read the whole chapter. Verse 18 goes so well with the others surrounding it. If my "self" is full of God's spirit, is there room for anything else? Well, yes, I think so. I can fill my "self" with love. "Self" is a word I put in place of "vessel." I originally used the word "body," but changed it for "self." The word "body" seemed so physical, so limited, so constrained by Newtonian physics... "Self" has a much more metaphysical / spiritual connotation. Newtonian physics gives us the law "no two things can occupy the same space at the same time." **Newtonian physics need not apply to the truths of God.**

Speaking of physics, I'm reminded of the saying, "nature abhors a vacuum." This refers to the idea that, on earth under our atmosphere, if you take everything out of a space, including the air, (creating a vacuum) something (usually air) will race to fill it in, and it is really difficult to prevent that from happening. Here's a case where a void is filled with something other than air...

*"Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find it. "Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order. "Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and **they go in and live there**; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. That is the way it will also be with this evil generation." (Matthew 12:43-45)*

So, we need to make sure that we don't fill our "self" with the wrong thing, but we also need to be sure that we don't leave it empty! In Ephesians 5:18, Paul tells us to **be filled with the Spirit**. How? Here is one hint: there's a parallelish verse in Colossians that seems to equate the Word with the Spirit...

*Let the **Word of Christ richly dwell within you**, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Col 3:16)*

This connection should come as no surprise, given the well-known intro to John:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God**. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. (John 1:1-3)*

So, does this mean that **we can claim some protection** against our vessel being filled with the wrong thing by simply reading God's Word? What do you think?

Here is a question to ponder: What is more valuable, the container or the contents? Yes, of course it depends. The golden chalice that Nebuchadnezzar took from the temple is probably more important than Belshazzar's wine. But, a plastic bucket filled with rubies and diamonds... You get the picture. What about the vessel that is my "self," filled with God's Spirit? God's Spirit that fills me might easily be **the most valuable thing I could possibly conceive**. But then, God so loved me that He sacrificed His only Son so that I might live. That makes me pretty valuable, right? Maybe that is just a silly question without an answer. Let's move on.

In that scripture from 2Tim, notice the "firm foundation of God." This point ties in nicely with a familiar verse:

For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:11)

The foundation is not the container, or vessel, but it supports the vessel. The sea supports the cargo ship, the stove supports the pot, my flesh supports my arteries, and **our Messiah supports us**.

What happens when you try to put 10 pounds of stuff into a 5-pound bag? Well, once again we are faced with the questions: what is the intended purpose of the bag and the stuff we're trying to contain? And, what are the circumstances? Can we be filled to overflowing with God's Spirit? Yup, and here's what happens:

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; **My cup overflows**. Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (Psalms 23:5-6)*

Overflowing with God's goodness and lovingkindness sounds pretty good, but sometimes full is all we get. I will gladly accept "merely" God's fullness. That sounds pretty awesome, too.

When the vessels were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel." And he said to her, "There is not one vessel more." And the oil stopped. (2 Kings 4:6)

I cannot help thinking of a list of containers found in the Bible and wondering about them... The water jars that held the wine in Cana, Elijah's meal in a barrel and oil in a cruse, the jars of the 12 virgins, the baskets used to collect the left over loaves and fish, old versus new wineskins, Jeremiah's muddy cistern, the rich fool's bigger barns, whitewashed sepulchers, the basket that carried the infant Moses, the alabaster jar of nard, Noah's ark, The Ark of the Covenant... hundreds of vessels to consider. **Fill yours with His Spirit and love.**

Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:2)

Peace to you and glory to God!

-Nate

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