

Reflecting on My Time With Steve Hill

I've got this, I confidently thought as I entered the television studio one Friday in March 2013. In just a couple hours, I would host an interview with evangelist Steve Hill, renowned for his impact upon millions during the Brownsville Revival.

At this time, Steve was just a few months out of a virtual coma from a decade-long battle with melanoma cancer. He was resurrected from the dead, it seemed, and revitalized enough to promote a new book, *Spiritual Avalanche*, which describes a poignant vision and warning to the modern church.

By this time, I'd done enough interviews that I wasn't particularly star-struck by someone with so much notoriety and esteem. This changed, however, when Steve entered the studio. Along with him was a small entourage: his wife and several assistants. As I began to make my introduction, I could see him size me up, and my confidence waned.

"Kyle, if you're not the real deal, you might as well go down the street and sell cars," he warned. He continued in a very intense lecture about the importance of the vision that he was about to share. Suddenly, I went from thinking *I've got this* to muttering an under-the-breath prayer: "Lord, help me!"

Steve was very honest with those of us in the studio that day.

"I'm not out of the woods," he assured. "Cancer is all over inside of me, but yet I don't have the symptoms."

To be sure, he was physically weaker than the fiery evangelist most knew from his revival days. We had to help him up onto the platform of the set. Our team couldn't keep his makeup on because he was sweating profusely. None of this affected his

demeanor, however. His mind seemed clear as ever, and his passion at new heights.

We sat there on the set, engaged in small talk, as the crew arranged the cameras and tested the sound. It only took a few minutes to discern that this man was genuine. The intimidation I felt when I was introduced was not from that of a larger-than-life celebrity preacher but from a man who cared so deeply for the gospel. Steve Hill would have rather risked offending a friend or stranger than see the message of his beloved Savior tarnished. It was refreshing.

It was evident that this *Spiritual Avalanche* vision consumed him. Even when the cameras weren't rolling, it's all he could talk about. Eventually, I said to him, "Pastor Steve, I'm giving you this platform. I'll interject where I can, but you run with the message God gave you. I want it heard." He appreciated and took the offer.

I knew that he was still skeptical. And rightly so. Television preachers are notorious for candy-coating the gospel to gain popularity. But I'll never forget what happened when we began to film. As I typically do, I shot my introduction and closing separately. As I introduced the message, I boasted in the cross and the blood of Jesus. When I did, out of my peripheral vision, just beyond the teleprompter, I saw his wife, Jeri, mouth "Yes!" and raise her hand in the air. It was as if she was saying, "Finally! Someone who gets it!"

I could sense Steve getting more and more comfortable too. By the time we shook hands to begin our discussion, he gave me the greatest compliment I could ever ask for: "You've said it all, Kyle." Obviously, I hadn't, but I appreciated his kindness.

As we rolled, Steve's passion oozed out of every second of the discussion. Eventually, it moved him to tears. These weren't tears conjured up just for good television. No, these were the

genuine tears of a man so in love with Jesus that he couldn't bear to see Jesus' name and message distorted.

By the end of the interview, Steve said, "Kyle and I are friends."

Wow! He called me his friend! I thought. I relished his words.

What did it take to gain the friendship of Steve Hill? Certainly, he wasn't impressed by my ability to broadcast his message; he made that clear from the start. Nor was there anything I could offer him. He simply wanted to ensure that we had the friendship of the same Jesus in common—not the pop-culture Jesus of sloppy grace but the Jesus who went to cross and was mutilated for my sins. This was the Jesus Steve had preached for so many years; it was the Jesus to whom he introduced millions at the Brownsville Revival. And just as it was back then, once he knew that I understood the authentic gospel, we were linked in friendship.

As we parted, Steve left me with a final word.

"You need to write," he encouraged. "You have 100 books in you."

His encouragement gave me the confidence to further pursue such opportunities. I'm privileged to say that the first book I'll release, *Silence Satan*, is a result of his exhortation.

I'll forever cherish my time with Steve Hill—not because I had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity with a well-known preacher but because of the things he taught me in that studio: protect the authentic gospel with all of your passion, reach souls without ever counting the costs and live fully and boldly to your last breath.

Thank you, Steve Hill, for the legacy that you left in the lives of countless, including myself. I pray that we carry your torch in a way that honors everything that you gave your

life for.

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