

WINTER 2004 - 2005

As always, we trust that Christ remains the love of your life and the passion of your existence. The following is written to encourage you, to let you know more concerning the “variables” facing those who carry His name to such a needy world. What an adventure, this life of faith!

Based on a recent survey, only 9 % of evangelical college students believe in such a thing as absolute truth. Why is this so? It is so because mom and dad, our public institutions of learning, even the church (in more cases than we would like to admit), have failed to properly emphasize the importance of absolutes. In our day, “truth” has become anything one wants it to be so long as it doesn’t inconvenience or hinder one’s lifestyle. Consequently, when I teach the Scriptures, I no longer assume that those listening believe what they are hearing—regardless of the setting. As Jeremiah said in his day, “Behold, the word of the Lord has become a reproach to them; They have no delight in it” (Jeremiah 6:10).

We are living in an interesting age, bringing me to an even greater appreciation for the Person of Jesus. For the believer, Christ remains the anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6:19) that grants hope regardless of the “circumstance.” Therefore, in case you need to hear it today, the God who made heaven and earth is very much in charge of His creation. He is not worried nor pacing the floor; He is not weary nor downcast, but is the eternal One who—every second of His existence—sees all that has transpired, is transpiring, and will transpire—from beginning to end (1 John 3:20). Therefore, He is never caught off guard, shocked, nor surprised by any event that occurs in space and time. Yet, through it all, He remains the God of love (1 John 4:8), joy (Nehemiah 8:10), peace (John 14:27), grace (John 1:14), and truth (John 14:6).

This truth is the foundation of my soul, all of which has been revealed by means of the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures. To know that absolute truth exists (and was personified in Jesus) is what the world is looking for, yet has failed to embrace. We have the privilege of taking this truth, which the unredeemed resist, and watch in amazement as God transforms lives that were directionless, aimless, and grossly misguided. Again, this adventure of faith is truly amazing!

Family News

Since our last correspondence, Kim, Benjamin, and I have experienced several things that have deepened our appreciation for those who stand for the truth. We have been challenged through favorable circumstances as well as those not so favorable. We are learning, to a much greater degree, the part that pain and adversity play in teaching us the deeper things of the cross. My home is my haven, and I am so grateful for a wife and son who love Jesus, and as a result, love me. The gal I married some fifteen years ago is as solid as a rock. I am very thankful that our son is being exposed to a mom that loves God and family. So much of what goes on around here would be impossible if it were not for a wife that possesses a passion for Christ, and along with it, wisdom and discernment. We continue to enjoy home schooling Benjamin. To watch him experience the different stages of childhood is most interesting (as all of you know who have raised, or are in the process of raising, children). He just turned nine and is 95 pounds (and in the 90th percentile height-wise), which means I have to be careful when wrestling with him. He is now strong enough and big enough to break my arm or leg (and no telling what else) in the midst of his many gyrations during our wrestling escapades. We are watching as our Lord works in Him but remain aware that his rough edges are God’s responsibility to remove—not ours. Our responsibility is to love him and see to it that he is raised in an environment that exposes him to

Jesus (not monotonous religious activities). We are very thankful for his heart and zeal for life, but as I have stated in earlier letters, we are believing that very active little boys, with strong wills, grow up to be godly men who desire to lead. He loves being with people—the more the merrier. In fact, Kim and I refer to him as “our social butterfly.” He also loves working with his hands, so he and I get much time together driving nails and measuring boards. It is great to teach him the importance of math (his least favorite subject) as we build things together. We, as a family, so enjoy the wonderful people the Lord sends across our path. We take pleasure in living here on the hill and experiencing all that rural life has to offer. The Lord is good!

Ministry News

This past semester on the hill was very encouraging. I taught the Pentateuch (Genesis through Deuteronomy) on Tuesday nights, and the number of young people who joined us, along with the adults in attendance, made for a wonderful time together (what a great mix age-wise we now have). I will teach the “History” portion of the Old Testament next semester (Joshua through Esther) and begin the major and minor prophets the fall semester of 2005. The Pentateuch course and tapes (and CDs) are now available as well as the course on the History books of the Old Testament (Joshua through Esther). The tapes and CDs on the History books of the Old Testament will be available as I teach them next semester.

I can honestly say that I am more encouraged with where the ministry is today than at any time previous to now. New doors seem to be opening, and as things progress we will fill you in on the details. Please pray that God would grant us the wisdom needed to choose the excellent over the good. Thanks!

Some have requested more information relating to our summer camp (July 10-16, 2005). This camp is designed for youth, ages 13-18, who desire to go deeper with our Lord. The youth are here for one week, and we normally have four to five hours of Bible study per day. They are also involved in work projects both here on the hill as well as the neighboring communities. Kids from all walks of life and a variety of geographical locations attend—what wonderful kids we have been privileged to associate with in the past. To see them grow up to be men and women of God has served to greatly encourage us.

Some Events to Consider Attending in 2005

January 18 Tuesday night Bible Study begins—the History books of the Old Testament.

February 4-6 Our annual youth retreat (for those who attend our summer camp as well as new-timers).

April 15-17 Our annual men’s retreat.

July 10-16 Summer camp for youth ages 13-18.

September 2-3 A study of Romans 1-8.

October 14-16 Our annual fall retreat for men and women, both single and married.

For more details concerning ministry information, you can go to our website at www.lifeonthehill.org. You can register for any of these events online or by just giving us a call (270)-437-4172.

I will be teaching in Benton, Kentucky (First Missionary Baptist Church---January 7-8, 2005) and Meridian, Mississippi (Highland Baptist Church—January 21-23, 2005) and Lexington, Kentucky (The Church at Tatesbrook—January 28-30, 2005).

We could never thank you enough for your support and all you do to encourage us. Walk on!

Thoughts From The Hill

The following relates to an event that I experienced with my son. It has served me well in my walk with Christ.

It is hard to believe that I have lived in western Kentucky without developing a passion for “coon hunting.” Several of my friends have hunted these critters for years, but I have struggled with the idea of staying up half the night just to hear a dog bark up a tree at a creature whose hide served to cover the head of a man named Boone—Daniel Boone, that is. A friend of mine named Grant Black, who is considered one of the foremost coon hunters in the area, invited Benjamin and me to a hunt a few weeks back. Once in the woods, Grant gave each of us a metal hat with a light attached to its front (much like a coalminer’s hat). He then issued us a battery to strap to our waist for the purpose of powering the light—and here we went. It wasn’t fifteen minutes until Grant’s dog, as well as another dog in the group of hunters, picked up the scent of a coon. Grant told us to listen closely to the tone of his dog’s bark, for a certain type of bark meant the coon had been “treed” and the dog had fulfilled its mission. I was intrigued as I watched Grant listen, ever so closely, to the different tones of his dog’s barks. Suddenly, he told us to move out (he had “heard” what he had been listening for), and after walking through briars, mud—you name it—we finally came to the dogs, tree, and coon. The hunters then shined their flashlights up the tree and told us to look for two small reflections of light (the eyes of the coon), which I never saw! Everyone else saw them, even Benjamin, but all I saw were limbs and a few leftover leaves from summer. After the dogs were shown much affection and encouraged by their owners, they were turned loose to repeat the process. About fifteen minutes later, Grant heard that special bark, so here we went a second time to look for two eyes amongst the limbs and leaves. I never saw those eyes either, everyone else having the excitement of picking them out with ease. The dogs were again shown affection and turned loose to do what they do best, so about thirty minutes later they had treed their third coon of the evening. This went on for over two hours, and all I am thinking is, “These men truly love what they are doing, but what could possibly motivate them to love it so?” One thing was certain; I had to have that question answered before retiring for the evening.

Finally, during a pause in the hunt, I asked Grant the big question. His response stunned me—in fact, preached a sermon that even the most fundamental pulpit in America would applaud. He said, “I don’t hunt because I dislike coons and want to make their lives miserable. I hunt because I enjoy being with my dog and listening to him bark.” Do you see the spiritual significance of his statement? He hunted because he enjoyed being with his dog and listening to him bark—of all things! I then had to ask myself a question. Do I walk with Jesus just to be with Him and to listen to His voice, or do I have some other agenda in mind that takes away my passion for the journey? Think about it. I have been thinking much about it since my son and I, on a cool winter night a few weeks ago, learned much from a coon hunter who invests more time knowing and listening to

his dog than most of us who know Christ invest in knowing and listening to our Savior.

I was also intrigued that same evening by another hunter's statement. After asking him how often he hunted, he said, "Every night I can. This week I will hunt seven nights since it is close to the holidays." Did you catch that? Every night that week he would hunt for the purpose of being with his dog and listening to him bark! I spoke to his wife later that night back at the coon hunters' club (yes, they have a club made up of hunters from the area). She had come to see her husband at the conclusion of the hunt, so I asked her about their "relationship" with their dog. She, with much compassion in her eyes, stated that their "hound" was part of their family and that they loved it as though it were a child. This added a new piece to the puzzle. They loved their dog; therefore, the husband took as much time out of his week as he could to be with him and listen to him bark. Isn't it interesting that not one of those hunters was forced to hunt? They did it because they loved their coon hound and enjoyed being with him! This was Galatians 5:6 personified—"...faith working through love."

I observed other things that night that intrigued me to no end. I couldn't help but notice the camaraderie that existed among the hunters. It was obvious that these guys cared for one another and greatly enjoyed their time together. Therefore, each man's love for his dog and passion to hear him bark generated a desire to be with those who enjoyed the same. The spiritual application is obvious. Those who love Jesus and take pleasure in His presence greatly enjoy their time with others who desire the same. Just as the "fellowship" among the hunters was not a result of a program or an emphasis on "fellowship," fellowship among believers never has to be programmed or emphasized when the common denominator is a passion to spend time with the Creator and enjoy His words. It just happens automatically! (By the way, He has said much for the believer to enjoy in the sixty-six books known as the Scriptures.)

On top of all that has been stated, I also discovered (through a comment made by one of the hunters) that their club had donated over \$100,000 dollars to people in need. The parallel was obvious. Giving to the poor, which Jesus addressed on several occasions in New Testament Scripture, will be the natural response among those who love Him and enjoy listening to His words.

Enjoy your "hunt" today. It should be most exciting as you enjoy His presence and hear what He has to say to you through His word.

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