

WINTER 2002/2003

As I look out my office window this cold December morn, seeing what snow remains from our latest winter storm, I am reminded of my childhood when snow days were some of the best days of the year. School was dismissed, so I slept late, sledded with my friends, threw a few snowballs—life seemed so carefree and pure. I could not help but think along those lines last week as Kim, Benjamin and I were sledding here on the hill. We had much fun enjoying the free and simple things that we too often take for granted. My prayer is that we can invest less of our lives in that which requires excessive time and effort so we might enjoy those things manufactured solely by the hand of God. Did not the psalmist state that such exercises were worthwhile, resulting in worship and awe of the God of creation (Psalm 8:1-4)? Yes, it is very spiritual to stop and smell the roses (even the fresh snow) from time to time.

FAMILY NEWS

Kim, Benjamin and I are doing well. After a very active fall, the month of December is a more relaxed season for us. We spend time both here and in Marion, Illinois (Kim's hometown) and are very appreciative of the fact that our families are both supportive and flexible. How blessed we are to have parents who are for us and encourage us in so many ways. Because Benjamin is home schooled, Kim stays very active carrying out her daily responsibilities. By God's grace she covers all her bases and, at the same time, sees that our home remains a haven. Words cannot express how thankful I am for who she is and what she does for Benjamin and me.

Benjamin, who will soon be seven, continues to be "all boy" with a throttle that knows only one speed—wide open! I say that with a smile, realizing more all along that he is geared as such probably because has dad, at his age, plowed through life at a similar pace. His latest craze is hunting. The other day he and I were hunting (only his dad carries the loaded shotgun, and to this date, all wildlife we have seen remains alive and well) when he happened upon a turkey blind. Time did not permit him to examine it very closely, so I knew what would follow. The next morning he talked his mother into going hunting with him (without a shotgun of course since dad was at his office—his dog Cheyenne was enough, thank you), so here they went. Benjamin not only examined the turkey blind in detail on this cold, wintry day, but had his mother crawl in it with him for an extended season of "fun and fellowship." What I would give for a home video of that incident! I am certain Kim learned much that day, the major point being to think twice before going hunting with a kid who, at this stage in his life, had rather be Daniel Boone than president of the United States. His desire now is to go coon hunting for the purpose of capturing the goods for a coon-skin cap. I have never been coon hunting in my life, so pray for us! You can ask Kim how this event plays out, for I am sure the next laugh will be on me.

On a more serious note, for anyone who has been privileged to attempt to raise a child, you know that it is a continual process of choosing your battles. We trust that we are choosing the right battles and allowing our son to grow into the man God would have him be in maturity, integrity, and godliness.

MINISTRY NEWS

It has been a fruitful fall here on the hill. I continued teaching The Gospels from a Jewish Perspective on Tuesday nights (my third semester of this study, which will continue at least one more semester). I do not know when I have been more challenged, yet encouraged, while

preparing and writing a course of study. It has stretched me greatly, but I am very thankful for the opportunity we have to teach individuals interested in going deeper with our Lord. Our fall retreat schedule was as busy as ever. Several groups visited us here on the hill, some of which come on an annual basis and others who came for the first time.

We also had Rebekah Edwards and Shae Newsome join us on the hill this past semester. They live in the house we moved out of last year. Rebekah, who is from Murfreesboro, Tennessee, has been coming to our summer camps and retreats for the past ten years. Shae is from this area and has been part of Tuesday night Bible study as well as our summer camps over the past few years. They cover a variety of bases for us and are such pleasant people to work with. How blessed we are to have them here!

Brandon Karstetter continues to live on the hill and work at WAAJ, a Christian radio station in Hardin. He, along with Bob Fichtinger and Rick Underhill, are presently developing a web site for the ministry. Both Bob and Rick live in Evansville, Indiana and have much experience in graphic design. They have done a wonderful job tailoring the sight to meet our needs. Brandon has done our computer research and is in the process of setting up the equipment that will service the site here on the hill. I am grateful for his expertise and willingness to help whenever called upon. The site (www.lifeonthehill.org) is being created to save time—both yours and ours. As many of you know, I have resisted going this route since day one, but the ministry has grown to where these changes were more than necessary. This site will post an updated list of courses and tapes produced by this ministry with the capability of ordering online. A schedule of annual retreats, summer camps and Bible schools will also be accessible along with information and registration forms. Many additional features will be available as well. Our newsletters will also be posted online, so if you desire to discontinue receiving them through the mail, just let us know. We should be up and running around the first of the year, so you can check us out if you like. If you are not a computer person and are totally confused by this paragraph, just take a deep breath and forget what you have just read. Entrance into the Kingdom is not contingent upon being computer literate. I officially used the web for the first time some three months ago and was several days getting over the experience. I am seeing, however, that it can be beneficial when used wisely.

We have several groups who have already reserved dates for retreats in 2003. If your church or Bible study group would like to visit us, just let us know.

EVENTS IN 2003 SPONSORED BY B.A.S.I.C. TRAINING

Note: Additional dates will be posted on our web site as they are scheduled.

January 14 We will continue our Tuesday night series titled The Gospels from a Jewish Perspective. New students can join at any time. We start at 7:00 p.m. and end around 8:20 p.m. weekly. **March 21-22** Bible school—book of Hebrews—begins Friday (21st) at 6:00 p.m. and ends Saturday (22nd) at 5:00 p.m. I will be teaching an overview of all thirteen chapters of this wonderful epistle. **April 25-26** Annual men's retreat. This retreat is for all men, of all ages and from all locations. The weekend is filled with worship, fellowship, study and laughter. Get in touch if you desire more information. **July 6-12** Summer camp for youth ages 13-18. If you desire to send youth that have not attended previously, you might want to get in touch. **September 5-6** Bible School—the first eight chapters of the book of Romans—begins Friday (5th) at 6:00 p.m. and ends Saturday (6th) at 5:00 p.m. **October 17-19** Annual fall retreat

for men and women, both single and married. We have had much fun on this weekend in the past and hope to see several of you next fall.

I am scheduled to speak off the hill in the following locations January-April, 2003. BSU Murray State University (**January 23, 30; February 6**); Indianapolis, Indiana (**February 21-22**—Men's retreat with Keith Tyner and Jim Pinkston); Hattiesburg Mississippi (**March 7-9**—Grace Community Bible Church); Murray State University (**April 2-3**—Campus); Lexington, Kentucky (date being scheduled for spring—The Church at Tatesbrook); Evansville, IN—The Vineyard (date being scheduled for spring).

A WORD OF THANKS

As always, we want to thank you for going on with Jesus. Your prayers, financial support and hunger for our Lord speak great things concerning His grace and faithfulness. May He bless you more than you could imagine (Ephesians 3:20). Walk on!

THOUGHTS FROM THE HILL

The following was taken from my notes on The Gospels from a Jewish Perspective. This study will continue at least one more semester. Notes and tapes are available if you should desire to dig deeper.

I am often asked why Jesus cursed the fig tree if it was not the season for figs. The answer follows.

The date is Monday, the 11th of Nisan, which converts to April 3, 30 AD, the day after Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. As He traveled to Jerusalem after His previous day's visit, He cursed a fig tree bearing nothing but leaves even though it was not the season for figs (Matthew 21:18-19; Mark 11:12-14). We must be careful if we are to properly interpret these events. What we must understand is that fig trees produce leaves some six weeks before they produce figs. Normally, however, fig trees produce edible nodules in conjunction with the bearing of their leaves. Therefore, what Jesus expected to find was not figs, but the small, edible nodules, which grew in conjunction with the leaves. It is obvious that the fig tree with leaves but no nodules was making a false proclamation, describing perfectly the generation of Jews in Jesus' day. Because the fig tree is a symbol of the nation of Israel, this account proves that the Jews were proclaiming something they did not believe. At the triumphal entry they had declared Jesus to be Messiah (Matthew 21:8-9), but the subsequent accounts in the Gospels show that they did not believe their declaration. This confirms that Jesus responded properly to the tree. He stated that no fruit should be borne by the tree forever (Matthew 21:19a; Mark 11:14—Revised Version), the word "forever" meaning "to the age," or "dispensation," or until some specified time in the future. God's word teaches that the Jews will bear abundant fruit in conjunction with the Second Coming, the Messianic Kingdom and the Eternal Order. Note: The fact that Jesus was hungry validated His humanity, while the withering of the fig tree validated His deity.

I am also asked if the account of the rich young ruler teaches that wealth is evil.

A certain ruler (Luke 18:18), meaning he was a member of the Sanhedrin, ran to Jesus (Mark 10:17) to ask what he should do to inherit eternal life (Luke 18:18). Note that the rich young ruler

approached Jesus for one purpose only—to discover what was required for eternal life. Jesus asked the ruler why he called Him good and stated that no one is good but God (Luke 18:19). The Lord's response confirms that the rich man did not believe on Him as God, for had he believed, Jesus would have told him he already possessed the eternal life he was seeking. The rich man viewed Him only as "Good teacher" (v.18), meaning that he had misinterpreted who Jesus was, preventing him from obtaining what he desired. After failing to respond to Jesus' statement in verse nineteen, Jesus mentioned commandments of the Law that relate to man's relationship to man (v.20), not the commandments that deal with man's relationship to God. The ruler stated that he had kept these from his youth (v.21). Clearly, Jesus knew something about this young man that affected the remainder of the conversation. He understood that he had bought into Pharisaic Judaism, which taught that wealth guaranteed entrance into the kingdom—which was his problem in the first place. So what did Jesus do? He proved to him that he was lacking in the area of the Law relating to man's relationship to God. When Jesus requested that he sell all his possessions and distribute them to the poor (v.22) He was actually asking him to change his theology—to trust Him for salvation rather than his wealth. The man was saddened by Jesus' request because he was extremely rich (v.23), but he was not saddened enough to walk away from the Pharisaic mindset of his day. Obviously, this account does not teach that wealth is evil and should be avoided. No doubt, context is essential for proper interpretation!

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