

Winter 2003-2004

The past twenty-five years on the hill bring to mind so many good memories of our times together. What an honor it is to have you as our friends. Thank you for your hunger and passion for Christ, for pursuing Jesus over the burden of religious activity, for seeking His rest over dead works, and for allowing Him to be your all, even your very life. This life of faith, even in the midst of such global uncertainty, truly is the victory that overcomes the world, capable of taking all that occurs in space and time and defining it through the eyes of the Master.

FAMILY NEWS

Since our last newsletter, Kim, Benjamin, and I have had an eventful summer, fall, and early winter. We have experienced good health and plenty of vigorous activities to keep life interesting. If you have lived on a farm, you know well that there is always something to be done. Kim enjoys tending her flowers, trees, shrubs—and anything else that will grow when planted in God's soil. Benjamin enjoys those types of things as well, but his heart is in gardening and farming, having grown his first official sweet corn patch this past summer. He, his grandpa, and I enjoyed planting, caring for, and harvesting his crop. It brought back fond memories of my early years when my dad and I did the same, identical thing together.

Speaking of my dad, his right eye, wounded in World War II, continues to progress. He experienced a great deal of discomfort after surgery, but that has improved as of late. The surgeon thinks the discomfort resulted from the adjustments the eye was making after fifty-seven years of inactivity. He has also had successful cataract surgery on his left eye since we last wrote. We are thankful for what the Lord has done on my dad's behalf, and we want to thank all of you who have prayed for him. Our Lord has gotten much glory from this extraordinary set of events, even a front-page article in one of our regional newspapers. Truly, God is good!

MINISTRY NEWS

As some of you know, I have been teaching a series titled *The Gospels From A Jewish Perspective* on Tuesday nights here on the hill. I have enjoyed every second of it. Nothing has stretched me more, yet nothing has confirmed to me the importance of studying every word, of every phrase, of every verse, of every chapter, of every book based on the full counsel of God's word—as well as the historical setting. As of three weeks ago, I finished this series and am in the process of editing and publishing the written materials. Rebekah Edwards (our secretary), Brandon Karstetter (our computer—audio assistant), and I are working diligently on the tapes and CD's as well. We are grateful for the wonderful support from those who have attended locally, as well as those who have followed from a distance by means of the tape ministry. I am not the same person (in the way I think) that started this series over two and a half years ago, for as a result of looking at Jesus for long, extended periods of time in the Gospels, I have come to realize how very little I knew of Him when I embarked on this journey. What a great God, friend, and provider He is. I cannot imagine attempting to live life void of His presence and companionship.

The ministry had the most active year to date, and we so enjoyed those who traveled to the hill for Bible studies and conferences. We are considering a variety of things for the future, one of which is to expand our sleeping quarters. The expansion will be relatively easy since we built a log structure (2400 square feet) a few years ago with the idea of converting it to dorm space if the need presented itself. It will be a matter of adding bathrooms and interior walls, resulting in four

large apartments that can be used in a variety of ways. This will greatly expand our sleeping capacity and give us additional flexibility with the groups who visit. Some of you have already volunteered your time to assist in this expansion. For this we are grateful.

The Lord continues to show all involved here that discipleship is where it is. The courses I have written, in conjunction with the physical labor done outside the classroom, have seemed to create a workable discipleship environment. The more I correspond with those who have lived on the hill and moved on to different areas of ministry, the deeper I realize the truth of Proverbs 29:19—that it takes more than words to instruct students in the truth. It takes getting dirty with them, allowing them to see your own frailties, and in turn, you seeing theirs—and loving each other enough to embrace the pain of it all as the Lord does His work. Did not Jesus involve Himself in such activities, looking past the disciples' weaknesses for the purpose of beholding what they could become? There is no greater ministry, yet it is becoming a lost art in the midst of Christendom's ill-founded pursuits of bigness, notoriety, and religiosity. Not that I have arrived in the area of knowing how discipleship works, but this I do know. It most definitely is not for the fragile or indifferent, nor for those who pursue passivity, pragmatism, political correctness, or mediocrity. Clearly, discipleship is for those who want to live as the Savior lived, without need for public recognition or the accolades of man. It is for the courageous, those secure enough to desire to teach others to lead, realizing all along that their position of leadership has been ordained by the God of heaven, never once overstepping the boundaries or parameters prescribed by the Creator. For you who are actively involved in the lives of others, allowing yourself to be vulnerable, and at the same time, realizing that it is Christ Himself who must do the work, I am so very grateful for your heart, life, wisdom, and insight into what is eternally significant. May God bless you dear comrade.

I just heard from the ministry that is translating the Romans and Hebrews courses, and they will soon be ready for use in discipleship schools in Russia and the Ukraine.

It would be impossible to explain how much our website has helped in the area of time management. The fact that the materials distributed by this ministry can be ordered by email, and that our staff responds to those orders, has freed up much time here on the hill. Rebekah and Brandon have done a wonderful job supervising this aspect of the ministry. They truly are a godsend. Note: This newsletter, and all future newsletters, will be posted on our website. If you desire to discontinue receiving them through the postal service, just let us know. Thanks.

A variety of churches and Christian organizations have reserved weekends for the winter, spring, and summer months. If you should desire to bring a group to the hill, we would suggest that you call or email us as soon as possible (email address—contact@lifeonthehill.org).

SOME EVENTS SPONSORED BY B.A.S.I.C. TRAINING IN 2004

Note: The following is only a partial listing of dates. You can register by writing, calling, or by means of our website. If you are interested in obtaining a full schedule of events, just check out our website or call for more information.

January 13 Tuesday night Bible study begins at 7:00 p.m. A survey of the Old Testament is the course of study this next semester. **January 30-February 1** Annual youth retreat (ages 13-18). **April 23-24** Annual Men's Retreat. **July 4-10** Summer Camp for youth ages 13-18. Bryan and Jonell McKenzie, who could not be with us last summer, will return this summer to assist in

the area of leadership and supervision. What a blessing they are to us. **September 3-4** Bible School—the first eight chapters of the book of Romans—begins Friday (3rd) at 6:00 p.m. and ends Saturday (4th) at 5:00 p.m. **October 15-17** Annual fall retreat for all ages, gender, and backgrounds. We have had much fun on this weekend in the past and hope to see several of you this next fall.

Our travel dates will be posted on our website, but in the short term we will be at Highland Baptist Church in Meridian, Mississippi (January 9-11, 2004). Hope to see some of you there.

A WORD OF THANKS

Your generosity allows us to continue to pursue the dream that God placed in our hearts well before the first students visited this ministry. Thank you, dear friends. Thank you! May our Lord greatly bless you in the coming year with His joy, peace, rest, and all the other benefits that accompany His “life” in us.

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