

August 1, 2011

DRAINED, SPENT, & PRESSED BEFORE CAMP TO ENSURE GODS ENABLEMENT

Dear Friends & Family,

Im in the process of sending out Julys newsletter as I type, which I had to write weeks beforehand in light of the fact that I got home very late from my annual teen camp Friday night, July 1st. By the time you read this, I will be in the intensity of preparation for jr. camp this month. Teen camp was incredible, to say the least. I felt so heavy by the time I arrived at camp the Saturday before, re: all of the preparation & warfare, that when I arrived, I wanted to go home! When two of my assistant directors arrived the next day they said the same thing! My interpretation of the heaviness we felt? I truly believe it was Jesus pressing us out of it. Even motivation to stay must come from Him! Apart from Him we can do nothing. We truly felt that as we endeavored to begin the camp. Through the years, it has not been uncommon for me to experience this feeling of wanting to go home, despite much preparation. I believe this is fleshly resistance, of course. As dismaying as it appears to be at first, it is a glorious thing it puts one in the place of utter dependence upon the Lord. If He does not come, & inspire, enable, & empower, its over. At times like this I encourage myself by remembering that it is not my **Son** Who needs to be proclaimed, nor my **Kingdom** that needs to be spread, nor is it my **gospel** that needs to be preached. Furthermore, I did not volunteer to preach. I was apprehended & called to do so. Hence, ultimately, the responsibility lies with our gracious Father. I've been entreating Him a lot lately to please Himself through me. Can we humans truly do so ultimately on our own? When is our repentance sincere enough? When is our faith strong enough? When is our prayer sincere & fervent enough? No wonder the Scripture declares that its the Holy Spirits intercession & fruit that makes a difference in our lives (Rom.8:26, 27). Well, when the counseling staff arrived Sunday afternoon, they brought with them an excitement that was contagious. Their enthusiasm erupted in me as well. They were Gods Cavalry to the rescue!

ALL IN A CAMPDAYS WORK

Upon arrival at camp on Saturday Setup Day, I proceed to get my room setup, as I know by the time I hit the sack that night, Ill be exhausted & be too tired to do so then. Upon doing so, its down to the chapel area to unload my truck & ministry trailer, both which are packed & loaded to the hilt, with just enough space for air. We spend hours that day setting up the camp in preparation for the staff & campers; this includes the chapel & dining hall primarily, the two most important rooms at camp for the week. The one is our meeting place where we spend hours with the Living God, the other where we cultivate a family atmosphere, eating, laughing, acting, dancing, cheering, shouting, etc. together. I will never forget praying at camp many years ago in the dining hall with our oldest son Matthew, who was my right arm at camp for many years. He prayed for Gods blessing on the dining hall as he realized that so many of the children & teens have no such family experience in their own homes. Ive never forgotten my firstborns prayer that day, & have prayed it many times since. By the way, Matthew is being ordained this month into the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. He has been in ministry full-time

now for six years, though he has done extensive ministry since he was very young, particularly in music & serving. On Sunday, the staff arrives. We have orientation with them, then I preach & minister to them on Sunday night. This is their night, for vision & encouragement. The other five days are for the kids, primarily. On Monday evening, I rode a horse out on the field in a prequel drama, which announces the much bigger sequel drama that follows the following Thursday evening. On Tuesday evening, I helped facilitate a field game w/the teens, pushing a huge 6 hot potato cageball around. On Wednesday evening, I came out of my Time Machine as a 1st century Jewish farmer outside of Jerusalem. This drama led into a message I preached re: **The Coming Harvest & The Fate Of The Tares**. My main subject matter was re: Hell. Yes, I was fearful & hesitant to preach it to teenagers, but I was motivated to do so by the recent heretical book re: the subject by Rob Bell. The book has circulated widely & rapidly among the younger generation. No doubt given the huge percentage of biblically illiterate Americans, I'm not surprised, but nonetheless angered & grieved. My goal in preaching a detailed message re: Hell? That the teens would cling to the cross in love, gratitude, & holy fear to the point that they got splinters from it by doing so! After I was finished, I wondered if I connected with them. In a matter of minutes, the floor was filled with teens on their faces. This is what I ache for at camp that the teenagers & children would adore on the floor after hearing solid biblical doctrine. I'm very wary & cynical of spiritual hype, especially with the young. May God deliver us from it. Experience must be initiated & grounded upon sound doctrine. Through the week I constantly reiterated the theme, a.k.a., **Chabod**, the Hebrew word for glory & for heavy. I told both staff & campers that I did not have to pursue experiences. I simply immerse myself in the right doctrines, & the weight of His glory, i.e., His manifold perfections, so fill my mind & heart that I can do nothing else but drop everything (including myself!) & adore Him. On Thursday evening, I prepared for & performed the huge directors field skit I do every year. This year it was Christian Martyrs Under Nero. You may recollect the pictures of it I sent you attached to last month's newsletter. It was a dream come true for me, as I have portrayed Roman officers in dramas for almost 25 years, but this was my first time doing so in a chariot! Friday is encompassed primarily with tearing down & packing up, unfortunately. I'd much rather be with the kids all day. Most days do involve rough-housing in the pool w/the boys, fighting for your very life! I also taught in six morning staff devotions, as well as conducted a Bible study & quizzing class for campers four of those days. As always, it was a very full week. We had a Hopewell Network pastor coun-sel with us for the first time. He gave me one of the highest compliments I've ever received. He said he had a newfound respect for me & my fellow directors, observing firsthand what I do in my element. Yes, if there was one aspect of ministry that I believe I was made for, it is camp. It truly is my element. In 2nd place would be a kids rally/service. Give me a roomful of kids that I can pump with fun, excitement, & laughter. Then, let me preach the gospel to them. Oh, words cannot describe the joy. One of the most beautiful sounds in the world to me is when I'm in a place where the kids have never seen my Time Machine. When the cover is pulled off, you hear an Ooooooooh across the room. There are few things like it on earth, Beloved. I pray our gracious Father would continue to send & enable me to minister at such gatherings of the young. If so, I shall be a contented man.

Sincerely & gratefully,
Michael and Kim

BACK HOME FROM CAMP #3

(7/27) I returned home Sunday evening from my 3rd of four youth camps this summer. It was in NY during one of their hottest summers on record (?). One day it was calling for a **110 degree heat-index** ! And the church where it was held had no A/C! I preached 5X in six days. The childrens ages ranged from 6-12. As always, my messages were adult-strength in doctrine, but, by Jesus ability & grace, given to children. Im working now on recuperating, & preparing for my own annual jr. camp later this month. After pouring out for a week at this camp, & unloading & unpacking my equipment the day after, I head to OH 1st thing Sun. a.m., driving 8 hours to preach at our oldest sons ordination service!

PS-we got hit w/2 unexpected rather large car repair bills this past month. God is GOD!