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August 2017

**Dear Friends & Family,**

### **“CAMP BIRTH CRAMPS”**



[7/6] I returned home last Friday night from the 1<sup>st</sup> of 4 camps I will serve at this summer-Hopewell Summer Camps' Sr. Hi. camp. We had 65 teenagers, grades 9-12. While this is our smallest camp by far each summer (it's our newest camp, only 6 years old & hence we are building up its attendance), nevertheless it is perhaps the most stressful, as it's “the first”. [This is my 27<sup>th</sup> year serving the Hopewell Network camps; last week was my 60<sup>th</sup> Hopewell camp. This is my 35<sup>th</sup> year overall in camp-related work/ministry.] Getting off the ground, so to speak, re: this camping season was exceptionally hard due to the year that I have had: contracting Guillain Barre' Syndrome from a flu shot last October, the aftermath of which I'm still dealing with on a daily basis; my Dad dying in March & being buried in May; our annual church production of Via Dolorosa {biggest workload for me each year next to camps} was late this year, & an unusual, unexpected months'-long spiritual warfare threatening the ministry. Our God so faithfully & graciously “moved” it out of the way! After months of intercession re: it, O, how releasing it was when “it moved”! I liken it almost to a horse {me!} being released from the starting gate. He reigns.

### **“JERICO & JUVENILE 'WALLS”**



Last Sunday evening at our staff vision meeting, I dramatically portrayed Joshua, meeting w/ one of his captains just before the battle of Jericho. After his captain leaves, Joshua is suddenly confronted by THE Captain of the Army of the Lord of Hosts {Jer. 5:13ff}. This led into a message re: “walls” that were coming to camp the next morning-within the teens. For progress to be made that week, they had to come down. As in the drama, when Joshua was challenged by his captain re: the invincibility of the task to him & the Israelites, re: taking down Jericho's massive, impregnable walls that were so high & wide [houses were built on top of them, as well as chariots being able to race across them!], Joshua agreed. *He* couldn't do it. Neither could the staff with the teens. God will always call us to tasks we are unable to do. The key to doing these tasks? Joshua was “by Jericho” [his obstacle; his foe; his challenge] when God's Captain [a.k.a. The Lord Jesus in His pre-incarnate state] appeared to him. The text says, “Joshua looked up” & saw Him. When the Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, it says He turned to him, looked at him, & said, “Go in this-your strength”. Seeing the Lord before battle is so critical to success. This is why I hold these staff-only meetings each camp before the campers arrive.

### THE INCUBATOR



How were we going to do it? I shared with the staff a “vision” I had in my mind months before I trust was from the Lord. I saw in my mind's eye an incubator, viz, the camp, with a warmth light hovered over it-the truth, love, & nurture of the Lord. I laid straw on the bottom of the incubator for comfort & warmth. I then placed a carton of eggs on top of the straw. These were the campers. By placing them within the walls of this five-day long incubator of camp, my hope & trust was that the Lord would bring down their walls-of pride, hardness, sin, indifference, apathy, etc. toward the things of God.

### THE MEN, THE MISSION, & THEIR MESSAGES



As always, I had lined up “my men”, i.e., those who would join arms with me in bringing the Word of God to the teens. **Gary Buck**, who has been associated with the camp since he was a child, preached on opening night re: “Surrender”, coming at it from all different angles, showing “levels” of surrender Christians “offer” to God, & how all but “total, unconditional surrender” pleases Him. Opening night of camp is always the most-challenging, but “G”, as I affectionately call him, was up for the task via the enabling of the Lord. I saw in my mind's eye Gary as holding a pick, faithfully & vigorously picking away at the base of the walls in the teens' hearts that night. While there wasn't the usual “visible” fruit of kids coming forward & lying on their faces before the Lord up front, I heard later how many teens were deeply affected by G's message as they pondered it in their chairs, & later in their cabins that night. The next morning, **Luke Trader** preached re: the theme of the camp, “Remember”. Excellently done, Luke used many object lessons & bare his heart & his own weaknesses before the teens. That evening, **Devin Blankenbiller**, Kim & mine's “4<sup>th</sup> son”, who like Gary has been associated with the camp since a child-in fact, Dev got saved in the Maple cabin when he was 9 years old, preached re: “No Fear”, based on I Sam. 17, re: David & Goliath. God used Dev to further bring down the walls & kids began to noticeably respond. Wednesday a.m., **Joel Kolb**, a network pastor, father of 4, & a counselor last week, challenged the guys re: sexual purity. I was riveted. He kept my attention the entire time-no small task the way my brain works! Wednesday night I performed my new Time Machine drama, “The Vineyard” [on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/Z2EYdrZ7lak>] & then preached re: John 15 re: the absolute necessity of one remaining attached to Jesus, The True Vine, in order to bear fruit which proves you belong to Him. Once again we were blessed with sweet altar time afterwards as the campers responded to the preached Word. On Thursday a.m., our worship leader for the week, **Elie Belizaire**, also brought the message, re: Matthew 3 & 4, & especially challenged the campers at the end to pursue the Lord the rest of the year, & not to wait for “the blessing” until camp next year-a much-needed reminder! **Eric Nordin**, whom I affectionately dub “CUB”, i.e. my “clean-up batter”, preached at our last regular evening chapel on Thursday night. I've often likened him to a plow, hovering over a field, dropped by God into it to “break things up”, & once again that is what happened. He kept charging the teens to stay close to the Word, which is our only hope & defense against a world & Church (!) riddled with false-teaching. As always, God used Eric to “bring down the house”, or better yet, in the context of this article, “the walls”! There was hardly an empty chair that night when he

invited the campers to respond. This is what camp is all about-rich, in depth teaching from the text of Scripture, accompanied & followed by the Holy Spirit's deep working in the hearts as He enables His vessels to preach.

### **ADORE ON THE FLOOR**



The end result? Campers would lay on their faces before the Lord, like so many men did in the Scriptures when confronted by His Word & His presence. I've often said there is no other place in Christendom I'd rather be than on the floor with a broken kid or teenager. This is what I ache for. This is what I long for. If it doesn't happen? My time at camp is over. Even so come, Lord Jesus, to the other three camps as well-& I'll be content.



### ***Caboose! On the Loose:***

**Ministry/Events for AUGUST & those not listed in last month's newsletter:**

**July 31: Transformation Life Center, West Park, NY: Recovering addicts' a.m. chapel**

**Aug. 1: Petra Church, New Holland, PA: hsc board mtg.**

**Aug. 12-18: Tel Hai Camp, Honey Brook, PA: hsc kids' camp: pastoral director**

**Aug. 27: Maranatha Christian Fellowship, Moorestown, NJ: children's service**

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