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August 2023 **“JR. HI. CAMP-& 900 MILES TO BOOT!”**



{Jr Hi Camp boys at the altar last month}

Dear *Friends & Family*,

[7/27] I returned home the other night from camp #2, vis, *hsc Jr Hi Camp*, but not before driving 900 miles round trip to & from OH. Why? Our 3 children & 10 of our grandchildren were all in the same place at the same time, which is a huge rarity these days. Despite deep post-camp fatigue, I knew I could not miss this priceless, historic family convocation. Kim flew there the day I left for Jr Hi camp. I drove out to pick her up & of course to see our clan. I was only there for a little over 48 hours, but in that span of time, I played percussion on our oldest son’s church’s worship team, watched a Christian camp movie, played a big football game, swam in Lake Erie, had a water balloon fight, played “Nuke-‘em!”, volleyball, rode my son’s new (used) motorcycle, went garbage-hunting with two of my grandsons in my pickup [it was their development’s monthly bulk garbage disposal night-I didn’t get anything, but was tempted!

😊], got *Mitchell’s* ice cream [a local delicacy!], etc. Needless to say, the “bus” hit me yesterday, & yet, our Lord enabled me to get a long list of post-camp items “done” & off said list.

**“WORSHIP-IT’S A ‘FAMILY AFFAIR”**



Along with the very rare blessing of most of our family being together [our son-in-law & 3 grandkids were missing-he & his 2 daughters were involved with mission trips & the other is in the Army], I also had the very rare treat to play music with our 2 sons again. In the 2000's the 3 of us comprised the original members of **The Caleb Guertin Band** & played & recorded music together. Our son Caleb released his "**Beloved**" CD in 2006 [& a plethora of music since then]. You can contact him at [cjguertin@gmail.com](mailto:cjguertin@gmail.com) should you be interested in acquiring it. What made this particular event even more special was that our two daughters-in-law, vis, **Devon & Elizabeth**, also sang along with us on the worship team @ **Local Church Cleveland**. I've told Dev & Liz for years I've wanted a recording of them singing together. Their voices are absolutely angelic. After worship, I had the double treat of sitting in between two of our younger grandsons & holding them (tightly at times! 😊) during the service.

**"BARBIE & KEN' COME TO JR HI CAMP!"**



Every Sunday evening, of every camp, for as long as I can remember, I hold a staff-vision meeting for that particular camp’s counselors. The purpose of this meeting is to inspire & motivate these “frontline” warriors-& that is exactly what they are. They are the initial & primary impression of camp to the campers. They lead, pray with, counsel, give affection to, & shepherd the campers. Without this counseling staff element, the messages of the teachers & preachers at camp would not be anywhere near as effective. Why? This personal care of the campers on the part of the counseling staff causes them to let go of their fears, their insecurities, their defenses, their “shields”, if you will. They are much more receptive to the seed of the Word of God versus if they didn’t have this relationship with them. I’ve often said to our staff, “You are the key to the camp”. The most important task of the pastoral director, & the most stressful, is procuring qualified staff. Your camp staff make or break you. And, so it is. Another key to effective ministry to the young (& to the not-so-young!) is *vision*. Until we see things in the unseen world, as they really are, versus the façade **the devil**, the world, & the flesh constantly hold up before us, we have no vision. When we have no vision, we have no burden for anything! When Jesus lifted up His eyes & saw the crowds, He felt compassion for them, as He saw them as sheep without a shepherd [Mk.9:36]. Hence, I strive to impart vision to my staff in this Sunday night meeting. While pondering the junior-highers, the thought came to me to bring 4 “**Barbie & Ken**” dolls as object lessons. All 4 dolls, 2 men & 2 women, were *adult* dolls. I

anticipated the staff wondering why I used *adult* dolls to represent junior-high aged young people. I told them when I started pastoring children decades ago, I strove to make it a regular practice to envision these precious little ones sitting before me & under my care as teenagers, young adults, married, with children of their own, senior citizens, & finally “residents” of a cemetery. Few disciplines have been more powerful with me in inciting a deep burden to minister to them with all of my endeavor as our Lord provides it. “Teach us to realize how short life is, that we might become wise” [Ps.90:12]. I believe it is an absolute must in children’s ministry to have this aspect of vision for them, or, as we sung at Bible school, “we dwell carelessly”-or, as I prefer to phrase it-“we dwell without a care”.

“DOLLS-& ‘GLOW-BALLS’”



Commensurate with the idea to use these Barbie & Ken dolls to represent the junior-highers was the thought to place before them on my object lesson table little rubber “glow balls”, as I call them. These balls flash with light (& “life”) when you shake them. I told the staff that before

we know it, these precious camp-ers will be teens & young adults, etc., like these dolls. And, despite the fact that these young ones with us for the next 5 days will be in their early years, every single one of them carries within them an eternal soul [the glow ball], that will spend eternity in 1 of 2 places. I then proceeded to pick up 2 of the 4 glow balls & shake them. I told the staff that some, many (?), of the campers will arrive the next day with their glow balls “flashing”, i.e., they have been regenerated & have the Life of God within them. The 2 balls I left unshaken represented those young people who would arrive the next day unregenerated, still dead in their trespasses & sin [Eph.2:1].

**“THE CURE: THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD-HIS KINDNESS & SEVERITY”**



As is always the case for as long as I can remember, I strove to have our camp “Text-driven”. I wanted the campers’ spiritual experiences at camp to be *responses* to the Word of God & the Life therein. It is very easy to hype-up a group of young people emotionally. But, when said emotions eventually dwindle-& they always do, the kids are left with nothing. Hence, I encourage my teachers & preachers to “get to the Text”, which is nuclear in itself-it literally throbs with life-it is alive, active, & energetic in itself [Heb.4:12].

Messages brought to the campers that week involved ***the inspiration of Scripture, the wrath of God & Jesus having propitiated & appeased it on Calvary for God’s people, the essentialness of repentance, the essence of faith, sexual purity, friendship with the world is enmity with God, & Jesus must increase, but we must decrease***. Below are some testimonies I received from parents which evinces results from such **Text**-driven messages:

***“Love this! You are the best! The boys cannot stop talking about how awesome camp was & how much the Holy Spirit moved.” [Shaneece]***

“Guerty, just wanted to express for a minute how thankful we are for camp & all that you & your team do. Daniel had a great week & the Lord spoke to him! We are so grateful for opportunities like this for our kids & know that what is in the Lord’s heart needs to partner with someone’s obedience & faithfulness, so thank you! Have a wonderful time with your family!” [Rebecca]

“You deserve a gallon of that stuff!! (my highly caffeinated cold brew coffee 😊) I’ve heard so much about camp in the last 12 hours that I feel like I’ve been there! My girls are fired up for God!” [Mandy-former camper & counselor]

**“When your son says chapel was his favorite at camp and you catch him actually singing during worship.” [B.B.-mother of Jr Hi camper & former counselor]**

**“I sure am grateful for all your love in those days of my life. You were like a shield in some way during those times. I’m definitely a better human because of your influence in my life, Pastor Michael. Tell Kim, thank you too! I know her part was silent from my young perspective but as an adult I realize it was just as valuable, helping to hold you up, minister life to you & give you the freedom to be you! You’re a great team. Love you both!” [Josh-a former camper of mine whom I counseled when I was 40. He just turned 40!]**

“Good evening! Just wanted to thank you for a great week at Junior High camp for our two girls (Addie & Laela). We’re still hearing fun stories. However, tonight Laela informed us that she also wants to be baptized at our church’s baptism next Sunday (music to my ears!). Addie already is scheduled for it, so this is lovely. She told us that she was struggling with feeling like she should get baptized but not wanting to, but Wednesday evenings chapel that you preached made it clear to her that she was decided. She said to tell you that you are such a powerful preacher & she is grateful. So next week two of our 4 daughters will be baptized in the pool at Woodcrest

Retreat! The angels are singing. Thank you!" {Katie-an intercessor, mother of campers, & first-time counselor for kids camp next month)

"Hey Guerty, it's Priscilla, Nathan & Clayton's Mom. Hey? I just wanted to call & thank you for hosting & being obedient to the Lord. Camp has made such an impact on both my kids...Clayton has been a different boy since he's come back. He's laid some things down, rededicated his life. This morning he got up & went & did the work & wanted to help do the horses as I've been doing them for him, so that he could do camp & he could do other things that he wanted to do & get up early before he had to go to his hockey camp...he has this overall peace....he's not acting out...so I'm just so thankful for that...he misses camp...it was such a pivotal part of this year & for getting him set for a brand new season that God wants to bless him in. It made such a difference with Nathan too but it really made a difference with Clayton...so much...I just want to thank you for your offering of giving your time & your money, your time away from your family in ministering to these kids, & I think that adults need to go to camp. I'm very serious about that, to get their heads screwed on right. And, I always thought about having some of my property-I have a farm, opening it up for that, cause sometimes we have to get away with God, in order to hear what He's saying...". [Priscilla]

Beloved? As I told my counselors in our Sunday night "Staff Vision Meeting", & also at one of our staff devotions in the early a.m. that week, all that happens at camp must be a *response* to **Divine initiative**. We **love** Him, because He first **loved** us (I Jn.4:19); we bless Him because He first blessed us (Eph.1:4); & this is the hardest one for Christians to believe & accept-we choose Him, because He first chose us (Eph.1:4). Hence, this is why our camps *must* be Text-driven. And, ultimately, whatever fruit we see among the campers, ultimately, those results are up to GOD: "I will have mercy upon whom I have mercy." [Ex. 33:19; Rom.9:15].

### "JUNE BUGS' VISITED ONE MORE TIME"



Many of you probably recall my “list of grievances” with present-day “packaged” worship services I wrote about in June’s newsletter. You may also recollect that in July’s newsletter I shared various & numerous responses I received from God’s “mutually-grieved” people re: these travesties not only allowed but encouraged in the House of God for 3+ decades now. Well, I received yet another response from a mother in the Lord to me. Her husband pastored the same church for 30+ years & has been the father in the Lord I never knew. They have parented me for decades. They are well into their eighties now. I have found shelter, love, & comfort in the shadow of their wings during those many years. Here is what “Ma” wrote about the present-day debacle in The Church of the Living God:

**“Have meant to reply about the things you & “Pa” & I have observed in church services we've been to, or seen on-line. Sad to see the lack of room given to Him to be the Absolute Center of the service instead of the performance or "effects" being brought forth. Hard to put it into words, but you know what I mean. Makes you hunger for the "real thing". I'm not hungry for smoke & mirrors, just His presence & the effect it brings us to tears. His Presence is all we need. Love, ‘Ma’” [Sunny]**

**“ONE MORE TIME AROUND THE ARENA”**



Despite the fact that I’m exhausted from Jr Hi Camp & my trip to OH right after it, I have one more lap around the arena-Kids Camp. I love all 3 camps each year, & each one is very special & precious in itself, but I’ve often said, “If the Hopewell Network ever said to me, ‘Michael? We want you from now on only to do 1 camp of the 3. Which one do you want?’. I would immediately say, “Kids Camp!”. Kids Camp has a magic, an innocence, a “hormone-free” context



that is absolutely precious-& priceless! I wouldn't trade it for the world. But-it also carries the heaviest workload: writing puppet show & costumed character skits & scripts, compiling & editing the music for them, amassing the pertinent costumes & actors for them, buying Bible game prizes (one of Kim's many camp-related tasks!), etc. This is all *in addition to* the numerous & various duties & responsibilities that come with the first two camps. BUT-it is an absolute labor of love! I pray it would please our Lord for me to continue in this "magical" harvest field for years to come!

Sincerely, Michael



***\*Caboose! Commentary Corner:*** [Our daughter Laura once said she'd love to have my old Bibles when I passed for all of the notes I have written in them over the decades. This was quite humbling to say the least, especially coming from one of your own children. Hence, I've decided to post each month random notes/comments from Bibles I have studied from: **"Adoration of the grace of the Trinity is proportionate to understanding the depth of our depravity."** MRG 1/27/'21



***Caboose! On The Loose!***

1. **Ministry/events for *AUGUST* & those not listed in last month's newsletter:**
2. **July 8: Mohnton, PA & Tel Hai Camp, Honey Brook, PA: Camp Bible Quiz Machine p/u & directors meeting**
3. **July 23: Local Church, Westlake, OH: worship team: percussion**
4. **August 1: Petra Church, New Holland, PA: hsc board meeting**
5. **August 4: Tel Hai Camp, Honey Brook, PA: hsc Kids Camp directors' prayer & planning meeting**
6. **August 12-18: Tel Hai Camp, Honey Brook, PA: hsc Kids Camp: pastoral director**



\*Michael is an ordained [Elim Fellowship](#) itinerant Stateside missionary & **Caboose!** is also an affiliate ministry of [The Hopewell Network of Churches](#). For 14 years he served on various local church staffs as their children's pastor. Since 2000 Kim & he have lived by faith, having no set salary, retirement, etc. to speak of. Yet-this is their calling at this season of their lives. Michael preaches God's Word & systematic theology, using both drama & visual aids, to all age groups, from children to senior citizens, either separately or combined. To help support this work [any amount no matter how small is greatly appreciated!], please make all tax-deductible gifts payable to: **Elim Fellowship**, c/o 1703 Dalton Rd., Lima, NY 14485, marking it "Preferred-Michael Robert **Guertin**" or you may click on the link below to give directly. Thank you! [click here](#)

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