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July 1, 2008

Dear Friends & Family,

"SETTING OUR COURSE FOR CAMP"

With my first camp of the summer just a few days away, my days are filled from early morning until well into the evening with various & sundry preparations for it. This will be my 25th year involved in camp ministry & my 18th at Tel Hai Camp. Each day, I feel as if a heavy wet-blanket of "burden" is on my heart, from the time I awake until the time I lay my head on my pillow, although it carries into the nights as well. It is a burden of aching inside to see our Lord move; to see Him move among us at camp mightily; to be ready to faithfully, powerfully, clearly, & accurately preach His Word to both staff & campers; to be ready "on all fronts". At this point, I'm trusting to preach three times at camp, perform in four dramas, & give some morning devotions as well. In preparation for all of that, my days have entailed hours study, prayer, meditation, object lesson buying &/or building, costume making, packing, loading, countless emails to camp staff, ministry equipment improvement & modification, etc. I've tried to get up to camp for vision & prayer purposes as well. In the midst of all of this, Kim has been preparing for our son Caleb's wedding & for his fiancé Elizabeth's bridal shower at our house w/over 40 women the same weekend I leave for camp! From here on out, I commence on what I believe to be the busiest summer of my entire life, re: ministry events (see itinerary below) & our son Caleb's wedding. **"THE LORD LAVISHED IN**

LAKELAND"

Some of you may be aware of a revival/renewal that has been going on for several weeks in Lakeland, FL. A number of people from our own church have gone down to witness it firsthand, including our pastor & a considerable number of our elders. As with all moves of God in Church history, there is tremendous blessing, coupled with human "handling" of it. Our pastor witnessed this. I myself watched some of it on our daughter's cable channel & sense pretty quickly the presence of the Lord in the place. Our pastor preached last Sunday so powerfully & effectively, having come fresh from this revival. We had a prayer line in our church at the end of the service this past Sunday where those who went to Lakeland stood on each side of the center aisle. Pastor then released those who wanted to go; those who wanted to be prayed for & blessed walked "down the aisle". Kim & I did so & were greatly blessed & encouraged. We didn't get home until 2 p.m. or so. **"THE WORD & THE SPIRIT—the CRUCIAL 'BLEND'!"**

As with last month's newsletter, my hope is to continue my series of "Christian myth debunking". Again, as with most Christian "myths", they are well-intended, but often not well thought out. As with last month's error, I myself have been guilty of believing & saying the following: **MYTH: "God moved so mightily that I didn't even get to preach! There wasn't even any sermon!"** **FACT:** It is impossible for God to manifest Himself anywhere where there has NOT been sound biblical preaching. He elevates His Word above His Name (Ps. 138:2). "Now Samuel did *not yet know* the Lord; the *word of the Lord* had not yet been revealed to him" (I Sam.3:7). "If any man loves Me, he will *keep My word*, & My Father will love him, & *We will come to him & make Our abode with him* (The essence of true revival→the "habitation" of the God-head!) (Jn.14:23). "Did you receive His Holy Spirit, & did God work miracles among you (again, this is a classic concise definition of revival!) because you obeyed the Law, or because you believed *what you heard* (i.e., the gospel, the Word of the Lord)?" (Gal.3:4,5). "When He, the Spirit (His sweet presence a

prominent characteristic of revival) of *truth* (Again, conveyed by God's Word) comes..." (Jn.15:26?). While praying at camp with a dear brother/son/friend in the Lord, he cited to me the familiar text from Eph. 6:17: "...the sword of the *Spirit*, which is *The Word of God*...". Again, the two MUST ALWAYS ACCOMPANY each other to have TRUE REVIVAL, or God is NOT in it! Even at the first Church revival, Pentecost, Peter had to "define" with Scripture the phenomenon of the Holy Spirit's move, with his famous, "this is that" sermon (Acts 2:16ff). He then preached the crucifixion & resurrection (gospel) of our Lord Jesus Christ in that same sermon. Along these same lines, I revisited an incredibly profound & rich passage in Exodus (33:19-34:7), which describes in quite vivid detail one of the most glorious encounters between God & man in all of Sacred Scripture. Moses entreats God to send His presence with him & the Israelites, or basically, Moses says, "We're not going!". The Lord assures Moses that He will. Moses then requests, "Show me Your glory!". John Piper (The Justification of God; © 1993) insightfully asserts, contrary to most interpreters of this passage, including me, that Moses was *not* just wanting to have an ethereal, mystical experience with the God of Israel. He wanted to see into the depths of His nature to have confidence of His promise that was coming from it! God's immediate reply was, "I will cause all of My *goodness* to pass by you...". Incredible it is, that when asked to display His glory, the first thought & word that came to our God was His *goodness*; not His omniscience, nor His omnipresence, nor His omnipotence, but → His *goodness*! I've written in a previous newsletter that the greatest aspect of God's manifold glory to a fallen race is His GOODNESS. I've also said that given our horrendous depravity, we don't need the riches of His money—we need the riches of His *mercy*! God passes by Moses, covering Moses' face with His hand, as no man can see Him & live. Watch now! God then PROCLAIMS His Name unto Moses! God uses WORDS! He does not infuse some vision into Moses' mind. He uses *words* to reveal Himself! Surely, this is one of the "top three" God-to-man manifestations in all of Scripture, & yet, what does the Lord command Moses to do before it happens? "Chisel two stone tablets....& I will WRITE on them...." (Ex.34:1). Do you see the divine pattern, Beloved? No Word? No revival! We must realize that when sovereign outpourings of God's Spirit occur, as in Lakeland, there was all kinds of biblical preaching that preceded it, as without sound doctrine & theology, God's people would have no desire for Him, nor know how to pray for revival, nor realize the need for it, etc. God will always "define" His Spirit's moves by His Word. Visions given to His prophet's always necessitated them being conveyed to others by *words*. A revival's perpetuity is so dependent on the Word preached within it to "sustain" it! If it is characterized by more "rhemas" than the written "logos", I would be wary! May Father & Jesus come & make Their abode with us, as They enable us to love Jesus & keep His Word. For camp this summer, I want that rich, deep, sweet balance of His Word & His Spirit, as "His deepest fountains are in His foundations". May He help us to dig those wells in His Word. Amen.

Kim, Caleb, & I sincerely thank you for being used of God to enable us to keep doing what we're doing!

Michael

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[Please make all tax-deductible gifts payable to: Elim Fellowship, 1703 Dalton Rd, Lima, NY 14485. Thanks!]

[Michael is an ordained Elim Fellowship itinerant home missionary, endorsed by his local church. He supports his family & his ministry by faith in the Lord & His provision through His people.]

Ministry/events for JULY & those not listed in last month's newsletter

June 6, 13: PA: camp directors' mtg.

July 1: Hopewell Christian Fellowship, Elverson, PA: camp board mtg.//pastors' mtg.//directors' mtg.

July 5, 6: Petra Christian Fellowship, New Holland, PA: 2 kids' services & camp promotion

July 12, 13: Glad Tidings A/G Church, West Wyomissing, PA: 2 kids' services & camp promotion

July 17: Mt. Laurel, NJ: Elim area pastors' mtg.

July 19-25: Conservative Congregational Christian Conference, Buffalo, NY: 3 kids'//3 youth services