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SUMMER 2018

NEWSLETTER

This summer has meant a whirlwind of activity at The Hill. Time has flown. Fall is coming much too soon, forcing some of our warm weather projects to wait through the winter.

Despite our frenzied pace we are ever thankful for your faithfulness. Your friendship is so very important to us and your communication encourages us to walk on.

We have a special treat in this newsletter. Rick Underhill, our dear friend and former Administrator at The Hill, is finishing his Bible study of James. We thought you might enjoy reading some of it. Rick will be teaching this material at the Fall Retreat in October. We would love for you to join us.

You'll also find images from summer camp scattered throughout the newsletter. Enjoy.

Brent

A Note From Rick

I'm sharing James 2:8 to encourage you that James 2:24, "*You see a man is justified by works and not by faith alone*" can be understood and applied in our day. My commentary is a literal interpretation of James' words in the context in which they are stated. A study guide of questions will be included with the commentary, along with brief introductions of many subjects throughout the New Testament to which the teaching of James naturally leads. The commentary I am writing addresses these subjects more comprehensively.

James is good news.

James 2:8

If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." you are doing well. (James 2:8)

In the context used by James, the *royal law* (James 2:8) is synonymous with the *law of our King*. Within the *royal law* spoken by King Jesus is, "*Love your neighbor as yourself,*" (Matthew 19:16-20, 22:34-40), which Jesus stated in a particular order to liberate the scribe from the wrong emphasis in obedience to the Law of Moses, Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-34. Loving others well is the second half of the *royal law*, Mark 12:31. But motive is the first half of the *royal law*, and comes from the fact that there is only One God.

The only way to love others well is from a motive of voluntary obedience to the one God, Mark 12:29. Our affection for God is to be single-minded — *from the heart*. It is to be a thinking devotion, not a blind one — *using our mind*. It is to encompass the whole energy of our being in Christ — *with all our strength*, Mark 12:30. What impact does your love for God have on your motive, thoughts and actions?

Allow the same love to shape your motive, thoughts and actions for others, Mark 12:31. If you show undue favor to others from any other motive than to love the one God, you break the *royal law*, and have become guilty of breaking all of God's commandments, James 2:10. James knows the liberty found in yielding to right motives as the good, honest place *the word implanted* (James 1:21), and *the law of liberty*, (James 1:25) seeks to lead the believer, John 8:31-32.

Both James and Paul understood the importance of God's love being expressed through the believer. God's love leads to God's will, such as loving your neighbor as yourself. To love unselfishly (agape) is the Law of Moses brought to fulfillment, Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:13-15; James 2:8. This wisdom for James and Paul resulted from their knowledge of "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself,*" (Leviticus 19:18), and their humility before God to learn from the Spirit through Jesus as is found in Matthew 19:16-22 and 22:34-40.

God's love leads believers to yield to the *word implanted*. Therefore, they will not be inconsistent in their relationship to others by preferring the wealthy and powerful while insulting the poor, James 2:1-7.

You are doing well (James 2:8) is a contrast to being spoken well of by others, James 2:1-3. The one doing well is obeying the *royal law*, which is to start with devotion

to the one God, which leads to loving Him and others well. Verse 8 begins with "*If, however...*" and is reinforced in verse 9 with "*But...*" both designed to draw a contrast to James 2:1-7. The one yielding to the *word implanted* will be *doing well*, and will not be ambitious for the place of honor. He will not be satisfied to do well only in his own eyes, or the eyes of others, Matthew 23:5-7; Mark 12:38-40; Luke 14:7-14, 20:45-47, James 3:13-18. If the believer becomes content with a good reputation, he is contradicting the teaching of Jesus who said, "*Woe to you when all men speak well of you...*," Luke 6:26.

Thoughtfully consider the events recorded in Matthew 19 and Luke 18 about the rich young ruler.

Here Jesus follows a pattern He may have done in conversation with seekers without exception.

He begins with what is important to the listener, in this case obeying the commandments. If the young man wanted to begin to (wish to) enter into the life of the One who is good, he was to obey the commandments (of God), Matthew 19:17.

Responding to Jesus, the young man said, "*All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking,*" Matthew 19:20. Jesus responds by using what is familiar to the listener to point the man to relationship with His Father.

The young ruler lacked one thing for reaching maturity, a well-placed confidence, Matthew 19:21. He viewed his stuff as *the way* to help others, rather than loving the *One who is good* as He directs the man how to use his life and his stuff to help others. The young ruler's faith was in his wisdom and stuff foremost. It is as if Jesus is saying the things that are important to the man needs to be understood from God's motive, applied from His perspective.



Rick Underhill teaching during the Romans Retreat

This agreement is the facet of justification toward which James is driving his audience.

The man was to no longer base his life on the earthly things accumulating around him (James 1:9-11, 2:1-4), but to *come, follow Christ*, Matthew 19:21, Luke 18:22. The verb *keep* (aorist, imperative, active, Matthew 19:17) when used of the commandments is an instruction for the moment and not for continuous or repeated action. That is unlike the tense of the verb *follow Me* (present, imperative, active, Matthew 19:21), which is a command to begin a continual or repeated action. God's life is continually experienced in Christ, not in keeping the commandments. Obeying the commandments of God will only help a person *begin to find* God's kind of life. The commandments function like a tutor leading a person to Christ, Galatians 3:15-29. A follower of God is to leave behind being motivated by rules.

The question of the rich young ruler "*Good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life,*" is a question a lawyer had asked Jesus before, Luke 10:25. *But wishing to justify himself, he* (the lawyer) *said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor,"* Luke 10:29. Jesus, having told the man the example of the Good Samaritan, replied, "*Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor...*" *And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him."* *Then Jesus said to him, "I send you out to do the same,"* Luke 10:36-37, (emphasis mine.)

In the same way Jesus had taught the rich young ruler, He taught this lawyer faith accompanied by the right motive is to be experienced through right actions. The lawyer expressed no disagreement. Both he and Jesus understood a connection between the lawyer wishing to justify himself and his behavior. This agreement is the facet of justification toward which James is driving his audience. That is the background of James 2:8. We will slowly unpack that truth when we get to James 2:14-26.

New Staff Member

Jenelle Schimpf came on board in May as our summer intern and fell right into the routine here. Being enormously gifted in areas that we aren't, her creativity, contagious enthusiasm, and love for Jesus make her a perfect fit at The Hill. She is such a perfect addition that we asked the Lord if He would let us keep her. He said, "Yes," and she said, "Yes!"

Jenelle is a native Californian coming to us by way of Murfreesboro, TN, a graduate of MTSU, a veteran of multiple summer camps and has served in various leadership positions within the youth ministry at Believers' Chapel in Murfreesboro. She most recently worked at Just Love Coffee.

She is an organizer, great administrator, quite adept at videography, a social media maven, discipler, and loves learning new things. Just what we needed! Join us in welcoming her to our staff at The Hill. You can currently reach her at intern@lifeonthehill.org.



Upcoming Events

Fall Retreat, October 19-21, 2018—Our annual fall retreat (open to all) will be a study of the book of James led by Rick Underhill.

For centuries the book of James has been misunderstood and avoided by believers due to its supposed contradiction with Paul's teachings. Martin Luther even suggested it should not have been included in the canon of Scripture. Fortunately it was included and we have access to its rich practical wisdom.

During this retreat we'll examine the difficult verses in James that troubled Luther as well as the wisdom the book offers us today.



Two happy campers, Mayra Patraca & Jenny Xharicata

Winter College Retreat, January 3-6, 2019—This is an expanded version of previous Winter College Retreats after feedback from the Rooted & Grounded Conference we hosted last May. This retreat is an annual gathering of students who are hungry for truth, a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ, and fellowship with others in a similar pursuit. They come to spend time with the Lord, to be encouraged, to expend themselves in worship, and to be a part of blessing others.

Our speakers this year are Greg Northcutt, Brian Crall, and Clay Jones. You can learn more about them on our website: lifeonthehill.org.



Two happy camp counselors, Farrett & Amy Boswell

Winter Youth Retreat, January 18-20, 2019—The Winter Youth Retreat is an event held at The Hill specifically for middle and high school students (age 13-18)—39 hours filled with the Word, laughter, friendship, worship, fun, and a little bit of sleep.

Ralph Harris will be back to teach along with some of our youth camp favorites—Chris Holloman and Dave Gibson. You can find out more about the teachers and download the registration form on our website: lifeonthehill.org.

If you'd like more information about any of these events or would like to volunteer in some way, give us a call or send us an email.



July Summer Youth Leadership Camp group photo



June Summer Youth Leadership Camp group photo

Teachings Online

Most of our retreat teachings are posted on our website. You'll find Preston Gillham, Neb Hayden, Steve Pettit, Ralph Harris, Rick Underhill, Patrick Johnson, Dave Gibson, and many more. Go to lifeonthehill.org, click on the Audio Teachings tab and enjoy.

Baptism at the Lake

Part of the joy of the ministry at The Hill is experiencing the lives transformed by Truth. One is Jesse Neff.

Jesse came from Ohio to Murray State and The Hill in 2014. Her infectious smile and predilection for adventure quickly won our hearts. She already had a relationship with Jesus, but learning her identity in Christ took it to another level.

Jesse recently added another page in her growing adventure with Jesus. Brother Alan Miller, her pastor at First Missionary Baptist Church, baptized her in our lake.

Jesse is praying about her many options after completing her nursing degree in December. She is considering expanding her adventure with Jesus into missions work.



Jesse and Pastor Alan Miller

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all (2Thessalonians 3:18),

Your friends at The Hill