

CONCEPTS: On a Hill

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I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth (Psalm 121:1-2 KJV).

This psalm has always been a favorite through the years. I would read it out loud on my pastoral visits to senior citizens, shut-ins, nursing homes, and hospitals. In teaching pastoral ministry in my seminary classes, I would encourage the public reading of Scripture (short) and in all visitation (along with prayer).

This is a great way to minister to people, but also a great way to memorize Scripture. If you read a passage repeatedly in a church service, at the family altar – anywhere — some will memorize it.

When I arrived as a student on “The Hill” at Blue Mountain College (BMC) in the fall of 1972, Psalm 121 took on an additional meaning and significance. This Scripture was interwoven into the fabric of the founding family – the Lowrey family. I can still hear Mrs. Tyler quoting these verses in Old Testament class.

On July 12, we go back to The Hill. We will have a week of inspiration and instruction for teenagers at our third annual Christian Leadership Institute (CLI). We do hope and pray the third time is charmed, as the old saying goes.

For me, the discipleship of CLI is tri-level. We will bring in eight keynote speakers, men and women I look up to and respect. We will have spiritual coaches, select men and women, who will mentor the participants. We will have teenagers (12 spots left to fill) who will be instructed. This is a three layer cake of discipleship.

The opportunity to enjoy this unique week in such a unique place is wonderful. Bible content is central to the week. Our theme will be “SINGLE-MINDED,” but I wonder what General Lowrey (BMC founder, Confederate Brigadier General Mark Perrin Lowrey) would think if he saw us playing Frisbee and golf all over The Hill. Would Mother Berry (Modena Lowrey Berry, the daughter of the General) do well at dodgeball?

In sports, you can play hurt but you should never play injured. By the end of the week, I am hurting physically, but hopefully not injured. Too many believers are not only hurting, but have been injured, too. Too many of our teenagers are hurting and injured. They need a Paul (as in the Apostle); they need a Barnabas (encourager).

The word, “hill,” can be used in a negative sense. Is this a “hill worth dying on?” Are we “turning a molehill into a mountain?” My childhood home was on a hill. I grew up in the hills and hollers of Itawamba County. For me, hill is a good word; The Hill is a good place.

Most of the teenagers at our CLI will be professing Christians. We cannot presume that all are believers. The Gospel — the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus — will be a priority. On The Hill, July 12-16, that hill must be front and center.

*On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
The emblem of suff'ring and shame;
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best
For a world of lost sinners was slain.
So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
Till my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
And exchange it some day for a crown.*

In Psalm 121:1, "hills" is plural. How appropriate.

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