



January 18, 2023
A Note from Pastor Jon

Dear Friends,

In August 2020 I wrote a Letter of Encouragement that shared my struggles with a troublesome mantra that I had learned during Basic Training in the US Army.

It was three words that for so long defined the way I took on any objective or project put before me: **KILL THE HILL.**

I invite you to go back and read that reflection from 2020. [<https://hilliardumc.org/letters-of-encouragement/>] We were in the middle of the pandemic, and we still had no vaccine and no clue when we might regain a sense of normalcy. I invite you to read my thoughts then and now, as I reflect some 30 months later, particularly because I want to share with you my own continued struggles of growth and my own self-awareness.

I concluded that letter by stating I hoped my new mantra would be shifting from KILL THE HILL to **ALL WILL BE WELL.**

While I still have hope to shift my mantra and the way I think and act in the world, I want to be honest and transparent to say that I have not yet arrived.

Yes, I know it takes more than 30 months to shift and change ingrained habits and ways of living that were part of me for nearly 30 years. I say this to say to you, **I am a work in progress.** While I sit here knowing and believing I am a beloved child of God and that God loves me no matter what, I have a lot of work ahead of me.

Since admitting my addiction to charge full steam ahead, even at my own peril and to the peril of those around me, I do have those who from time to time have checked in on me and have even called me out.

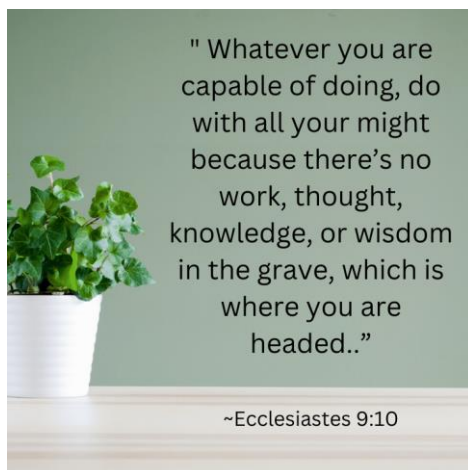


There are those who help me to see when I am beginning to sacrifice my physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being — especially when I willingly or ignorantly ignore the warning signs and default back to working myself or others to the brink of burnout.

In a recent conversation with my therapist (something new in 2022 and YES! I recommend everyone have a therapist), I was reflecting back on the end of 2022 with eyes ahead to 2023. I shared how 2022 ended with nothing less than pure exhaustion, with very little left in the tank.

While it was partly the nature of the season as a pastor, as a parent, and every other role I play, I allowed myself to fall into my former mindset.

While I didn't take on every challenge, and I did say no to a few things, I felt in my own body and soul that I had overextended myself. While not reaching a place of burnout or resentment, I am reminded (thanks to my amazing therapist) that I was close. I need to be and do better.



Over the last week or so I reflected again on these words from **Ecclesiastes 9:10**, as I did in 2020: *"Whatever you are capable of doing, do with all your might because there's no work, thought, knowledge, or wisdom in the grave, which is where you are headed."* (Common English Bible)

Yet again I am reminded of that fourth word. **It is good, acceptable, and right for me and those around me to live within the bounds of what I am CAPABLE of doing.**

I should not literally or metaphorically kill myself with my productivity or seeking prescribed outcomes. Do what I am capable of and trust in God that **ALL WILL BE WELL.**

While it has been 30 months since admitting this to myself for the first time, I still struggle to remain in the spaces of what I am capable of without overextending, overcommitting and facing burnout.

I can struggle to say no, ask for help, or accept that the outcomes don't have to live up to my own or others' perceived standards. **It is healthy and right and good to live within my own ability and capability and fully and completely trust God with the outcomes.**

I will still claim that it is not about doing everything all the time with all that we have. There may be times and seasons when we are called to do that. For me, that was Advent 2022 through January 1, 2023.

In 2023, however, I can admit what I was just beginning to understand in 2020. I can acknowledge my feelings, share my feelings, seek assistance, and seek rest.

While I no longer live by the mantra KILL THE HILL, I must always be reminded of how easy it can be to slip back into harmful ways of living and being.

This is the story of my growth. This is the story of my seeking to be better today than I was yesterday, and better tomorrow than I am today. This is the story of my admitting, while I have come a LONG way in 30 months, I still have a LONG WAY to go.

ALL WILL BE WELL!

Pastor Jon

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