



Well it's October again and fall season is upon us. Above are pictures of my homeland in Eastern Tennessee, it's a majestic beauty of God's creation. I grew up in the midst of that beauty and never really appreciated it until sometime after I moved away.

As many of you know Raylene and I, with ten others in our church were given the opportunity to visit my homeland on a mission trip. I was excited about the others going there to see the beauty of our country as well as ministering "Experiencing God in the Church" with the people in a little town called Dandridge, Tennessee.

The particular church that we were called to visit was Swannsylvan Baptist Church founded in 1901. It was located in the backwoods about 10 miles out of town. Our plan was to visit Noah's Ark in Williamstown, Kentucky as well, it was only a moderate drive from Dandridge and I was looking forward to touring this massive undertaking. The ark itself was over 500 feet long and the investment was around \$100 million dollars to build it.

To be perfectly honest, it was not my plan to go to Tennessee. I had a lot of things going that I thought was more important, after all I grew up there and had been back many times after I moved away in the early sixties. God had a different plan for us and it developed into a crisis of belief before the trip ended.

Ironically "Crisis of Belief" is defined in the fifth reality of experiencing God in the church. This is how Henry Blackaby describes it, God's invitation to work with Him **always leads you to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action.**

I felt pretty strongly that God was calling me back to Tennessee. I recalled some of the early teaching of experiencing God, "When God invites you to join Him in His work, He has a God size assignment for

you.”

This reflection led to curiosity, what is the God size assignment? My excitement began to grow more on a personal level. Then shortly another encouraging change began to develop. In the beginning Raylene could not go on this trip, it was impossible, she had just started a new job. I really did not want to go alone, then just a week before the event she got laid off from the job. She was now available, my perspective changed dramatically. She was really excited even though she lost her job; she was happy and so was I.

Other events that seemed impossible just fell into place and the trip was planned without any great effort. God was already at work. It reminded me of Moses reluctance to go to Egypt to free God's people from slavery. Moses did not want to go, he could not speak well, so God said take Aaron, he will be your prophet/ spokesman. I could see now that God had a plan and if it is His plan it will happen.

Now I have the faith, I know I must take action. **I'm reminded in James 2:26 "for as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without action is dead also."** The way I live my life is a testimony of what I believe about God and I know I cannot do it alone, He provided support in Raylene and I know He will always be there.

We left early for the trip, so we would have enough time to see the Ark and visit with relatives before the Experiencing God event began at the end of the week. Shortly after we arrived as we were driving through the country side, I began to think about my early life as a child and a young man growing up in this magnificent environment.

I could feel a sense of it drawing me back like a slow vacuum, I could see all those years rolling back in time and what a wonderful feeling it was living there. The environment, the loving people that I knew I could depend on, the independence of government, the church I grew up in, the land, the animals and the peace that came with it all.

In an instant the plans changed again, I felt I needed to find a place there, I shared my feeling with Raylene, and as the loving wife she has always been she always says, "where you go I will follow." We went straight to the hotel and began to research property for sale. We put the trip to the ark on hold hoping we would have time later in the week to make the trip. It never happened, it was not in the plan.

We spent the entire week looking at property, we were in awe of so many beautiful places on the market and the prices were unbelievable in comparison to the cost here in Texas.

We spent the weekend in Dandridge visiting with some of the local folks while doing the Experiencing God study, they talked about how much it had changed over the years I had been gone. I agreed somewhat that the landscape had changed with growth and not so many large farms anymore but one thing that hasn't change is the people, praise God. They are still the same God fearing people, trying to live their life in the light of the Lord.

This is the crisis of belief that I spoke about, is God calling me back home? We consider Texas home as well, we have family here and all the great friends we love and our little church that has a heart larger than life itself, I know there is much work to be done here. We don't want to leave but I have to go if I feel I'm called by God.

Please pray for us, that God will lead us in a direction that will please him, that will have a greater impact in serving the kingdom of God.

Our love in the name of Jesus, Rob and Raylene