

My Story

by Gra Whitehead

This is the story of my life up until now.

It could be called a testimony, but I'm just calling my story because it has taken nearly a lifetime to play out.

10 stages of my life:

1. birth to 21 - my worldview development
2. 22 – 23 - my dad's death
3. 23 – 34 - living for self, society & worldly goals
4. 35 – 49 - hurricane season
5. 50 – 56 - salvation & enrolled in God U.
6. 56 - Romans 8:28
7. 56 - finding my purpose
8. 62 - the vision
9. 64 - the Lord of Life
10. 65 forward - waiting, waiting, waiting

Stage 1: birth to age 20**my worldview development**

I was born in 1948 approximately 2 months premature, weighing only 3 lbs at the Duke Hospital.

Very shortly thereafter, I developed pneumonia.

Back in those days, very few infants survived pneumonia, let alone premature ones.

My Grandfather Whitehead told my Dad that I would never make it.

My Grandfather had no idea what the future held for his grandson.

God knew my whole life before it ever started.

He knows everyone's life, for **He** is the **Author** of life.

He knew that stage 5 was on the horizon.

As I grew up, I developed a worldview that represented the values of the home in which I grew up in.

Everybody has a worldview, even if they are not aware of it.

A worldview is how we look at and interpret any situation in life – it is the filter through which we process information in order to come to a decision or an opinion.

Everyone's worldview is different.

Whose worldview is **correct**?

We can argue that our entire life and never settle on the same answer.

Actually, a **Biblical** worldview is the **correct** one.

God made the world, **God** made humans, **God** made the rules of the universe and whether or not you agree, **He** is correct.

As I grew up in a very materialistic, social-oriented world, my views and opinions were being determined by my environment.

I went to Sunday school, church, and was taught **right** from wrong.

I never thought about the word “**Christian**”, I just **assumed** I was **one**.

My **assumption** was not based on any **Biblical** knowledge.

It was just an opinion that was not thought about much.

During my high school years, I developed a strong work ethic around a goal that I established early on – I wanted to earn a basketball scholarship to a school in the ACC.

For four long years I worked at that goal 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year.

When my friends were doing other activities, I was in the gym practicing for my goal.

There is a price everyone must pay for **anything** in life that they want.

One must determine what that price is – how much of their life they are willing to exchange for it.

I achieved my goal during my senior year in high school by signing a four-year scholarship to UNC.

I can remember very plainly a few days after signing, I was again in the gym practicing basketball.

Although, this time something was different.

I didn't have a goal to chase.

I felt empty.

My motivation was not the same.

I never thought about the actual playing of basketball in college – my whole focus in life was **earning** that scholarship.

My college basketball career was limited to 2 years.

I completely lost interest in basketball as other worlds opened up to me.

Satan was slowly establishing a base from which to operate in my soul.

After college, I went to work for BB&T in Wilson.

While at work one day, I was informed that my Dad had died; he was 49.

I was 22, young and dumb.

My life forever changed.

Stage 2: 22 – 23 years of age**my dad's death**

My Dad was a great dad.

He and I were entirely different.

Farming was his life – he was devoted to being the very best farmer in the area.

Even his hobby was farming.

That's where we were different.

I did not grow up doing manual labor on the farm due to my dad's share-cropping method of farming.

I worked during the summers on the farm, but not doing the unpleasant labors involved in agriculture of the time.

I developed different hobbies and interests.

My dad and I were never close – we had different interests.

He died suddenly of suicide.

He was mentally depressed – a condition that was not talked about back then.

He had no professional help, and depression won.

Some life-changing decisions had to be made in order to ensure that our family farming operation would continue.

Stage 3: 23 -34 years of age:**living for self, society, & worldly goals**

At the age of 23 with no idea about how to farm, I was suddenly thrust into a position of responsibility – something that was not familiar to me.

I did have a business education from college, but that was of little help in the daily running of a farm back then, except for the business accounting.

With help from family friends, we hired a long-time family associate of my dad's to be our farm manager.

I resigned from the bank and Mr. Anderson started teaching me how to farm.

I loved it.

I became obsessed with it.

During the years of the 70s, agriculture can into its own – it was very prosperous as American farmers began to trade on a world market.

I was successful, as were so many of my farming buddies.

Making money was easy.

I thought that I was responsible for my success.

This was a product of a distorted worldview. (false knowledge)

I was totally looking at life through the wrong lens.

I developed very ambitious goals and was well on my way to achieving them when all of a sudden, clouds appeared on the horizon.

Stage 4: 35 – 49 years of age: hurricane season

During the good years, I expanded the farm, started an oil distributorship with a service station, and entered the hog business, along with a hardware store and a farm supply company and a gourmet peanut business; all of which were earthly goals.

In the **Bible**, **Jesus** calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee; but on Grasunan Farm, **He** created the perfect storms, one after another.

Totally unaware to me, this was the beginning of my **now** eternal destiny.

God places storms (circumstances, events) into a person's life to teach, to correct or to lead that person.

Individuals respond to these circumstances differently; some think that it is just life happening; others gradually realize that a **higher power** is controlling their life.

Various areas of my several businesses began to crumble.

The oil business was the first to indicate something was going wrong.

I started experiencing depression for the first time in my life.

Year after year the storms continue to increase.

I had no idea what was happening.

All that I knew was that I was losing money at a very dangerous rate.

As it was losing money year after year, it pulled resources from the farming operation.

I had to turn things around or disaster was looming.

During all of this, I developed glaucoma and lost sight in one eye.

I was told that I was too young to be experiencing glaucoma.

My mother died of cancer after a five, year battle.

My mind was slipping further into depression.

As the years continued, my marriage became another victim.

My wife and I separated and both decided the children would be better off for them to live with her.

That was a crushing blow for me.

I had decided early in my life that I would be close to my children regardless of the cost; and I was and still am.

After the children left, things continued to get worst.

I was selling off hundreds of acres of farmland in an attempt to save our family farm.

Finally, I decided to get out of farming.

I can look back on what happened in my life and see something that never crossed my mind during the time – **Someone** was arranging the events in my life.

Changes were occurring **too perfectly timed.**

A new job opportunity appeared at an agri-business facility which I owned.

I took the job which allowed me to have more flexible hours than in farming.

This meant that I could travel to participate as a coach for my children's athletic careers.

What a wonderful blessing.

I also began dating a girl that I had not seen in 20 years.

We married and she entered into a very hard situation – that of being a step-mom in a family where the dad was totally engulfed with depression.

The storms continued.

I still had no idea why.

People with a distorted worldview cannot see the bigger picture of life – that life is being determined by **God**.

All in all, I lost seven-figure money, farmland, a fuel business, an agri-business, before I finally collapsed on my bed and crying out to **God** wanting to know what was going on.

What did **He** want?

There in my bedroom **He** spoke with **His** silent voice deep in my soul – **He wanted me.**

Why in the world would the **God of Creation** want the broken, worn-out remnants of a once-successful man – a sinner?

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Then you will call on Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.

When you seek Me with ALL your heart, I will be found by you,” declared the Lord”. **Jeremiah 29:11-14**

What a powerful **Bible** verse.

Stage 5: 50 – 63 years of age:**salvation & enrollment in God U.**

This contains the most important time period of my life.

What I learned during this stage was life changing.

I learned the “complete” **gospel** of **Jesus Christ**.

I knew about Him for all of my life; but getting to know Him on a personal level is completely different from just going to church and “hearing” about **Him**.

This stage involved reading the **Bible**, studying the **Bible** and developing a passion to follow and obey **Jesus** – an attempt to make **Him** number one in my life.

Two of my friends – Jim Branch & Kenneth Sykes – were aware of what was happening to me.

They stepped into my life and led me to accepting **Jesus** as my **Savior** at the Billy Graham retreat – The Cove.

I was the only man out of 600 to go forward to accept **Jesus**.

No one can become a **Christian** whenever they choose.

A person must be called by the **Holy Spirit** in order for the mystery surrounding the workings of the **Holy Spirit** in one’s soul to occur.

“The call to salvation is a call to be on a mission with God”.

Whenever you feel “**something**” urging you to **Jesus**, seize the moment; do not let it pass – it may never happen again.

My life changed dramatically thereafter.

The number 1 fact that I would love for any non-born again **Christian to get out of this story is:**

You need to educate yourself on what **God has to say about life and death and the requirements for getting into **heaven**.**

It is not automatic.

The default destination for everyone is hell – because everyone is born as a sinner.

If you do not consider yourself a sinner, then why are you going to die one day?

And unless you learn what to do about that condition, that’s where you are headed.

The main 2 hindrances for people in deciding to become a **Christian** are:

1 – first realizing that they are not a **Christian**

2 – the unwillingness to change & **educate** themselves.

Pride is behind both of those hindrances.

The Bible, “My people perish for lack of knowledge.” Hosea 4:6

These hindrances did not bother me at all.

The **Bible** states that **God** starts everyone into **Christianity** with baby steps.

A person's advancement is based 100% on that person's willingness to learn and just what degree of a **Christian** they wish to become.

I started slowly, but I set a goal to become the best **Christian** that I could possibly be – I wanted everything **God** had planned for me.

Slowly my worldview began to change – I started seeing the same world differently – through **Jesus'** eyes.

I could see that I had everything upside down.

I had myself, my plans, my future, my fun, my wants, my, my, my, etc at the top of my agenda.

A true **Christian** has **Jesus** at the top of their agenda; everything else is secondary.

I now wear a wrist bracelet that has **"I am second"** on it.

A **Christian** has:

- Admitted to **God** that they are a sinner
- Repented from their "old" life style of self & sin
- Placed **Jesus** as **LORD & Savior** of their life.

The first two conditions were not hard, but the third took some time.

Repentance is turning away from the lifestyle you once lived and turning to **Jesus** for guidance.

Many, many people desire to have Jesus as their **Savior**, but **ONLY A FEW** have **Him** as their **LORD**.

Having **Jesus** as your **LORD** means that you allow **Him** to be in complete control of everything: your decisions

your agenda

your checkbook

your attitude

your everything.

“I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.” Jesus

Jesus is telling the secret for entering **heaven**.

Being born again detours **Christians** off of the broad road of destruction onto the narrow road of **salvation**.

For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and MANY enter through it.

But small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life,

AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT.



Matthew 7:13-14

These verses are words of **Jesus**.

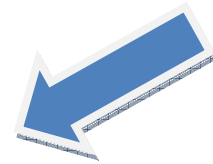
The narrow road **is** the road **less** travelled.

He is the **One Who** determines who gets into **heaven** and who does not.

And **He** said that **Only A Few** are going to make it.

If you were to fly to New York today on United and the CEO of United assured you that the plane was going to crash, would you still take the flight?

God is speaking to us from **His Word** – the **Bible**.



Heaven is there for whosoever; but sadly, **ONLY A FEW** have the **Biblical** knowledge to get there.

Instead of **Heaven** being a person's goal in life, going to **Heaven** is actually a by-product of living a **Christian** life dedicated to **Jesus**.

A person's direction, not their intention, determines their destination.

The Principle of the Path Andy Snley's

If anything is more important to you than **God**, you have a direction problem.

Until a person experiences **God**, **He** is not real; **He** is only an opinion or a fact that you have heard about.

Someone may tell you that their pit bull is as friendly as a lamb; but until you experience a relationship with that pit bull, what they tell you is only an opinion.

A person must experience **God/Jesus** to gain **true** knowledge of **Them**.

Jesus tells us: “**I AM** the **Way**, the **Truth**, & the **Life**; **NO** man comes to the **Father** but by **Me**”.

If a person is not changed by the **Holy Spirit** into a “new person” (new thoughts, beliefs, priorities, etc.), they are not born again and cannot pass through the sin wall that separates all sinners from **God & heaven**.

“**I stand at the door and knock. If you hear My voice and open the door, I will come in**” **Jesus** **Revelation 3:20**

This is **Jesus** asking you to open the door of your heart to allow **Him** to come in.

When a person is **truly** born again, the change in that person is obvious to everyone who knows them.

Once a person’s “flesh” is out of the way with its self-centered demands and time-bound outlook, the **Holy Spirit** can begin **His** work.

It is **God’s** plan for **saving** mankind from itself.

There are two ways of being fooled in life:

1- to believe what is not **true**

2- to refuse to believe what is **true**.

Most people do not believe the born-again requirement although they believe in **God/Jesus**.

Today, people do not want to change from what they have been taught growing up.

Pride keeps them from admitting they may be wrong.

Who else better than **Jesus** can a person learn the **truth** from?

He is **God**.

Jesus has ONLY two choices when someone dies:

1- **He** will say, "I never knew you".

2- Or, **He** will say, "Enter into the joy of the **Lord**."

You will NOT have a say in the matter --- destiny set for eternity.

Jesus has never been wrong and **He** will **NEVER** be wrong.

There is so much **education needed**.

The **Holy Spirit** went to work on me, changing everything about me from the inside out.

My way of thinking, the people I want to associate with, my values, my desires, everything – my entire worldview of life.

I had to get rid of my "unknown gods" – materialism, power, money, etc. and replace them with **Jesus**.

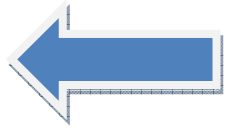
Getting rid of "unknown gods" does not mean giving everything away; it means putting your love for **Jesus** and what **He** wants of you, ahead of your prior agenda.

The first commandment states that **God** will have no other gods ahead of **Him**.

This one fact keeps many people from becoming **true Christians**.

It is estimated (by surveys) that 80% of church-goers will **not** go to heaven.

ONLY A FEW.



Why?

Because most people think that they are just fine and are headed there.

This is such a sad situation.

To live one's entire life under a false assumption, to discover one second after death that they had everything wrong, is so sad.

Stage 6: 56 years of age**Romans 8:28**

“Every day we are in a spiritual battle between **God’s** forces and Satan’s forces in the invisible realm and also in our minds.

The invisible spiritual war between **good** and evil is the ultimate stealth war.

It pits the two most powerful forces in existence in a fight to the finish.

The prize?

Your soul goes to the victor.

Every decision you make every day moves you closer to capture.

Human beings will fight this spiritual battle to the end with some having full knowledge of the outcome, yet millions will join the losing side.

There is no dispute about the end result – **God** wins!

You have been given the freedom to choose your side:

1- **God’s** victory-bound army

2- Satan’s live-for-the-moment losers.

Your choice should be a no-brainer, yet Satan deceives hundreds of millions of people, convincing them to reject **God's** offer of love in favor of Satan's offer of pleasures in this world.

Most people do not understand the intensity of the devil's evil nature.

Satan hates your guts.

He will search out your weaknesses and exploit them.

Every choice matters.

Choices of :

- language used
- beliefs
- friends
- what you do
- how you live
- everything.

Americans are not as concerned about the outcome of this spiritual battle (b/c they can't see it), as they are about physical comfort, personal image, personal agenda, and material gain.

People are TOO busy living to even think about this unseen battle.

They are Biblically ignorant and are already captured by Satan w/o even knowing it.” *Think Like Jesus* George Barna

When a person makes a stand for **Jesus**, they can be certain Satan will hit them hard, trying to discredit them.

My attack caught me by surprise.

I had been taking antidepressants for about 15+ years when I passed out twice one morning and was rushed to the ER.

After a week of tests, it was determined that I had a lethal amount of antidepressants in my blood stream.

Since my regular family doctor had retired, I was not having my blood levels checked regularly.

Over the years the antidepressant built up to a lethal level.

Just to explain to you how **God** looks after **His** children, over the prior weekend I visited Billy Graham’s Cove training center in Asheville.

I forgot to take my medications with me.

On Monday morning I took the meds and then passed out.

The doctors told me that if I had taken the meds over the weekend, I would have died Monday.

God gave me two days without meds to soften the punch on Monday.

What a **God** !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

I had to undergo antidepressant withdrawal which was followed by discovering my thyroid was under producing (causing extra depression) and it had to be put to sleep.

I was suffering in double depression.

A new doctor put me on a new antidepressant – Romoran – which has been taken off the market for causing so many suicides.

I was living in “hell on this earth” with my head about to burst with depression.

I could not take it.

I opted out w/o going to **God** for help.

ALWAYS GO TO **GOD** FOR HELP WHEN YOU ARE HURTING.

I felt like my head was being hit with a hammer.

I tried to take my life.

As I sat in my truck with two cans of methyl bromide taped to the end of my pistol, I was ready to go to **heaven**.

My feelings were that tomorrow was not going to be any better.

I was not sure of **God's** view of suicide, so just before I pulled the trigger, I asked **God**: **“Do not leave me nor forsake me”**.

This is verse found several places in the **Bible**.

I pulled the trigger and the poison sprayed everywhere, even into my mouth.

This is an instant knock-out poison.

I knew right away that I was not going to die.

God had acted faster than a speeding bullet in doing what **He** does best.

He saved me from death.

How, I do not have a clue.

He rearranged the laws of nature to work for **His** glory.

And we know that God causes EVERYTHING to work together for the good of THOSE who love God and are CALLED according to HIS PURPOSE for them. Romans 8:28

What the devil had meant for evil, **God** over-ruled it to demonstrate **His** power and glory.

Gra experienced **God** that day.

“We come to know God as we experience Him.”

Experiencing God Blackaby & King

God has plans for Gra.

For I know the plans I have for you, declared the Lord.

Plans to give you hope and a future.

If you seek Me with all of your heart, I will be found by you.

Jeremiah 29:11-14

Stage 7: 56 – 57**finding my purpose**

After spending time in the hospital, I was taken to a **Christian** shrink who worked with me for months to get the correct antidepressant.

Meanwhile, he told me to read *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren, which I did.

The first sentence of the book is: **“Life is not about you.”**

After finishing the book, I realized that **God** created each of us with certain gifts and talents for a specific purpose in life.

It is our responsibility to discover **His** purpose for our life.

I did some deep thinking concerning this matter and concluded what my present passions were.

I came up with 2 immediate, clear-cut passions and a made-up third.

The first passion was my desire to serve **God** through my love of dogs.

The second was my desire to witness to or inform my friends as to what I had learned during the past 10 years concerning the **true gospel**.

The third included using my business degree to teach **Christian** business values to teens.

Immediately I created Down East Animal Refuge (DEAR), a 501 c3 no-kill, non-profit dog shelter.

With about 5 or 6 volunteers we went to work saving dogs.

My second passion or purpose was much slower in developing.

I wanted my statement to my friends to be meaningful and believable.

I presented it to 34 friends four years later in the form of a 32 page letter.

Only one individual had any worthwhile discussion concerning what I tried to get across them.

This has been so disheartening.

All **God** is expecting from me is to plant the seed.

Stage 8: 62**the vision**

One day I was driving home from Norfolk, Va. and stopped to buy a lottery ticket. (I know the [Christian](#) view of this)

As I was going down the road I asked **God** if **He** would bless the ticket by allowing DEAR to win so that we could build a small facility of some sort to better draw people to our efforts.

He immediately responded clearly to me.

He told me, **“To take care of your business, first.”**

This was my **first** recognizable communication from **God/HS**.

I knew exactly what **He** was referring to.

During the years in the hurricane season with constant depression, I had failed to file (not just pay; but to even file) 5 years of income tax records for 4 companies I had at the time.

I wanted a blessing for my dog venture, so I went to work on the tax situation.

In September of 2010, I filed the final tax return.

Nineteen days later, on October 19, 2010, **God** kept me awake all night.

Out of all the nights in my life since **God** spoke to me about taking care of my business, now (after doing what **He** told me to do), **He** did this.

He began what has become a slow process of revealing **His** vision and purpose for my life.

“When **God gets ready for you to take a new step or direction in **His** activity, it will be in sequence with what **He** has already been doing in your life”.**

*Experiencing **God*** Blackaby & King

This first night, **God** began by guiding me in drawing a future dog complex.

This first design included two 500-foot kennels with water surrounding them.

I saved that first drawing.

The next week, **God** kept me awake again all night revising the plans.

This time **He** instructed me to have 11 kennels, one for each disciple except Judas, a cross-shaped central pond, and a cross-shaped central building.

Once again a week later, **God** kept me awake for another all-nighter.

The finishing touches were drawn into **God’s** vision for my dog shelter/ministry.

“God** does not ask you to dream up something you can do for **Him**.”**

*Experiencing **God*** Blackaby & King

“Honoring **God involves discovering His vision of what our lives could be and should be.”**

Visioneering Andy Stanley

“Anything significant that happens in your life will be a result of God’s activity in your life.” *Experiencing God* Blackaby & King

I knew I had some homework to do, so I started putting together construction costs and operating budgets for the vision.

“When the opportunity comes, it is too late to prepare.”

John Wooten

“While you are waiting, investigate.

The investigation will accomplish **one** of three things:

- confirm the divine origin of your vision
- give further definition and focus to the vision
- tip you off that you were mistaken about the vision.”

Visioneering Andy Stanley

“When God reveals to you what He is doing, that is when you need to respond.” *Experiencing God* Blackaby & King

This homework kept me busy for the next two years.

In the fall of 2011 I was riding in my truck with nothing on my mind, when God/HS spoke to me for the second time; He said, **“You forgot the irrigation system for the vision.”**

I was surprised at the comment, but He was correct.

But in 2012, **God/HS** spoke for the **third time** saying: **“Your cement is figured incorrectly.”**

Boy, this really got my attention.

“Somewhere in the facts collected while investigating, there will be proof that the vision is indeed God-ordained.”

Visioneering Andy Stanley

The incorrect cement figures were the proof.

“God is far more interested in accomplishing His kingdom purposes than you are.” *Experiencing God* Blackaby & King

After consulting with a friend, I learned that I had divided by the wrong number in converting square feet into cubic feet for the cement.

WOW!

God was into **His** vision’s details. **He** knew my figures were incorrect.

That correction saved a tremendous amount of money.

In the months following, I tried to create a name for this vision-dog ministry, but could not come up with a name that ideally identified the project.

One day as I travelled to visit another dog facility, I rounded a curve and saw a huge wooden cross beside the road.

Instantly, the name hit me – Crossdogs!

That's exactly how **God** works when one is willing to listen to **His** "quiet" voice within.

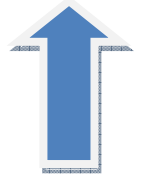
Revelation come from **God** within you.

Information comes from outside sources.

Stage 9: 64**The Lord of my life**

This stage is critical in becoming a person whom **God** can use for **His** purposes on earth.

Many a man becomes a **Christian** having **Jesus** as their **Savior**, but **ONLY** **A FEW** have **Jesus** as their **Lord** of their life.



Many good things have happened to me during this time.

Most of these years have been consumed with educating myself about **God** and **His** ways.

Meanwhile, I have also been faithfully operating a small dog rescue kennel without much public awareness.

Finally, one day I realized that something was missing.

I did not feel as if I was making any progress towards the vision of Crossdogs, so I sat down and analyzed the situation.

“God always develops character to match His assignment.

He will tell you to make necessary adjustments and to take the first step of obedience.

Ask Him to reveal the truth of your circumstances.

Ash Him to show you His perspective.

You need to bring your experience up to the **Word of God and not lower **God's** ways to match your experience.”**

*Experiencing **God*** Blackaby & King

I made the conclusion that I had given **God** 99% of my life for **Him** to do with as **He** chose.

I do believe that this procedure was **God**-inspired.

He has plans for me and those plans mandate a 100% commitment on my part.

I had to give the 1% that I was holding back.

So, I did.

I can't find the proper words, (maybe later I'll be able to) to describe what life has been like since that total surrender decision.

“Do not assume that the moment **God calls you, you are ready for the assignment”.** *Experiencing **God*** Blackaby & King

Stage 10: the present**Waiting on the Lord**

Now is my “time in the desert” – the most painful and frustrating challenges of being a **Christian** wanting to be used by **God**.

I must wait.

It takes time for **God** to work.

He is constantly arranging circumstances behind the scenes for the future creation of Crossdogs.

I must wait.

“God has to lay some basic foundations in your life before He can prepare you for the larger tasks”.

*Experiencing **God*** Blackaby & King

Waiting for most people is not enjoyable.

We have been taught to achieve, to work, to do.

God’s world waits for **His** timing and instructions.

He is in control of everything.

I must wait.

“A vision always requires patience”. *Visioneering* Andy Stanley

“Three things take place while waiting:

- **the vision matures in us**
- **we mature in preparation for the vision**
- **God is at work behind the scenes preparing the way”.**

Visioneering Andy Stanley

Waiting builds patience.

Waiting builds **faith**. (if not careful, it can weaken **faith**)

“Spiritual maturity takes time”. *Visioneering* Andy Stanley

“God is far more interested in accomplishing His kingdom purposes than you are”. *Experiencing God* Blackaby & King

“There is a correlation between the preparation time and the magnitude of the task to which we are called”.

Visioneering Andy Stanley

In the spring of 2013 at Billy Graham’s Cove Retreat, as I sat in a rocking chair waiting for lunch, **God/HS** spoke to me for the **fourth time**; **He** quoted **Scripture** – **Romans 8:28**. **“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them.”**

This verse is a very powerful, well-known verse among **Christians**.

It contains a strong promise from **God**, but it only applies to: **“those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them.”**

God was telling me **His** channel through which **He** is going to finance the Crossdogs vision.

“When God spoke, the person was sure God was speaking.

When God spoke, the person knew what God said”.

Experiencing God Blackaby & King

In the spring of 2016, again at the Cove, **God/HS** brought Mary Mac to my mind.

She is my mother’s college roommate’s daughter.

I wanted to find her and rekindle our childhood friendship some 59 years in the past.

I found & visited her which created an urge in me to visit her homeplace quite a distance from Scotland Neck.

As I visited her old hometown, I was very impressed at how beautiful and isolated the area was.

I had no idea **God** was laying a foundation for **His** vision there.

Meanwhile, I read Anne Graham Lotz’s book – *The Magnificent Obsession*.

“Christians wanting direction and answers from God should ask Him directly and bluntly”. *The Magnificent Obsession* Anne Graham Lotz

The **Bible** instructions **Christians** to approach **God** **boldly**.

Anne also said to, **“run” my questions through the Bible”.**

I wanted an answer for the validation of the vision.

This is what I did.

I told **God** that I was going to pick up a **Bible** and **randomly** open it for the answer.

I opened my sister's **Bible** to: **John 15:7**

“But if you remain in Me and My Words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted.”

What an answer!

God/HS had spoken to me for the **fifth time**, but it was through **His Word**.

“God speaks to individuals, and He can do it in any way He pleases.

You will know when God is speaking to you.

He will see to it.” *Experiencing God* Blackaby & King

I asked **Him** for the vision that **He** has placed in my heart to come **true**.

“Yet, the final completion may be a long time off.”

Experiencing God Blackaby & King

In the fall of 2016, I was riding in my car on the farm when out of nowhere, **God/HS** spoke to me for the **sixth time** saying: **“Going to move Crossdogs from your farm to new location.”**

He actually named the place but I prefer not to mention it here.

After about ten seconds, I realized this was a test; just as **God** instructed Abraham to get up and leave his home to go to a foreign land.

God want **me** to see if I would obey **Him** or to hold on to my dream of having the vision on my farm as planned for the past six years.

After realizing it was a test, I said, “Ok, **let’s** go.”

That meant I would have to leave my home, my farm, my hometown, my friends, and everything associated with my having lived in Scotland Neck for my entire life.

I know whatever **God** has planned for me at the new location is the best that life has to offer.

It is the place where my old friend Mary Mac grew up.

God operated through her, whom I had not seen in 59 years, to get me to go to her childhood hometown.

That laid a foundation for the new location.

Only **God** could have done that!

“Obedience indicates faith in God.” *Experiencing God* Blackaby & King

Many things started happening concerning the vision.

Details were put into my head and many trips to the new location followed, as I was doing my homework once again.

“When you are faced with a sense of direction, you may ask yourself, “Is this **God, me, or Satan?””**

*Experiencing **God*** Blackaby & King

In February of 2017, I was traveling to visit someone who lived near the new vision location, I wanted to visit both places, but I did not want to go back to the new location if it was not the correct place.

Isn't it amazing that I still questioned **God**, given all **He** has done for me over the past twenty years.

I've asked **Him** to forgive me for this lack of trust or understanding; as I remind **Him** that I am just a human being doing the best I can to obey **Him**.

I told **God** that when I get to the next major turnoff it would be the turn to visit my friend and if I go straight, it would be the direction to the new location.

I asked **Him** to tell me which way to go.

As I approached the turnoff, I heard, **“Don't go, don't go, don't go.”**

My sheep hear My voice; I know them and they follow Me. John 10:27

Something sounded strange.

God/HS has never repeated anything to me.

“God uses kingdom principles to accomplish kingdom purposes.”

*Experiencing **God*** Blackaby & King

I said, “In the name of **Jesus**, Satan get behind me and leave me.”

Resist the devil and he will flee from you. James 4:7

The second I said “me”, a feeling came over me that I have never experienced.

I can only describe it as “the peace of **God** that surpasses all comprehension.”

That feeling last all afternoon and into the night.

I was somewhat shocked!

The answer was for me to go to the new location once again.

“You will know when **God is speaking to you. **He** will see to it”.**

*Experiencing **God*** Blackaby & King

Satan tried to keep me from going there.

God/Hs has spoken to me for the **seventh time**, this time without using words.

“He can do it any way He wants to”. *Experiencing **God*** Blackaby & King

With this being the seventh time **God/HS** had communicated with me, and this was the seventh year of waiting since **God** first implanted the vision into my head, I felt sure the timing was near.

A year later now, obviously it was not the time.

I'm into the eighth year of waiting, but I do know that all of the waiting has not been in vain.

God has taught, corrected, and matured me so much during this time.

“I will never give you an order that I will not release the power to enable it to happen.

People know us; they know what we can do.

That is why God gives God-size assignments to His people.

Let the world see God at work, and He will attract people to Himself.” *Experiencing God* Blackaby & King

“Waiting for a vision that “tarries” is the true test of our faithfulness to God.” *My Utmost for His Highest* Oswald Chambers

When the Crossdogs vision is completed, a plaque will be located at the front door stating:

- Crossdogs
- conceived by the **Holy Spirit**
- built by the blood of **Jesus**
- financed from **God's** riches.

to be continued