

## **February 2009—Are You a Turtle on a Stump?**

When we were planting Evangel Baptist Church in Bradenton FL, I headed out one particular day to the Withlacoochee State Forest with our deacons and their dirt bikes. This was an all-day event—early morning to dark thirty—and promised to be great recreation and prized fellowship for the deacons, Matt Schrepfer, and myself.

We got off to a rocky start when one of the gents suggested since I was a bit older and my "bones take longer to heal," I should ride a four wheeler!

Once we dealt with the issue of my ancient bones, I settled in on a Honda XR 600 dirt bike. Wow, what a thrill as my toes barely touched the ground and I got used to the saddle. It had been many years since I'd been on a dirt bike and I loved it (the 100,000 miles on our Gold Wing does not qualify as dirt bike ridin').

*[FYI, I didn't break any bones and was only unconscious for a minute or so when I went over the handle bars on a treacherous part of the trail. You really do see bright white stars when you get knocked out.]*

While riding, I spotted a sand tortoise—and a great illustration sprang to mind! Hustling off the trail I leaned the bike up against a bush and chased the docile fellow down—yes, I can catch a turtle. By this time the guys had gathered around, and I was looking for a stump or some kind of post.

In Florida, stumps are as hard to find as rocks, so Matt bungeed that tortoise to the back of his bike and we took off to continue our search. One of the men grabbed his camera as we located a stump about 3 feet high and carefully placed the turtle squarely on top of it. I'll admit to a bit of drama as I knelt down next to that critter and had my picture taken!

What's the point? Well, nothing; it just demonstrates the implications of traumatic brain injury. Actually...it's a very *visual* lesson to help me embrace who I am in the Lord's work. How does a turtle get on a stump? Someone else put him there! It wasn't his skill, strength, prowess, agility, brains or determination. Nope, someone else put him there! You see, if I have "accomplished" anything in the Lord—or I am anything at all in the Lord's work (and we all are!), this serves as a clear reminder that I am nothing more than a turtle on a stump.

So how does that square with our view of self? It should cause us to be balanced! When I humbly understand that the Lord could use a rock as well as me, yet also confidently recognize that He does want to use me, I will neither overvalue nor undervalue myself. Rather I can depend on Him and yield to Him as I allow Him to cultivate the characteristics in my life that will help me serve effectively. Jesus explained this balance: *"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing"* (John 15:4-5).

*Bill*