

## Encourageu.com Blog Article – By Mark Cummins

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### [Journey to Ocala \(long but helpful\)](#)

The events of the last month have confused many in Ocala and beyond. Many are wondering "how" did all the confusion happen? And more importantly how do we go forward from here?

My journey to Ocala began in August 2007. No I was not in Ocala, nor did I even know anything about Ocala at that time. (hearing the crazy "rumors" in the newspapers, blogs, email trail has been sad...however on another hand it has kept me laughing at the imaginations of people).

It began in my Bible study where I was reading Genesis 12:1 *"The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you."* That morning, I felt God was speaking to me, releasing me from where we were, that God was getting ready to do a new work at the CenterPointe Church. (A great church ~ where we loved them deeply. The great people of the CenterPointe faced many challenges, however I watched them grow in Christ, grow in trusting God, loving people and investing their lives in a community that has changed drastically in the last decade ~ I continue to love and pray for the precious people from the CenterPointe (now the Hollywood Community Church)

Throughout August 2007, I continued to meditate on Genesis 12:1, I was coming off an extended fast on August 26, 2007...after our morning worship celebration a man who I did not know introduced himself from FBC Ocala . . . .well as they say ~ the rest is history!

Team Cummins had a fantastic lunch with the search committee and the next two months were marked by numerous meetings, phone calls, visits, reference checks...I was very impressed with the search team....they made the decision to go back to Pennsylvania where I pastored Zion Baptist Church for 9 years <http://www.zionlife.com/> to see how God worked in my life there (I love you all in Clarion/Zion ~ thanks for all the prayers)

On Sunday November 4, 2007 FBC Ocala voted 98.6% to extend the call to serve as Senior Pastor ~ With great enthusiasm and excitement for God's future at FBC Ocala and the community I accepted!

The vote was overwhelmingly positive, even though a vicious and negative email & telephone campaign had been waged against me to the pastors and staff at FBC OCALA, by the same disgruntled former members of FBC West Hollywood that were recently quoted in newspapers and adding their thoughts to the blog sphere nonsense.

The comment's and accusations were examined by the staff pastors at FBC OCALA and Search Committee and found to be false ~ However, now you have an insight of "how" the rupture at FBC Ocala began . . . a seed of doubt was planted on Wednesday October 31, 2007. And by Friday October 31, 2008 that seed had grown into a tree of doubt producing fruit of confusion, frustration, division and rebellion.

November 2008 has been a devastating month in the lives of members and attenders of FBC Ocala...and for the Body of Christ in Ocala and beyond. Southern Baptist Churches are Christ Centered, Pastor led congregations, with a Biblical protocol of authority through the Scriptures and By-laws. The Word of God is our sole authority ~ God outlines who we are to be as a church and what we are do as a church in His Word. By-laws outline how we as a church are doing what God has called us to do.

The past several weeks the Word of God, nor the authority of our Deacon's and committees has been recognized or obeyed. Rather the "consensus of the crowd" has been recognized and obeyed. Many have felt that they were living Numbers 13 - where the majority brought an evil report of what God had said. The lone minority voice of Joshua and Caleb was ignored and even attacked. The result of their rebellion is found in Numbers 14:1 "That night all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud."

In any conflict a decision needs to be made. Someone has to look beyond the immediate, beyond "winning" and consider the greater good of all and ask "what would Jesus do"?

One of my favorite portions of God's Word is Philipians 2. First it reveals how selfish my/our humanity really is . . . and it gives us God's plan for relationship's and conflict.

" If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death- - even death on a cross! "

Earlier I shared that my journey to Ocala began in Genesis 12 ~ God said to Abraham to leave where he was and go to a land that I will show you....This week I went back to Genesis, seeking God...a Word from Him in the middle of the confusion and rebellion that I was seeing . . .

Once again God did not disappoint, He spoke to me clearly...just one chapter beyond Genesis 12, where God spoke to me about coming to FBC Ocala, He spoke to me about releasing me from FBC Ocala . . It is the story of the conflict between Abraham and his nephew Lot

Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. And quarreling arose between Abram's herdsmen and the herdsmen of Lot. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time. So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers. Genesis 13:5-8

After praying, talking with TEAM Cummins and speaking to the elected leadership (prior to me coming to FBC Ocala) of FBC Ocala I tendered my resignation as Pastor of FBC Ocala on Tuesday November 25, 2008.

I was then asked if I believed that my call to Ocala was to the FBC Ocala or to the community of Ocala. Again, after prayer and speaking to my family and leadership, I am confident that God has used all of these events to bring TEAM Cummins to Ocala. I have grown to love the area Pastors, Missions agencies, educators, business owners, neighbors, students . . .I love the people of Ocala and I want to give my life so all in Ocala and beyond can find the *HOPE* that I found 22 years ago in *Jesus Christ!*

There is nothing that anyone can do about going back in time. Trying to go back and figure out "why did this happen"; wastes time and energy that could be spent praising God, loving family or sharing Jesus Christ with a friend.

In life, circumstances occur that we do not understand, nor do they make sense. Events, decisions and actions seem "unfair, unjust" or even just wrong. As Christ followers, our energy is not to be spent in trying to "understand", but in "trusting" God (Proverbs 3:5-6) who has a blessed today and favored future (Jeremiah 29:11-14) for our lives.

The next several months are going to be exciting and challenging as God births a new Body of Believers....a gathering of Christ Followers on the dusty trail called life . . .broken men and women...all who have failed and come short of God's standard...but who have found *Hope*....and are finding *Hope* in Jesus Christ....

If you are looking for *Hope*...it is not in a program, denomination, career, 401k, politics.....it is in Jesus Christ!

This Sunday a gathering of Christ Followers is taking place at Camper Village at 1:00pm. Notice the article below for directions.