

Sabbatical Report — Brian Bish

What We Did

Part 1 - The Midwest Trip

The Bish family began with a trip to see family across the Midwest. After attending the Bish family reunion over Memorial Day weekend in Cincinnati, Ohio, we went south across Tennessee to Atlanta, Georgia, where we spent a week with my sister and her family (who is now cancer free!!! and recovering from an intense schedule of chemotherapy). The boys played with their cousins and we visited the Coca Cola museum and a waterpark. To the delight of our nephews, evenings were spent playing the parlor game called Mafia. We had too much fun to get any pictures, though.

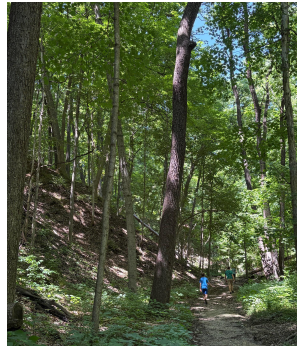


Extended Bish Family at the Annual Family Reunion in Cowan Lake, OH

From there, we traveled eight hours to the St. Louis area where we spent a week with my mom. Natalie's dad traveled from Central Missouri to take us to a Cardinals game where we had incredible seats down the first base line eight rows behind the Cardinals dugout! We also visited my old Rock Climbing gym for a good bouldering session. From my mom's house, we took a day trip to Pere Marquette State Park in Grafton, IL where we hiked along the forested hills just north of the Mississippi river. There are some amazing views from the top of the bluffs. Natalie and I also went on a couple hikes just the two of us at the local Nature Institute where we got within 10 feet of a pair of young doe who did not run away as Natalie carried on a playful conversation with them.



Bishes with Natalie's Dad at the Cardinal's Game



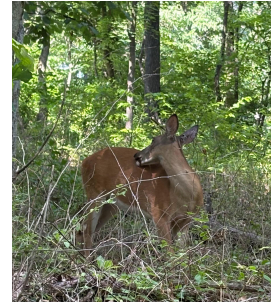
Beautiful, Hilly Forest of Pere Marquette, IL



Bishes, Mid-Hike, in Pere Marquette



Overlooking the Mississippi River at Pere Marquette State Park, Grafton, IL



The Doe, Completely Unconcerned with Us

Our last stop in the Midwest was in central Missouri at Natalie's parents' land. It was an extremely relaxing time where days were spent swimming in their lake and evenings were spent watching the NBA or NHL finals. One day we even took a float trip down the Current River with Natalie's Dad.



Oberg (Natalie's Family) Farm, View from the Lake



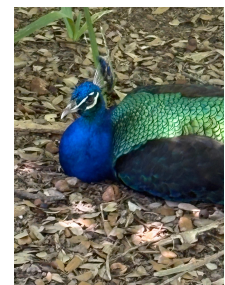
Mouth to Cave Spring on the Current River
Clearly, the best picture of Pastor Brian ever taken

Part 2 - Back In Texas

We made our way back to Lake Jackson, where we spent the time cleaning and repairing our house. After a couple weeks of this, we took a four day trip to Austin. We went to Barton Springs pool, Mount Bonnell, Mayfield Park, and finally visited the Schlitterbahn. The highlight, however, was rock climbing actual limestone along Austin's Greenbelt. I was very pleased to find that I could climb 5.10 level outdoors!



At the Top of Mount Bonnell,
Overlooking the Colorado River,
AKA, Lake Austin.



Peacock at Mayfield Park in Austin!

Climbing in Austin's Green Belt: All Four Bishes at the Top of a 5.10!

And a Picture with, Josh, our Guide for the Day





From Austin, we went to Schlitterbahn in New Braunfels, then we spent the Fourth of July with my dad in Conroe. After galavanting across the eastern part of the state, we came back home for a couple weeks. This time we spent most of the time removing bamboo from our backyard. Natalie and I enjoyed a week by ourselves while the kids were at youth camp and we got ready for the last leg of the summer... a cruise!



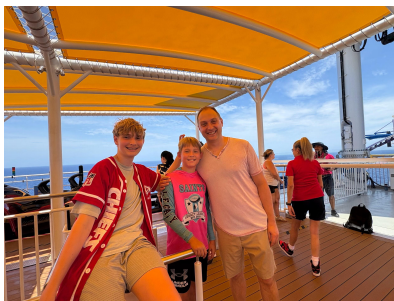
Brian and Natalie Playing Rummy on a Date Night
Natalie destroyed me.

The Boys Having Fun at Church Camp



Part 3 - The Cruise... Then Back to Normal

On July 18, we took our very first cruise on Carnival's Jubilee ship which held 7200 guests, not including their crew. What an experience! The ship was bustling with activity and things to do, but I never got tired of just looking out at the ocean and seeing God's beautiful creation. Natalie and I watched the sunset and the reflection of the moon off of the blue ocean.



Brian and the Boys as We All Wait in Line for
"BOLT: The Ultimate Sea Coaster"



Brian and James Before They Take Off



Several Beautiful Sunsets!

The highlight was an amazing time snorkeling in Roatan, Honduras as we swam along reefs and saw beautiful fish by a sunken ship. We even saw starfish a foot in diameter and 3 inches thick! I didn't know such things existed. We tried to take pictures of God's underwater creation, but, well, it didn't work out. The snorkeling boat had an upper deck, which many of the snorkelers decided to use as a high dive. On a dare, I was challenged to do a front flip... let's just say I did not land gracefully!



Overlooking the Caribbean Sea from Roatan, Honduras

We got back from the cruise and spent the last 14 days gearing up for the school year and getting back in the normal rhythm of life. This was the best summer I have had in over 20 years, and I am incredibly refreshed.

What I Learned

About Rest

I'm going to preach a whole sermon on this topic when I return, but if I was going to try to put it simply, I would say that there are two big mistakes you can make when it comes to work and rest. The first is to lean too heavily in the direction of rest, abdicating responsibility because "God's got this." This minimizes the importance of obedience, dedication, and excellence. The Bible is very clear that our work matters to God, and how we do it is a big part of glorifying Him.

The other mistake is to take so much responsibility that you forget that your work is God's work, and it doesn't all depend on you! Our work requires His blessing to be of any long-term value. We work for Him — as the old hymn says, "praise to the Lord Who doth prosper thy work and defend thee!" Sabbath is a reminder of this principle, that when we rest, we are trusting Him to be the ultimate one who brings forth fruit from our work. He invites us to remember his power while we rejuvenate. He gives us rest as a gift for our good and as a reminder that he will still be working while we are not.

About Thankfulness

The last thing I will write is what I learned about thankfulness. Taking some time away allows you to get perspective on your life and the blessings from God. I find myself thankful in a fresh way for Hope Fellowship Church and for the wonderful people that He has surrounded me with in my life. My sabbatical time was an opportunity to reflect on how good He has been to me in my life, and that has made it even more worshipful and rejuvenating.

It's great to be back! Let's keep reaching Lake Jackson with the gospel and continue to make disciples for His glory!

With deep love and appreciation,

Pastor Brian