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Five MegaTruths
From My Life's Journey

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INTRODUCTION

Life is a journey, so the poets and song wrights often say. If that is so, then there must be some mile markers along the way that help us to know that we're traveling the way we need to go. In these devotionals we will follow the story of Bro. Dave and his youth group from First Church as they hit the road for a missions trip, and in the process learn a thing or two about the road trip that we all take in this thing called life.

MEGATRUTH #1

Bro. Dave: Savannah, you're late. You need to hurry and get your stuff loaded on the van so we can have a prayer and get going.

Savannah: No problem – it's all right here. *(She pushes the button on the car remote that opens the trunk of her car.)*

Bro. Dave: *(Half kidding)* You gotta be kidding me! I told everyone the limit is two – *two* – pieces of luggage on this trip. You have a trunk full of stuff!

Savannah: Aww Bro. Dave, I only have two pieces of luggage here. And then there's my makeup caboodle....

Trenton: You gotta let her take that, Bro. Dave – unless you want her to *scare* people into accepting Christ on this trip.

Savannah: Oh shush, you. *(Back to Bro. Dave.)* ...and my hair-care bag, and Fluffy, and my pillow, and my...

Bro. Dave: Okay, okay. Just get ten or twelve guys to help you and get all that stuff on the van.

Savannah: Very funny.

Bro. Dave: *(A few minutes later.)* Okay everyone, make a circle and hold hands. Let's pray together before we leave.

My Father in heaven, I thank you for all the youth and sponsors here who are willing to give up a week of their time to go and help other people. I pray that you will give us safety as

we travel, and that you will help us to minister to others along the way. May people truly see your love for them in the things that we do. Amen.

Okay, everyone on the van!

Trenton: *(As the van pulls out of the church parking lot.)* Are we there yet? How much longer?

Bro. Dave: Thirty more minutes.

Josh: Yeah, right. Like we'll make it to Colorado in thirty minutes.

Becca: Bro. Dave, have you ever been to this mission before?

Bro. Dave: No, but I put the address into my GPS and it's mapped out the best way to get there.

Becca: Boy, my parents need to get one of those things. They are always getting turned around and missing the right exits and stuff. And when Mom is trying to reading the map to give Dad directions, she has to turn the map sideways and upside down every time that we turn a corner. They need something like your GPS to keep them from getting lost.

Bro. Dave: Yeah, I'd get lost too if I had to travel without my GPS.

Life is a road-trip. And the destination that we choose determines the path that we must follow to get there. One of the important destinations for me has been the destination of "freedom."

I have discovered that, in a sense, every person is as free as any other person. A person that is not free to make choices (such as a slave) is actually free from the responsibilities that are a part of making choices. On the other hand, a person who is free to choose is then very often a slave to the consequences of his choice. My high school and college years showed me something: People who choose the lesser freedom (e.g., making choices that conflicted with God's directions) gave up their greater freedom (e.g., living a life without the pains and other consequences of those wrong choices).

Freedom is a very important destination on my personal road trip, and I'm sure it is for you, too. And Jesus gave the route that we must take to reach that destination. He said, "*If you abide in my word... you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*" (John 8:31-32).

Think with me a minute....

Do you know people that are slaves to their appetites for drinking or pornography or even for overeating? Oh, they say they can quit...., but have you actually seen them free of their problem for a month or two? Is that really freedom?

Do you have friends who have chosen to "sleep around" – or even just "sleep" with one person but without being married to them? As you watch them over the weeks and months, do they really show the kind of deep inward peace and freedom that you want?

Do you know of young people around your age that have a baby to take care of by themselves because they chose sexual "freedom"? Has their choice of freedom provided the kind of freedom that you really want?

Most of these people have exercised their freedom to choose a path that goes against God's directions – and are now slaves to the consequences of those choices. Myself, I prefer the bigger and better freedoms that only come from what Jesus said in John 8. That freedom comes from abiding in His Word – i.e., to know the truths that God gives us in the Bible, and to live by them.

Question 1: Do you regularly take time to read and understand God's Word (the Bible)?

Question 2: Have you committed yourself to live like the Bible says you should?

MegaTruth #1: The only way to true freedom is to know the truths that God gives us and to daily live by them.

MEGATRUTH #2

Josh: Bro. Dave.

Silence.

Josh: Oh Bro. Da~ave!

More silence.

Josh: Hey, somebody up front get Bro. Dave's attention for me.

Bro. Dave: Wh-hoa! (*as Savannah pokes him in the ribs; he takes out one of his earphones*) What?!

Josh: Bro. Dave, where are we?

Bro. Dave: Thirty more minutes.

Josh: No, seriously...., where are we. I've been to the mission with another group before, and this doesn't look right.

Bro. Dave: Well, let me grab the GPS and see. It says that we're in...., that we.... missed our turn off about thirty minutes ago!

Becca: Oh no, it's just like riding with Dad again!

Savannah: No way! How did this happen?

Bro. Dave: Well, you were all having such fun – and having fun *loudly* – that I had to put in my earphones to listen to some of the music that we'll be singing at the mission. Between the noise of your talking and having fun and the noise of my own music, well, I guess I couldn't hear the GPS when it said that we needed to turn. We better turn around here and get back where we belong.

We live in a very noisy world. There is noise around us from school and other the stuff going on. There's also noise and drama from family and the other people around us.

And there's the noise within our own lives. Sometimes it's the drama that we cause, or that we get from meddling with other

people. And sometimes it's the noise and voices that go on inside of us – the fear, the anger, the questions, and the hurt that never seems to go away.

In one way of looking at it, we could say that there are three different types of voices in our head. One is the voice that comes from what we feel. The cool part of this is that God made us to be people that feel things with our hearts. But the bad side of it is that most of the time we don't do what it takes to really feel the good stuff God intended, and that we often don't get rid of the bad feelings to make room for the good.

A second voice inside us is the voice of what we think. The cool part of this is if we think right – if we'll think on and live the truths God has given us (as mentioned in the first devotional) – then eventually we will feel right. Guaranteed. But if we think wrong, then we'll feel wrong.

Either one of these voices – the voice of our emotions and the voice of our mind – can make a whole lot of noise within us. And if we're not careful, we will let one of them drown out the third voice – the voice of our spirit. For a person that has accepted Jesus as their Savior, God makes the spiritual part of them alive. And once that part is alive, it has a voice within us. Since we're not used to listening to it, we often don't even notice it. And because our thoughts and our feelings are so loud at times, it's hard to hear our spirit unless we go looking for it.

In a way, it was that kind of thing the psalmist was talking about in Psalm 46:10 – the verse that has meant more to me than most any other scripture. See, I used to be a very, very anxious person. I was scare of a lot of things, and so often it seemed my mind and my feelings were screaming things in my head. But this psalm says we must, "Be still, and know that [He] is God." This isn't talking about sitting still on the outside, but to slow down on the inside – to have a quietened heart. This tells me that even with all the noise going on – whether it is outside of me or inside me – I have to ask God to quieten my heart, to look past what my mind and my feelings are shouting at me, and listen to what God is saying to my spirit. (And

since God is always consistent, whatever He tells us in our spirit will match 100% with the truths He tells us in His Word.)

Is your mind so full of thoughts that you have a hard time listening to God? Are your feelings so bottled up that you can't hear Him? If so, just pray to Him and give those thoughts and feelings to Him, and ask Him to free you and let you "be still" in your heart and hear what He speaks to your spirit.

MegaTruth #2: We must not be distracted by all the noise and voices around us and within us; we must be still and quiet on the inside and know God as He speaks to our heart.

MEGATRUTH #3

Bro. Dave: Come on Savannah, I said our rest stop is over and everyone back in the van. You know, you're always the last one.

Savannah: Well, I'm not the last one *this* time. Trenton isn't here yet.

Everyone looks around for Trenton until someone notices him waving goodbye to someone he had just met.

Bro. Dave: Trenton, Savannah got here before you did? Are you sick?

Trenton: You all are not going to believe this, but I was talking to that guy over there.....

Becca: Trenton, you never talk to anyone, especially to people that you don't know! What's the deal?

Trenton: I don't know. It's just something that I felt I needed to do. Anyway, we were at the soda machine at the same time and he asked who we are and what we were up to. I told him that we're the youth group from First Church, and that we're going to a mission in Colorado to tell people around there about God. So he asks me why we're doing that....

Becca: So, were you scared?

Trenton: Yeah, I guess in a way I was. But there was this sense down inside that even though I don't normally feel comfortable talking with people like this, that it was all okay.

So anyway, I told him that we we're telling people about God and all, and he said that he didn't believe in God. So I asked him why, and he said that there wasn't any reason to believe there is a God, and said that he believed in evolution and the big bang theory and all that kind of stuff that we hear in science class. I replied, "So, you believe in science. Me, too. But the problem is that science proves that evolution is not possible." He looked stunned. "Science (specifically, the laws of thermodynamics) says that stuff goes from order to chaos – like when you drop an arm-load of books in the hall at school, they never land all neatly in a stack but scatter all over the place. Well, that law of science proves that life could not move from lower forms to higher and more complicated forms by random accident."

Becca: Wow! So what did he say?

Trenton: Nothing really – he was still stunned. So I went on to tell him that the same laws show that some tremendously powerful *outside* force had to create our universe, too.

Savannah: What do you mean?

Trenton: Well, another one of the law of thermodynamics says that in a closed system (like our universe) there must always be the exact same amount of matter and energy. Everyone agrees that at some point back in time there was absolutely no matter or energy at all here, and then somehow all of our matter and energy appeared where nothing was earlier. So, thermodynamics shows that that change in the amount of energy and matter had to come from an *outside* source. And we know that source was God.

Josh: So what did the guy say?

Trenton: He said that he had never thought about all that stuff before, and wondered why teachers didn't cover that in science class. And he said that he would think about all this some more and message me sometime soon.

Bro. Dave: That is so cool, Trenton. So you mustered up some courage and shared what you thought God wanted you to say. That takes a lot of guts..., but you may have just changed the heart and the eternity of this guy because of it. Great job!

The job that stood before Joshua was no small task – not a job for the faint of heart. Yesterday he was only an adviser to the nation's leader Moses, but today he is the leader of the million-plus faces that are now looking at him. Yesterday he was a nomad among nomad, but today he is the general over a virtually unproven lot of would-be soldiers. Yesterday he buried his leader, and today he must now fill those shoes himself. If ever there was a time and reason to be scare pitless, Joshua found himself in the middle of it.

But the inability of man is one of the greatest places for God's ability to shine – and God stepped up to the pitcher's mound to do just that. As He approached Joshua (Joshua chapter 1), He gave him a few pointers that will also help us when we face trying and scary situations. Let's look at what God said:

1. "Moses is dead" (v2) – to take the mound against those heavy hitters that scare us at times we have to be able to accept and deal with the truth. God's words to Joshua may sound harsh and insensitive, but Joshua was in a place that he had to be able to deal with the truth – and we must be willing to do the same.
2. "Be strong and courageous" (v6, 7, 9) – Three times God spoke of Joshua's need to courageously take his stand. Courage is not the lack of fear, but is instead choosing to do what you need to do even if we are scared.

3. “Follow My ways” (v7-8) – As I discussed in an earlier devotional, success requires that we know God’s truths and live by them.
4. “Every place you go I have already given to you” (v3) and “No man shall be able to stand before you” (v5) – As long as Joshua would take a stand, God would win the battle for him.

This shows that we should not depend upon our own ability or strength for success, but on God’s. It also shows that we can not succeed if we don’t get into the action.

MegaTruth #3: Being a success requires that we depend on God’s strength and ability to see us through, and that we learn and live by what He tells us in the Bible. Failure comes when we fail to take part in the big game where God has assigned us.

MEGATRUTH #4

Becca: Bro. Dave, did I play the last two measures of that song right?

Bro. Dave: Yes Becca, that was just fine.

Becca: And did I play the verses loud enough?

Bro. Dave: Yes, it was plenty loud. (*Speaking to the whole youth choir...*) Okay, let’s now practice the last song that we’ll sing in the mission’s service tomorrow.

Bro. Dave: (*After the choir finishes the song.*) Altos, remember to project at measure 47. And basses you were a little weak on your solo part, so put your heart and your lungs into it when we sing this tomorrow. Good job everyone. Choir dismissed.

Becca: Bro. Dave, I’m not sure if I played this song right. I felt like my timing was off on page two, and I don’t think the staccato notes were right, and....

Bro. Dave: Becca, what’s going on? You have been playing these songs for several weeks – and doing fine. And didn’t I tell you

that if there was a problem that you needed to fix that I would tell you about it?

Becca: Yes, sir.

Bro. Dave: So, if you’ve been doing okay, and if I haven’t mentioned anything that you need to work on, then why are you sweating this so much?

Becca: Well, I guess there are a couple of things. One is that I’m just nervous. I’m okay playing the piano with our group, but with all the other people that will be watching us – watching *me* – tomorrow I guess I’m getting butterflies.

The other thing is that lately I really haven’t been practicing on the songs like I really should have. And without practicing I don’t feel as comfortable, and when I don’t feel comfortable I get to thinking that I just can’t do it.

Bro. Dave: Yeah, that explains a lot. I’m sorry, but at this point it’s too late to do anything that will make you feel comfortable like you want to – like you could have if you had practiced.

But there is one thing I can do to help you, but it won’t be easy. While it’s good that you know what you *feel*, at this point it’s even more important that you know and put your confidence in what you *know*.

Becca: That I “know what I know?” What do you mean?

Bro. Dave: Do you know that I will tell you the truth about your playing?

Becca: Yes.

Bro. Dave: Do you know that I would tell you if you were playing something wrong, just like I promised you I would?

Becca: Yes.

Bro. Dave: Have I told you that you were playing anything wrong?

Becca: No.

Bro. Dave: So, now tell me what you *feel*, and tell me what you *know*.

Becca: I *feel* that I am messing up and that I may not even be able to play the songs at all. But I *know* that if there was something that I need to do then you would let me know. Right?

Bro. Dave: Right! So, what you feel goes in one direction, and what you know goes in another. So, which one will you believe and put your confidence in?

Becca: Well, it's not easy....., but I'll choose to go with what I know!

This story illustrates one of the longest struggles that I have ever dealt with. I was saved about the time that I started into the third grade; but even twelve years later when I was in college I was still having questions about whether I had *really* been saved back then. And you know what? – I was even a preacher at the time! I know some people who get saved and never, ever question whether it was real..., but I know a whole lot more folks that have had questions. And the sad thing is, most are too embarrassed to talk about it with others.

One reason I was unsure about my salvation was my own fault. Like Becca in the story who failed to regularly keep up her skills on the piano, I didn't take the time to stay close to God like I should. I mean more than just reading quickly over a few verses and saying a "Now I lay me down to sleep" kind of prayer. God wants us to open up our hearts to Him as we speak (pray) to Him, then allow Him to open up His heart to us as we read and think about what He says in the Bible. And because I failed to be open to Him, it left a feeling inside that maybe the relationship wasn't there at all.

After feeling this way for years and years, one night I heard a preacher quote these words of Jesus, "No one can come to me unless the Father ... draws him" (John 6:44). That made me ask myself where did all my questions about my salvation come from. Did they really come from God as He was drawing me to Jesus? Or was it

just my own questions from my own worried mind, and not from God after all? So, right then I honestly prayed something like this:

God, as best as I can tell all these questions that I've had about whether I am really saved or not – it seems those questions come from me and not from you. If it is you that is drawing me, then I humbly ask you to show me so in a way that I can understand. Until that time comes, I will believe that I was truly saved back then. Amen.

And you know what? I have not seriously doubted my salvation since that time.

I'm guessing that many of you have also had questions about your salvation. Maybe some are wondering about it even now. I hope the words from John 6 will bring you some sense of peace that it brought me, and that you will be as honest with God as you pray and leave it with Him. I suggest that you would find a mature Christian – a youth pastor, pastor, sponsor – that you could talk this over with. Sometimes just being able to talk about it helps to clear your mind and help you to know where you stand and what you need to do. This is very important, so please don't ignore it.

MegaTruth #4: God draws when it is time for a person to be saved.
If He isn't drawing, then you have no reason to be concern;
If He is drawing, then it's time to accept His invitation.

MEGATRUTH #5

Ring! Ring! Ring!

Savannah: Can you believe this? It's Rustin calling..., for the third time in two hours!

Josh: Lucky you – he's called me five times!

Becca: Two times here.

Bro. Dave: I finally told him that I was only going to answer one call a day from him, so he better make it good.

Ring! Ring! Ring!

Savannah: (*Answering phone.*) What is it, Rustin? What does it look like here? This part of the Grand Canyon looks just like the part five minutes ago when you last asked Becca the same thing. No, there just isn't any way to explain what it feels like to be in this awesome place – there are just no words that describe it.

Yeah, I know you want to be here. We want you to be here, too. We really do miss you. So why did you have to go clown around and not get signed up by the deadline? I mean, it's not like anyone let you forget – we were always telling you to do it. And you had plenty of time. Yeah, I know you had that unexpected trip when your aunt died..., but we both know you had plenty of chances to sign up before that. Hey, gotta go – there's too much to do here for me to be stuck on the phone. Bye.

Of all the many Bible truths that have meant something special to me, there is one truth in one situation that stands out above them all. It was several years ago, back when I was eight. It happened to be on a Tuesday night during a summer revival meeting, in the church my family went to. The preacher for the revival was Bro. A.D. Livingston. I don't remember what he preached about that night, but during the invitation I felt a major heaviness in my heart that I really didn't understand. But during the closing prayer Bro. Livingston came over to where I was and he talked with me. He read John 3:16, then explained that since I was a part of the world that this verse talked about we could read it again and put my own name in the places where it talked about the world. It is such a great concept that I want to do that right now, but instead of my name I want you to put *your* name in the blanks:

For God so loved _____, that he gave his only Son [Jesus], that if _____ believes in him _____ shall not perish but have eternal life.

That is the greatest truth of all – that God wants to give us life that will last forever in heaven. Getting that life is as easy as A, B, C:

A – Admit (to yourself and to God) that you have done things that the Bible says are wrong (Romans 3:23, 6:23).

B – Believe what the Bible tells us about Jesus. That means that you genuinely believe that Jesus was the Son of God and that He died on the cross so that you can be forgiven and able to go to heaven.

C – Commit. Pray to God, and if you really mean it ask Him to forgive your sins, commit your heart and life to Him, and ask Jesus to save you.

If God has stirred your heart to be saved like He did mine and if you have truly believed these things and prayed to God committing your life to Him, then here is God's promise to you: "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13).

If you made this commitment, then as a new Christian you need to talk regularly with God in prayer, and you need to read your Bible to hear what God has to say to you. You need to go regularly to a good, Bible-believing church. You also need to talk to your pastor about being baptized.

The Greatest Mega Truth of All: God genuinely loves you – loves you enough to send His Son to die for you. And when the time comes that He draws you to know that you have sinned and need Christ as your Savior, all you have to do is Admit, Believe and Commit.

Hi, my name is Don Burke. I am a pastor and I wrote these devotionals. If you have made the decision to accept Jesus as your Savior while reading these devotionals or during the ALIVE conference this year, I would love to hear from you. You can share your good news by sending me an email to PotosiPastor@gmail.com.