

The Truth Pulpit Interviews D. C. Washington, #1

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Questions & Answers

By Don Green

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Don Green. Well, welcome to this edition of the Truth Pulpit. This is Don Green. And normally on the Truth Pulpit I'm giving you Bible teaching from the pulpit at Truth Community Church but today we have a special exception as I have a special guest with me in studio named D. C. Washington. We'll give you an opportunity to get to know D. C. a little bit. D. C., good to have you with us today on the Truth Pulpit.

D. C. Washington. Good to be here.

Don. Now we have to start with a little bit of reason why D. C. is here. D. C. is a recurring guest musician at Truth Community Church and we want to have an opportunity for you to get to know D. C. a little bit. D. C., we've got to start where every conversation with you ever starts, tell us about the name D. C. Washington. Is that just a stage name or where did you come up with that?

D. C. It's the name my mother and father called me for all the years that I knew them, and the story I was told is that my grandmother wanted my initials to be D. C. I grew up in southeast Arkansas and I'm not sure why she wanted my name to be D. C., but that's what it was and so that's what I've been called by my mom, my sisters, my brothers, and anybody who calls me anything other than that probably don't know me, they don't know me real well.

Don. So the funny thing is that you actually live in the Washington, DC area.

D. C. I do live there but I am from Arkansas. I will have to emphasize that a few times, I'm sure. I was born and raised in Arkansas but I retired from the US Army in 2000, went to DC in 1993 as part of the Army, and have lived there ever since.

Don. Now you've got some background in church music. Tell us a little bit about your background and then I want to dive into your personal story a little bit.

D. C. I mean, I grew up in the church. I grew up in a small, little, Baptist church in Arkansas. You notice I always repeat Arkansas a lot because it's a place near and dear to my heart. But I grew up in a small, little, Baptist church and I sang in the choir, I did band. I went off the University of Arkansas, became a music major and I've directed

church choirs pretty much every place I've been stationed, and I've done some choir work in the church that I am currently in, the Immanuel Bible Church in Springfield, Virginia.

Don. Yeah, now the military background actually had nothing to do with music. You weren't a music vocalist in the military, as I recall.

D. C. Not at all. I graduated from the University of Arkansas with a music degree but I also graduated as an ROTC commissioned officer and I had two years commitment to that that I had to serve with the Army. I turned two years into 22 years and I served as a personnel officer and a budget officer.

Don. And you retired as a Lieutenant Colonel, if I remember correctly.

D. C. I did. I did.

Don. And on behalf of everyone that listens to the Truth Pulpit, thank you for your service to our country. We're glad to have you in many capacities here.

D. C. I am honored to have served and to continue to serve.

Don. Now your military background actually gave you opportunities to sing in front of some pretty impressive audiences. Tell us a little bit about 1995 to start with and the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II.

D. C. I had the opportunity to go and sing with President Clinton and Bob Hope and one of the Andrews Sisters, I'm not sure which one was still living at that time. But a gentleman in my church worked for the Army chaplain's office and they were having a difficult time putting together a program for the Sunday morning service for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of World War II over in Hawaii, and he called me up and said, "Hey, how would you like to go do this?" And I thought, "Hey, who wouldn't?" And long story short, I got to sing "Amazing Grace" in front of the President, at that time Mrs. Clinton, President Clinton, and then they came up on stage and we sang "America the Beautiful" together, and he and I traded conversations about being from Arkansas, and if you've ever been around President Clinton, he knows everybody and remembers everybody, so he knew a lot of people that I knew from Arkansas.

Don. There's, at the time there was a very impressive picture published in one of the newspaper that you were in your full dress uniforms sharing a laugh with the President at the time. It was a very impressive picture.

D. C. Right, and that was one of the moments when he found out I was from Arkansas and he found out where I was from in Arkansas and he knew several people from the little bitty town called McGehee, Arkansas.

Don. And so you were on stage with the President, with Bob Hope, with one of the Andrews Sisters and yet five minutes after it was over, tell us what happened. Life has a way of bringing humility in the midst of the opportunity.

D. C. Yeah, there was all this big pomp and circumstance and then at the end of that, I had to find my way back to the hotel and trying to find a taxi back to the hotel. I was nobody then after that.

Don. So you were somebody for five minutes and nobody five minutes later.

D. C. Yeah, yeah, thanks for reminding me of that. It keeps you humble.

Don. Well, you told me first so I guess we're on the same page. Now along with that, you also had an opportunity to sing in the White House within the past few years ago which was pretty special to you, I know.

D. C. I sing with a group called the Cathedral Choral Society. I've been singing with them since 1994, and we are a sort of a symphonic choir that has a residency in the National Cathedral there in Washington, DC. We're not a part of the Cathedral but it's the organizations, I want to say, 65 of 75 years old, I don't remember how old it is, but it's been singing there for a long time. But you get an opportunity to do lots of things in the DC area. There's lots of opportunities and so the choir was asked to put together a small little ensemble to come over and sing for one of the receptions at the White House. We really were supposed to be there for like an hour, it turned out we were there for almost four hours because the other group that was supposed to be there didn't come. And so we got an opportunity to see the President, President Obama, Mrs. Obama, got a picture with them, and got to see, it was for correspondence. You saw print correspondence come in for one reception and then you saw radio and tv correspondence come in, and so it was pretty cool and we were standing there singing for almost three hours.

Don. Yeah, you had your picture taken, you were standing right next to Mrs. Obama, as I recall.

D. C. Yes, and she leaned over to me and told me, she asked me if I was being good which I thought was there something on my face that made her wonder that?

Don. Well, maybe your reputation preceded you. I don't know.

D. C. But, no, they were very nice. They were very gracious and we got that one picture with them and didn't see them anymore.

Don. You're listening to the Truth Pulpit with Don Green interviewing D. C. Washington. D. C., as we've talked about your military background a little bit, your military service took you to a lot of different places. Tell us just a little bit about where you served our country because it leads into how you found some important spiritual influence in your life.

D. C. Well, I came in the Army in 1978 and was stationed in Fort Hood, Texas for two years and after that I went to Turkey, came back from Turkey, spent some time in Indiana going to school, went down to Mississippi, spent three years down there, spent another three years at Fort Hood, and then went to Greece, spent three years in Greece, came back from Greece and that's when I went to the DC area. In '96, I was moved over to Saudi Arabia for a year and came back and finished out my career in the DC area.

Don. What aspect of your tours of duty, are there any that particularly stand out to you as being, having a particularly memorable aspect to your career?

D. C. My career or just life in general?

Don. Your career.

D. C. My career, no. My career pretty much was a standard sort of career. I did the things I was supposed to do to get promoted and I did the things I was supposed to do to stay educated and do the right kind of jobs. The thing that stands out to me about life and about my career, about church or whatever, are people. That's what I remember most, the people that I remember from all of those places that I told you about. I still have connections with people 30+ years later and so that's what sticks out to me.

Don. Yeah, and that's consistent with what I know you to be. You love people and yet when you were in Turkey, you had to go to Turkey to find somebody that would have a tremendous spiritual influence on your life. Tell us about that.

D. C. Sure. In Turkey I was, at that time I was single and I had an apartment that was sort of a studio apartment next door to an Air Force airman. And I still don't know how it came about that we started talking about, how we got on the conversation of the Bible, and he shared some tapes with me of a preacher that I had never heard of before and his name was John MacArthur, and it was transforming in the way that I heard someone doing expository preaching and teaching and making the Bible and its sufficiency very plain and very understandable in a way that I had never never experienced before, and that led to my becoming a subscriber for folks who are John MacArthur folks who go way back to the cassette tapes subscriptions that you could use to get. I have a basement full of John MacArthur tapes that are just all over the place because I would get those tapes and I would just devour them and they would just...and that has, that really did transform how I viewed the Bible and how I viewed the sufficiency of the Bible and how you can systematically understand it and study it.

Don. Well, I would say that many of our listeners are familiar with the ministry of John MacArthur. Of course, my primary formation as a preacher was formed under John MacArthur and at the Master's Seminary, so we have that in common and the fact of the matter is, is that for someone who is as accomplished a vocalist as you are, having sung for Presidents, biblical doctrine is very important to you.

D. C. Totally. Absolutely. That's what it's all about. The singing is a vehicle for the Gospel. It's all about the Gospel. It's all about understanding who Jesus is, it's understanding what the Bible is all about, what it means to be a part of a church, what it means to be there sharing each other's burdens and understanding what truth is. I mean, you call this the Truth Pulpit but truth is important and truth is found in the Bible.

Don. Now along with the military background, the music background, your doctrinal background, you've also had some opportunities that you enjoy singing at sports venues in our nation's capital. Tell us a little bit about that.

D. C. The church I go to is called Immanuel Bible Church. It's a fairly large church and there are lots of people scattered all over the Washington, DC area doing all kinds of things. There was a gentleman in my church who used to work for the Washington Redskins, the football team there, and he suggested that I submit a CD singing the National Anthem for them, and I did and that was about 10 years ago. And so every year I do one game for the Redskins and that turned into my doing the anthem for the Washington Nationals. The Washington Nationals is a baseball team that came to DC about 8-9 years ago from Montreal, and I do a game a month for them. I'm a baseball fan more than I am a football fan.

Don. Yeah, the Nationals are your real love of life after Waynetta, are they not?

D. C. Absolutely. Absolutely they are. They are. I've got a big W on my car and it stands for Waynetta and it stands for the Washington Nationals.

Don. Very good. And so you've sung in front of 90,000 people at Redskins Stadium, 40,000 people at a Nat's game, and yet there is a very interesting thing that your former music secretary, Karen Maxfield, I know a beloved friend of yours, said to me when I was first getting to know you, she said that whether D. C. is singing in front of 90,000 people at a stadium or 9 people in a nursing home, that you're the same singer, and that's very true. Tell us a little bit about what motivates you when you are singing because you would think, you know, somebody like me that doesn't have much musical background, there would be a different level of engagement at a stadium as opposed to a nursing home, but you don't see it that way at all. Talk to us a little bit about what motivates you when you sing and what's going through your heart and mind when you have opportunity to use your voice in the places that the Lord opens up to you.

D. C. I am humbled by the notion that people even like to listen to me sing, to be honest, and that's not false modesty. I mean, I sing okay but I'm not the greatest singer that has ever come along. So the notion that people want to hear me sing is humbling. The other thing is God has blessed me with a wonderful grateful heart. I am grateful just for the opportunity to be able to minister to people, to touch people. I don't take that for granted. Whether I'm at Redskins Stadium or Nat Stadium and I see the ushers or the vendors or the security people and they are impacted or touched by my ability, I am grateful that they are and so but I'm also grateful for the opportunity to go to a nursing home and be able to minister there. That's, I mean, when I was a kid growing up in southeast Arkansas,

our piano player at our church would take us over to the nursing home. I remember singing "Farther Along" at the nursing home to 10 people and thinking as a kid, "Wow, this is just great! This is super!" And so I still have that sense of wow whether it's 90,000 people at Redskins Stadium and praying that I don't forget the words to the National Anthem, or the 9 people that haven't had anybody come by to see them in, I don't know when, to sing to them.

Don. "Farther Along," you said?

D. C. "Farther Along."

Don. Do you have that tuned up.

D. C. [singing]

"Tempted and tried we're oft made to wonder why it should be thus all the day long
While there are others living about us, never molested, though in the wrong
Farther along we'll know all about it; farther along we'll understand why
Cheer up, my brother; live in the sunshine, we'll understand it all by and by."

See, you didn't think I could do it.

Don. That was impressive and you need to know if you're listening to us today on the Truth Pulpit with Don Green and my special guest, D. C. Washington, what you just heard was completely unrehearsed. D. C. just has that on the top of his tongue and, D. C., thank you for ministering to us in so many different, so many different ways.

You mentioned your background in Arkansas, and the truth of the matter is, on radio people can't see you as I do in the studio.

D. C. They would be seeing a very handsome man.

Don. I'll leave that one untouched, my friends out in radio land. But you're an African American man, which wouldn't be evident on radio, and tell us a little bit about your background in Arkansas because your background is something unusual, especially in this almost 60 years after the Board of Education decision in 1954.

D. C. I know I don't sound like it but I'm 61, and so I was born in 1955, a year after Brown v. Board of Education, so I grew up in segregated Arkansas where schools were, I mean, I grew up in a town of about 5,000 people but there were the black schools and the white schools, and even though the decision to integrate schools was made, the Separate But Equal decision was made in 1954, it was not until 1970 that schools totally integrated in my little town in Arkansas and pretty much across the state of Arkansas. It took that long of a process for that decision to finally take hold.

Don. Now looking back on that, your elementary and even into middle school education was in a segregated school, black only, and elsewhere in the town was a white only school, correct?

D. C. Correct. Wow, about sixth grade the state, what states would do as they were trying to figure out life after *Brown v. Board of Education* was come up with different sort of approaches, and one of the approaches was called Freedom of Choice, and I think about sixth grade you could decide which school you wanted to go to. You could say if you wanted to go to McGehee High School or DeShay High School, which was the African American school, then your parents could say that's where they wanted you to go. So for the most part they remained separate up until my tenth grade year, 1970.

Don. Yeah, and so one of the things that I've done kind of in some private reading of my own over the past year, I've been reading a lot of presidential biographies and getting a little bit deeper into American history, and the racial segregation, the separation, the issue of slavery was really embedded into our country from the beginning, and you have kind of a unique perspective on that as an African American man growing up with some segregated schools, and yet the thing that I've always appreciated about you, D. C., and we've talked about this even earlier today, is that you look back on that without a sense of bitterness or anger. Talk a little bit about your spiritual perspective on growing up in a segregated town as an African American man.

D. C. Well, I think it has to do with growing up with two parents who were very very strong Christians. My mom and my dad, my dad died when I was 14 but he made a huge impact on not just my life but the life of my siblings and the lives of people that he touched. Growing up in Arkansas, especially growing up in rural Arkansas, you sort of missed a lot of the Civil Rights sort of issues that were going on. Jim Crow is very evident growing up where I grew up. I mean, we grew up in rural Arkansas in the country, in agricultural kind of environments, you don't have the sort of marches and events that you would have like in Birmingham or in Mississippi or things like that, or in Jackson, and so you just lived life and I lived life knowing that I had two parents who loved me, I had siblings who loved me, I had a community who loved me, and although there was lots of Jim Crow laws that prevented me from drinking from a water fountain or going to a certain place. I can remember as a kid growing up, I look back on it now, when we would travel, your ability to find someplace to go to the bathroom, I never thought about it until much later, but my parents had a way of just sort of making that sort of okay, that you understood that did not diminish you because opportunities that were not provided to you. So I didn't grow up in a home full of bitterness or anger or a sense of deprivation, if you will. I grew up in a home that was very loving but a home also that was very active in trying to improve things for later generations. So that's how I grew up, so integration became just another thing that I had to engage with as a person.

Don. And so the perspective of your parents and the perspective of being a born-again Christian changes your whole perspective on that from maybe the man on the street who doesn't know Christ.

D. C. Yeah, I would say so. I would say that the churches became very important in the African American community, but in my own personal life the church was sort of the rock, the cornerstone, the place that we sort of, the touchstone that we, that sort of anchored us, if you will.

Don. Well, D. C., we have about 2 minutes left in this segment and we'll plan to be back again tomorrow on the Truth Pulpit with D. C. Washington. Tell us just in 90 seconds maybe just a little bit about how you came to know Christ and we'll pick up on that next time.

D. C. Well, I can say my mom and dad were Christians and I can't remember a time that I was not in church but I remember as a kid growing up in the South, we had revival meetings and I can remember that when I was 9, it was my opportunity to sit on what we call the mourner's bench and the evangelist would come in and I can remember the night where he talked about the word and talked about how important it was to give your life to Jesus Christ, and so it was a no-brainer for me having grown up in that environment. And so I became a Christian when I was 9 in May and was baptized in June, the first Sunday in June and, in fact, we would have to use another church's baptismal pool to baptize people. And I've been a Christian ever since.

Don. And now it's your joy not only to sing in front of large audiences at sporting events but you actually love to sing in the local church especially.

D. C. I do. I have a heart for the local church. I go to a church that's probably about 3,000 people. I grew up in a church that was probably about 100 people and my heart is for churches that are like the church I grew up in. I love my church, a church with 3,000 people can become smaller depending on how you engage with it, but I have a heart for churches that are much smaller than where I go right now.

Don. That's D. C. Washington, special recurring guest musician at Truth Community Church. D. C., you'll join us again tomorrow, won't you, and we'll be able to talk more and get to know you better.

D. C. I'll come back in.

Don. Thank you for joining us on the Truth Pulpit today. This is Don Green signing off and inviting you back to be with us next time as we have more with our friend, D. C. Washington.

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