

## The Truth Pulpit Interviews D.C. Washington, #2

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*Questions & Answers*

By Don Green

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### **Truth Community Church**

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Don Green. Well, welcome back to the Truth Pulpit. This is Don Green sitting in studio with my good friend, D. C. Washington, for the second part of a two-part segment where we're just getting to know D. C. He is a recurring guest musician at Truth Community Church, leading our choir and also doing solos. D. C., welcome back to the Truth Pulpit.

D. C. Washington. It's good to be here.

Don. Last time when you were with us, you spoke a little bit about your thoughts and your, really your past in church music. You learned church music at an early age in the church that you attended in McGehee, Arkansas. Talk to us a little bit now about your current thoughts about the role of music in church worship.

D. C. Well, I think, can I go back to Arkansas for a second?

Don. Yeah.

D. C. Because one of the things that we didn't, I talked about the church I grew up in but I think we talked about this and I wanted to make sure that I got an opportunity to say this because when we talked about Jim Crow and integration and how life sort of unfurled, if you will. School was integrated when I was in tenth grade and I got to know other Christians who happened to be white, and they were members of First Baptist Church in McGehee, Arkansas, and that was an opportunity also to expand my music in a way that I had not done before, and I got to sing there with them in their youth choir and there was tension, not between the kids but tension between some of the members and my participation, that I was protected from because of the love of some really strong families who understood that living out the Christian life meant that they had to sort of step out of their comfort zone from their cultural life, that they understood that I was just a boy who wanted to come and worship. And Mabel Ruth and Roger Horan were two people who taught me what it meant to really sort of step out.

Don. These were white families in a white church bringing into segregated Arkansas, bringing a young African American man with them into their white church. That's what you're describing, right?

D. C. Yeah, exactly and that has left a mark on my life to this day.

Don. Yeah, you realize this is the kind of stuff that they make movies about, right?

D. C. Yeah, but not... Yeah, Denzel Washington doesn't want to play me.

Don. Well, that would almost be another D. C. Washington. I don't know what his middle initial is. And so your experience of, your experience in church life is really pretty profound. You grew up in an African American church in segregated Arkansas, you were part of the integration, you might say, of a white church in your teenage years, and then you moved on into other things, but this isn't about race to you at all, this is all about the Lord Jesus Christ.

D. C. Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. When I hear the phrase that Sunday morning at 11 o'clock is the most segregated time in America, it just makes me cringe because we are... and I understand from a cultural standpoint. I understand, I mean, I grew up in an African American church, I've gone to integrated churches off and on through the last 40 years since college, I've gone to all, I mean, churches that have been predominantly African American even during the time I was in the military, but it was not about the culture or the race of the church, it was about the doctrine, the view of who Jesus was, the view of what church was about, what the word had to say about its own sufficiency. That's what it's all about for me, and so I found myself in lots of different congregations over the course of moving in the military, but they've all be centered in understanding of who Jesus Christ is.

Don. You know, D. C., whenever we talk about these issues, my mind usually goes pretty quickly to Ephesians 2 where the Apostle Paul talked about how the death of Christ unified believing Jews and believing Gentiles into a single body, and in the same way now the only real hope that we have for peace between different segments of our society is ultimately found in Christ. Talk about that a little bit.

D. C. Absolutely. We've gone through some interesting times in our country. One of the reasons I sing the anthem is because I, my way of showing appreciation for being an American. I tell people I'm a Christian first by far, my life flows out of who I am as a Christian, but I'm also an American. I mean, I'm proud to be an American. I served my country for 22 years in the military and I was real proud of that, but I'm also an African American and I don't lose any of those things, I don't stop being an African American because I go to a church that's predominantly white. I don't stop being an American because I'm a Christian. But all those things flow into who I am, and so the American part of me is excited about the country that I live in and watching how we have come for almost 300 years from where we started to where we are now. We're not where we need to be but I believe the church plays a vital role in making sure that we always understand who we are in Christ first, and that then sort of can help feed who we are as citizens of this country.

Don. Kind of reminds me of what Jesus talks about in Matthew 5:13 speaking to his disciples said that, "You the salt of the earth," and the salt being that which hinders decay in a society. When Christians manifest a harmony between African Americans and whites, it testifies to a greater reality than what our political fault-lines are built around.

D. C. Absolutely. Totally. I totally agree with you there.

Don. So with that little bit of background kind of in mind, there's one other thing that I would add to it, that you and I have talked a bit, talked about a bit, and even just our relationship, D. C., it seems to me is a little bit of a microcosm of what we're talking about. You grew up in segregated Arkansas in predominantly African American circles, and I grew up in a home where my dad was, well, let's just put it this way, he was unashamed to use the "n" word frequently as he was around, and so we could not come in that perspective from more different environments and yet here we are close friends, trusted friends, with the matter of you being black and me being white doesn't really even enter into the consideration unless we're consciously talking about it at a time like this.

D. C. Right. And how long have we known each other?

Don. Over 10 years.

D. C. Ten years we've known each other.

Don. The best 10 years of your life you'd probably say off camera.

D. C. Yeah, there's no camera around here though. The way you described our backgrounds would make us, would have not sort of ideal to be...

Don. We're not candidates to be friends from an earthly perspective.

D. C. Absolutely, but I don't know that two people could be more instantly... I mean, our friendship is almost, I mean from the very beginning, I mean, we did not get to know each other. My coming to Grace, the invitation to Grace was not because we were friends because we just sort of, you heard me and you thought might be good to have, but once I came to Grace Community, to do the Grace Life concert that I did, there was an instant connection and I believe it was a spiritual thing. I do believe it was a spiritual thing in that we have been from that moment on the best of friends, and that is not because of earthly sort of things.

Don. It couldn't be of earthly things because our backgrounds are so very different. D. C. and I have ministered together in three different countries, in the United States, in Canada, and in Romania. We've done Gospel work together for many years in many locations and now the Lord has brought you to be a regular part of Truth Community Church and on behalf of our congregation, D. C., I have to tell you that we couldn't be more excited about being able to share you for a little while from month to month. So welcome again to Truth Community Church.

D. C. I'm excited about being at Truth Community. You won't tell them but I'll tell this. When you came, when Truth Community, before you were Truth Community called you out to be here, I was eager to come out and minister with you long before you would allow me to.

Don. We had to get special clearance to have D. C. with us.

D. C. But, so the opportunity to come and do music might just come in drive-by music, just me come singing and leaving, but to come and to minister with the wonderful people at this church is exciting and I look forward to the months ahead. I was here a month ago, I will be here on a monthly basis. Through the wonderful medium of social media, I get to still be in touch with folks in the choir and hopefully and the musicians and I'm just excited.

Don. Well, for those of you that are not familiar with our church, we're a congregation in Cincinnati, Ohio on the east side. We would love to have you join us sometime, and D. C. comes on a monthly basis, first weekend of every month, provides leadership for a choir, does some special music on solos and different things like that, and so our church is richly blessed to have a man of your quality, D. C., not only your vocal talent but a man of your spiritual commitments and the kind of man that you are. We're very blessed to have you so thank you for being a part of our church, and thank you in the audience for joining us on this edition of the Truth Pulpit. This is Don Green doing an interview with our friend, D. C. Washington.

D. C., if we could circle back to the question that I opened with that you skillfully dodged at the start, haha, tell us a little bit about your thoughts about church music and the role of music. Some people will say, have the mindset that worship and preaching are two different things, and when they say worship, they really mean music. You see it a little bit differently and we'd appreciate getting your thoughts on that.

D. C. You accuse me of dodging that, I didn't dodge.

Don. It looked like a dodge to me, man.

D. C. We talked about this and one of the things that in our times of ministering together, one of the things that I would always come and ask, I'd say, "Okay, what are you preaching about for this session?" Because I would always want to figure out, okay, what can I do to support that and reinforce that in the hearts and minds of the people who are coming here to listen to you preach, because it's all about getting the Gospel and getting the word into the hearts and minds of people so they can go live their lives successfully for Christ. So the music plays a role in that. If it's just music for music's sake, then like I told you, people can just put a CD on and be okay with that. I think the role of music and the role of preaching is sort of coming together in a way to do worship. Worship is not just the music and I've heard, I mean, I've heard that phrase a lot and it just drives me crazy because the worship is not music, the worship is giving our praise and our glory

through our being a...on Sunday morning I'm talking about specifically but if you've seen me on 95, I'm worshiping in my car so whether I'm listening to Don Green on the radio or listening to music, my goal is to let my God know how much, how grateful I am for who he is and to express that. The music has to then be about supporting what I think is central on Sunday morning and that's the word and that's the preaching of God's word, and so they have to work together with each other, and so that's how I view and that's my heart as it relates to music in the church. One of the things I love about hymns is the theology of the hymn-writers, the hymn-writers of old and there are hymn-writers today who have a tremendous grasp on theology and making sure that it's not just about nice sounding words or nice sounding music, it's about penetrating a heart for Christ to make them more effective in their walk as a Christian.

Don. Good words from our friend D. C. Washington. D. C., I've heard you say many times that it's not so much that you love, when it comes to a church service, it's not so much that you love to sing but that you love to worship.

D. C. I love to worship. It's all about worshiping and if you've ever heard me sing, I sing pretty loud, it's just because it's just coming out of my heart. Sometimes when I'm leading worship at Immanuel and we've got a fairly large congregation and it's difficult to describe what it's like to hear God's people all in great voice, sometimes not even great voice, praising God together. It is a wonderful experience and so...

Don. Yeah, and one of the things, D. C., there's so many things that I love about the way that you lead music, the way that you sing, and you have a capacity that I certainly don't have, many capacities that I don't have but one of the things that I've heard you say when you're leading from a platform, leading music, you say two things, you say, "It's okay to smile," because our faces tend, can be a little bit dour sometimes probably or especially early on Sunday morning, and also you have a way of saying, "Come on, you can do better than that." And tell us, just tell us what you're thinking about with the smiling and you can do better than that, because it's more than just a personal relationship, you're trying to do something with the congregation and for the congregation when you're saying things like that.

D. C. Well, partly it is this, I don't want worship to be a spectator for sport. I hesitate sometimes to talk about the smiling or you can do better than this.

Don. It comes naturally to you though.

D. C. It does. It does because I think you should smile because I think you should be excited about being in...but I don't want it to be misread that you have to do it the way I do it, you have to be as demonstrable as I am. That's not what I mean when I say that but I do know that a lot of times people come to church and it's spectator sport. They come and they'll sing a hymn and they have absolutely no connection with the words that they just got through singing, and so part of what I think is my responsibility as worship leader is to point that out. It's to stress that, to take that as a moment of saying, "Okay, this is not a routine thing we're doing. We're coming here as a body of believers to worship the

Triune God, and so let's not just sort of give it lip service." And so that's what motivates me in my worship leading in trying to bring at least a little focus, a little moment where it sort of jars you to say, "Ah, yeah, I can smile." Or, "Yeah, oh man, I just sang about this great God and who He is!" And that penetrates your mind in a way that otherwise you would just sort of just like go right by.

Don. And the truth of the matter is as I have the privilege of being here in studio with you, even as you're describing that you're being demonstrative with your hands and there's actually, there's a spiritual reality that you're describing there, that you can't help, you yourself, you as D. C. Washington, you can't help but be demonstrative and to be expressive as you're leading music because that's what's in your heart to do, right?

D. C. Absolutely. Absolutely.

Don. And see, and in a different way when I'm preaching, that same spirit animates me when I'm preaching. I have to be demonstrative. I have, my hands speak and I have to move and I have to elevate my voice because you're just captivated by the grandeur of Christ and the truth of God's word in a way that you can't simply be a monotone robot in that if these things, you truly understand these things. Talk about that for just a moment.

D. C. Like you say, one of my favorite hymns is "Blessed Assurance," and when you sing, [singing]

"Perfect submission, all is at rest  
I in my Savior, am happy and blessed  
I'm watching and waiting, looking above  
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

This is my story, this is my song  
Praising my Savior all the day long  
This is my story, this is my song  
Praising my Savior all the day long."

When I say those words, I can't, I can't just phone that in.

Don. Well, I'm with you. You know, the Lord saved us so that we would know and that we would have joy, 1 John says. He wrote these things so that we could have joy and so that assurance is not something that is just a passing thought in our mind, it captivates our hearts with joy, with delight, with gladness when we truly know the Lord Jesus Christ.

D. C. And if I'm in a congregation and that's not your experience, then I want that, I want you to see that experience on the hearts and the minds of people that it is, that can say that, and hopefully that will then motivate you to say, "I want parts of that too."

Don. Well, you're listening to D. C. Washington on the Truth Pulpit. This is Don Green, glad that you've joined us for this second segment of our interview with our good friend

D. C. Washington. D. C., we have about three minutes left and just talk to us a little bit about the kinds of songs that we sing here at Truth Community Church and the way that that builds into the overall worship on a Sunday morning.

D. C. Well, I mean, you're a hymn singing church which is always a good thing, but you've allowed me to come and I sing some more contemporary things but I think the music that I believe that we do here at Truth Community starts with the understanding that it has to be truth. If it's not truth, then it's just entertainment, and there's nothing wrong with entertainment, entertainment is okay but it's truth. And so the kind of music that you do, I think, is indicative of that.

Don. And as we sing together with D. C., he's helping us launch some greater variety to our music with ensembles and a choir and there's been just a remarkable outpouring of interest from our congregation which you can probably understand as you're listening to us, the enthusiasm of D. C. is contagious and it draws people into worship. D. C., we're really grateful to have you at our church and to have you here on the Truth Pulpit and I've got one final request. When you were here a few months ago, you sang a song that has echoed in my heart a good bit and I'm wondering if you might just do a line to bring it to a conclusion on today's broadcast, "The God of Angel Armies." That I can hardly contain myself when you sing that and I'm wondering if you might close us with that word of encouragement in song.

D. C. [singing]

"I know who goes before me  
I know who stands behind  
The God of angel armies  
Is always by my side.

The one who reigns forever  
He is a friend of mine  
The God of angel armies  
Is always by my side."

Don. That's the wonderful voice of D. C. Washington as we wrap up this message, this segment I should say of the Truth Pulpit. Thank you for being with us and if you're interested in a Bible teaching church and you're somewhere in the Cincinnati, Ohio area, we meet on Sundays at 9 AM, Tuesdays at 7 PM, in addition to this radio broadcast that you hear on your local station. D. C. has sung about that God of angel armies, that's the God that we proclaim, a sovereign God who reigns over all and yet loved his people enough to send his Son the Lord Jesus Christ into the world to die for sinners just like you, and if this joy of Christ, this assurance of salvation is foreign to your experience, we invite you to the word of God, the Gospel of John to be able to read about a Christ who came and a Christ who invites you to come to him for the salvation of your soul.

D. C., thank you for being with us. We hope that you'll be with us again sometime in the future on the Truth Pulpit.

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