

Dave Anthony Memorial Message

By Bruce Anthony, Dave's Brother

It began as a normal week, lots of things to do. Dave started out the week with 3 AC System installs to get done. He and his team pushed on through Monday, making good progress. Tuesday morning started like any other, out the door and a million things to get done. He and the guys started on their work that morning with one of the installs but as the morning wore on, Dave suddenly said he wasn't feeling well. He said he was going to go home, got in his truck and left. Minutes later, Dave's heart attack was over and he went to be with the Lord.



Sudden, swift, without warning, no chance to say good-bye, no last handshake or hug, he was gone. My little brother, at 56, with no prior history of heart issues, died. It took my breath away when I got the call. So how do we process this? Where do we find the answers to WHY? And how do we move on from here?

Before I go into these points, I want to recall what Dave was like. All of you here knew Dave, you know that he was a man of Integrity – that he did what he said, even if it hurt. He was a man of compassion – caring for those who were hurting or in need, mentoring those just starting out. And he was Faithful, always there when you needed him, willing to go the extra mile, dependable, gracious, never lashing out in anger, always having a word of encouragement.

Why was Dave like this? What motivated him and gave him the strength to be a gentle giant of a man? I think we can find great insight in the words he left behind for us to study. We found a tablet in his office where he had written some Bible verses that meant a lot to him and guided his life and actions. Let me read the first one from:

Psalm 1

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.(ESV)

Dave delighted in the Lord; his roots went deep into the streams of water that nourished his soul and produced the fruits of Integrity, Compassion and Faithfulness. He believed that if he made this Book, the Bible, the guidepost and guardrails for his life, then God would bless him and through him bless others. I think you all can see the results of that blessing in your lives. I certainly can.

Dave loved his wife and children deeply. He invested in them and gave his time and attention to them, and it all came from this call to delight in the Lord.

Men, we can't love our wives and children in our own strength and power. Sometimes we fail, sometimes we look out selfishly for our own interests, sometimes it is just too much, and we want out. Dave knew this; it was why he delighted first in the Lord and drew his strength as husband, father and boss from the depths of God's word and promises. They never fail, they never let you down, they are utterly dependable.

Another favorite from Dave is:

Psalm 91

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." (NIV)

Do you want rest, do you want a fortress to defend you in tough times, do you need a refuge when the world is caving in? God promised it to you – it comes from a relationship with Him. **He will be these things for you**, as he was for Dave.

I think many of us would say, "Dave was a good Guy; he deserves to go to heaven." If we put all the good works that Dave did on a scale and measure them, many would look at it and say, "Wow, he really tips the scale for good." Does this mean that Dave had a clear path to making it into heaven? **Did he do enough good works to open the pearly gates?** Should we take a vote?

Dave would draw our attention to what the Bible Says in Romans 3:10 **"There is no one righteous, not even one";** and in verse 20 **"Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law [doing good works]";** and in verse 23: **"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** What Dave knew is that since the time of Adam and Eve's rebellion against God in the Garden of Eden, we are each born with defective spiritual DNA that causes us to also rebel and sin against God. What happens when we sin? Romans 6:23 tells us that **"the wages of sin is death"**. And by Death the Bible means eternal separation from God and painful punishment forever.

This sounds really harsh. Some of you might be thinking, "I'm not so bad. I don't go around murdering people or abusing children or fill in the blank..." But God's standards are so high that He says to be angry with someone is to murder them in our hearts. To covet what our neighbor has is stealing and if we look at someone in lust, it is just as though we did the act. God is concerned with our hearts, and the sad truth is that our hearts have evil in them. Mine does, Dave's did, yours does also. God cannot be present with or joined to evil.

So what are we to do? Some might say, “This is too hard. I’m just going to live my life and see what comes.” But for those people, there is no peace, there is no hope and there is the prospect of facing what Dave did last Tuesday morning – he got up, he shaved, he went to work, and he found out his time was up – no warning. Wouldn’t you rather have a certain hope, that no matter what comes, you have a refuge and a fortress, that when you breathe your Last breath here, the next moment you will be in your Savior’s presence?

Others might say, “Well, I don’t believe in this God stuff, and I wouldn’t want to live by His rules if He did exist.” I was there, I didn’t believe, I was running away from God because I didn’t like the rulebook. One day God confronted me and said, “Surprise, I’m real, I’m here and you have to decide what to do about Me.” He had my attention, like a baseball bat to the head. I knew He was real - I knew I faced a choice. The beautiful thing is that God chased me down while I was His enemy and offered to cover my sins with the death of His own Son Jesus on the cross. All I had to do was believe that He was who He said He was and yield control of my life to Him. In Romans 6:23 He writes “but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”. I made the choice to surrender to Him 45 years ago at age 17, and my life has never been the same. I would never go back – no regrets. Dave made this same choice years ago.

This is the way out of our dilemma: God did what we cannot do – He offered Himself on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. All we have to do is believe and accept His payment on our behalf, and He cancels out every sin we ever did or will do. He adopts us as His children and He puts the Spirit of His Son Jesus into our hearts to rebuild us from the inside out. Gradually room by room, we get renovated to be like Jesus. This was Dave’s greatest desire - to become like Jesus.

Have you ever wondered what Jesus was like? Look at someone like my brother Dave. Compassionate, Gentle, Peaceful, Faithful, full of Integrity, Strong, Protective – his goal was to model Jesus for you, so that you would desire to be like Jesus.

I said I would talk about the hard questions, like “why would God let Dave die at such a young age?” I think there are at three reasons that we can consider:

First, Dave would start with John 15:13 ***“There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”*** (NLT) Dave has been a friend to many of you over the years. He has shared his skills, knowledge, and life with you and quietly shared his faith and love for Jesus. Dave would do anything for you to know the Jesus he loves and for you to come to faith because of him, even offer up his life. We are already seeing this happen as men whose hearts have been touched by Dave are turning to trust in Jesus. Dave is doing backflips in heaven over this.

Second, Dave would go to Psalm 139:

“My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in secret, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all my days were written in Your book and ordained for me before one of them came to be.” (NIV)

He knew that every day of his life was designed by God, and one day would be **The Day** he went home to be with Jesus. He would not come back for all the money in the world. Being with God in heaven is so wondrously amazing that the Bible says we can’t even dream or imagine what it will be like. Dave is not looking back.

Lastly, Dave would point to Matt 24 where Jesus is talking about the time when He will return to the earth:

“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, f but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing [they were oblivious] about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”(NIV)

Dave and I spent many hours lately talking about the course our world is taking, the impacts of Covid, the growing unrest and evil around us, and how there are so many signs coming true that the day of the Lord’s return is coming soon. I think **Dave would say that he wants to warn as many of you as he can**, because once Jesus returns and you haven’t made him Lord, it will be terrible: evil will be completely unleashed and great tribulation will fill the earth. He would not want you to have to face that.

So what can we conclude about why? Because Dave loves you, he was willing to lay down his life for you so that you could hear before it’s too late. Don’t miss out, you may never get another chance. Your days are written in God’s book, as is the day of His return. We don’t know either one, **are you ready?**

Finally, I want to take a moment and answer the question: What is it like for Dave now?

Dave is seeing God face to face. The ONE who breathes out stars and galaxies, who made all that we see and touch out of nothing, the one Whom the entire universe is not big enough to contain. God is looking into Dave’s eyes and saying, **“Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.”**

There are several passages in the Bible where we get a glimpse into God’s Throne room. Let’s look at three of them because Dave is there right now.

Isaiah 6: I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. Attending him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. They were calling out to each other, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Heaven’s Armies! The whole earth is filled with his glory!” Their voices shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire building was filled with smoke.(NLT)

Rev 4: I saw a throne in heaven and someone sitting on it. The one sitting on the throne was as brilliant as gemstones—like jasper and carnelian. And the glow of an emerald circled his throne like a rainbow. Twenty-four thrones surrounded him, and twenty-four elders sat on them. They were all clothed in white and had gold crowns on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning and the rumble of thunder. And in front of the throne were seven torches with burning flames. This is the sevenfold Spirit of God. In front of the throne was a shiny sea of glass, sparkling like crystal.

In the center and around the throne were four living beings, each covered with eyes, front and back. The first of these living beings was like a lion; the second was like an ox; the third had a human face; and the fourth was like an eagle in flight. Each of these living beings had six wings, and their wings were covered all over with eyes, inside and out. Day after day and night after night they keep on saying,

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty— the one who always was, who is, and who is still to come.”

Whenever the living beings give glory and honor and thanks to the one sitting on the throne (the one who lives forever and ever), the twenty-four elders fall down and worship the one sitting on the throne (the one who lives forever and ever). And they lay their crowns before the throne and say,

“You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things, and they exist because you created what you pleased.” (NLT)

This is so cool: that in two books written 800 years apart, Isaiah and John saw the same scene – AMAZING! The Bible is so consistent. Now Dave is seeing the same scene and worshiping God with them and with millions of other believers who have gone before us – including his mom, his grandparents, and my own son John. Dave is now a part of the great cloud of witnesses that the Bible speaks about in Heb 12:1-2, who are watching and cheering us on.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

(Heb 12:1-2 NIV)

There is one more scene we can look at that tells us of Dave's future:

Rev 19(NLT): *Then I saw heaven opened, and a white horse was standing there. Its rider was named Faithful and True, for he judges fairly and wages a righteous war. His eyes were like flames of fire, and on his head were many crowns. A name was written on him that no one understood except himself. He wore a robe dipped in blood, and his title **was the Word of God** [Jesus]. The **armies of heaven** [the church], dressed in the finest of pure white linen, followed him on white horses. From his mouth came a sharp sword to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod. He will release the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty, like juice flowing from a winepress. On his robe at his thigh was written this title:*

King of all kings and Lord of all lords.

Jesus is the rider on the white horse, and the armies of heaven, God's church, now include Dave on his own white horse riding with Jesus on THE DAY He comes to judge the earth. Dave wants you to be on the white horses with him and not staring them down as they ride towards you.

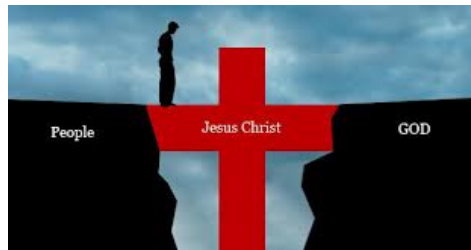
So this has been a really heavy session, but death is serious business. It should cause us to stare in the mirror and ask the question – am I ready? What do I believe? Would I give my life so that my friends could hear about Jesus and have eternal life -vs- eternal suffering if I stand silent? I have been praying over these words for days. Cyndy asked me to make sure that I clearly shared the Gospel with you.

The Gospel is the good news, that though we are God's enemies, He has paid for our rebellion and sin, and we can be forgiven and set free from sin and eternal death. Jesus is coming back soon; some of us may not even see death if He returns in the very near future. Others might taste death yet this afternoon or this week or month. None of us knows the number of days written for us in God's book of life. If you have not made Jesus Lord, you can do that today. I urge you not to put it off, **your day may be today.**

We will sing our final hymn, and while we are singing, I would ask you to think about giving your life to Jesus. You will never regret it. Dave didn't, Cyndy doesn't, their sons don't, my family and I don't. If you want, you can come to the front, or you can do it where you are standing, place does not matter. When we are done singing, I will lead us in a simple prayer for those who want to go all-in with Jesus and live a life of faith like Dave's.

P.S. If God is tugging at your heart about following Jesus or you have questions, please see the next page, which was included in the information at the service.

How to Follow Jesus



Step 1 – God loves you and has a plan for you!

The Bible says, “God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, [Jesus Christ], that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Jesus said, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly”—a complete life full of purpose (John 10:10).

Step 2 – Man is sinful and separated from God.

We have all done, thought or said bad things, which the Bible calls “sin.” The Bible says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). The result of sin is death, spiritual separation from God (Romans 6:23).

Step 3 – God sent His Son to die for your sins!

Jesus died in our place so we could have a relationship with God and be with Him forever.

“God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Jesus is the only way to God. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6).

Step 4 – Would you like to receive God’s forgiveness?

We can’t earn salvation; we are saved by God’s grace when we have faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. All you have to do is believe you are a sinner, that Christ died for your sins, and ask His forgiveness. Then turn from your sins—that’s called repentance. Jesus Christ knows you and loves you. What matters to Him is the attitude of your heart, your honesty. We suggest praying the following prayer to accept Christ as your Savior:

*“Dear God, I know I’m a sinner, and I ask for your forgiveness.
I believe Jesus Christ is Your Son. I believe that He died
for my sin and that you raised Him to life.
I want to trust Him as my Savior and follow Him as Lord,
from this day forward. Guide my life and help me to do your will.
I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.”*

If you have prayed this prayer today or would like to rededicate your life to Jesus, or if you have questions anytime, please call/text or email me at 507-271-0415, bruceanthony2@gmail.com.

Note: Thank you to the Billy Graham organization for the material on this page, copied from their website.