

# God Spots

“Bus Trip Across America”

By archie rhines

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## Greyhound Bus Trip Across America Collecting God Spots

### Bus Trip Across America



I'm not real sure where the crazy idea of traveling across America by bus started. I know it had to do with my passion for God Spots and my built-in need for adventure. I was encouraged by my bride's enthusiasm for the adventure and her willingness to let me burn up vacation time while spending money we did not have.

Looking for a Biblical precedence, it seems Paul and Parnabas may have taken a bus ride while working their ministry. The Word says it like this, "Paul and Barnabas were graciously received by the whole church, including the apostles and leaders. They reported on their recent journey and how God had used them to open things up to the outsiders".

In eleven days, Fred and I head to California on a bus ride in search of our "ONE" and a renewal of our Spirit in going back to where we grew up. I'm looking forward to sitting at the top of the gravel road leading down to the old house where I exchanged my life for the life of Christ. I expect to meet God there in a special way.

God's put on my heart there is another person to go along. Might that be you?

Note: A God Spot is when God authenticates His presence and I get to blog about it. What fun! It is incredibly encouraging to know God is alive and well in the midst of Life's struggle.

[February 22, 2009](#) Posted by [37stories](#) | [Leave a Comment](#) | [Edit](#)

### God Authenticates His Pleasure in Providing Resources

Does God ever just totally blow you away with His graciousness? I bet He does. Well, today He blew my socks off. A very gracious person donated way too much money for my upcoming trip to California. The person alone almost funded the "one way" ticket by herself.



I am speechless and humbled to think someone would do that for me. But, I am also uncomfortable with accepting such a large gift. So, I think I will return it. I will be forever grateful to the person for their graciousness.

It does make me think and brings a question to my mind. We serve a BIG God. Why shouldn't His gifts be large? Why shouldn't we expect them to blow our socks off? I trust by my returning the gift I am not offensive to the person or to God. Do you have any thoughts?

Note: As it turns out... I didn't return the gift at the advice of many. Who was I to rob her of a blessing? It is an interesting way to look at it. Some things are just not about me.

[January 26, 2009](#) Posted by [37stories](#) | [7 Comments](#) | [Edit](#)

## Wahoo! Snow in the Sierra Nevadas!

ALL packed and ready to go. I am excited. Having grown up in the high Sierras, I am anxious to get back and relive the memories of my youth. My mother has been checking the weather reports. Mom says hwy 80 is closed going up toward Donner Pass. Snow and lots of it! Wahoo. God Spot awesome.

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## God Spots Waiting for the Picking



The long awaited round trip "**In Search of God Spots**" between Texas and California has arrived! I am excited and have an ever increasing spirit for what God is going to do. I hope to be blinded by the brilliance of the "God Spots" seen and experienced. Federico, my Hispanic traveling companion refers to me as his crazy old gringo friend. I suppose there is a bit of craziness in the mix of doing this trip.

We leave tomorrow, Thursday at about 8:30 PM. Please be encouraged to track with us on the trip via the web. To make it easy, I have created what I am calling my "Life Stream" page. It's a new approach I'm developing to pull information from multiple sources and display on a single page. My Life Stream or summary of all my blogs, pictures and video can be found there.

At the top of the page, I've provided all the links to my other popular blogs. Check it out and see if it makes it easy to keep up. Your posted blog comments will be an encouragement. I expect to post and check in often to share the adventure. Between my Life Stream and God Spots at <http://37stories.wordpress.com>, you can keep up with most of what's going on. I trust everyone finds the trip interesting and God is glorified. Enjoy!

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## Most Donations Were Appreciated



Many loving friends donated to make this trip possible across America by Bus. One of the donations was a bit surprising. Fred discovered a donated bug in our traveling food.

We are in a bus loaded down with some of the most interesting people in the world. There are people of many different races, faith, size, shape and emotional stability. It is definitely a cross section of humanity I look forward to getting to know.

Fred opened up the day's snack and yelled out, "There's a bug in my food!", I think some were jealous they didn't have a bug in their food. Fred is a funny guy.

My friend Sharon made Fred and my day by contributing to our trip in such a wonderful way. She stashed a BIG ugly plastic bug in a plastic bag filled with trail mix. Fred tossed the bug to a couple children in the seat behind him. It sure made their day and mine!

I love the personal interaction between people on the bus. There is immediate bonding and sharing. Thank you to all my friends and family that made this trip possible. I'm already thinking about my next one...Uh. Probably should have mentioned the trip to Cora before I posted it. 😊

[March 11, 2009](#) Posted by [37stories](#) | [Bus Trip](#) | [1 Comment](#) | [Edit](#)

## Sanity is greatly overrated

Am I crazy to listen for and to God? Does He even talk and if He does talk, can I hear?

Some say listening to God is insane. I was reading from some old writings of a guy that experienced a piece of the great Welsh Revival, a hundred years ago or so. The truths pulled from these papers are easily remembered and impactful. An easy to remember acronym is LDOG.

**Listen** to God

**Do** what God tells you to do

**Only do** what God tells you to do

**Give God** the Glory for what you do

My bus trip across America started with listening to God. He speaks in lots of ways. For the bus trip, He spoke out of a trapped feeling I was experiencing in the circumstance of life. The trip was my way of getting away for a time to realign and get closer to God. Ever been there and needed a breath of fresh air?

It seemed God was ok with my bus trip as it is usually easy to know when God is displeased with my choices. I kinda get this sick feeling in my gut that I really blew it and I need to ask forgiveness quick. As He was ok with the trip, what would God want me to do? I think being available for His plan is paramount in my obedience. I don't know exactly what He has planned for the adventure. I do hope to be obedient as He reveals His perfected plan and will for my life.

Only do what God tells you to do refers to the trap that was sprung on Moses. You remember the story. God told him to tap the rock and he struck it instead. It is important to Listen and Do, but only Do what God tells you to do. Don't add to it. Don't take away from it. It is God's show.

As I travel across America and back again. I expect to hear from God. I expect to be obedient and Do. I hope to only do what God tells me to do.

As the many God Spots are lived out during the trip. I pray I will give God the glory for His handiwork. I need to continually remind myself. This is not about me. This is all about God.

I trust you will follow me on the trip at the [God Spots](#) blog. I look forward to reading your encouraging comments as we bus and blog across America!

**February 28, 2009** Posted by [37stories](#) | [Christianity](#), [God Spots](#), [Grace](#), [Religion](#) | [2 Comments](#) | [Edit](#)

## Writing a Book. Want to be in it?

I'm taking a bus ride across America. I'm traveling with a friend, Federico. My wife thinks she will miss me. Federico and I think this is going to be a great adventure.

Oddly enough, it all started with Pastor Jeff declaring this was the year of "ONE". He and the body are praying that each of us would have opportunity to lead at least one other to "exchange their life" for the life of Christ.

Now last year, I impacted a lot of people. Some people I impacted in a positive fashion. Others would say I impacted them in a negative way. I suppose it is your perspective that determines the verdict. I really want the best for everyone. Sometimes it works out. Sometimes the outcome is hard to understand.

I have plans of writing a book. It will be called "God Spots". In this book will be a collection of stories describing how God has revealed and authenticated His presence. This bus trip is key to the contents of this

book. It is my hope during this trip to chat with people of America about how they have seen God work in their life.

Won't that be exciting?!

The dialog will go something like this: Excuse me. I am writing a book. Would you like to be in it? "Yes", you say? May I take your picture? My book is about God Spots. Can you tell me about a time when you knew God did something for you? Remember the time when you knew the only way this "thing" could have happened was with God's hand in it? Remember? Can you share your God Spot?

I'm trusting this will provide me the opportunity to share about the times God has authenticated His presence in my life. Who knows? Maybe the person will exchange his/her life for the life of Christ? It could happen....

It is the year of "ONE".

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## Bus Survival Techniques

Mr. Fred was my traveling companion. God put him on my heart as a traveling companion for reasons that were eternal, but the practicality of having him along was priceless. This was not his first bus ride. He knew the rules of the road and how to survive. Even before we started our trip, he gave me survival instructions. They went like this.



Rule #1 – Don't get the bus driver mad.

Rule #2 – Refer to rule #1.

Many of the bus drivers must go through bus driver attitude school and that is not necessarily a good thing. They make the rules of the road. Sit down and shut up. Follow the rules. Let me see if I can remember how they went...

"This bus is going to Bakersfield, Tucson, Phoenix, blah, blah and blah. Find a seat and be quiet. If your neighbor can hear you talk, you are talking too loud. Don't take your shoes off. I don't want to smell your feet. Use head phones. If your neighbor can hear it, it is too loud. There is a toilet in the back for your

convenience. Guys don't wizz all over the seat. Do not smoke. I will throw you off the bus. You ladies in

back. You are talking too loud. Quiet down or I will remove you from the bus. No alcohol or drugs of any type. I will toss you from the bus.”

And did I say, “FOLLOW RULE#1!” Oh yeah. Enjoy your trip and thanks for choosing Greyhound.

As the trip unfolds, there was a time when I was almost thrown off the bus. The driver was not kidding.

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## Listening but not understanding

A great passage in the message version of the Bible goes like this... “Their heads were spinning; they couldn’t make head or tail of any of it. They talked back and forth, confused: “What’s going on here?” Others joked, “They’re drunk on cheap wine.”

Listening is important when chasing after God Spots. It’s in the listening one has the opportunity for wisdom, understanding and knowledge. I think many times I listen for God and hear Him only to be confused and in the confusion be ineffective. This is where faith should kick in, but often I am guilty of squashing it.

Confusion is not of God. Many times confusion goes hand in hand with disobedience. I don’t understand or the voice I hear makes no logical sense, so I do nothing. Lack of action kills faith. Remember LDOG?

**Listen** to God

**Do** what God tells you to do

**Only do** what God tells you to do

**Give God** the Glory for what you do

When you listen to God, do something. Even if it seems crazy, God will smile on your obedience and turn the craziness into something good. Your obedience will produce an amazing fragrance in the nostrils of God.

[March 3, 2009](#) Posted by [37stories](#) | [God Spots](#) | [God Spot](#), [Religion](#) | [7 Comments](#) | [Edit](#)

## A miraculous healing! Wish I’d been there.

The miles on the bus drone on. The scenery is West Texas. Most everything is brown. Life is hard to imagine in the wasteland. It is a great time to read from His Word. I have passionately fell in love with God’s Word. I can’t consume enough of it. I read this fascinating story.

A while back, three o'clock in the afternoon, a couple guys were on their way to church for prayer meeting. At the same time there was a man crippled from birth being carried up. Every day he was set on the curb, to beg from those going into church. When he saw the guys about to enter, he asked for a handout. They looked him straight in the eye and said, "Look here." He looked up, expecting to get something from them.

One guy said, "I don't have a nickel to my name, but what I do have, I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!" He grabbed him by the right hand and pulled him up. In an instant his feet and ankles became firm. He jumped to his feet and walked.

The cripple went into the church with them, walking back and forth, dancing and praising God. Everybody there saw him walking around and praising God. They recognized him as the one who sat begging on the curb and rubbed their eyes, astonished, scarcely believing what they were seeing.

Wished I'd been there. It was a wonderful God Spot. Maybe I'll get to see my own while on the bus...

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## On board Greyhound San Antonio

Fred says he is going on a mission.

Felicia, Fred's bride says, "Sorry. Sorry. Sorry." Fred says, "He loves her."

Cora says, "She loves me and to be safe." Archie says, "He loves Cora and will miss her".

That the world may know.

**March 5, 2009** Posted by [37stories](#) | [Bus Trip](#), [God Spots](#) | [2 Comments](#) | [Edit](#)

## Made it to El Paso by Bus

It is 7:00 Friday morning. Spent the night on the bus packed full of humanity. There was the hacker lady in front of me. Obviously, had some terminal disease she was intent on infected everyone else with or else she was trying to hack up a hair ball. I'm not sure which. There was the "oh god" guy in the back of the bus who woke up yelling "oh god" where are we? "oh god, we are on I10". "oh god. it's ok. we are headed to El Paso.

Fred picked a wonderful lady to sit next to. He probably sat a little closer than he hoped since she took up both seats. I actually think Fred got stuck because he gave up the seat next the small hispanic guy and let

me sit there. That Fred. He's ok.

We did have a couple "God Spots". I'll need to catch up shortly. There is not much time in this stop, because of a God Spot. Our 4 hour layover has turned into a 45 minute layover. One bus was early. One bus was late. We make a better connection and California is waiting. Wahoo!

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## 1st God Spot Awesome

Met Bud in Junction. He is 54, my age. He was part of the Holy Ghost church at 16, but fell away. He asked me if i knew God. I thought I was suppose to ask that question. I asked him how he could fall away from God knowing all God did. He said David did. Then suggested the best vitamin for a Christian was "B1". I forget what that meant. Maybe you should ask Fred. We were both blessed with a God Spot right out the gate.

I get back on the bus and begin thinking... Bud says, 'Do you know God?' He's sitting on a bench outside a Quikstop at midnight and he wants to know if I know God. It gets me thinking. Do I know God? What does knowing God mean?

Do you know God? How does one know someone else? It seems to me you know someone by your senses. You recognize their appearance, their touch or even their smell. We are all unique that way. So, how is it I know God?

I can't smell God. I can't physically see Him. I can't touch Him. So how is it, I can know Him? The Word says, "by their fruits you shall know them." It's partially by the fruits of God that I know Him. But possibly the opportunity to know God through our Spirit is far greater than any knowing Him in the flesh.

I'm beginning to believe the Spirit world dwarfs the physical world as we know it. Bud knows...

As I further ponder... To know God, requires being able to identify Him. To identify requires knowing His attributes. God resides in the Spirit world, but makes His presence known in the physical world. What is the best and most available place to start getting to know Him? Read. Consume His Word. Make it a part of you. If feeding on His Word in not a part of your daily nourishment, it is unlikely you really want to know Christ.

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## 4 am Friday to El Paso

Driving across the vastness of the open desert, looking up at the sky enriched by millions of stars, humbles one into realizing how seemingly insignificant each of us are. Yet, somewhere in the vastness of it all, God chooses us to be His children. He elevates us above the heavenly angels. Only God can know why He chose for it to be so. God's love is immeasurable!

If only I could truly know Him....

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## GOD LOVES US ALL. RIGHT?

What about the white lady with no teeth getting on the bus yelling about blacks and Mexicans while kicking a Chinese man's foot in aisle. I wish I had the camera ready. What is the opposite of a God Spot? I don't know. Sigh.. but this has to be it.

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## What's your Drug of Choice?

I am sitting next to a guy who use to do every drug imaginable. He wasn't particular. Then he was locked up with only a Bible. GOD FOUND HIM AND HE IS ONE THAT THE WORLD MAY KNOW. He is an awesome traveling companion. Genuine. Authentic. Kind.

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## The World's a Safer Place

Hopefully by now you have picked up on a simple fact. I am sarcastic. I am told sarcasm is not good. I think it further defines who I am. I guess you will just have to deal with it as I post..

Yes. I feel safe. I was just wanded before I could go to the restroom in Phoenix. Fred had to erase the video of me being wanded by someone with a mid-east accent and likely bomb making material in his pocket.

Ah yes. America...

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## Technology Fails



Mom, this picture is for you.

Technology may fail, but memories are forever. Fred and I made it back to our childhood homes. We have met a lot of people and heard a lot of stories.

Technology has been challenging on the bus, so am behind the posting curve. I hope later today (Sunday) and before we board the bus to head back to catch up on my blog posts.

This has been a very impressionable trip and I know it will be an event in my life that will help shape me. I hope the shaping will be for the better. The two highest points of the trip were meeting Federico's family and seeing the love shared in a family unit and visiting my old home where I grew up with my dad being pastor of a small Baptist mission. God was in each Spot and we were blessed.

There will be lots more later about being called queer in the LA bus station, people coming down off all kinds of drugs, good people just wanting to survive, young people with dreams, bad people not looking for anything and expecting the worse, frustrations and happiness.

Check in later today. I hope to have some stories posted. God does bless. Archie and Federico

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## Love of the Family



I am really impressed by the strength found in the Mexican family unit.

Federico and I visited his grandmother. Her name is Artemisa and she is 96 years old. Artemisa. Isn't that a beautiful name.

She had a stroke recently and is confined to a wheel chair after a fall two weeks, ago. She very nearly broke her back. We found her on a street corner in

her wheel chair, being pushed by her daughter (Fred's mother), Norma. They were returning from the dollar store as an excursion for the day.

Words cannot describe the love that shined from Artemisa's eyes when she saw, Federico. They hugged and kissed. Artemisa said, 'Now I am ready to die.' Mr. Fred loaded her in the front seat of the car and we drove her home. She was alert and so excited to have Mr. Fred help her. In her house she pointed out the pictures on her wall for me to see the people of her legacy. She couldn't speak well and said little, but you could read the pleasure in her eyes as she viewed the pictures of her family.

I sat on the couch next to Artemisa as Federico leaned over to reach her ear as she sat in the wheel chair. Federico was whispering sweet words of love that included a prayer to God. I can only imagine the sweetness Artemisa heard in Federico's words. There was a passion in the room that wars are fought over. There was a feeling that the world could be going to hell, but for the moment in this small room, everything was right.

God smiled. God saw a people made in his image. God saw the sweetness of His creations being displayed in love that crossed generations and ethnicity. Federico explained briefly about his friend that had come with him to see Artemisa. She said, "I was a good person and blessed". She was right. She blessed me.

As we left, Artemis gave the sign of the cross twice across her heart. Federico said she was blessing our trip as we went to share God with other people. Artemis is a precious person. It is beautiful to see someone with her heart exposed, not caring what others think...

Is there an Artemis in your life? You are blessed.

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## There is a reason that man is wearing protection

We were driving from Dutch Flat, CA to Salinas to catch our return bus. Right in front of us was a helicopter spraying pesticide on the fields. I quickly pulled off the rode to get some video and pictures. God Spot Awesome. Here it is. Fred stayed seated. He said he wasn't getting out. There was a reason the guy was wearing protective clothing. I agreed and got out to shoot some video and take some pictures.

It was such a classic God Spot. Take an everyday event in life. Tune your ears to the Spirit and listen. God spoke strongly through Fred. There was danger ahead. Be prepared. Protect yourself.

I'm wearing a tee-shirt and blue jeans. I am obviously ill prepared to be stepping outside and exposing myself to the danger of chemical sprays. I have no protective gear on. I hear the warning and I go anyway. It is so like God to whisper in your ear. Go!

It is so crucial to be prepared to step out when God says Go!. How excited God must be to see one of His children fully prepared and anxiously waiting to hear His voice say, "Go".

I got my pics and stepped back in the car. Fred said, "It's good we were not downwind." It's so like God. Listen to God. Do what He says to do. Do only what God says for you to do. Then, give Him the Glory. It is unlikely, God will say, "Go" unless He has your back covered. With your preparation, God provides His protection. With the adventure, you give God the Glory. I think I saw God smile.

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## GOOD MORNING FROM PHOENIX

Forgive typos from txting... Just leaving Phoenix. Got a few hours sleep on bus. Have observed crazy people go to CA but don't come back. Odd. I guess they are going for the social programs. Bus travel is not for the innocent. Sweet old lady had her bag stolen last night as she slept. Sad. God does judge...

The bus stopped and everyone unloaded. Fred and I hung back. There was a little lady curled up in a seat near the front of the bus. Fred asked her to wake up. She didn't. Fred yelled at her to wake her up. She didn't. Fred leaned over her seat and put his mouth to her ear and yelled to wake up. She didn't. Fred put his hand to her throat to feel her pulse. Then thought, oh no! What if they think I killed her! She woke up.

Even now I am still chuckling. Kind hearted Fred. Always looking out for the underdog.

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## Blackhawk Down

Only have a minute between busses, but just prayed with a survivor from a copter crash in Somalia in the 90's. 2 copters down. 17 dead. 2 POWs. Tim was a POW for 30+ days. Then, the gate to his cell was left wide open. GOD SPOT AWESOME!

More when I develop the dialog with Tim to get his experience accurate. Be looking for it.

Tim was sitting in the corner of the room in the bus station. He doesn't fly any more. He is attempting to fold a blanket. One hand and arm are shaking uncontrollably and holding one edge of the blanket. The other hand is seemingly chasing the runaway hand. He is trying to make the two meet so as to complete the fold.

I sit down next to Tim and ask if I can help with the process. He declines. I say, "I am writing a book called God Spots. May I ask you a question? Would you like to be in it? I ask, "Have you ever seen God do anything for you? You know, like some time when it was obvious without the help of God you would not make it?"

He grinned and said, "You don't have enough time." I said, "Try me. I have shrunk my story down to less than a minute. Maybe you can do the same." At this point the bus is preparing to leave and I am no way going to miss this God Spot.

Tim asked if I had seen the movie Black Hawk Down. I said I had not, but was familiar with the story line. He said the movie portrayed a single mission. There were really two missions and he was on one of them. It was on this mission his helicopter was shot down. Nineteen men were on board. 17 men died. 2 were taken captive. Tim was one of the captives. You may remember his friend's bodies on TV being drug around on the street in total disregard to the value of human life.

He was a prisoner of war for about 30 days. One day the guard forgot and left the door of his cell open. He ran and didn't stop running until his rescue. The nervous condition resulted from the crash and his treatment afterward. We traded email addresses and I dashed for the bus. I broke the 1<sup>st</sup> rule. Never make the bus driver mad.

Everyone else had loaded on the bus. The driver had stood at the door and took tickets. As I dashed for the bus, the driver had stepped away for a pit stop. I walked directly into the bus without having my ticket retrieved and sat down. I figured no big deal. The driver could sort it out later. It turned out to be a big deal for the bus driver and much to the amusement of everyone else on the bus.

Somewhere in the middle of nowhere, the bus driver realized he had one more passenger than tickets. It seemed he had been counting as he was driving. At the next stop, he started yelling he was looking for whoever got on the bus without giving up his ticket. I knew at that point I was in deep trouble and had broken the 1<sup>st</sup> rule. Fred was sitting next to me and ducked his head. Under his breath he whispered, "You broke the 1<sup>st</sup> rule." It was if to say... I was on my own and good luck. I love that Fred... so transparent.

I raised my hand up and waved my ticket. The Japanese bus driver came back and proceeded to yell at me. I put a very sad face on and let everyone on the bus see how bad this poor gringo grandpa was being treated by a foreigner. I say all this about nationality, not because it is politically correct or to imply nationality had anything to do with the actions. The mention of race only paints a better graphic picture in your imagination.

After the driver vents his much needed release of steam, he takes my ticket and returns to his seat. I take great pride in having served the episode.

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## God is alive and well

TXTING... I am blow away by God's direct hand on Fred n I as we bus America. Have you seen God work in your life? God promises that if you ask for his presence in your life He will be there. It's time to ask.

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## Oh god! I'm on the Wrong Bus!



**LADY YELLING FROM BACK OF BUS** – Oh god! I got to get off. Oh god. I'm on the wrong bus. Oh god. I thought I was going to California. I can't go to Mexico. It is dark and adds to the spookiness of the yelling.

Note: I'm using a "lower case "g" out of respect to our God.

Fred yells, "Please sit down until the bus stops." Ah yes, Freddy the peacemaker. I picked up the name Freddy, because his

California family affectionately refers to him as Freddy. I like that. I don't know if he does. It speaks to and reminds him of a much rougher and less kind Mr. Fred. 😊

As we pull up to the immigration check point, the bus is boarded and we are checked by Officer Olivas to see if we belong here. The dog is barking outside the bus in the luggage compartment area. I guess "3" barks means everything is ok and I want a bisquit. The officer asks if I am an America citizen. I'm tempted to say, "Que", but he has a big gun and is not smiling.

On a side bar... in March of 2009 there has been a warrant out for my arrest for almost a year and I don't know it. On this trip to California, I could have very easily been arrested and tossed into jail. I was totally unaware of what could have happened and what eventually did, but then that is a different story.

Come judgment day, I suppose the lady in the back of the bus will still be yelling, 'Oh God', but this time with a capital "G". It will be confirmed she lived life on the wrong bus. From appearances, I'd say she was crippled up from Crack. Fred says likely a heroin addick on Methodone.

When you consider the value you place on your life, it is sad to consider the waste of a human's life. We all started as babies. We all make choices. Some end up on the wrong bus...

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## Am I Chosen?

"You didn't choose me, remember. I chose you and put you in the world to bear fruit. Fruit that won't spoil."

John 15:16

God is amazing. I'm sitting next to a guy who grew up doing all sorts of drugs and suffered because of it. He has experiences I will never have. And yet, God chose him that he might bear fruit. Fruit that won't spoil and that is what he is doing.

Today, he is quick to invest his life into the lives of others. He will pick up the bags of one struggling. He will find a seat for one looking. He will make sure an elderly person gets on the right bus.

Although he is tough, God is giving him a gentle spirit. Although he hates who he has been, he loves God who is miraculously creating the person God intended.

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## Life as a Gift

"Holy Father, guard them as they pursue this life that you conferred as a gift through me. So they can be one heart and mind, as we are one heart and mind". John 17

Jesus spoke these words to the Father concerning His friend and followers immediately prior to His betrayal by Judas. I am sensitized to the fragility of human life as I look upon the different crippled people on the bus. Some are crippled mentally, some are crippled physically, but we are all crippled that don't have the heart of our Father.

Christ gave His followers, life as a gift. It would seem this would be enough, but Jesus was concerned for the gift. He was aware the gift could be stolen by the life we live. He asked God to guard them as they pursue life. Christ didn't want anything to get in the way of His followers experiencing life as "ONE" heart and mind. I am "ONE" that the world may know...

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## Life on a Bus at night is a Struggle



The wheels on the bus go round and round, round and round, the wheels....

At night the drone of the engine and sounds of the road never end. It is a persistent dull roar. It is what you attempt to sleep by and between the moans, groans, shouts, grunts, snores and crying. Lights are out and the bus driver wants it quiet. Don't forget

rule #1: "Don't make the bus driver mad!"

Sadly, the night environment does not welcome talks of Christ. It doesn't welcome talk at all. It is the night hours I would read God's Word and contemplate for what purpose He had me on this insane bus ride across America.

I was reading last night about the time in Acts when the Holy Spirit was not bashful. It spread like wild fire through the people present. It was undeniable. Sometimes today, however infrequent, a group of believers get the gift of life and experience "ONENESS" as God intended.

I then read of the Welch revivalist Okey and the incredible works of the Spirit. There were times when he knew there was a person or situation that was preventing the Holy Spirit from creating oneness. When the impediment was removed, the Spirit came in a big way.

Isn't it exciting to consider what God may intend for the body of believers at Grace Point Church as we become ONE in Christ with impediments removed!

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## 22 Minute Burger



Freddy was excited to see a Carl's jr hamburger joint across the street from the bus station. The bus driver recommended Wendy's next to the bus, but Freddy knew the Carl's jr burger was the best in the country. Having been living on granola, this sounded pretty good.

The bus driver gave us 30 minutes and then he was leaving whether we were on the bus or not. I think he enjoyed leaving people. He might even have been notching his belt.

22 minutes later and counting, I still did not have my coveted Sante Fe Chicken Burger. Fred got his burger but mine was lost in the stack of receipts from a "SLAMMED" restaurant. I told Fred to head back and hold the bus. I knew he could, he had experience dealing with unruly bus drivers. Ha!

Finally with a minute to go, I told the kid behind the counter to give me anything. It didn't matter. Just grab one and toss it in the bag. He took one look at my sweet kind Christian face (sarcasm intended) and complied with grabbing something and tossing it in the bag. He knew I was a heartbeat away from being comfortable sitting with the crazy people. He said, "Sorry". Fred owes me a Sante Fe Chicken Sandwich. I tell you this, that the world may know!

Note: Even the "Oh. god!" lady got her Wendy's burger.

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## Confrontation in LA Bus Station



Sitting at the LA bus station at 12:30 AM is eventful. There are all kinds of people from all over the world. An African lady (Liberia) is standing at the telephone charging station talking with a lady from Puerto Rico. They ask if the picture on my cell phone is of my wife? They say, "she is pretty." I think so.

The young chicanos are all strutting showing their stuff. Whatever "stuff" is and trying to be tough. They got their hoods over their heads and looking around head ducked and eyes lifted up peering from under the hood. They tend to ignor me, a crazy old man with unkept grey hair and trashed blue jeans. I think that is a good thing.

Then there are the two guys wearing blankets with holes cut in them for their heads. Of course I can't neglect the guy that went out of his way to call me QUEER because I was watching Family Time ( a disgusting cartoon show seen at all greyhound stations). I'm not sure why he thought it was important to yell QUEER at me from across the room.



Maybe I am queer to the LA world. Not gay, just queer in the sense of not fitting in. Fred said I was dressed (Grace Point polo shirt) like a narcotics agent. Ha!

The friendliest people are middle to late age Mexican people. They try to avoid conflict and tend to smile. They are old enough to have experienced the vapor of life and settled in with a sense of contentment. I think much can be learned from one who has worked in the fields and still produced fruit in their own lives...

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### Lost his wallet and waiting for a bus

Ryan is a clean cut college age student with family in Australia. He has been studying in the US. Somewhere along the line he lost his wallet and was one step away from being homeless. His dad is working in Europe.

I told Ryan I was writing a book and asked if he would like to be in it. I said the title of the book was "God Spots" and explained I was traveling across America by bus to meet people like him. Did he ever have God do anything for him? Believe me. It is a great "pick up" line.

He laughed and said many times. He has totaled 3 cars and survived them all. Then, he explained about losing his wallet and God coming to through to the rescue through his uncle's help in Oklahoma. He was active in a Christ centered youth group and was a believer.

We had a great time talking about God and chasing after youthful dreams...

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### Robert is a Street Evangelist



Robert is Federico's half brother. Robert is a lot of things. He excelled in the military. He is college degreed. He owns a nice home. He is professionally employed. He is an example of what America provides those that strive.

But Robert is more than that. Robert is a weekend street evangelist. He waits outside the Salinas theatre or local coffee shop and tells people about Jesus. He has developed a great comfortable approach to telling people without Jesus they are going to hell. Wouldn't they like to prevent that?

I liked Robert. He says it is unique when one is led to Christ. He does a lot of planting and trusts God for the harvest. Robert planted in Federico's life. It was years of frustration before Robert was blessed to see the fruit being birthed in Federico's life.

Do you have a Robert in your life that is still waiting to see your fruit?

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## Jesus FREAK!

It is late at night or early morning on the bus. It is dark except for my light overhead. Everyone wishes they were asleep or somewhere else. The bus incessantly groans on...

The moon is bright. The desert stars are twinkling. I am impressed to gaze and ponder life's journey.

As I have journeyed through life, there have been times when I bumped into a Jesus Freak. It was that unique person that seemed obsessed with God. He was always an encouragement, but still seemed a bit odd. Being a



Jesus Freak was ok with me for them, but not for me. I just didn't have the passion and they were a bit odd.

Today, I sense a continued transformation of my heart. There is a new found boldness to share Christ but even more a fresh interest and desire for others to know Jesus. Somewhere in the mix and transformation of my heart, I suspect there is a "Jesus Freak" being born.

I am content to go down this road in my pursuit of God. I am ok with being odd. I wonder where God will use me as He develops His person in me.

I suppose Jesus is the ultimate Jesus Freak. We are to take on the qualities of Christ. I look forward to seeing how Jesus develops His freaky qualities in me.

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## Inconsider Behavior

It's night on the bus. I tend to write in my journal at night. It is tough sleeping and there is little opportunity to talk. There are exceptions...

I am ashamed for the East LA ladies at the back of the bus. I use the term lady with an imagination. They are talking loud and vulgar. There are children on board being exposed to far more than they or anyone else should be. Federico says he'd like to shut them up. I suggest he pick his battles. I don't know if that is good advice or not. It avoids conflict but the ladies are still BAD!

Culturally or socially, do they think their inconsiderate behavior put them in a position of power? Do they feel stronger when in the world's face or they just clueless? It seems even the bus driver sometimes ignores rule #1: "Don't make the bus driver mad."

It is a bit odd. Rosa Parks took a stand for equal rights on the bus and chose to sit up front. These ladies chose to sit in the back of the bus and make a statement, also. Sadly, I suspect the statement they make is an embarrassment for Rosa Parks.

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## Starbucks Supports the Homeless



I met Mike the homeless guy outside Starbucks today. He was looking for cans in the Starbucks trash. Oddly, I didn't think twice about grabbing my camera and running outside to talk to Mike. He had his grocery cart, cans, sign, head phones and hat. He had one tooth showing as he smiled.

I asked if he could use a couple of bucks for lunch. He quickly agreed he was starving. Then looked at his stomach and said he was at least hungry. It seemed perfectly natural to tell him I was writing a book and would he like to be in it? He said sure and I explained my book was titled, "God Spots". Did he ever have God authenticate His presence in his life?

Mike didn't even have to think about it. He didn't need multiple takes in front of a camera to get it right. His response was sincere, easy and real. He quickly gave his "ONE" minute testimony. I was amazed. Here was a guy picking up cans for a living and he is more articulate than me. Federico recognizes where he said he grew up as being affluent.

We as affluent believers with every opportunity, struggle to craft a believable one minute testimony. Mike with no opportunity or lost opportunity doesn't even need a script. He loves God and eagerly shares.

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## Mike the Homeless Guy – Take Two!



The first thing I noticed about Mike as I sipped my hot coffee in Starbucks was the sign on his grocery cart that said homeless. It was good marketing. Easily communicated a message. As I approached him, I noticed his sunshades, earphones and a single tooth when he smiled.

Mike's cart was full of cans. He seemed a bit apprehensive as I approached or maybe it was I that was apprehensive. I was surprised at my eagerness to talk to Mike. There was no conversation with God about obedience. I didn't struggle with the typical, "Why me? God." There was a eagerness on my part to meet Mike and hear his story.

Mike sees God in the simple things. He sees God when he finds a particularly good stash of cans. He says seeing God in the simple things is like being slapped in the face to get his attention. The simple things remind Mike of God's presence.

Even as odd and out of place Mike was picking through the garbage in front of Starbucks, there was something even more odd. I shook his hand and it was strong and affirming. The strength of his grip was not fitting the circumstances of a homeless man picking up cans. Mike blessed me.

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## It's Time to Pray or Hitchhike



There was a built in weakness in my travel plans. I had only bought round trip bus tickets between San Antonio, TX and Salinas, CA. I hoped to make it to my childhood home of Gold Run, CA. It was 5 hours further north by car. It meant I'd need to rent a car, hitchhike or sweet talk the bus nazi to stop at a stop that didn't exist or whatever else I could figure out.

I don't have a credit card. I only have a bank debit card and it had about \$80 in it. I hoped that wouldn't be a problem. We got to Enterprise Rental and they didn't have any cars. They had one truck that they would rent me for \$90 / day and I'd have to take it for two days. That wasn't going to work. I thought it was time to pray.

Fred's stepbrother Robert took us to the next rental place at Hertz. I didn't have much hope. Typically, Hertz is

more expensive than Enterprise. It was worse than that when the agent explained he didn't have any cars and had a waiting list.

I politely listened and prayed. His attitude softened and he volunteered that maybe he could find a car. I gave him my bank card and he said his system couldn't find me. I gave him my driver license and social security # and he said I didn't exist.

Oddly, I am comforted to know I don't exist in the credit industry. That is probably a good thing. The agent did find a car. Federico stepped up and put it on his card. Fortunately, he exists so we got a car and headed for Gold Run.

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## What's in the word – Mankind?

Was there a time when man deserved the descriptor, "kind"? Is that the source of the word "mankind"? I am the kind of guy that looks at a glass of water half full not half empty. I tend to want to think the best of people. Traveling by bus is challenging to find the "kind" in man. Maybe it should be "mankindless"?

As a rule, humanity seems indifferent as a whole and downright rude at 1st blush. Sometimes ever so infrequent, someone steps up and does a kind act and everyone looks. Maybe a person is helped with their luggage or boarding questions are answered. Simple, yet so impactful are acts of kindness.

Freddy has a passion for the underdog. He sincerely goes out of his way to help those less able to help themselves. More times than not, it was Freddy helping an elderly with their bags or telling someone what bus to get on. Freddy's natural inclination is to want to get in the face of anyone taking advantage of another.

Admittedly, you can't fix the world but you can influence mankind in your world as you experience it.

Thanks Freddy.

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## Climbing the Socio-Economic Ladder

I remember in an economics class, the professor said each generation at best will only climb one rung on the socio-economic ladder. I refused to believe it. My dreams were big. I would be the next high technology shooting star. I would grow stronger and faster than any other company. I was willing to pay the price.

Forty years later, it seems I have wore out the rungs of the ladder. I've climbed some rungs and seen people at the top. I've fallen down some rungs and seen people at the bottom. Today, I wonder if I chose the wrong ladder. Just because there is a ladder to climb in gaining riches, does it mean you are obligated to step on or "if on" are you obligated to climb?

Maybe a better ladder to climb is one that has love as the top rung? The bottom rung is all about self. Each step up the ladder is dieing to new selfish ambitions and living a deeper rich life expressing love for others through obedient acts.

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## Enjoy the adventure



I have invested a week of my vacation time riding in a greyhound bus full of smelly people with destinations. Oddly, Freddy and I had no destination. Sure we hoped to go back to the place of our individual childhoods, but the trip had its own value. If we made it to our destination, ok. If not, ok. It was all about the experience.

When I failed to turn in my ticket and got on the bus anyway, the bus driver threatened to throw me off. I had broken rule #1. "Don't make the bus driver mad." It's funny. To everyone else on the bus, being tossed off would be considered catastrophic. For me, I was ok with it. Being tossed off was just one more event in my journey. Not good. Not bad. Just an event.

I wonder if life should be a little more like my bus adventure. Buy a ticket with a destination in mind, but be ok with change that creates the uniqueness of the experience. Enjoy the adventure wherever you are, for the time God gives you. Regardless whether you planned being there.

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## Love is the Greatest Commandment

A week later with vacation time burned and several hundred dollars from friends and family, I am back from a round trip bus ride between Texas and California. It was great having Freddy with me.

I was asked what was the most memorable experience? Several things come to mind, but seeing Freddy's grandmother's face light up when she saw Freddy is at the top of the list. It is an incredible passionate love that is unconditional. The grandmother is 96 years old and wise.

If I were asked what benefit did I gain from the trip, I believe it is a deeper appreciation for the greatest commandment of all, "Love one another". It is easy to love my wife, Cora. It is easy to love my son and others in our family. It is not so easy to love those on a bus.

Most get on the bus with a protective impenetrable shield about them. It is selfish and filled with hurt and dashed dreams. Most feel like life has not treated them fairly and probably rightfully so. They are ok with letting you experience and take part in their frustrations. When someone is shouting vulgarities at you, it is tough following the greatest commandment of all. Love.

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## Right Every Wrong

Back from a 6 day bus trip from Texas to California and back. I slept 17 hours in my own bed. Coffee tastes and feels particularly good this morning. I woke up thinking about all the anger in the world and wondered. How much wrong are we responsible for correcting in the world?

It would seem like an easy answer, but it's really not. Suppose, you see a bus driver verbally abusing a fragile old lady. Do you stop it? Probably. Suppose you see a mother yelling at her baby. Do you stop it? Maybe. Suppose, throughout out the day you continually see bad things happen. Every time you step up to correct a wrong there is risk to yourself and your family. How many times do you step up?

You get tired. You only have so much energy. How many wrongs are your responsibilities?

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## Arrived San Antonio Safely

Freddy (childhood name I like) and I arrived back in San Antonio at about 5:45 AM

Tuesday morning or at least told it is Tuesday, I'm not sure. A week on the bus kind disorients you to time.

I kissed Cora goodbye as she left for work and laid down at 7:00 AM for a nap. I woke up long enough to eat a couple pieces of pizza at lunch and back to sleep. I finally woke up at 5:30 PM. Gosh, I was tuckered. Even so, I don't think I will have any trouble sleeping tonight.

First, my apologies for the sporadic blog entries. I tried. Next trip I need to beg some ones Blackberry, iphone



or something that will work in most locations. My Cricket only worked very infrequently. I continuously tried to send the adventure, but it would bounce back. Sorry about that, but thank you for attempting to track with me. So, now I try to do some catchup.

I think I will just post a series and then go back and try to make them in date order later as best as I can. At some point I will likely confuse the issue when I try to sort by date. So, I apologize in advance. But for now, this should all be fresh for you. Freddy and I dropped back to paper and pen and captured the events. So, we just need to get the happenings to the blog.

I will quickly confess this trip was life changing. It will be one of those "cairns" (from P.Jeff's message) or markers driven deep in the ground

that marks my way. Thank you for traveling with us and thank you for enjoying the journey.

archie

PS. I hope you were not offended by some of the posts. People are real and I will clean up some of the events, but don't want to sanitize it and lose the real meaning.

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