

“Help, my ass is on fire!”

A RAILROAD TRACK is a terrible mattress.

But that’s exactly where I woke up one morning, my head pounding with the worst headache of my life.

I was lying on my side and my guts felt like they’d been shredded. My temple was cold as bone but I didn’t know why. I tried to open my eyes, but the lashes were glued together with dried blood. I moved an arm to rub the congealed mess away and the motion sent a shock of pain up my back like a hot spear driving into my spine.

What happened to me!?

I cursed, rubbed the gunk off my face, and finally got my eyes to work again.

I looked down at my feet to see both legs draped over a rusty brown rail. My jeans were stained purple from all the blood and my feet were bent at unnatural angles.

I blinked.

My head was on the other rail.

I had to get up.

I tried to move my feet. Nothing happened.

My brain was sending signals, yet my kicks weren’t responding.

“Give me a break,” I muttered, only to feel something like a lump of chewing gum under my tongue. I pushed it to my lips and spat it out.

It was a piece of my cheek.

How am I gonna get out of this mess?

And for that matter, how did I get *into* it!?

I grunted as each movement sent lightning bolts shooting up my back. I had to move. How long had I been there? Were these tracks live? I sure didn't want to wait around to find out!

I tried to roll but gasped as the wind left my insides. Ribs on both sides felt broken. Each breath felt like getting jabbed in the chest with a screwdriver.

How the heck was I going to get off these damned tracks!? I wanted to move but my body was lying there like a stupid ventriloquist dummy. If I don't move soon I could be cut to pieces by a passing train, then that'd be the end of ole Dave.

Well then, I thought, at least this would make a good story!

I let my head fall again, exhausted. The pain came in pulses, throbbing as if my whole body was a blood vessel ready to burst. I couldn't just lie there. I had to move, to get out of here and avenge myself on the bastards that did this to me.

And if I *did* die, what was it all for? To bring in a guy on an arrest warrant and collect a couple hundred bucks? What ultimate good did *that* serve?

I couldn't die here. Hell, I was just getting started. But there I was, split like kindling over the iron rails.

I exhaled, readying myself. I was going to take a deep breath and hold it so I could twist every working muscle in my body and roll. It didn't matter which way I went. I just had to get off these tracks.

I closed my eyes, gritted my teeth, and sucked air through my nostrils.

Then I screamed.

Agonizing pain ripped through me and I froze, clenching my fists. I couldn't move, the sensation in my chest was so awful!

Great, I thought. I'm never gonna get out of this.

"Move, Dave," I sputtered, tears and blood mingling on my lips. "Move!"

It was time to try again. No matter how much it hurt, I had to roll. Only God knew how much time I had. And as I steadied myself for one more go at it, I felt the rail under my ear start to vibrate.

IF YOU'RE LIKE ME, you only talk to God when things are getting bad. I mean *really* bad.

It wasn't until my day on the tracks that I realized my conversations with the Big Guy tended to start with: "Help, my ass is on fire!"

Whether it was through bounty hunting, bad girlfriends, illnesses, or lots of reckless drinking, I had built a tendency to communicate with God only when I was in a whole boatload of trouble.

For a while I thought I was the only idiot to live this way. But I've figured something out: It's human nature! That's how we all are. Some of us, in fact, don't even talk to God. We've decided that He doesn't exist, or that we don't need any of this religion stuff.

Hey, I get it.

Most of my life I didn't have time for this "God" business. I was a busy guy. There were things to do, family members to care for, bodies to guard, and bounties to collect.

To make matters even more rebellious, I'm a biker. Most of us biker types don't go to church. We look at dudes dressed up in stuffy suits and start cracking up. It honestly sounds like prison to most of us.

But I also discovered something that I wish I'd learned sooner: God doesn't live in a church. He isn't contained in a building. Even better, God is a much wilder, adventurous character than we dare give him credit for. He's *out there*, and most of us don't dare follow him where He goes.

As I said, this took me a long time to figure out. I'm a pretty thick-headed fella, something that's saved my ass *and* put me in great danger throughout my life. Stubbornness can be admirable when it helps you accomplish your goals, but it can be a massive character flaw

when it holds you back from taking good advice and learning valuable life lessons.

For a time I didn't want anything to do with God except when I needed help. He was my "Get out of jail free" card. A life boat as the *Titanic* is about to go down. My Jesus Insurance.

In my mind, God probably owed me help anyway since I was generally a good person. I think this is how a lot of us look at faith and spirituality. We think, "I'm a good person most of the time, so God is obligated to help me when I'm in a bad spot."

The truth is so much better, but also so much worse. God doesn't just want to be your last option; in fact, He doesn't even want to be an option at all. He wants to be your *everything*. Like I said: Much better but much worse.

That means we have to trust Him. We have to stop trying to be perfect. We have to depend on Him and walk with Him.

I like to say: Progress not perfection.

When I woke up on those railroad tracks, I thought I was dead. It was going to take a miracle to be saved. Yet saving me from those railroad tracks was going to end up being an easy task for God.

Saving my stubborn heart?

That would be the real miracle.

I BELIEVE GOD WANTS YOU IN HIS CREW.

He wants to be with you everywhere you go. He'll get you out of some jams, allow others to teach you, and He'll coach you and mentor you along the way. Through His Son, God will transform you and make you a better person than you thought possible.

But it's going to take a day on the tracks for you to realize just how much you need Him. That's what I needed.

This book is titled *The Deepest Cut* for several reasons.

First, if you don't already know, a "cut" is a leather jacket that a biker wears. Sometimes it's spelled "kutt" as well.

It's called a cut because the wearer removes the sleeves from a full jacket. Next, you sew on patches that signify which crew you belong to.

Even though I'm not currently riding (more on that later!) I still wear my cut. It's a major part of me. It proclaims what I care about to others, and reminds me of my own values and story.

I've titled this book *The Deepest Cut* because biking—we call it riding—is important to me, and I think Jesus and his love are more like biker culture than you could ever imagine. I also gave it that title because I've suffered several deep cuts in my life, especially that day on the railroad tracks.

Yet they are nothing compared to the deep cuts that Jesus Christ sustained on the cross. He suffered punishment so that you and I don't have to.

If you read that and immediately think, "Oh no, not another Jesus-religion book," hang in there! I promise this book isn't a bunch of sermons. Instead, it's a bunch of stories. Stories are much more entertaining than sermons anyway. That's probably why Jesus was constantly telling them.

Some of my stories are sad, but most of them are hilarious. The fact that I'm still alive is proof that God has a sick sense of humor!

But the point of every story I'm going to tell you is that I believe God loves you and me more than we can imagine. He wants to be our #1 plan. He wants to take care of us.

And He wants us to join His crew, and to show it He gives us a special cut with colors only He can create.

Our God loves us, and I can prove it.

Now, just to make sure I haven't fully scared you off, let's jump into my first story by asking a simple question:

How many DUIs do you think a Christian should get in their lifetime?