



"Cross Connection"

Radio Ministry of Hope Wesleyan Church and Wells of Salvation Ministries
Ultimate Oldies Radio – FM 97.7 and 101.5, Huber Heights, Ohio



Series: Christian Messages In Secular Music

03/05/08

Program 26 – “Lean On Me” – © 1972 Bill Withers

How easy it is to link Bill Withers’ compelling lyrics to Scriptural principles in this classic! Just as we lean on Jesus, we can and should help others in need, with the Lord’s leading. While none of us can singularly solve the world’s problems, we can show His love in practical ways as this song describes, and thus make a difference for the cause of Christ.

The song¹ --

- Reached #1 on the *Billboard Top 100* in July '72
- Ranked #205 on the *Rolling Stone's 500 Greatest Songs of All Time*
- Bill Withers' first (and only) *Billboard Hot 100* number one single to date
- Inspired by Withers’ subsistence childhood in the coal mining town of Slab Fork, WV
- Written after he moved to LA, and missed the strong hometown community ethic
- Recording backed by several members of the Watts 103rd Street Rhythm Band
- Also recorded by Al Jarreau, dc Talk, Michael Bolton, Bonnie Tyler, and Anne Murray

The artist² –

- Bill Withers born the youngest of 9 children; father died when Bill was 13
- He served in Navy 9 years, then moved to LA in 1967 to pursue music career
- Singer-songwriter performed and recorded from the late '60s to mid-'80s
- Other songs -- "Ain't No Sunshine," "Use Me," "Lovely Day," and "Just the Two of Us"
- Worked assembling toilets for Boeing 747's, while recording demo tapes he shopped around and performing in juke joints during the night
- When "Ain't No Sunshine" debuted, he refused to give up his job, believing the music business was fickle and that he was still a novice compared to other working acts

Sometimes in our lives we all have pain
 We all have sorrow
 But if we are wise
 We know that there's always tomorrow

↑

“...one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead...”
 -- The Apostle Paul;
 Philippians 3:13b

Jesus was all too familiar with sorrows and suffering...

- *“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering”* – Isaiah 53:3, NIV

Jesus sympathizes with our pain and sorrow...

- *“...we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses...”* – Hebrews 4:15, NIV

Jesus does not indemnify us from problems in this world, but assures us that He has overcome what the world throws our way...

- *“...In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world”* – John 16:33b, NIV

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lean_on_Me_%28song%29

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Withers

Lean on me, when you're not strong
And I'll be your friend
I'll help you carry on
For it won't be long
'Til I'm gonna need
Somebody to lean on

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls"

- Matthew 11:29. Jesus is simply saying, "Lean on Me"!
- Similarly, the lyrics describe how we should help each other in time of need. Our motivation? God's love!

Please swallow your pride
If I have things you need to borrow
For no one can fill those of your needs
That you don't let show

In fact, when it comes to our basic needs, the Bible advises Christians to go a step beyond lending – i.e., to give – *"If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and **yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?"***
-- James 2:15-16, NASV

Lean on me...

If there is a load you have to bear
That you can't carry
I'm right up the road
I'll share your load
If you just call me

A remarkable paraphrase of Scripture! The Apostle Paul, speaking of how to help Christian brothers and sisters, said...

- **"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ"** – Galatians 6:2

So just call on me brother, when you need a hand
We all need somebody to lean on
I just might have a problem that you'd understand
We all need somebody to lean on

*"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, **present your requests to God**"* – Philipians 4:6

Lean on me...

Final Thoughts:

After Bill Withers had moved to the big city, he apparently missed the values that were common in his small hometown in West Virginia – a community where friends and neighbors had very little, and helping each other was not only admirable, but necessary for sustenance.

As a "baby boomer", I am a member of what has been termed "The 'Me' Generation".

"Baby boomers are commonly thought to be the most self-absorbed generation in American history... they spend lavishly on themselves, remodeling everything from their homes to their bones."³

Anyone who has visited the third world, or participated in a missionary trip, or assisted at the local homeless shelter, has typically witnessed human needs that are typically out of sight and mind in our daily lives. Jesus instructs His followers to lean on Him, and then share that comfort with others. As you consider what God has done for you, and entrusted to you, please prayerfully consider how you should minister to those around you.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" – 2 Cor 1:3-4, NIV

"...if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday" -- Isaiah 58:10

³ Daniel J. Kadlec, 'Me Generation' becomes 'We Generation', USA Today, 08/02/2006
http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/editorials/2006-08-02-we-generation-edit_x.htm