



## "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

06/18/08

Program 38 – **"Mercedes Benz"** © 1970 Janis Joplin, Michael McClure, Bob Neuwirth

It has been observed that even the man who has everything wants "two of everything". The desire for "more, more, more,..." is seemingly unquenchable.

- What leads the winning gambler to stay at the table?
- What keeps the stock market speculator investing in high-risk offerings?
- What drives folks to "Keep up with the Joneses"?

A former boss of mine related how a friend of his was completely obsessed with obtaining bigger, better and more expensive things than my boss had. On one occasion he visited my boss's home and, with tape measure in hand, proceeded to carefully document the measurements of each room in the house – thus assuring that the home he was building would have more square footage and be more expensive!

I have a sign on my desk that reminds me – *"If (I) have God, (I) have more than (I)'ll ever need". According to the Apostle Paul, "People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction...Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs"* (1 Timothy 6:9,10).

### The Song <sup>1</sup> --

- 'A cappella' song – recorded in 1 take – 1 of the last 2 songs recorded by Janis Joplin
- Intended as negative commentary about materialistic individuals who place too much value on items like a Mercedes-Benz
  - Reflects Joplin's view of what she saw as a materialistic world – how people relate happiness to money and material possessions
- Mercedes-Benz has used the song in commercials for their cars

### The Artist – Janis Joplin <sup>2</sup> –

- American singer, songwriter, and music arranger, from Port Arthur, Texas
- Rose to prominence in the late 1960s as the lead singer of Big Brother and the Holding Company, and later as a solo artist.
- *Rolling Stone* magazine ranked her #46 on list of 100 Greatest Artists of All Time
- Troubled childhood → Parents indicated, "She was unhappy and unsatisfied without [receiving a lot of attention]. The normal rapport wasn't adequate."<sup>3</sup>
- Shunned in high school – "I was a misfit." ...became overweight...skin broke out, leaving deep scars. Routinely taunted with names like "pig," "freak" or "creep."<sup>4</sup>
- Struggled with heavy alcohol and drug usage throughout her brief life
- Died of drug overdose October 1970 in Los Angeles at age 27
- Style influenced heavily by African-American blues singers
- Performed at Monterrey Pop Festival (1967) and Woodstock (1968)
- Other hits: "Piece of My Heart", "Me and Bobby McGee", "Ball and Chain", "Down on Me"
- Rock and Roll Hall of Fame – 1995; Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award – 2005
- The 1979 film, *The Rose*, starring Bette Midler, was loosely based on Joplin's life

<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercedes\\_Benz\\_%28song%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercedes_Benz_%28song%29)

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Janis\\_Joplin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Janis_Joplin)

<sup>3</sup> Jacobson, Laurie (October 1984). *Hollywood Heartbreak: The Tragic and Mysterious Deaths of Hollywood's Most Remarkable Legends*. [Simon & Schuster](#). ISBN 067149998X.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid 3

*"Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income..."*  
– Ecclesiastes 5:10a

Oh Lord, won't You buy me a Mercedes Benz?  
My friends all drive Porsches, I must make amends  
Worked hard all my lifetime, no help from my friends,  
So Lord, won't You buy me a Mercedes Benz?

*"Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"* – Matthew 7:9-11, NIV

*"...godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it."*  
-- 1 Timothy 6:6,7  
*"But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that."* – 1 Timothy 6:8)

We really can't "earn" anything from God, yet we recognize that God delights in giving good gifts to His children

Oh Lord, won't You buy me a color TV?  
"Dialing for Dollars" is trying to find me  
I wait for delivery each day until three  
So oh Lord, won't You buy me a color TV?

- Refers to an old segment carried on many local TV shows, which required contestants to be watching the show in order to win
- How often do we not only tell the Lord what we want, but when and how to deliver it!

Oh Lord, won't You buy me a night on the town?  
I'm counting on You, Lord, please don't let me down  
Prove that You love me and buy the next round  
Oh Lord, won't You buy me a night on the town?

- Jesus has already proven His love for us!  
*"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* – Romans 5:8, NIV  
*"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'"* – Heb. 13:5

*(first verse repeats)*

**Final Thoughts –**

In his book, *70 Years of Miracles*<sup>5</sup>, the late Rev. Richard H. Harvey describes how his pregnant wife craved watermelon. "I crave [it] so much that if I don't get it, I don't think I can stand it!" she said. While he wanted to please his wife, they had very little money, and they owed payment of utility bills. So he fell to his knees and simply prayed, "O Lord, send us a watermelon, or the money to buy one." It came time to go to bed, and still no watermelon. Rev. Harvey casually noted, "Well, it isn't midnight yet."

Just then, a traveling salesman knocked on the door, and asked Harvey's wife if he could borrow him. They walked to an Italian fruit stand in the town, where he purchased a watermelon and gave it to Harvey to give to his wife. Harvey recalls, "I ran down the street with the watermelon in my arms, yelling, "I've got it, I've got it, I've got it!"

The next summer, Harvey encountered the salesman again, and learned the background of the encounter – "[The salesman] had planned that day to pass through our town, but when he came to our city limits he felt sick. And when he got to the center of town he was so sick he feared to drive any longer. He pulled up in front of the only hotel, registered and went to bed. It was 5:00 p.m. Then for five hours, he said, he argued with God, because an inner voice kept saying, 'Go over and get Harvey and take him to town.' 'No, no. Tomorrow I'll do it.' But the impression got stronger and stronger until he knew that if he were going to get any sleep at all, he would have to obey. He said he did not have the least idea what he was to buy for the young preacher. I must say that probably nothing in my lifetime has brought to me a clearer revelation of God's personal interest in the details of our lives. He even cared enough to satisfy my wife's intense craving for a piece of watermelon!"

Don't put God in a box! But, above all, keep Him first in your life. He may surprise you with special gifts – and in a special way!

<sup>5</sup> 70 Years of Miracles, Richard H. Harvey, © 1992, Horizon Books, Camp Hill PA, Chapter 14