



"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

05/21/08

Program 36 – “Presence Of The Lord” – © 1969 Eric Clapton

Featured artist – Blind Faith¹

- English blues-rock band -- Eric Clapton (Cream), Ginger Baker (Cream), Steve Winwood (Spencer Davis Group), Ric Grech (Family)
- Released only one album, *Blind Faith*, in August 1969
 - #1 on Bill Board’s charts for Pop Album in both US and UK
 - Cover was nameless, controversial for nudity
 - Clapton has continued to perform "Presence of the Lord" and the group’s "Can't Find My Way Home" throughout his solo career
- “Presence of the Lord” is a testimony of faith
 - First song for which Clapton wrote all the lyrics²
 - 3 stanzas – essentially the same, with a few minor differences

I have finally found a way to live just like I never could before.

(2nd verse: ...found a place to live...)

I know that I don't have much to give, but I can open any door.

Everybody knows the secret, everybody knows the score.

I have finally found a way to live in the color of the Lord.

(2nd verse: ...a place to live in the presence of the Lord)

“To young believers, the song seemed like a tentative response to 1 Samuel 6:20 — ‘*Who can stand in the presence of the Lord, this Holy God?*’³”

In his 2008 article in *Christianity Today*, entitled “Eric Clapton, In the Presence of the Lord”³, author John Powell, Associate Professor of History at Oklahoma Baptist University, gives some valuable insights into the spiritual journey of Eric Clapton. Like many high-profile recording artists, Clapton’s life has been a virtual roller coaster of experiences in a spiritual search. Even so, Powell notes that “The bluesman has been haunted by God through his early years, his born-again period, and his recovery.” Here are some additional insights from the article --

- “...his road has seldom been smooth”
- “At...age of 9...he learned that he was born out of wedlock to his "auntie" and an unknown Canadian soldier”
- “...he struggled to find a safe place. Feelings of isolation and insecurity haunted him throughout life, drawing him to the gritty alienation of the blues.”

“...there is a spiritual side of Clapton that was scarcely known. It almost always influenced what he thought and did, and the kind of music he wrote and played.”

- Even though counterculture zealots declared “Clapton is God” on subway walls, “Clapton never set himself up as a model of Christian faith, and admits as much.”

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blind_Faith

² <http://www.songfacts.com/detail.php?id=1362>

³ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/aprilweb-only/115-32.0.html>

- "He grew up in rural Surrey attending a local congregation of the Church of England, and in his autobiography, wrote that he "grew up with a strong curiosity about spiritual matters, but my searching took me away from church and community worship to the internal journey."
- "The foundation of his minimalist faith is reflected in the favorite hymn of his youth, 'Jesus Bids Us Shine':

Jesus bids us shine with a clear, pure light,
Like a little candle burning in the night;
In this world of darkness, we must shine,
You in your small corner, and I in mine.³

"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." – Hebrews 10:25

- Clapton believed "...we serve God individually -- in our own 'small corner' – (it) made sense to him in a working-class neighborhood where he found little spiritual encouragement."
- In 1969, "...two Christians came to Clapton's dressing room after a show, probably drawn by... 'Presence of the Lord,' the showstopper on the Blind Faith tour."
 - The two Christians asked Clapton to pray with them.

"As they knelt, he saw "a blinding light" and sensed God's presence. His testimony was open and honest; he told "everyone" he was "a born-again Christian."

- "Within a year of his conversion he became addicted to heroin, kicked it, but moved on to alcohol, sexual promiscuity, and a string of failed relationships."
- "In 1987 he hit the bottom. Failing through a month of rehab, he fell to his knees and finally "surrendered" to God, dedicating his sobriety to his newborn son, Conor."

"I was in complete despair," Clapton wrote. "In the privacy of my room, I begged for help. I had no notion who I thought I was talking to, I just knew that I had come to the end of my tether ... and, getting down on my knees, I surrendered. Within a few days I realized that ... I had found a place to turn to, a place I'd always known was there but never really wanted, or needed, to believe in. ... From that day until this, I have never failed to pray in the morning, on my knees, asking for help, and at night, to express gratitude for my life and, most of all, for my sobriety. I choose to kneel because I feel I need to humble myself when I pray, and with my ego, this is the most I can do. If you are asking why I do all this, I will tell you ... because it works, as simple as that."

- "Four years later, Conor died in a fall from the window of a 53rd floor of a Park Avenue apartment, Clapton admitted, "There was a moment when I did lose faith."
 - Inspired his hit "Tears In Heaven"
- "Still, he found the strength to present a session to his Alcoholics Anonymous meeting on 'handing your will over to the care of God.'"
 - Afterward, a woman confessed that he had taken away her "last excuse" for drinking, a confirmation to Clapton that "staying sober and helping others to achieve sobriety" is "the single most important proposition" in his life.

Final Thoughts: Today, Eric Clapton enjoys a thriving career, a successful marriage, and "...three little girls who think the world of their daddy, without a thought for his troubled past."⁵ He raises funds for his substance abuse center in Antigua, won his 19th Grammy Award in February 2008, reunited with former Blind Faith band member Steve Winwood for three highly-acclaimed concerts in Madison Square Garden, and hit the NY Times bestseller list with his autobiography.⁵ His testimony should reassure each of us that God doesn't give up on us, and we should never give up on Him. Let's seek to live daily in His presence!

⁴ Susan B. Warner / Edwin O. Excell, 1868; <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/j/b/jbushine.htm>

⁵ Ibid 3