



"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

08/20/08

Program 52 "The Heart Of The Matter" © Don Henley, Mike Campbell, J.D. Souther

After describing a devastating end to a relationship, the lyricist focuses on the only constructive way to carry on with life – through forgiveness. That's godly counsel to us all!

The Song ^{1,2,3} –

- From Don Henley's studio album *The End of the Innocence*
- Reached #21 on Billboard Hot 100, #3 on Hot Adult Contemporary Tracks, #2 on Mainstream Rock Tracks, and #9 on Canadian Singles Chart, during winter of '89-'90
- Co-writer Mike Campbell -- known as lead guitarist for Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers
- Co-writer J.D. Souther – best known as co-writer for the Eagles' hits "Best of My Love", "Victim of Love", "Heartache Tonight", and "New Kid in Town"; "Her Town Too" (with James Taylor); and the Roy Orbison-style single hit "You're Only Lonely" ⁴

The Artist – Don Henley ⁴ –

- Donald Hugh Henley (born 1947, Linden, Texas) -- rock singer, songwriter, drummer
- Founding member of the Eagles, with successful Grammy Award-winning solo career
- Toured as part of Linda Ronstadt's backup band in 1970 prior to forming the Eagles
- Hits that he wrote, co-wrote, and/or sang with the Eagles ('71-'80) include "Desperado", "The Best of My Love", "One Of These Nights", "Hotel California", and "The Long Run"
- Subsequent solo hits include "Dirty Laundry", "Leather & Lace" (with Stevie Nicks), "The Boys Of Summer", "Not Enough Love In The World", "All She Wants To Do Is Dance", "Sunset Grill", and "The End Of The Innocence"
- Active in many environmental and political causes
- Eagles reunited in 1994; Henley continues to tour and record with the Eagles

I got the call today, I didn't wanna hear
 But I knew that it would come
 An old true friend of ours was talkin' on the phone
 She said you found someone
 And I thought of all the bad luck,
 And the struggles we went through
 And how I lost me and you lost you
 What are these voices outside love's open door
 Make us throw off our contentment
 And beg for something more?

Here's a story of a broken relationship – something that we all experience at some time
 Song speaks of both struggles and contentment
 If this involves a marriage, it is critical that the Lord Jesus Christ be made a partner in the relationship
 Blame was placed on "voices". Is this realistic?

I'm learning to live without you now
 But I miss you sometimes
 The more I know, the less I understand
 All the things I thought I knew, I'm learning again

Broken relationships typically elicit strong emotions such as anger and bitterness; people handle these situations differently, e.g.-- vengeance, control, self-destruction, hostility
"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge..."
 – Romans 12:18,19a, NIV

¹ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Heart_of_the_Matter_\(song\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Heart_of_the_Matter_(song))

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

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._D._Souther

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don_Henley

I've been tryin' to get down to the heart of the matter
But my will gets weak and my thoughts seem to scatter
But I think it's about forgiveness -- forgiveness
Even if, even if you don't love me anymore

These times are so uncertain
There's a yearning undefined
...People filled with rage
We all need a little tenderness
How can love survive in such a graceless age
The trust and self-assurance that can lead to happiness
They're the very things we kill, I guess
Pride and competition cannot fill these empty arms
And the work I put between us,
Doesn't keep me warm

I'm learning to live without you now
But I miss you, Baby
The more I know, the less I understand
All the things I thought I figured out, I have to learn again
I've been tryin' to get down to the heart of the matter
But everything changes and my friends seem to scatter
But I think it's about forgiveness -- forgiveness
Even if, even if you don't love me anymore

There are people in your life who've come and gone
They let you down and hurt your pride
Better put it all behind you; life goes on
You keep carryin' that anger, it'll eat you up inside
I've been tryin' to get down to the heart of the matter
But my will gets weak and my thoughts seem to scatter
But I think it's about forgiveness -- forgiveness
Even if, even if you don't love me anymore

I've been tryin' to get down to the heart of the matter
Because the flesh will get weak and the ashes will scatter
So I'm thinkin' about forgiveness -- forgiveness
Even if, even if you don't love me anymore

"To err is human, to forgive divine."

-- Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*

Forgiveness is not natural, but a godly response

"...forgiveness is an integral part of the Christian's new nature. An unforgiving Christian is a contradiction in terms" ⁵

"But we have the mind of Christ" – 1 Cor. 2:16

"The Holy Spirit indwells and empowers us. Therefore, Christians are capable of superhuman acts of forgiveness." ⁶

How important is forgiveness? Jesus said –

"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" -- Matthew 6:14-15, NIV

Christians are commanded to forgive!

"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."
– Colossians 3::13

Even the secular world acknowledges the long-term damage caused by unmanaged anger...

*"It has been said that holding on to bitterness is analogous to you drinking poison expecting the other person to die...A decision to not forgive your offender actually gives them power to continue hurting you long after the offense has been committed. Forgiveness is not easy, but it's very necessary for your own well being."*⁷

Consider the circumstances when Jesus said...

"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." -- Luke 23:34

Final thoughts:

Don Henley, the same fellow who remarked, "rock bands work best as a benevolent dictatorship"⁸, penned not only this song, but co-authored one entitled "Not Enough Love In The World". It has been suggested that, after pondering the message in his lyrics, Henley was moved to follow his own advice and reconcile with former members of the Eagles -- which led to the group's reunion. The group had disbanded acrimoniously in 1980. When asked about prospects for a reunion, the answer came back, "When hell freezes over!"⁹ Hell apparently "froze over" in 1994, and the Eagles' reunion tour was bannered with that quip. That's the power of forgiveness!

⁵ From *Forgiveness*, John F. MacArthur, p. 98, Crossway Books, © 1998

⁶ Ibid 5, p. 114

⁷ <http://superperformance.com/controlanger.php>

⁸ Ibid 4

⁹ <http://www.dvdmg.com/eagleshellfreezesover.shtml>