

The Founder's Music Testimony

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Robin Calamaio 2002

Every Christian has a testimony. The primary testimony is a re-counting of how one's soul was transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of light. Without question this is the most important story a Christian has to tell. But once this transfer has taken place, God begins transforming various areas of a Christian's life. So, other testimonies are created. This is my *music testimony*. God has challenged and changed this area of my life. It is a recounting of the processes that have led to the concept of The-Music-Mission. It is my hope this information will instill confidence in potential participants to become part of this enterprise.

Pre-Christian Calamaio

My Dad played the guitar. He was a very good guitar player and, in fact, still is. But there was a point in time I made a decision. I did not want to be like my Dad. So when it was suggested I take up the guitar, my excuse was ready. A few years earlier I had broken the ring finger on my left hand. Even though it was only a hair line fracture, I made that the bedrock reason for why I *could not* play the guitar. This lasted until my first year in college. That is where I met Harold J. Davis and Jim Messman.

Harold, or Hal, was a lead guitar player. He would walk around our dorm room playing along to songs from groups like Jethro Tull, Yes, Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendrix, etc. I was infatuated with Hal's playing ability, but he had no desire, or patience, in teaching me how to play. However, down the hall was a fellow named Jim Messman. He played an acoustic guitar and was quite skilled at finger picking. I began to take Hal's guitar and sit across from Jim and imitate his chords and picking patterns. That got me started. It was almost immediate that I began creating little tunes. Very soon after this I began putting some words to those little tunes. This became *my* world - a world I fully controlled, a world where I could express myself - free of anyone else's opinions, correction, or censorship. After a year or so, I had 15 or 20 songs under my belt and crossed paths with another guitar player named Steve Kahler. Musically, this was a very positive development.

Steve was a solid guitar player and I learned several new finger pick patterns from him. This challenged me, kept me growing, and gave me new, creative outlets for song writing. Steve had a very good tenor voice and he loved creating harmonies to my songs. He also enjoyed being able to work up little lead licks, so he also prospered from our time together. We played in various public places and were well received. But Steve received an ultimatum from a young lady named Burnadette. Steve had to choose me - or her. I lost, Steve and Burn got married, and I hope they have lived happily ever after. I really do. A short time later, I left Kansas (my home state) and moved to Florida. By this time I had about 40 original songs. I ran an ad in the Fort Lauderdale newspaper to start a music group. The response was interesting to say the least. But the most interesting was a 35-year-old lead guitar player named Daniel Joseph Coleangelo Jr. He went by Danny Cole, Jr. To this day I have never heard a more versatile or skilled guitarist. Danny's father was a guitar instructor. He had taught his son many music styles. Danny could play classical, blues, jazz, country, and all kinds of rock lead work. We would play at "open mics" in the area and Danny would turn his back to the audience so other lead guitar players would not be able to steal his licks (these open mic's were attended primarily by musicians). I still remember them flocking the stage after a performance and getting around Danny to try to find out what he had been doing. I'm sure they did not find out too much. Danny's attraction to me was quite simple - I had original songs and that gave him creative outlets for all kinds of rhythm

and lead work. To give you an idea how good this guy was I have to relate this story.

Each time we would get together I would set up my reel-to-reel tape player so I could record our sessions. One evening, after arriving, he asked me if I had a pair of tweezers. He needed to remove a splinter from the tip of his left index finger. We couldn't find any tweezers in our medicine chest, but he did find a razor blade. Danny proceeded to cut off the tip of his index finger. I said, "Danny, why the heck did you do that? I've got everything set up to record and now you cut off the tip of your finger!" Danny calmly told me not to worry. He bandaged himself up and proceeded to play with the other three fingers. On tape, I couldn't even tell the difference. He always told me I would have to learn to use my pinky (little finger) if planned on becoming a good guitarist. That night I looked at his hands more closely. I observed that his pinky was almost as long as his ring finger. My pinky is exactly even with the crease of the last knuckle of my ring finger. But even with my physical limitations, our music chemistry was such that we began planning great music adventures. But Someone else had other plans.

My songs were becoming more and more intense as I was searching for meaning and purpose in life (maybe I will record some of my pre-Christian songs, or at least the lyrics, in a special niche on *The Music Mission*). Then, in an act of mercy, the Lord Jesus Christ interrupted and reversed my descent into death. This "interruption" proved to be a wedge that separated Danny and me. It is my great hope this wedge proves to be a temporary measure by the Lord. You see, Danny stuck with me through the labor of the new birthing process. He never ridiculed or discouraged me on my search, but when conversion came, we both instinctively knew we were going down different roads. The last evening we played together, as he was getting in his car, he said, "I'll call you next week." I replied, "Sounds good to me." As he took off, our eyes locked for a second - we knew we were saying goodbye. If I don't see Danny again on this side, it is my great hope the Lord orders that he and I make music *to Him* on the other side of the Jordan.

New things have come! Like ... New Music!

My conversion was one of those dramatic darkness-to-light affairs. I immediately began writing Christians songs. I had quite a flurry early on. To this day, some of these early songs are my favorites. They include, "Thank You Lord Jesus", "Living Water or Die", "Jesus and the Woman Caught in Adultery", "Lord Jesus", "My Father", "Seek Ye First", "Grace and Peace to You", "I Feel So Free", "Let Them Come", and "The Simple Fact". There was a lot of joy and purity as God had opened (and continues to open 26+ years later) a new world to me.

I ran across a quote from Martin Luther within a few weeks of my conversion. This is not the exact quote, so if you find it, please forward it. If you listen to my songs, you'll know this quote has greatly influenced my song writing. It went something like this: "The gift of language has been given to man along with the gift of music in order that man might proclaim the word of God through music." I hope my music's style and feel compliment the word of God.

Trouble

But not all was rosy with my music life those first couple of years. Indeed, there were some thorns. One big thorn was named, "Jealousy." Another big thorn was named, "Idolatry." There were many other thorns, but these were the two biggest.

In those days, I was attending a Bible study a couple of evenings a week. Before the studies, a fellow named Bruce Danna would play his songs for the group. Guess which thorn drew blood. It starts with a "J." But, I also began to see other things about myself. If I was in someone's home and saw a guitar sitting in the corner, internal calculations immediately began and continued until that

guitar found its way into my hands. The conversation at hand did not really matter much. In fact, I probably didn't hear much of it - **because I was thinking about getting that guitar**. My conscience did begin bothering me enough that I started telling people about this "struggle" I was having. One night, I was recounting these "woes" to a Christian sister. After patiently listening, she innocently asked, "*Why don't you just play your songs at home by yourself to the Lord? That would solve the problem.*" I totally recoiled upon hearing these words. In fact, my entire being revolted against this "solution." After all, the whole reason I played **was for people**. I wanted them to *hear me, see me, listen to me, be influenced by me* ... me, me, me, me (incidentally I have a song entitled, "*Me, Me, Me*").

When I laid down that night, and all was quiet, I could see something right in the middle of my heart. It was my music. But, it was not enthroned by itself. There **it was**, and there **I was** right with it - and there wasn't much room for anything else on that throne. My relatively new faith and my relatively new relationship with God was now fuel to give life and animation to - an idol. And it was deep - fused into the core of my soul.

Maybe others can "reform" themselves, but for me, "forget about it!" And besides, this malady was too powerful to even attempt controlling. I was *entangled* in a besetting sin. There was only one way to get untangled. I had to **set aside** this plague - set down that stupid guitar. Not for a season, but for the rest of my life. I could wait until heaven to pick up music again.

At that same time, the Bible teaching I was under played a role in that decision. Those teaching the studies I attended, made a distinction between "natural" and "spiritual" gifts. Natural gifts are common gifts that even unsaved people possess. But spiritual gifts are bestowed only on the redeemed. Therefore, spiritual gifts are special and obviously superior to natural gifts. This teaching stressed that God may, or may not, want to use the natural gifts we have, *but we know for sure* that He wants us to discover and use our spiritual gift(s). Guitar playing ability, song writing, and singing obviously fell into the realm of natural - lesser - gifts. While I no longer believe this is correct teaching (for a discussion see Endnote 1), **at that time** it seemed reasonable enough. Since I had no idea what spiritual gift(s) I had, and these natural gifts had me all twisted up, there was one thing to do - cast aside these natural abilities, and ask God to illumine me to whatever spiritual gift(s) I had been given. And that is what I did. I pawned my guitar and shelved my music. I am of the persuasion that God used this "crooked stick" of doctrine to draw a straight line in my soul.

Relief

Interesting things began happening inside and outside of me. For starters, an immediate weight was lifted. Then God opened doors to fully occupy my time and energies - particularly in teaching. Within months, I went on staff at a Christian drug rehabilitation program where demands on my time and energy were quite intense. I also took up another "hobby" of great benefit. I wrote out favorite passages, pinned them on the walls of my room, and began memorizing them (a brother once told me that if I wanted to be used by God, the more Scripture I had in me, the more He could use me. That is a correct statement and I set myself to that task). But other great, and unexpected, miracles occurred. One of the best was - *I began to enjoy the music of my brothers!* Just as the callouses on my fingertips quickly disappeared, so also the callouses of envy and jealousy that had plagued my soul, evaporated into thin air. This became a season of tremendous spiritual freedom. You know, I can't remember who the blessed sister was who suggested how I solve my "problem." She has no idea how she impacted my life. Without her, *The-Music-Mission* would never have come about. I surely would have shipwrecked in the area of music and this work would have never been born. But ... I'm ahead of myself.

Even though I was finished with my music - God wasn't. Read on, my beloved friend. You are about to walk into holy ground. Acts by the Living God are Holy Ground.

Unwelcome Stirrings

God's primary tool for communicating to His children is the Bible. After about a year of freedom, various passages I came across began stirring in my soul. Verses like Psalm 98:1, "*O sing to the Lord a new song, for He has done wonderful things.*" Or Psalm 33:3, "*Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy.*" While some say these passages are dogmatic commands (as they are in the imperative mood), in this context these statements function as exhortations - a command, yet a strong, benevolent appeal. While designed to challenge those who have the ability to create new songs, they are also designed to encourage, validate and liberate *new music creativity*. This is one reason *The-Music-Mission* is devoted only to original Christian music. But, at that time, I did not see these directives in that light. I resisted this material because I had no desire to go back into slavery. I loved my freedom. But it seemed like every time I opened the Bible, I kept running across passages relating to music. It was causing enough pressure in me that I remember telling the Lord I did not want to start playing again. But the pressure continued. Then entered Rev. Singh.

While working at the drug rehabilitation center, I received a call one evening from a blind preacher named Rev. Singh. Actually, he called to ask questions about the drug program, and I was the one who fielded the inquiries. After an interesting and rather lengthy conversation, we decided we would like to meet in person. Diabetes had taken his vision sometime back, and after our initial visit, we decided to keep getting together. I began going over on my day off, picked him up, and we would run various errands - and just go for long drives. We would sing hymns together and just talk. Sometimes, I would accompany him in the evenings to his fiery Pentecostal evangelist meetings. Even though I am not of the Pentecostal persuasion, we had a lot of good times together. One day, when I stopped by to pick him up, he said he wanted to talk for a minute. I sat down, and he told me that while he was waiting for me, he felt burdened to pray about our relationship. He said that although he enjoyed our times together, he felt like maybe there was some deeper reason why God had brought us together. He then asked me, "*Robin, is there something bothering you?*" I took a deep breath, sighed, and said, "*Yeah, Rev. Singh ... there is something that has been bothering me lately.*" I had never said anything about my music before - but it seemed quite natural to tell him the whole music story - just as I have told you. When I finished, he leaned very close to me, and as I looked into his blind eyes, he quietly said, "*I think you might be holding back on something that would be good for you.*" I sat back on the sofa, reflected for a moment, and said within myself, "HmMMM." After that, we went on our errands. On those days off, I had different brothers that would let me spend the night on their floor or sofa. This would get me away from the residential facility for a full day. So that night, as I was on a pallet on my brother Mike's apartment floor, I reflected on Rev. Singh's comment. I made up my mind on my course of action. "*Okay Lord, if you really want me to start playing again ... I am willing. But I'm not going to run out and buy a guitar. You own every guitar on the face of this planet, so if You really want me to start playing again, then I ask You for a guitar. If You really want me to start playing again, You will have to give me one. That's it.*" Looking back on this "deal" I made, it now seems a bit audacious. But, I was so happy with my freedom that I cringed at the possibility of falling back into the music trap. I had *to know* - **absolutely know** - that God Almighty Himself wanted me to start playing again. That whole deal was between me and Him. Nobody was going to know anything about any of this. Period. I went to sleep.

Wham!

The next morning I got up and went to work at Turning Point, the drug rehab. As I was passing the Director's office, I stuck my head in and waved. Without even saying hello, he looked up and said,

"Hey Robin, I just got a call from a lady and I need you to go pick up some donated items. You're picking up a guitar and" I didn't really even hear the rest. I just chuckled and said, *"I think that guitar's for me."* As I walked toward the van, I laughed and said, *"I bet you it's a Martin; maybe a Guild."* Well, it turned out to be a beat up little no-name classical nylon string guitar - with only four strings on it. That really brought out a belly laugh. When I got back to my room, I scrounged around and found a couple of stings, slapped them on, and I was in business. So, guess what I did next? In the evenings I would sit in my room and just play before the Lord. Just me and Him. At one point I had twenty some evenings in a row that I made up a new tune. And the Scripture I had pinned up on the walls - well, passage after passage found its way into these new songs. Some of the songs of that season included, *"Thru Wisdom This He's Done"*, *"The Prophet's Dream"*, *"Judah's Lion"*, *"We Do Not Know"*, *"Sing Praises"*, *"Give Ear O Heavens"*, *"The Rejected Stone"*, *"We Thank Thee and Praise Thy Glorious Name"*, *"Well Pleasing in Thy Sight"*, *"How Can We Grow Weary"*, *"Psalm 19 - Praise God"*, *"Except in the Cross"*, *"Liberty"*, *"Declaring Things That are Upright"*, *"The Mighty One"*, *"Seek Her as Silver"*, and *"You Weren't Even on the List"*. I also did several other songs during that period that were not totally scripture to music. Some of these included, *"Give Me the Jesus of the Bible"*, *"Prayer"*, *"Hallelujah Jesus My King"*, *"Altogether Lovely"*, *"Living Water the Whole World Douse"*, *"I Found My Work -To Proclaim Another's"*, and *"No Other Road"*. There were others that I finished later on, but for those interested in my music, this gives you a flavor of what happened right after I was given that guitar. It was a good season.

By the way, the entire time I worked at Turning Point (over a year and a half) That was the only time a guitar was ever donated.

But what about the jealousies and the idolatry? Did that stuff come back? Well it's 24 years later and none of those locusts have returned. None of those chewing, gnawing, stripping destroyers have even hatched. But I'm getting ahead of myself. If you have read this far, you may as well read the rest. What else are you going to do that's so important over the next few minutes anyway?

After a few months of playing on that little no name guitar, a young lady named Claire Birmingham insisted on giving me a guitar she had - but never played. Claire, I have written about 150 songs on that instrument, and played before a good number of people in a lot of settings. If God has used any of my material, or any of my performances, to expand His Kingdom, you will share in those rewards. I hope you will be pleasantly surprised on Judgement Day. Anyway, about the time Claire gave me her guitar, I began to *get asked* to play. The first place was the Bible study where Bruce Danna played. One of the teachers there made an interesting observation about my music. He said my style and content attracts a certain type of listener, and those who are drawn to my approach and message will really "get into it." In other words, my music is not pop - it is niche music - and message oriented. I have always seen my music as specialty music. For me, the satisfaction of writing songs has been to get out some message that has been stirring around inside of me. That is the impetus behind my songs. When they come out, I find relief. It doesn't matter if anyone likes the song - or message - or not. It is just something I have needed to get out. Some of these songs are *"Shoulder to Shoulder"*, *"Directed by Him"*, *"Start Singin' Again"*, *"Tell Me You Heard"*, *"The Death of the World"*, *"I Don't Mean Maybe"*, *"Tares and Wheat"*, *"O Prince Pearl"*, *"To Carry Your Name"*, *"Faith Knows"*, *"We've Got the Ball"*, *"Let Me Hear Forgiven"*, *"Get Up!"*, *"Say 'No!' to Jesus?"*, *"Dead Men"*, *"The Simple Fact"*, *"O Angels, Angels"*, *"Judgement Day"*, *"Open Up and Listen"*, *"Seasons"*, *"Be at Peace with Me"*, *"Violating Your Love"*, *"The World"*, *"Glory to God in The Highest"*, *"Please Win This Fool"*, *"With the Other Hand"*, *"Can the Slave Free Himself?"*, *"The Wrath of the Lamb"*, *"Something's Wrong"*, *"Too Blin-dead"*, *"Fireflakes"*, *"Toil for Fire"*, *"Me, Me, Me"*, *"Without Knowing You"*, *"O Jesus"*, *"Before the Flood"*, *"We Can't Stay Here"*, *"Lord Jesus"*, *"Thank You Lord Jesus"*, and I'm sure a few more. Anyway, after playing at that Bible study a few

times, God opened another great opportunity.

The Mission

A brother named Jack Fontaine was preparing to open a Street Gospel Mission right off the Fort Lauderdale strip. This was his third time orchestrating such an effort. He was remodeling a three-story hotel and I visited regularly as the work progressed. I thought that God was going to use me as a bridge between this Street Mission and the drug rehab. The idea was that I would get to know those who might make a profession of faith - yet needed a more stable, long term residence - like Turning Point. By the time the Mission opened, several musicians were lined up to play. I was not one of them, but I felt my music would fit the place quite well. To my amazement and pleasure, I felt no jealousy toward anyone who did play there, and this internal freedom has never been lost. But, I still had a very strong desire to play there, but said nothing to anyone. So, one night I put my guitar in my car's trunk and made this "deal" with the Lord. *"If Jack asks me to play, then I will go get my guitar and do my thing. Otherwise, the guitar stays in the trunk."* (Jack had known me my whole Christian life, so he knew I played some. He also was the brother who had told me about memorizing Scripture). As soon as I walked into the lobby, I stood and looked over a packed house. Jack was walking on the far side of the room with a group of people all over him, clamoring for his attention. Before taking another step, Jack looked right at me and bellowed over the crowd, *"Hey Robin, How you doin'?" Did you bring your guitar?"* I said, *"Yeah, it's in the car."* He said, *"Well, go get it and come play some of your songs!"* I floated out to my car, came in and played my heart out - there was no doubt it was God's will. When you **know** you have not exalted yourself, you know God is going to use your effort. Interestingly, the next day I took a group of my Turning Point guys to a local park. I was on my bike, but at a standstill, when this young, burly, drunk fella came up behind me. He said, *"Hey, you're the ***** who played that guitar last night."* He had me somewhat trapped and began pacing back and forth in front of me getting closer and closer with his threats and profanities. He threatened to smash that guitar over my head if I ever showed up at the Mission again. I kept direct eye contact with this Satanic messenger, and although I did not want to escalate the situation, I also had no intention of cowering before him. I've never taken too well to threats. At several points I said, *"Well, you do what you need to do, and I'll do what I need to do."* After several rounds he started backing off, and left breathing threats and violence. My rehab guys then came up and said, *"If he'd have jumped you, we were ready to come help."* I said, *"Yeah, I bet."* That night **I went back to the Mission and played long and loud.** The destroyer didn't show. Not long after this, the Lord transferred me from working at Turning Point - to going on staff **at the Mission** as Director of the Family Division. As part of my duties, I played **four nights per week!** So much for having Claire's guitar wrapped around my neck. God had other plans for that guitar. But more was in store. More songs - and a singing partner.

After I had been playing for a couple of months, Jack's wife, Jane, said, *"Robin, you played a song last night that I think I have a harmony for. Would you like to hear it?"* I said, *"Yeah, that would be okay."* Inside of myself, I said, *"Oh brother. Just what I need, a female singer."* A year and a half later, she had put harmonies to twenty-three of my songs plus I put one of her poems to music (*"Paths"*). We also did remakes of six hymns. We developed quite a following at that time as her soprano, feminine harmonies contrasted quite interestingly with my gruffer baritone voice. It was a good season. By the time the Mission closed, I had 64 completed original songs (23 now with harmonies) plus Jane's song, *"Paths"*. It was now the fall of 1981.

Time Passes – Swiftly

By this time, I had a name for a music group. I saw my life as a series of Missions - a Drug

Rehab Mission, Street Gospel Mission, etc. So, it seemed reasonable that my music was also a mission - a mission to expound the creation of sound - hence *The-Music-Mission*. From the beginning, I have prayed about, and committed, *The-Music-Mission* to the Lord. Many of my songs I have set before Him and have made requests about them line by line - phrase by phrase. But, my thought was that *The-Music-Mission* was to be the name of some future band. My major request was this - "*Lord, do more than I can ask, or think, with The-Music-Mission.*" That was around 1980.

1983 was a year of rest. I was working a regular 40 hr per week job, so I had time to work on a lot of my partial songs and complete them. That year I completed 60 songs - exactly 30 were old ones, and 30 were new ones. I also drew several pictures to go with some of my songs. I hope you will enjoy them and I hope you will read my, "Explanations of the Pictures". I have reasons for chosen colors, etc. The originals are exactly twice the size of album covers, so that was my initial thought for their potential use.

Some Self Evaluation

In evaluating my own music ability, here are some observations. First, I play by ear. While some have expressed amazement at this, *to me it is amazing that anybody can play anything by reading notes off a paper*. Second, am not a pliable artist. I just do my thing, and if others want to join in - so be it. Forget "jamming." I'm not that versatile. Third, I have found that some genuine musicians "turn on" to what I am doing (at least to particular songs), as my music gives them new avenues to express *their* music creativity. They hear harmonies, lead licks, etc. that stimulate them musically. This explains Steve Kahler, Danny Cole, Jr., Jane Fontaine, and my daughter, Staci. I create the skeletal structure - but others, with musical skills, flesh it out. Fourth, any vocal accompaniment must be a better voice than mine. *Better* - otherwise the song does not work.

Along with the guitar's normal standard tuning, I also play in a couple of open tunings - E and C (14 of my songs are in open E and 26 are in open C). I have no idea what chords I am playing. *A musician* would know what the heck he/she is playing.

While music has always been an important part of my life, that is what it has been - *a part* of my life. In 1982, I started my trek toward various educational degrees. The Bible college I attended in 1982 folded after my first year there. But from 1984 -1986, I earned an Associate of Divinity Degree. In 1990, I finished a Business Administration degree with a Minor in New Testament Greek. By the spring of 1992, I completed a Master of Divinity degree and was also elected to Theta Phi, an international, academic, theological honors society. I have pastored a couple of churches (31/2 years), and have worked a couple of regular jobs (currently sales) the last eight years. During this time, I have played in many different settings. But, I have also known that my music would never be able to move through any traditional outlet. So, for the reasons listed below, the dream of any extended exposure to my music died. First, my music is not pop. Second, my music does not neatly fit into a particular mold. Third, my songs are too long for the industry. Most are five minutes or more, and if I could really do what I wanted, some songs would have lengthy introductions, some long narratives, and some major instrumental breaks - some might be 15 or 20 minutes long! But there has been one other great and chronic barrier for me - *I have never wanted money to be a factor between me and my audience*. I have always wanted my music available *for free*. And here is why. I ask myself, "*Who is my audience anyway?*" The answer is simple - my family - my *eternal* family. You see, my songs are *message* songs. I have written them because I have had something I wanted to say. But anything I have worth saying is something *our Father* has taught me. He has never asked *a penny* of me for any of His insight, counsel, wisdom, or knowledge. "*O God, let me just give it, give it, give it.*" The world does not want to hear what I have to say, and those of the world can't understand what I'm saying anyway (1 Jn 4:5-6 and Ro 8:7). So, my audience, indeed my only audience, is my eternal family. Nothing would

please me more than to hear that one of my little ten-year-old sisters sang one of my songs to her church. *I want her to have it for free.* Nothing would give me more joy than to find out that one of my songs gave direction to a brother or sister in some dilemma. *I want them to have it for free.* And nothing could energize my soul more than discovering some song of mine brought someone back from the brink of despair. *I want that song there for free.* In fact, I'm going to let you in on a little secret. As a Christian, I once went through a grief experience. I had no idea the degree of pain and darkness that could engulf a person. For twenty-one days, I could not control my emotions. That flood was almost overpowering. Only those who have suffered through a genuine grief experience can understand what I am saying. During one of my darkest moments I said, "*Lord, now I know why people commit suicide.*" When the pain seems like it will never abate, or it is just too great, suicide seems like a way to stop the pain. For me, I knew there was light at the end of the tunnel. But some people do not have that light. Right then and there I asked God to move me into people's lives right at that point and use me to bring them back from that brink. What do you think His response will be to that request? He is going to use my songs in that task. I do not know how, when, where, or to whom, but *I want my music to be there for free.* I guess you can tell - I am real serious about this. For more, go to Endnote 2. But I also want my brothers and sisters *yet to be* (in other words, not yet converted) to mysteriously find my music in their hands - *and it arrived there free.* You see, I want my music to be some of the first drops of free living water to get to them before God opens His free floodgate to them.

So, the bottom line was this - traditional Christian music endeavors and I were, and are, on different tracks. And music for free?? Forget about it!

Since 1984, I have completed 27 new songs (it's '02 as of this writing). I still have messages to get out. I also have some partials I need to complete. Interestingly, my oldest daughter (Staci, currently sixteen) has put harmonies to five of my songs in the last few years ("*Directed by Him*", "*Trembles at My Word*", "*Tell Me You Heard*", "*The Earth is the Lord's*", and "*Seasons*"). We have another song to which she put the words, called, "*To Whom Shall We Go?*" That began with a little tune I was just fiddling with. Staci said, "*Daddy, would you tape that tune for me? I think I have a melody for it.*" I did, and she did the rest. It is one of my all time favorites. What is interesting to me is that I could hear no melody at all in that original tune. Feel free to download that one and see what you think!

Oh yeah, somewhere during this time period, something happened that brought my dream back from the dead. A track was created that I could run my songs down. Something that has made it possible for me to give my music away. Something that has made it possible to give it away to people *all around the world!* It's a thing called the Internet (thanks, All!). But *The-Music-Mission* is not destined to be just some group I hoped to put together - it is much bigger than I could ask or think of - in every way.

Conclusion

So now, you have read *my* music testimony journey from start to present. This website is now the next chapter. It is my goal that it outlives me, and outgrows me in every conceivable way - and that God uses it until the end of the Internet. *But here is something quite interesting and I really want you to think about this.* Many things, and people, have been a part of *my* music testimony. But let's look at this from another angle. I want to use Jane Fontaine as an example. You see, I presented *her* as a part of *my* music testimony - and indeed she was. But, if *she* wrote out *her* music testimony, and what all God had done with *her* musically, then *I* would have been part of *her* story. Now, if you have read all this, I know that *you too* have a music testimony in progress. You may be an artist with your own songs. Or you may be an artist who has no original songs, but have great talents and you use your

musical abilities to honor God. Or maybe you are a saint that is fed by artistic creativity and promote it in your own ways. So, the question is this - *is The-Music-Mission supposed to become a part of your music testimony?* What do you think? You see, *The-Music-Mission* is not about me. It is a lot bigger than me. God is doing more with *The-Music-Mission* than I could have ever thought or imagined. Now, I am just one artist using this platform for my songs and message. But this platform has been created for *anyone's* original Christian music. And this work is worked *by the saints*. Christian Artists upload and give their music away. Christians download and distribute music. Christians promote this work. Christians become patrons by finding music around them and getting it on *The-Music-Mission*. Christians also help guide the evolution of this enterprise with their ideas, insights and suggestions. So the question is this; do you think this work is to become a part of *your* music testimony? Only you will answer this. And that is the way it should be.

Endnote 1

At first glance this teaching seems quite reasonable. But it is based upon a couple of assumptions. It assumes that the list of spiritual gifts in the New Testament is an exhaustive list. It also makes an assumption that abilities one possess outside of these New Testament lists should be labeled "natural gifts." I am not at all sure either assumption is correct. I am of the conviction that any ability one possesses has been bestowed by the Creator. While it may not be proper to insist that unbelievers possess "spiritual gifts," it is proper to maintain that any human ability or aptitude is divinely granted and not merely "natural." In fact, this is much of what The Judgment on the final day will be all about. Individuals will account to God for how they used, neglected, and/or abused, divinely granted abilities - gifts, you might say. As a Christian, every talent or ability we have should be presented to God. We should ask Him to clean it up and employ it in a God honoring way. For example, the ability to play an instrument, write songs or sing can be totally redirected as has happened in my case. We are told in Colossians 3:16, "*Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*" There is no question this material builds up the body of Christ. It seems to be a stretch that the body of Christ can be spiritually built up by "natural" gifts. And some songs are referred to as *spiritual songs*. So, is this a *natural gift* doing a *spiritual work*? Also, it is obvious that "*singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God,*" is a spiritual exercise. So, if the production of music is simply a natural ability, how can spiritual productivity be accomplished by it? I'll answer that for you. Nothing natural can create spiritual progression.

So, here's the way I see it. The lists of spiritual gifts in the New Testament are lists of abilities through which spiritual materials flow. Many of the abilities (teaching, prophesy, administrations, helps, etc.) are platforms, or conduits, for this flow. But, these same abilities can be conduits for non spiritual materials as well. There are *false* teachers everywhere - very effective ones - even teaching doctrines of demons (1Tim 4:1). Hitler had many effective administrators. And many humanitarians have helped all kinds of people while wanting nothing to do with Christianity. On the other hand, I have been spiritually impacted by music, skits, movies, poetry, and prose when these "natural" abilities have been used to forward spiritual materials. Think on this! Even one who has the talent to make money can have that ability redirected after conversion. My main point is that I am not at all convinced that divinely granted aptitudes and abilities should be summarily relegated to an inferior category of natural gifts.

Endnote 2

I hate selling services to family - natural family or eternal. And the spiritual material I serve is

above and beyond money. While money has its place in our sojourn, I have always wanted to remove it from any spiritual transaction. Money can cause suspicion on the part of my hearer and create a barrier. Most of my pastoring has been part time, as I do not see my Christianity, or my gifts, as a way to make money. Any spiritual knowledge, wisdom, insight or ability, I might possess has been freely given to me by God Himself. But more important, as His representative, it only seems appropriate that I should represent Him accurately. If He offers His life saving and life changing material for free, shouldn't I do the same? I think of it this way. Say the richest man in the world gives me an inexhaustible supply of food and goods. He then sends me off as his representative to disperse these materials worldwide. I then go out and charge for the material. That doesn't seem like the way to represent that rich man. Now, I know that Paul made the case that those who sow *spiritual* things do have the right to reap *material* things from the recipients of the spiritual material. He also said that the ox was not to be muzzled while threshing. And he did assert that those who proclaim the gospel do have the right to earn their living from it (1Cor 9:1-18 - But I do wonder if Paul's definition of what it meant to "proclaim the gospel" is the same as what is practiced today). But I also know that Paul knew the best way to get through to the fleshly believers in Corinth was to not take a dime from them (Same passage, but this part is usually conveniently overlooked). The church in the USA is very close to the Corinthian Church - much closer than most care to know. For example, that church divided up and rallied around charismatic leaders. Churches in America have topped that. Not only are there all kinds of *institutionalized* denominational structures, but most of these splinter groups have camps *within them* as the struggle for power and position rages (1Cor 1:10-13 and 3:1-9). The Corinthians tolerated sexual immorality (1Cor 5:1-8), drug each other to court before unbelievers (1Cor 6:1-11), flaunted liberties they had in Christ in an unrighteous way (1Cor 8:1-13), and made distinctions between rich and poor saints (1Cor 11:17-34). In America, in every city, we have the distinctly rich churches which are completely separate from the not so rich ones. At least the Corinthians were still meeting together under the same roof. Also, the Corinthians made all kinds of distinctions between the saints, heaping abundant honor on some while at the same time disregarding the value of other less seemly saints (1Cor 12:4-31). In America, we fawn over those who have been called to "full time ministry"- as though the rest of the saints are not. These *special saints* are "ordained," given letters of commendation, are nearly crowned in many cases, and have all sorts of appositions and titles attached to their names. At the same time the lesser saints are labeled, "laymen" who spend their lives in "secular work." What garbage. The ignorance - wilful ignorance - in the churches in America is truly astounding. We have far outdone the saints in Corinth. But the comparisons do not end here. The Corinthians were totally messed up on the make-up of genuine Christian love (1Cor 13:1-13). I have never heard a clear and accurate message yet on the elements of genuine Christian love. You owe it to yourself to read my Ebook on this ("*Love and the Bible*" - it's free too!). I can guarantee that you will be exposed to information *you have never heard*. And it seems that the subject of love is a pretty foundational subject for Christianity - wouldn't you agree? Read my Ebook and see if I am just blowing smoke - or not. But the Corinthian's errors still kept coming. They were messed up on the proper use of spiritual gifts (1Cor 14:1-33) as well as the role of women (1Cor 14:34-36). You know, I am not at all sure we have anything over the saints of Corinth. There may be some pockets operating a bit more healthily, but those are the exception and not the rule. Churches here heap up teachers according to their own desires continuously (2 Tim 4:3-4). They want pastors who are in line with their expectations in doctrines *and in practices*. The churches in America are hotbeds for power plays of all kinds. So, here is my point. Everything in me says - I have been freely given and I am going to freely give! I am not going to have money between me and the audience I am seeking to impact. Period. I do not want to pastor with the offering plate going in front of my audience. I do not want to be a Bible college, or seminary instructor, and extract my living from my younger brothers and sisters as I place

great strains on them personally and/or financially. And I do not want money paid to me directly by my music audience. Freely I have been given - O God, let me freely Give! Especially in this culture where You so often are made to look like a beggar! It seems like every spiritual transaction has a hand stuck out there asking for money from the audience - whether on TV, radio or in the pew. When you go into any Christian bookstore - money is out front. For Christian schooling - preschool through seminary - money is out front. When you go to your mailbox - all the Christian organizations are asking for money. Even after I paid all my money for my degrees, as an alumni, every mailing asks for more. I know all the reasons why. They all explain why, why, why. But I have decided this is not the way I want to present my Christian witness. If others decide otherwise - that's fine. You see, I really do understand that *none* of the brethren will stand before me on these issues. How do I know how God has led them? I have my hands full trying to figure out what He wants me to do. I am not so sure He is interested in letting me know how He is leading his other children. I do not want to be like Peter, who was so concerned about God's will for *John's* life. When Peter said, "*What about him(John)?*" Jesus rebuked Peter saying, "*What is that to you? You follow Me*" (Jn 21:15-23). Jesus told Peter to mind his own business. His hands would be full with his own walk. *John's* life, and every other child of God's life, is Jesus' business. It is critical that each of us work out our own life and convictions before God. So, *as for me*, I want money *out of the picture, especially in this culture and at this time*. That's just the way it is.

But now I want to discuss the role of the Patron. In the past, I have had a few seasons where patrons invested in me, to support me in various outreaches. Some were anonymous, others were not. And that worked for me, because *the recipients of my labor received that labor without charge*. The patrons were *an equal* in the work - one who saw God working in me and wanted to invest in that. But, I have had some other patrons who gave with strings attached. At a certain point, they tried to assert their agenda as they felt they had ***bought their way*** into that position. Believe me, that happens to pastors continually. These patrons tried in various ways to make me go in the direction ***they decided***. One wanted me to go to a particular school. Another wanted me to become ordained in a particular denomination, while others wanted me to do work in the church *they* should have been doing. Interestingly, when this type of patron does not get what he/she wants, they often pull their money and seek to put it elsewhere so as to get their agenda accomplished. My first major patron found another student to support in his school. The second one never did get someone ordained. The husband of that patron couple died, so that pursuit ended. My other small group of patrons made good on their threat to pull the funding and went out and got a different pastor. And I can truly say, "That's okay." Each one has full rights to use his/her monies as deemed fit. We each individually account to God for our money uses and if we believe the direction someone is going in (or some ministry) is not resulting in God's purposes being forwarded, ***we should not place our money there*** (for a more complete discussion on the Christian's responsibility and relationship with money, please freely access my Ebook, "*No Tithes for the Christian*"). But, I must add this. It is indeed a great blessing from God when one is granted patrons who invest without any manipulative intent. It is my hope to discuss this in more detail in *The-Music-Mission's* Patron program. You see, I am convinced that many patrons ***do not*** realize they are being manipulative. Most of the time, patrons have the same general burden as the person (or ministry) in which they are investing. That is the reason the patron is interested in that individual (or ministry) in the first place. But the problem arises when the patron believes the individual (or ministry) is straying from the vision the patron holds. That is when manipulation can begin. Enough on this.

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