

INTO YOUR DEATH

1985. The paradox of Christianity again: we get life by going into death, following Jesus. Over and over we try to sweeten the message, make it more palatable, don't talk about death or blood. But this is the only way. The opening melody of the chorus is pinched, almost intentionally, from the great Cold Chisel song "Saturday Night". (and so I like to do it at a similar speed to that song, relaxed. But many like to do it faster — that works OK too)

Into your death we go
into your life we grow
Feed us with your body and blood
so we grow to be like Jesus, be like you

1. I know the night is dark
I know the way is long
Fill us with your Spirit of light
so we keep on shining, Jesus, shining in you

2. You know that we are small
you know that we are weak
Fill us with your Spirit of hope
so we keep on hoping, Jesus, hoping in you

3. So many live in pain;
others are trapped by fear.
Fill us with your Spirit of love
so we keep on loving, Jesus, loving in you

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THERE'LL BE PEACE

(also in 'Let's Sing it again' CD & Book)

1987. Maybe it's because I was at university in the late 60s and early 70s. Or that I got into folk music and protest music earlier in the 60s. Whatever the reason, the idea of peace is central to my thinking about the Christian faith. Not 'peace of mind' or 'peace at any price'. They're soft and fluffy concepts, that suggest the absence of conflict, but also the absence of challenge and growth. No, the biblical picture of peace is stronger: wholeness, congruence, togetherness. One of the earliest songs we used in contemporary services was Sebastian Temple's Prayer of St Francis. St Francis of Assisi still seems as good a role model as he was to people of his day. And Make me a channel of your peace still seems as good a prayer as it did then.

1. There'll be peace,
peace for every woman, every man,
stillness on the waters, on the land,
on the land.

2. When he comes,
everything will harmonise again,
hatred will be gone, we will be friends,
only friends.

There'll be peace on the earth below,
and in the sky above flies the dove.
There'll be peace for the stars that shine,
for the rocks and hills, yes, there will.

3. Bring your peace,
peace that started when you gave your life,
bursting from the grave to end the strife,
end the strife.

Bring your peace to the earth below,
paint the sky above with your love.
Bring your peace, take our hate away,
give us peaceful ways, peaceful ways.

4. Won't you come,
Jesus, Prince of Peace — O make it soon,
come and sing your everlasting tune,
peaceful tune.
There'll be peace

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SORROWING SONG

(also in 'Let's Sing it again' CD & Book)

1986. The psalms are full of complaints and questions, people asking why, wondering about God's wisdom. Yet so few of the contemporary Christian songs argue with God. There's a lack of honesty, which also suggests to me that people are a little out of touch with the one who raises all these questions. Honesty, reality, anger — God can stand a little more of that from us. God is big enough. Why is there pain, God? The world was made through you, Jesus, and for you, so how come there's such frustration and suffering in it? Are they part of your plan? For what reason? When I ask these questions, Lord, I thank you for listening to me. Thanks, too, for answering them in your own sideways fashion. Help me to be part of the answer for other people.

1. Lord, hear my praying, listen to me;
you know there's evil in what I see.
I know I'm part of all that is wrong;
still, won't you hear my sorrowing song?

2. Children are crying, hungry for food,
sick from diseases — God, are you good?
People are homeless, lost and alone —
God, are you hiding? Where have you gone?

3. Why do the rich ones steal from the poor?
Why do they build their weapons of war?
How can you stand the torture and pain,
hope disappearing, freedom in chains?

4. Jesus, remind us that you are found
with those who cry, with those who are bound.
Where there is suffering, you will be there —
help us to follow, Lord, hear my prayer.

Extra Verses written after the Bali Bombing, Oct 2002

2. Bodies are broken, twisted and scarred;
blaming is easy, questions are hard:
who made the bomb and what was the plan?
Why don't you answer, God, if you can?

3. Why do we hate and seek to destroy?
So much to live for and to enjoy.
Year after year the story is told.
God, can you heal these hearts hard and cold?

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YOU ARE THE PRISONER

1987. At the heart of the Christian faith is the mystery of Jesus' humiliating death on a Roman gallows. 'For our sake God made the sinless one into sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God' (2 Corinthians 5:21. Jerusalem Bible). 'He was deep in Jesus' misery' is how one of Flannery O'Connor's leading characters is described. Should we aim to be like that too? Not in a self-flagellating way, but in sympathy. This is our hero, and fans identify with every single aspect of the one they idolise. Christians can start by looking at the story of Jesus' suffering and death in the gospels. Also at many books, pictures, songs and poems. Once we've identified with Jesus and his story, we might catch glimpses of him anywhere: especially in suffering people, in those who need our help, in those who need us to be Jesus to them.

1. You are the prisoner, shackled and bound.
Soldiers mistreat you, you make no sound.
They lead you captive for all to see.
You are the prisoner, and I am free.

2. You are abandoned, left all alone.
Your friends are faithless
— hearts made of stone.
Blood from your crown seeps down on your face.
You are abandoned, I am embraced.

3. You are condemned to carry a cross.
'Guilty' the verdict — this is the cost:
thirty-nine lashes, hung among thieves.
You are condemned, and I am reprieved.

4. You are brought down and you are despised,
humiliated, dehumanised.
Cruel is your suffering, bitter your cup.
You are brought down, and I am raised up.

5. Let me look closely into your pain,
learn of your suffering, know all your shame.
Let me attend to all of your wounds —
Jesus, you'll never suffer alone.

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THEN I WILL PRAISE YOU

(also in 'Let's Sing it again' CD & Book)

1990. Though I've often received encouragement and positive feedback for songs I've written, two letters I received in 1995 were extra-special. The one shared with me the healing impact that one of my songs had had on that one person's life. The other, from a friend of many years, detailed the powerful role that several songs had played at crucial times. 'Then I will praise you' was one of those songs: '... you were the hand of God holding me back from the rim of the Abyss with your song.' The words of the psalms, whether literal or paraphrased, have had that effect on many people over the centuries, and naturally I'm enormously encouraged that a simple tune combined with the deep thoughts of the psalmist can provide such support.

1. When I feel miserable, down and depressed,
worthless, I feel that I've never been blessed,
you hold me gently with your unseen hands;
later I'll see you, my friend.

Then I will praise you, God, I will praise you.
Then I will praise you, my Saviour, again.

2. You seem so far away, you, and your light;
darkness has covered me, thick as the night;
I've lost direction, I can't find my way.
God, bring this night to an end.

3. Send out your light and truth, they'll be my guide.
Where there's your light and truth,
troubles subside.
Fill me with wonder, surprise me with joy.
Only on you I depend.

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BECAUSE WE BEAR YOUR NAME

(also in 'Let's Sing it again' CD & Book)

1985. Dr John Kleinig, lecturer at Luther Seminary in Adelaide, preached at the monthly student service at St Stephen's in October 1985. He not only prepared a sermon on Mark 9:38-50 but also this powerful set of lyrics for which I wrote the melody. We always start it very simply — a single instrument — and build it to a huge conclusion, the bigger the better. The text from Mark seems like a collection of disconnected teachings, but John wove these together beautifully under the theme spelled out in verse 41 (anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ). The tune owes something to Joe Jackson's Body and Soul album, especially the song Be my number two. Lord Jesus, because we bear your name our lives are not our own. May we enjoy your company, identify with your values, take pride in being Christian, and really want to be Christ-like.

1. Lord Jesus, we belong to you,
you live in us, we live in you;
we live and work for you —
because we bear your name.

2. Help us receive each other, Lord,
for you receive the least of us
and come to us in them —

3. Bless those who give us any gift,
because they know that we are yours;
reward them with your grace —

4. Let us acknowledge those as friends
who use your name to right a wrong
but have not joined us yet —

5. Let nothing that we do or say
offend the weak so that they fall
and lose their faith in you —

6. Keep us from missing out on life;
give hands that help, and single sight,
and feet that walk your way —

7. You are the salt that cleanses us,
so clean us out, and make us fit
for common life with you —
because we bear your name.

© 1985 Words: John Kleinig; Music: Robin Mann

SPIRIT OF GOD

(also in 'Let's Sing it again' CD & Book)

1987. I was reading this terrific little book called The Holy Spirit: shy member of the Trinity when I bought a new synthesiser, an Ensoniq, in July 1987. Songs have many jumping-off points, and the combination of the book and synth (and many other things too!) led to this song. It's got a lot of words. It's a long prayer to the Holy Spirit, and also an exposition at the same time. I know that community worship songs with lots of words are not fashionable, but God just keeps putting all these words in my head! And anyway, Christians are urged in the letters of the New Testament to grow in knowledge as well as in faith and love. I think songs can help the process of growth. They get words into our heads and keep them there. If the words are a good reflection of Scripture, and focus on the beautiful things God does for us, songs can do much more than make us feel good. Spirit of God, may all these thoughts and words be more than dry bones lying in a dusty valley. Put flesh on them and breathe life into them, so we also carry your gifts of faith and love.

1. Spirit of God, you're with me,
shaping me from within;
everything Jesus promised, you bring:
life in the Father's care,
your special peace we share,
safety from every evil snare.

Spirit of God, fly like a dove,
carry your gifts of faith and love.

2. Spirit of God, you show me
heaven right here on earth;
here, in the midst of dying, is birth:
water and word combine,
and all your gifts are mine —
O how the light of Jesus shines!

3. Spirit of God, you gather
people of every tongue;
women and men, the old and the young;
knowing that we belong,
gathered to sing your song —
we may be weak but you are strong.

4. Give me a heart that's simple,
just like a child at play.
Let me be strong but gentle today;
trusting when I can't see,
that you're at work in me,
growing some good fruit on this tree.

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STAY AWAKE

1984. This song is one of contrasts: a clarion-call chorus alternated with reflective verses. Staying awake doesn't mean retreating to a hill or a beach in order to wait for Christ's return. Better to learn to recognise God's presence in our daily lives, and to be awake to God's influence.

Stay awake and watch for me,
stay awake and watch for me.
Stay awake and watch for me,
stay awake and watch for me – watch for me.

1. You might see me in stars at night,
winter light, beaches bright.
If you miss me, then catch a sight
in the hungry and the refugee's flight, oh ...

2. You can see me in bread and wine –
food and drink here in time –
hear me speaking and see the signs
in the word that I have left behind, oh ...

3. Sun keeps shining and the earth goes round,
some get lost, some get found.
I'll be with you till the stars close down.
Stay awake until you hear that sound!

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THEY WERE WAITING

1. They were waiting, waiting for the time,
waiting for the promises to be fulfilled;
just like Eden, peace instead of war,
no more fighting anymore.

Now the time has come, God is in the world,
we have seen his day dawning in the sky.
They were waiting, we've been waiting;
come, Lord Jesus, won't you come?

2. They were hoping, hoping for a king,
hoping for a king who would be wise and fair;
equal treatment, justice for the poor,
no oppression anymore.

Now the king has come, God is in the world,
we have seen the child born in Bethlehem.
They were hoping, we've been hoping;
come, Lord Jesus, won't you come?

Come, Lord Jesus, won't you come? (2 times)
Come, Lord Jesus, won't you come, Lord Jesus?
Come, Lord Jesus, won't you come?

3. They were watching, watching for the sign,
watching for the sign of his arrival here:
water in the desert, singing in the land,
celebration in the land.

Now the sign has come, God is in the world,
we have seen the boy, we have seen his star.
They were watching, we've been watching;
come, Lord Jesus, won't you come?

Come, Lord Jesus,

Robin Mann © 1989

FOR THE BREAD

1988. Great words by Brian Wren — I hope my tune expresses my admiration, while it helps to communicate the strong truths contained.

1. For the bread that we have eaten,
for the wine that we have tasted,
for the life that you have given,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
we will praise you.

2. For the life of Christ within us,
turning all our fears to freedom
helping us to live for others,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
we will praise you.

3. For the strength of Christ to lead us
in our living and our dying,
in the end with all your people,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
we will praise you,
we will praise you.
(instrumental on first half of verse)
...In the end with all your people,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
we will praise you.

Words: Brian Wren

Music: Robin Mann © 1988

LIKE A WEDDING FEAST

1987. Pictures of heaven are often unappealing. Jesus described it in several places as a feast, and this song, with its uptempo rock'nroll style, attempts to portray something of the joy of the occasion.

1. Everything is ready, everything is done,
Celebrate the new day with the risen one.

You can come and join him at the party.
Jesus says it's like a wedding feast.

2. Jesus put together what was split apart;
Now he offers true love for the broken heart. (chorus)

BRIDGE

Some who are invited may refuse him,
Never know the peace and joy he brings.
But if you're found, you never want to lose him;
Jesus gets it right, every moment right.

3. "Come to me you weary, I will give you rest;
Lay your burden on me,
put me to the test."(chorus & bridge)

4. We may be in trouble, we may be in pain;
Jesus' food and drink will make us strong again.
(chorus – last line three times)

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BREAD OF HEAVEN

He gave them grain from heaven, by sending down manna for them to eat. So they ate the food of angels, and God gave them all they wanted. Psalm 78:24,25 1988. The Uniting Church of Australia organises a biennial youth gathering called National Christian Youth Convention (NCYC). Since 1975 I've had some connection with most of their events, mainly through sending off songs that reflect the chosen themes. In 1989, Dorothy and I were asked to be guest artists in Perth, where the theme was 'Cross The Desert'. This song was one that I wrote for the convention.

1. Bread of heaven in the desert,
precious manna from above,
bread of angels from the Father
fed the children of his love.
Bread of heaven, be our food today,
make us strong to walk your desert way,
bread of heaven,
for the life that never ends.
2. Bread of heaven left his glory,
was a human on this earth,
and his body, it was broken
to abolish Eden's curse.
Bread of heaven, broken for us all,
may your blood bring peace to all the world,
bread of heaven,
for the life that never ends.
3. Bread of heaven, at the table,
such an ordinary meal,
but the Saviour gives it power
both to comfort and to heal.
Bread of heaven, take away my sin,
let your Spirit always live within,
bread of heaven,
for the life that never ends.
4. Bread of heaven, give us new hearts,
teach us how to love and share;
all are equal at the table,
make us equal everywhere.
Bread of heaven, here you make us one,
may it be a taste of what's to come,
bread of heaven,
for the life that never ends.

WE HAVE SEEN THE WORD OF LIFE

1985. The opening of the First Letter of John and of John's Gospel provide the words for this song. The melody and style owe something to Indian music. Close vocal harmony helps the song along. The New Testament writers are very keen to assert the historical basis of our faith, and John is very consistent in his assertion that the man Jesus is "The Word of Life" - the eternal God.

1. We have seen the word of life.
we have seen it with our eyes,
we have heard it with our ears,
we have touched it with our hands.

2. We have seen the word of life,
and the word became a man,
he was full of grace and truth,
he has made God's glory known.

3. We have seen the word of life.
he is Jesus, God's own son,
and he died to save us all
to forgive us for our sin.

4. We have seen the word of life,
he reveals the truth of God,
and we have no need to hide
— we are living in his light.

Repeat Verse 1

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LISTEN TO HIM

1987. Like many songs this one started from a book I read: "The Holy Spirit: Shy Member of the Trinity". Friedrich Bruner and William Hordern each contribute 2 essays/lectures to this slim volume. One of Bruner's highlights the way in which both the Spirit and the Father point to Jesus as the one to focus our attention on. The phrase "Listen to Him!" occurs at both the baptism of Jesus and at his Transfiguration. The music began as a drum pattern and a riff on the synthesiser I had recently bought (Ensoniq ESQ1). The combination of this book and the synthesiser also produced "Spirit Of God, Fly Like A Dove" in that month, July 1987.

1. Breezes whisper without meaning,
sands lie silent on the beach;
earth has no self-explanation –
only one can give it speech.

Listen to him – Jesus, the eternal one.
Listen to him – angels sang when he was born.
Listen to him – now the word of God is known
in his only Son.

2. He must show the truth about us –
sin has made us deaf and blind.
We could never understand him,
so he comes, a man in time.

3. How does Jesus break the silence?
With an offer to the lost:
'Come, a home is ready for you!'
Opens heaven with a cross.

4. Now I've heard you speaking clearly –
word and water, bread and wine –
I might recognize your accent
anywhere and anytime.

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MY PEACE I GIVE

1. My peace I give, my peace I leave you;
though I am gone you will know my peace.
When the raging war thunders round you,
you'll be safe with me in my care.

This is my gift to you –
this is my gift to you.

2. My peace I give, unexpected treasure:
it can't be bought, it can't be earned.
Open hands are all that is needed,
open hands that wait to receive.

3. My peace I give to the lost and broken –
I bring you home, I heal your wounds.
Every scrap of broken creation,
stretching out my arms, I embrace.

4. My peace I give, as the angels promised.
You'll know my heart, you'll know my mind.
As you share my death and my rising,
share my peace wherever you go.

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STAY WITH ME, I'LL STAY WITH YOU

1985. "Make your home in me as I make mine in you" (John 15:4) was the theme for the evening student service on May 5th, 1985. This song came about after I explored different translations of John 15:1-8, the gospel for the day. Many songs rise put of playing with an idea, and looking for different ways to express it, a way that feels fresh.

Stay with me, I'll stay with you
every night and day with you.
Stay with me, I'll stay with you
every night and day with you.

1. My door was open and you came inside.
My house was empty till you satisfied
with the gift you came to share:
life forever in your care.
Jesus, you're beside me everywhere.

2. We eat together, it's a special time.
So much is given in the bread and wine:
more than just a memory,
here you give yourself to me.
Risen Jesus, now my eyes can see.

3. You show me places where I need to go,
lead me to people that I need to know.
Lead me further on your way,
call me closer when I stray.
Stay beside me, let me hear you say:

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