



"Cross Connection"

Radio Ministry of Hope Wesleyan Church and Wells of Salvation Ministries
Ultimate Oldies Radio – FM 97.7 and 101.1, Huber Heights, Ohio



Series: Christian Messages In Secular Music

5/27/09

Program 84 "Higher Ground" © 1973 Stevie Wonder

The Song ¹

- Funk song written by Stevie Wonder from his 1973 album *Innervisions*
- Against a driving, percolating clavinet-based arrangement, the lyric posits that religion can perhaps successfully do battle with the darker sides of human nature.
- Reached #4 on the U.S. Pop Singles chart and #1 on the U.S. Hot Soul Singles chart.
- Wonder played all instruments on the album track, including drums
- Ranked #261 on *Rolling Stone's* list of the 500 Greatest Songs of All Time
- Recorded just before Wonder was in a near-fatal accident in August '73 that left him in a coma. Early in recovery, his road manager sang the melody of "Higher Ground" into the singer's ear; Wonder responded by moving his fingers with the music

The Artists – Stevie Wonder (1950 -) ²; Curt Collins ³

Stevie Wonder:

- Blind child prodigy who became a unique and visionary artist in his own right
 - Eyes developed prematurely shortly after birth, causing permanent blindness
 - Mother kept him in the house, gave him musical instruments to pass the time; harmonica first, then drums
 - Active in his church's choir
- Helped bring Motown into a more adult, more socially conscious age
- One of rock's great multi-instrumentalists, producers and arrangers
- Blended soul, jazz, and funk in a manner that has transformed R&B
- Extensive legacy of hits and awards (see notes for CC Program 54, "You Will Know")

Curt Collins:

- Emerging Christian artist based in Tennessee; former high school band director
- Modified "Higher Ground" lyrics to reflect his faith
- Adopted from an orphanage in Little Rock, Arkansas at 6 months old
- Ministry reveals a specific burden for special needs kids
 - Working toward establishing The Love Unconditional Foundation to help families that have adopted special needs children

"God is my hiding place and my comforter—my sword, my shield. "God is never going to let you go. You can waste your years; He'll give you a second chance. He'll give you the time to change." – Curt Collins

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

² <http://oldies.about.com/od/soulmotown/p/steviewonder.htm>

³ <http://www.curtcollins.com/about.php>

People keep on learnin'
Soldiers keep on warrin'
World keep on turnin'
'Cause it wont be too long

Powers keep on lyin'
While your people keep on dyin'
World keep on turnin'
'Cause it wont be too long

I'm so darn glad he let me try it again
'Cause my last time on earth
I lived a whole world of sin
I'm so glad that I know more
than I knew then
Gonna keep on tryin'
Till I reach the highest ground

Teachers keep on teachin'
Preachers keep on preachin'
World keep on turnin'
'Cause it won't be too long
Oh no

Lovers keep on lovin'
Believers keep on believin'
Sleepers just stop sleepin'
'Cause it wont be too long
Oh no

I'm so glad that he let me try it again
'Cause my last time on earth
I lived a whole world of sin
I'm so glad that I know more
than I knew then
Gonna keep on tryin'
Till I reach my highest ground...whew!
Till I reach my highest ground
No ones gonna bring me down, Oh no
Till I reach my highest ground
Don't you let nobody bring
you down (they'll sho nuff try)
God is gonna show you higher ground
He's the only friend you have around

"As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man." – Matthew 24:37-39

Two different focuses:

- Reincarnation
- God of a second chance
- Eastern concept of improving conditions with each life
- Discuss concept of sanctification

(Differences in version by Christian artist Curt Collins, highlighted in yellow) --

I'm so glad he that let me try it again
Cause my **first time around**
I lived a whole world of sin
It feels so good to know more
than I knew then
Gonna keep on tryin'
Till I reach the highest ground

Teachers keep on teachin'
Preachers keep on preachin'
World just stop turnin'
Cause it won't be too long, Oh no

"...man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment." – Hebrews 9:27, NIV

Discuss this passage in light of:

- Translated saints – e.g., Elijah (2 Kings 2:11) and Enoch (Genesis 5:24)
- Those who died more than once – e.g., Lazarus, Eutychus, Jairus' daughter, Dorcas, et al

"...sanctification is not completed in a single moment; but sin, from whose dominion we have been delivered through the cross and death of Christ, is weakened more and more by daily...losses, and the inner man is day by day renewed more and more." – Jacob Arminius ⁴

I'm pressing on the upward way, New heights I'm gaining every day;
Still praying as I onward bound, Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

Lord, lift me up and let me stand, By faith, on heaven's table land,
A higher plane than I have found; Lord, plant my feet on higher ground!

Final Thoughts:

None of us is perfect. None of us can attain perfection through our own blood, sweat and tears. The Bible tells us *"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us"* (1 John 1:8) Isn't it comforting to know that the One who is perfect is also patient with us, and has provided the Holy Spirit to help us walk more closely with our Lord each day? Further, we know that *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). We reach "higher ground" only through travelling there hand-in-hand with Jesus Christ!

⁴ http://www.wellssofsalvation.com/html/we_believe_.html