



Hymn of The Week

November 12, 2020

Reflection by Doug Rohn on "Precious Lord, Take My Hand"

"I find
["Precious Lord,
Take My Hand"]
to be a powerful
statement of hope
in God's love."

I was introduced to this piece in high school. Our choir sang the song in 1977, and I immediately fell in love with it. The arrangement by Roy Ringwald really spoke to me as a 17-year-old, and speaks to me today. I find it to be a powerful statement of hope in God's love.

There are many arrangements of this song. It is found in hymnals, and has been performed by such artists as Elvis Presley, Jim Reeves, Aretha Franklin, and Beyoncé. I sang with a gospel group from 1977 to 1989 with some talented guys I went to school with. The name of our group was the Unity Quartet. "Precious Lord" was one of the songs we chose to sing. We reunited five years ago and recorded the song.

The melody is credited to Dorsey, drawn extensively from the 1844 hymntune "Maitland." "Maitland" is often attributed to American composer George N. Allen (1812–1877), but the earliest known source (Plymouth Collection, 1855) shows that Allen was the author/adaptor of the text "Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone," not the composer of the tune, and the tune itself was printed without attribution for many years.



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"Maitland" is also sometimes attributed to The Oberlin Social and Sabbath School Hymn Book, which Allen edited, but this collection does not contain music.

This tune originally appeared in hymnals and tune books as "Cross and Crown." The name "Maitland" appears as early as 1868. Dorsey said that he had heard Blind Connie Williams sing his version of this song with "Precious Lord" and used it as inspiration.

Dorsey wrote "Precious Lord" in response to his inconsolable bereavement at the death of his wife, Nettie Harper, in childbirth, and his infant son in August 1932. Mr. Dorsey can be seen telling this story in the 1982 gospel music documentary *Say Amen, Somebody*.

The earliest known recording was made on February 16, 1937, by the Heavenly Gospel Singers (Bluebird B6846).

"Take My Hand, Precious Lord" is published in more than 40 languages.