

I can't - Jesus Can!

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[0 : 00] Now, music's been the theme tonight, hasn't it? Music's been the theme. I have some notes as well. I don't know where they've gone. I don't want notes. Oh, never mind. I'll manage, I'm sure.

They're not down there. Are they in blue? No. Oh, they're here. That's good. All right. So, music's been the theme, and I'm learning to play the banjo.

So, Sid's here, so Sid will give me some lessons, won't you, Sid, on the banjo? Because I think you learned it first, didn't you? Ah.

Well, the first, I've told you this, the first time I played it, the dog put itself to bed. And Lisa was wanting to kill that donkey in Yankee Doodle.

After she heard me upstairs. It's quite funny. But I love it. I love it. Oh, my finger ends are hard now. I feel like I'm getting there. Yeah, I'm learning some scales, chords.

[1 : 05] I'm going to do it. One day I'll play the banjo up here. Yeah, yeah, you just wait. You just wait. It's coming. So, I don't have a musical story to tell you, except I've told you a little bit about Bono before.

Bono before. So, I've got a picture. I can't. Jesus can't. So, this kind of sums up a little bit of my own life, in a way, through the life story of the person who is my favorite.

Well, the rock band is my favorite band, U2. I told you that when I became a Christian in 1981, you know, I was a boxer and a Newcastle supporter and a pretty bad lad, really, in so many ways.

Drinking too much, doing wrong things too much, you know, the kind of stuff. But I was a northeast lad, and it wasn't cool to be a Christian. And then I became a Christian, and I had all kinds of run-ins with my dad, who was also my boxing trainer.

And you've heard those stories before. So, you know, Jim Reeves in a cowboy hat wouldn't cut it and sell shields. So, I discovered that U2 were Christians.

[2 : 15] Some of them, at least three members of the band were Christians. A little bit older than me, but not much. And that was quite cool, because they were a cool band. They had New Year's Day Out as their top single, Region No. 2.

And I bought the album War. And on War, there's the song 40, and I mentioned that last time. But there's also a song in there called Rejoice.

Rejoice is about Bono looking at the world and seeing so many bad things in it. He was from Ireland, and he spoke out against the IRA, which was a very brave thing to do, and a sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland.

And he advocated for peace. That was a very difficult thing to do. He himself was from a home where his father was a Catholic and his mother was a Protestant. And he had become part of Shalom, a Christian community.

And The Edge, who's the lead guitarist, Dave Evans, he was actually going to become a missionary. He only decided against it when Bono convinced him to do the first album.

[3 : 21] Just give it a try. And the rest, as it were, is history. But in Rejoice, there's a lyric where Bono says, I can't change the world, but I can change the world in me.

I can't change the world, but I can change the world in me. And then you remember him in Live Aid with Feed the World, and you might also know something of his story in his book Surrender.

It tells you all about his story. His story of how he advocated for world poverty, for the end to the violence in Ireland, for the Drop the Dead campaign, for compassion to HIV sufferers, especially in Africa.

Got \$50 million out of Jesse Helms, who believed that AIDS was a punishment of God upon gay people. And still he went and advocated for them.

Got \$200 million out of George Bush Jr. for developing world aid. And he's done amazing things with Jubilee 2000, give millions of his own money to the cause.

[4 : 31] And some people don't like him because he's opinionated. He likes to preach. He's egotistical by his own admission.

He loves being in the limelight. He's a big mouth, as he says. He went to Ethiopia. And when he went to Ethiopia, he saw the poverty in the village, and it broke his heart.

And he'd give him the inspiration for the song, Where the Streets Have No Name. I want to run. I want to hide. I want to tear down the walls that hold me inside.

The cities are flood and our love turns to rust. We've beaten and blown by the wind, trampled in the dust. I'll show you a place high on the desert plain, where the streets have no name.

That was Ethiopia, in poverty, in famine. And it motivated him to give his life for the service of the poor. In surrender, 40 years later, 30 to 40 years later, he was asked what he'd learned about his life.

[5 : 36] And interestingly, he wrote, I can change the world, but I can't change the world in me. Remember the other way, when he was a young man, full of himself.

Yeah? I can't change the world, but I can change the world in me. He'd done amazing things with the millions he'd earned and all the influence he has.

He says, I can change the world, but I can't change the world in me. He's learned that I can't, but Jesus can. Next slide, please.

You see, Jesus told us a story about, or give us a metaphor, about the Christian life. He said, Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, or carry heavy burdens, I'm caught in it by memory, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

[6 : 43] And there's the picture of the yoked cattle. Imagine if one of them had to plow the field alone. That would be hard work if the other one went on strike and decided it wasn't going to play ball.

The reason why they're yoked together, of course, is so they walk in tandem, and the yoke exists as a system of restraint, but also to compel obedience. Jesus, speaking to people who had religion up to their eyes, and had been overwhelmed by all the rules and regulations of the religious elites who told them how to behave and how to live, said, Look, if you keep trying to please God on your own, you'll never do it.

you'll find that you can't change the world in you. But if you surrender to me, and you yoke yourself to me, and you walk in step with me, you will find that I can change the world in you.

As Jesus said, or as Paul said, he discovered in his life of Jesus, I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength. God can take our story, our brokenness, our weakness, our failings, our sin, and he can deal with them and cleanse them and make them right, and then he can set us on a pathway in life of walking with Jesus, and he'll fix our world for us, and clean up our hearts, and make things right.

And we've heard two testimonies, wonderful testimonies, great stories, wonderful. They will go in a catalog of other people's stories, and they'll go online, if you want them to go online, you can refuse, of course.

[8 : 34] I'm hard to say no to, though. But they just produce a catalog of story after story after story of how people, when they have found themselves to be weak and broken and sinful and in need, have discovered hope in Jesus.

They've learned to walk this life in step with our Lord Jesus Christ. I can change the world, but I can't change the world in me.

But Jesus can. Yesterday, we had the Holy Spirit Day, and I will never forget this, as long as I live. It was one of those wonderful moments. I said to people, I've got some oil here.

Oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, and I'll just take some oil, and if you let me, I'll put a sign of a cross on your head and ask God to put his Holy Spirit into your life. And the first person was Mary.

91-ish, or 92. In my mind, she's 92. In her, I'm 91. Earlier in the day, she walked across here, and Ray was helping her across. She was on a stick. And I said, as I watched her going across, I said, Mary, don't run, mind.

[9 : 49] And I said to her, Mary, there's an old saying. You can't teach an old dog new tricks. She looked at me and says, don't you believe it, she says. And then she told a story of how she came to church when Ray eventually invited her.

She came to church. I'm going to test it out. And her words to the other people in the group is, when I started to come to church, it was like a magnet. I just couldn't stop coming.

And she said, now I say to my family, don't you come on a Sunday and mess my day up. Because I'm going to church. They have to come on Saturdays now. But then I took that oil, and I went to her, and I put the sign of the cross on her head, and asked that God would fill her with the Holy Spirit.

And, you know, she's a tough Middlesbrough lass, is Mary. But the tears in her eyes, the joy in her heart. And I said to her this morning, how are you, Mary?

Yes, did you enjoy it? Oh, it was wonderful, she says. Absolutely wonderful. She has given her burden to Jesus, and allowed Him to carry it for her.

[11 : 02] And now she is in yoke with Him at 91 years of age, walking step by step with Jesus. Learn to take the easy yoke of Jesus.

And the last slide, just for you. Because you know I'm a big fan of this guy, Dallas Willard, and you can't possibly read that. Dallas Willard said that the problem with us as Christians is that we often think about what we can't do.

Well, you know, I'm not perfect. I can't do this. I can't do that. Jesus doesn't want us to think about what we can't do. He wants us to think what we can do with Him. You see, I remember when Alan was ill with his cancer.

Two lots of it. I remember that. And I remember that there was another gentleman, George Verder, who used to come to Whitby for various things.

Not George Verder. No, the guy from Leeds. Verner Wright. I remember when Verner Wright used to come from Leeds every year for Beach Mission.

[12 : 05] And one year, we got news that Verner Wright had got cancer, terminal cancer, and he was going to die. And he was going to Eastern Europe at the time.

He was due to go. He was a professor at Leeds University. And he was going to Eastern Europe, so he had to get clearance from the doctor to go. So he went into the doctor, and the doctor said to him, well, I wouldn't advise you flying, you know, you're very poorly.

He said to his doctor, he said, all of my life, I follow Jesus, and I often wonder what it would be like to get to this point where somebody told me I was going to die.

Would my faith still work then? He says, it does. I'm going to Eastern Europe. And he went. He died shortly after. But you see, he never died.

For me, to live is Christ, to die is gain. Jesus says, I am the resurrection of life. Whoever believes in me, even if he die, yet shall he live. And the one who lives and believes in me will never die.

[13 : 07] And I can testify that in all of the years Alan suffered, he never did complain, and he wasn't afraid, and he never lost his faith.

So, by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word is established. We can't, but Jesus can. I can't change the world in me, but Jesus can. And I invite you to experience that for yourself. Amen. Amen. Amen.