

COUNTRY MUSIC'S OBSESSION WITH JESUS

BEAR FRUIT

There's nothing wrong with obsessing over Jesus, His name, or the unrepayable gift he's given us. Since the early adolescence of American country music, The Lord's name has frequently found its way to the center of country music's most distinguished singers' lyrics and music. From bluegrass gospel, to the mainstream of Nashville, to the annual Christmas songs refurbished with a little banjo twang, Jesus is everywhere. Bible verses like Colossians 1:17 and Proverbs 15:3 literally make reference to the omnipresence of God, but when does the realm of country Music properly acknowledge God and His glory, and when does it misinterpret the Bible, and/or God's might?

Before nitpicking some of America's favorite songs, let me first state that nobody is perfect, and I give the songwriters the benefit of the doubt that they wrote/performed these songs with the best intentions. Let's take a look at some of the most recent popular country hits relating to Jesus and where the lyrics go astray from what the Bible actually says.

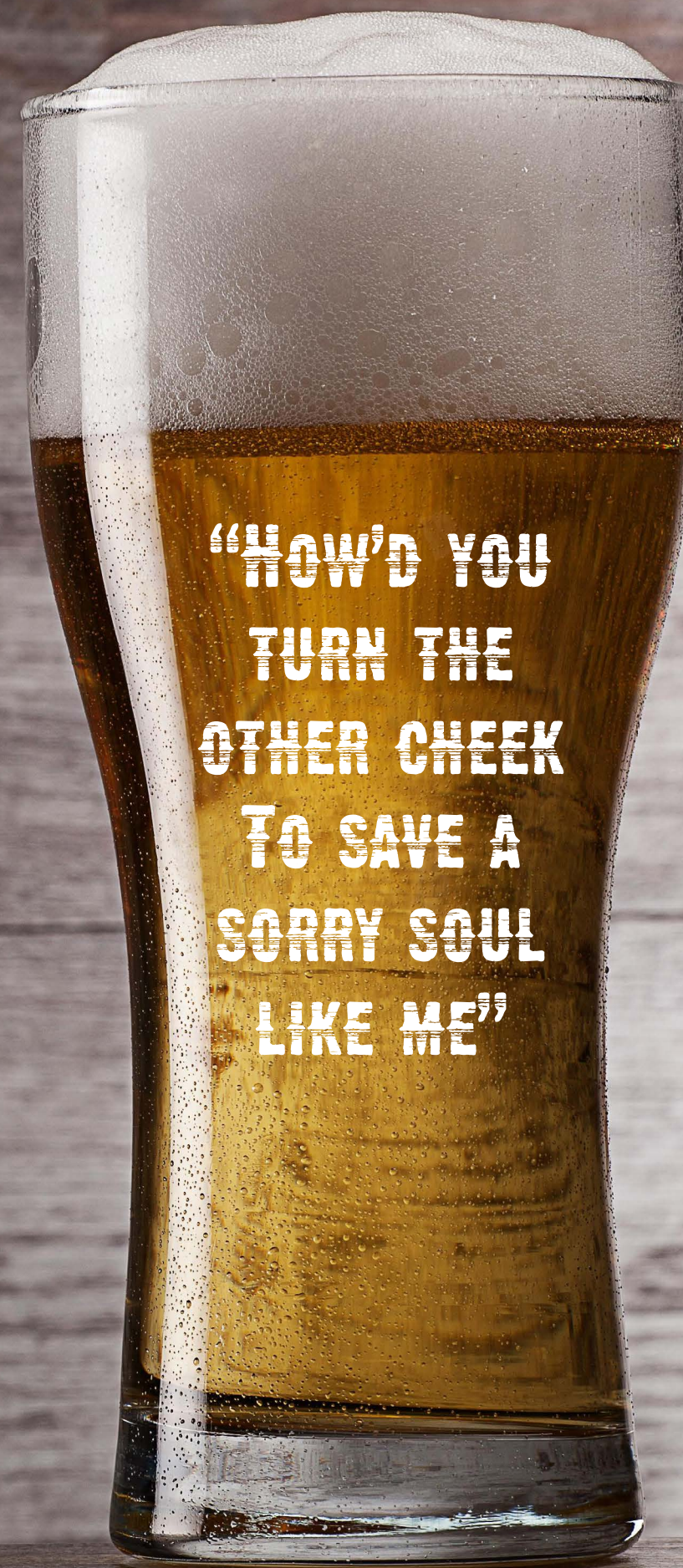


#1 Beer with Jesus by: Thomas Rhett

The Good:

There's a reason why this song resonates so strongly with many, because almost all of us have a question or two we've pondered asking when we meet the Shepherd face to face. But have no fear as Matthew 7:7 states, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you," (KJV).

As strong as our sense to have our questions is our desire to serve the Lord to our utmost ability... It's what God designed us to do in the first place. Throughout the song Rhett caters to Jesus by purchasing his drinks, and playing, "nothing but the good stuff." I see this as the literal attempt to personify 1 Samuel 12:24 which states, "Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you," (NIV)



The very Chorus feeds to our sense of awe in Christ's sacrifice for us:

How'd you turn the other cheek

To save a sorry soul like me

Do you hear the prayers I send

What happens when life ends And when you think you're comin' back again

I'd tell everyone, but no one would believe it

If I could have a beer with Jesus

To know that Jesus did turn a cheek for us despite our faults is hard to grasp. We're unfaithful, unholily... broken, but yet He loves us so much He died to rescue us anyway.

The Bad:

To put it simply, all of the questions Rhett's chorus asks can be found in the Gospel and New Testament. The question of how did He turn His cheek? The answer rests within the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. Romans 5:8 states, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us," (NIV). And the further rectification of this comes from John 15:13 saying that no one has a greater love than for a man to lay down his life for his friends.

For the question, "Do you hear the prayers I send," again the answer is found in the gospel... multiple times. Once again read Matthew 7:7, but also Matthew 21:12, "If you believe, you shall receive whatever you ask for in prayer." One of my favorite eulogy's of God's response to prayer is found in Psalm 107:28-30,

"Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad that the waters were quiet, and he brought them to their desired haven." One final nitpick comes from the line, "sit somewhere we couldn't see a clock." Let's not forget God is; He is in all things and He hold everything together.

Summary:

Wanting to serve God is a great thing, being awestruck by Him and his miracles is a good thing because who wants to serve a God they aren't amazed by?! On the flipside, His message of love and sacrifice is simple enough to understand, it's actually bluntly simple, He loves you so much He died for you.

#2

Sinner

by: Josh
Thompson

The Good:

This simple song contains a rather straight forward though process, which is “Thank you God that you never stop forgiving.” Quite literally Thompson is singing a thank you song to God in his chorus.

Cause I'm a sinner - That's just what I am
Sometime's the Devil - can get the upper Hand
But I hit -my knees / And Close My Eyes and Bow my head
And thank the Good Lord - that when it comes to forgive-ness
He's no Quitter
Cause I'm a Sinner

Rejoicing in our forgiveness brings God delight, He wants us to realize that no matter how frequently or severely we mess up, His forgiveness is stronger than our sins. In Psalm 32 David starts the Psalm with celebrating forgiveness.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
Whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity,
And in whose spirit there is no deceit.

Another plus mark this song receives is it's acknowledgment God's consistent forgiveness. As 1 John

**“AND THANK THE
GOOD LORD - THAT
WHEN IT COMES TO
FORGIVE-NESS
HE'S NO QUITTER”**

1:9 states, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us. In all actuality, the first verse of the song is a lament of Thompsons and a recognition that he's not perfect. We can only be made perfect though the one who is.

The Bad:

Because this song is rather short, there's a Biblical flaw in this song that needs to be set straight. In the third verse Thompson sings:

If Heaven Had - a limit

On the number of commandments -you could break
Before they just cast your soul a-way
Well then there's no doubt - where I'll be headin' when I check out

Nowhere in the Bible does it say “Heaven will judge you.” Sure there is a plethora of Bible verses that caution us about judging others, but the only true judge we need to concern ourselves with is the Lord. Psalms 75:7 & 50:6 both declare God as the true judge. Don't let Psalm 76:8-9 confuse you when it says, “judgment to be heard from Heaven,” keep in mind Heaven is where the Shepherd rules over all, it's His throne. If Thompson had stated “before 'He' just cast your soul a-way,” subsequent to “If Heaven had a limit,” it would make more Biblical sense. The only way the word “they” could work in the present context is if it's a referral to the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), then it makes sense.

Summary: Sing, shout, or dance your clothes off!!! Why? Because you're forgiven and there's no stopping the Lord from forgiving you of your sins other than you not asking for it! This song nails that aspect on the head. Be mindful that the one doing the forgiving is also the one accounting your judgment.

#3

Heart Like Mine

by: Mirnada Lambert

The Good:

God knows you, all of you, better than you know the back of your hand. Lambert's chorus goes:

'Cause I heard Jesus, He drank wine
I bet we'd get along just fine
He could calm a storm and heal the blind
And I bet He'd understand a heart like mine

This chorus speaks a lot of truth; yes Jesus calmed the storms (Matthew 8: 23-27), yes Jesus healed the blind (John ch. 9 and Mark 8:22-25) and it's strongly agreed upon that Jesus drank wine in the sharing of meals. Wine was actually considered safe to drink during the time of Jesus, for most water was deemed unsafe.

Back to God knowing you better than you know the back of your own hand. A strong description of God's knowledge of you can be found in Isaiah chapter 43. In specific:

"But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior," (NIV)

"CAUSE I HEARD JESUS
HE DRANK WINE I BET
WE'D GET ALONG JUST
FINE"

Also in John 10:14 the Lord reminds us that as our shepherd He knows all of His "sheep." God is saturated with love for each one of us, and despite our flaws he Loves us. As Lambert's song continues, she plays on the role of her imperfections and yet how God still loves her, and she couldn't be more correct.

The Bad:

The bad of this song is just more a word of caution. Just because it's assumed Jesus drank wine doesn't mean or give us the right to continue destructive drinking habits. Ephesians 5:8 actually exhorts against being drunk (And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit). When listening to the song, it could be argued that there's an almost insensible overtone of an, "I don't care what I do because Jesus loves me," in this song. Yes Jesus loves us, but He also simultaneously wants us to respect our bodies which are temples of the spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Summary:

"Heart like mine" wonderfully reflects God's unceasing knowledge of us, but be warned, just because the Son of Man may have shared a glass of wine with His twelve disciples doesn't mean we should correlate it to mean we should indulge in a twelve pack with our best friend...