

About...

What is my whole life?

...how and why it was written

This song was written, fairly spontaneously, during one of our morning worship and prayer times in the summer of 2011. Partly inspired by the famous words from chapter 3 of Philippians:

“But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.¹⁰”

And 4:11:

“for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.”

as I was studying the book, and trying to memorise, or at least familiarise myself with large sections of it at that time.

This scripture became a heart-cry for expressing total commitment to Jesus, and came in the midst of a season of thankfulness because so many amazing things were opening up for the Sanctuary and for me personally.

And so, I came to love using this song in thankful surrender as a promise to give everything to him.

However, shortly after this time, I entered a more challenging season which, though still full of blessing and incredible breakthroughs, gave this song a different context and meaning. Then I clung to its truth, and the promises I had made as I experienced a time of waiting for a number of breakthroughs personally and for the Sanctuary. It took on a whole new meaning during this season, and has become very precious for this.

Whatever the season, this is a song which helps me come back to my priorities, and the fact that obedience and sacrifice are a joy in response to the incredible gift of the cross, and the restored relationship with the Father that I enjoy because of it.

...how, where and when it could be used

This song can be used in corporate worship, and I've experienced it being quite powerful in this context – with the octave shift omitted in most settings as this is beyond most people's comfortable range. However whilst the melody is simple, the chord shifts from major to minor are not predictable and therefore it can take a while for people to become familiar enough with it to focus on the words, and the significance of them singing them as a prayer to offer their lives.

(The freeform bridge should be omitted for corporate use, but the main bridge, as indicated on the chord sheet, can be used if desired.)

There's no question though that this song works best when sung over people, particularly in a response setting.

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...the extra free form bridge on the recording

There are many songs which express total and heartfelt commitment to God and I am so grateful for them because I need to own my decision to follow and obey again and again. I can't remember who it was that said that the problem with living sacrifices is that they have a tendency to keep getting off the altar... but I identify with that!

The problem is though that like any sentiment, liturgy or phrase that becomes a central and familiar part of devotion, words of commitment can become religious and formulaic, and lose some of the power of what they meant, and I wanted at least in some part of the song to name what for me I need to actively choose to count as loss at this point in my journey.

When Paul talked about being "content in any circumstance", he wasn't expressing a vague sentiment, he was saying when I'm in prison; when I'm beaten; when I'm falsely accused; when I struggle to make enough to make ends meet because I give my time to the church for free... I am content because Jesus means more.

When he counted "all things loss", he wasn't just making a generalisation, he was referring to specific things he'd had and given up such as wealth and his status among the religious elite of the Jewish establishment.

And so I wanted to get beyond well worn religious phrases to flesh out some of these "circumstances" and "things" that following Christ for me means. There are so many things that the world – and sometimes even our churches – hold "dear" and it is a day by day choice to choose Christ and his call over what sometimes feels a bit like the matrix!

...the dedication

I dedicated this song to my parents for Easter 2012, in recognition of, and thanks for, the most important gifts they have given me. Like all good parents they prize my health, happiness and education highly, and have made sacrifices time and time again to work for these. And like fewer, but other, excellent parents they go beyond even this to model and teach a way of life that prizes faith and people above things and achievements.

What makes them exceptional though, even among the very strongest and best of Christian parents, is that they have always actively encouraged and desired me to fulfil God's call on my life above anything else. And so their love, encouragement and wisdom is a huge help to me as I seek to pursue and obey the "upward call of Christ".

That is a gift few children receive from their parents – but one that is infinitely precious, because it helps set you free to partner with God in becoming who he created you to be.

...its place on the journey to where world and worship meet

For me, I would classify this lyric as belonging to a family of "songs from the road" – my own personal songs of ascent... they are vital for me as I keep journeying forward, acting as anchor points for my heart, promises to God, and decisions as I live for him. Again and again I come back to this place of recommitment in order that I might seek to love God and love others with my whole heart, strength and resources.

As I count the cost of laying down my life to love him, and others, in very real and practical ways – I need songs like this to put my heart into words.