

Music and Conversation with Jenny Youngman

Steve: With us today in the studio for music and conversation is singer/songwriter Jenny Youngman. We'll be talking about Jenny's recently completed CD *Glimpse of Glory*. Jenny, thanks for joining us today.

Jenny: It's good to be here.

Steve: Great. Now I understand you moved here from Chicago, originally from Kansas.

Jenny: We did. Born and raised in Kansas and after college got married and my husband and I both felt a call to go to seminary. So we went to div school just outside of Chicago in Evanston, and spent about 2 or 3 years there. I finished my degree early. So I had to go to work first and got a job in Nashville. We moved to Nashville and have been here ever since—about 8 and a half or 9 years.

Steve: And you're doing curriculum writing and editing curriculum.

Jenny: I have been. I just changed jobs and, you know, that's a whole 'nother story, but yeah, that's what I came to do. I've always been in youth ministry and...but also felt like I was a writer, and sort of found the best of both worlds working in youth curriculum, you know, working with youth pastors and giving them resources.

Steve: Would you say then that creating the songs for *Glimpse of Glory* was the first full-scale exercise in songwriting?

Jenny: I would never have called myself a songwriter. You have to write a hundred bad songs.... I'm sure I've got notebooks full of really bad songs, but there were a few that I started playing for people and they started saying, "Yeah, that really speaks to me." And "I think you should play that for some more people." And you know, when you can play it for your spouse and, you know, he doesn't laugh you out of the room, then that's, I think, a good sign 'cause you're the most honest with each other. And so, yeah, I would never have called myself a songwriter...even 3 years ago. So this is a new thing and something that we're really excited about and something that we definitely feel like the Spirit is just sort of working up in us.

Steve: You've listed your husband as executive producer on the CD. It sounds to me like that has a lot to do with that process of helping birth the songs and give you the confidence to know which ones.

Jenny: For sure. He's the first one that hears the songs. He almost always knows when a song is just about finished, and will just sort of sit down beside me and let me play 'em for him. He definitely is instrumental in helping, you know, bounce ideas and even melodies. That's why I would list him as executive producer. He really sort of helps select the songs and guide me and say, you know, which songs would speak to the biggest audience of people.

Steve: Ok, could you tell us a little bit about the opening track on your record, "Eyes Wide Open"?

Jenny: Sure. I think that song is like sort of my anthem for the record. It's probably one of the first songs that I ever wrote and completed and played for other people and got really good feedback about. And it sort of occurred to me that if you want to see the work of God you have to open your eyes and be willing to look for it. A lot of times we bury our heads in our prayers and forget to look for the answers. And I thought, I need to be about looking for God's work, that God's presence is all around us and God is at work in the world and I want to look for it; I want to see it; I want to be inspired by it. And I want to get to work myself. And I have a devotional book that I read that just has classic writings in it and...a dear bishop in the United Methodist Church wrote a lot of the entries. And one of his prayers ended by saying "convert me, unmake me, remake me." And I just thought, yeah, that is...that is what God does to the world. That's the work of the kingdom, to be unmade and remade over and again. And that's the glory of God.

Steve: So it's not just a personal reverence, but an engaging in some way with the day-to-day, the moment-to-moment.

Jenny: For sure. You know, God is in the friendships. And God's glory is in the faces of my children and their friends and relationships, and even broken places, to look and see that God is there and active, and that God's glory is in the face of, you know, everyone around us and that we have something to learn about God in a really dynamic way.

Steve: There's a song on your record called "God Is in This Place" that is very comforting. And it seems to be talking to the subject of brokenness, of the need for healing. You mean that as much healing within the body as...as just healing to any person.

Jenny: I do. I just think that God is about healing and restoration and that song came as a prayer after the tsunami and Hurricane Katrina. You couldn't turn on the news without seeing people lining the streets or, you know, of seeing people just completely robbed of their homes and children crying and dying. That song, in particular, has such a special meaning for me because it felt like a gift from God. It feels like a way to pray.

Everyone has their way of dealing with tragedy. And, you know, a lot of time my way is just to sit down at the piano and work it out. And that's sort of how that song came to be. It's been my prayer all along that it would speak to people in even just the day-to-day tragedies of broken relationships and accidents and disease and the general hurts that we feel that we have that we never speak aloud. I've always hoped that that song would really speak to people in that really sort of deep place in their hearts to say God is there with you.

Steve: A few moments ago you mentioned the importance of friends and relationships. That's a theme that you also bring into the song *Love You Like That*, a song about community. How did that one come about?

Jenny: Well, you know, my husband is a pastor. And I'm sort of new at being the pastor's wife. I wrote that when we were going to a new church. And I just sort of, you know, fearful of how people would receive me and also sort of what I wanted to be and who I wanted to become and what my dream for the church would be. And also there's a verse in there that I wrote for someone who just doesn't like me. And it was a painful relationship. And I just sort of said, you know, you can not like me all you want, but you know I'm called to love you. And I'm gonna do that because that's what real community is. And that's what it means to follow Jesus, you know, to love people that it's hard to like. And so it's sort of my declaration of community and what that means, especially in the church.

Steve: You've had the opportunity to play these songs for some people in area churches. Right?

Jenny: We have. We've been mostly in Tennessee playing quite a few concerts and trying to get this music out there. And, you know, our hope is that we could keep getting it out there and connecting these songs to more people, that they would find hope and inspiration in them.

Steve: We've been speaking with Jenny Youngman. And you can get her new CD *Glimpse of Glory* either on iTunes as a download, or you can go to jennyyoungman.com. We appreciate having the chance to talk to you and hear your music live in the studio today, Jenny. Thanks so much.

Jenny: Well, thanks for having me.