

Week 3: The Gaithers

He Touched Me

Text and Tune: Bill Gaither (1936–), 1963

- Born and raised in Alexandria, Indiana, a small rural town
 - Formed the Bill Gaither Trio in 1956, while a student at Anderson University (also in Indiana)
 - Following graduation with an English major and music minor, started work as a high school English teacher in 1959
 - After difficulty maintaining both teaching and music careers, became a full-time musician in 1967
 - “He Touched Me” was his first major success in songwriting, recorded by artists from Jimmy Durante to Elvis Presley
 - The song idea was suggested by a minister in the Church of God, the father of his friend and fellow singer Doug Oldham
1. Given that this was the Gaithers’ first big hit, what qualities do you see (in both text and tune) that account for its popularity? What is the central message?

The Old Rugged Cross Made The Difference

Text and Tune: Bill Gaither (1936–), Gloria Gaither (1942–), 1970

- Gloria grew up in the Battle Creek area of Michigan and even worked for the Kellogg company for a time
 - Also attended Anderson University and studied English, French, and Sociology
 - Met Bill when they were both teachers at Alexandria Monroe High School, and married in 1962
 - They have co-written countless songs together, where Gloria typically provides the words and Bill the music
 - In addition, Gloria is a published author of over 40 books, half of them for children
1. This hymn shares a similar theme with “He Touched Me” but approached in a different way. What are the main differences you see between the two? Which do you find more effective?
 2. The title and chorus directly reference the classic gospel hymn “The Old Rugged Cross” from the early 1900s. What connections between the two songs do you notice?

Hear My Song, Lord

Text and Tune: Bill Gaither (1936–), Gloria Gaither (1942–), 1989

- In addition to continuing to perform and record, formed the Gaither Music Company serving as record label, publisher, and retail store
 - Formed the Gaither Vocal Band in 1981 to build on the success of the Bill Gaither Trio
 - Many famous contemporary Christian musicians launched their careers touring with the Gaithers, including Michael W. Smith, Sandi Patty, Steve Green, Amy Grant, and others
 - In 1991, debuted the Gaither Homecoming, a video and record series (and later tour) compiling the best of Southern gospel music
1. In what ways do you see a modern “praise chorus” influence on this song? At the same time, are there other features that make it still seem “Gaither-like”?