

I'd like to share some of the back-story of "Holding On", a song we have sung several times as SBCC. My hope is that this story will give you greater insight into a song that has become a significant part of my spiritual journey.

HOLDING ON  
Andy White, © 2006

*I've been broken, I have been down  
I've seen your signs, to you I'm bound  
It's not easy, I don't feel strong  
Plans fall short as, days feel long*

*I'm holding on to love, I'm holding on to grace  
I'm holding on to you, 'til I see your face  
I hold on to you, I hold on to you  
I hold on to you, I hold on to you*

*I come to you, and you know  
What I do not say, what I do not show  
I come to you, so I can  
Hold on to you, I hold on to you  
I hold on to you, I hold on to you*

This song evolved during a painful season of life. I became friends with Matt Steele about twelve years ago. Matt and I were in a rock band together. Through the numerous practices and gigs, we came to know one another extremely well and developed a multifaceted, trusting friendship. Our camaraderie went well beyond our attempts to create the best music we could. As our relationship grew tighter, we shared the ups and downs of faith. It was a privilege to have a friend to respect so highly on both a musical and personal level.

When my wife and I first started attending SBCC in 2003, Matt was one of the only close friends we had. I'll never forget the joy on his face the first time he saw us walk down the aisles.

He made us feel like we instantly belonged and bridged me into friendships with his friends—people after God's heart that I now call "lifelong friends". In addition, Matt persuaded me to use my musical gifts for worship as soon and often as possible. The profound spiritual and musical imprints he left on my life will forever impact my future.

Sadly, I only had about a decade of Matt's intense influence on my life. As most of you know, he lost an excruciating battle with brain cancer in October of 2006. Watching my friend slowly

die was the most difficult trial I've had to face. I desperately wanted to help and encourage him, but often felt like there was little I could do to make a significant difference.

Why would heaven want to take a godly man in the prime of his life? Wasn't it obvious that his family needed him? His church needed him? I needed him? As Matt's life drew to a close, I wrestled with these types of questions.

Thankfully, I did not tackle these difficult uncertainties alone. My church, my friends, my family—we were all seeking insights into the quandary of Matt's shortened life. What I discovered were two very simple realities that I already knew but had not yet experienced to this degree.

Reality #1: Life is hard.

As tough as it was for me to lose Matt, I knew it was far more agonizing for his immediate family and closest friends. This is one instance of pain in life. We can all name a myriad of struggles, deaths, wars, conflicts, and misfortunes. As much as we'd like to escape challenge, it always seems to be looming. I found comfort in this passage:

*Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. (James 1:12)*

Reality #2: Heaven is remarkable.

Matt's life overwhelmingly pointed heavenward. At Matt's memorial, many shared about the wonder of heaven. This was evident in his time on earth, and also more profoundly now in paradise. Reed mentioned that if Matt had the chance to leave heaven, he would refuse. Matt is seeing and experiencing the unparalleled love of Christ in a way that we can hardly fathom. As I pondered this reality, my enthusiasm for heaven inflated.

*Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. (Revelation 21:3-4)*

Why am I holding on? I believe the enormous blessings that await us far outweigh the difficulties of this life. As painful as earth can be, the promise of heaven is worth holding on to. My friendship with Matt, and the aftermath of his passing, inspired me to hold more tightly to my one and only hope—until I see His face.

*Labor while you live, to serve God and do what good you can, and endeavor to improve every dispensation to God's glory and your own spiritual good, and to*

*God's glory and your own spiritual good, and be content to do and bear all that God calls you to do in this wilderness, and never expect to find this world anything better than a wilderness. If you lived near us, yet our breath and yours would soon go forth, and we should return to our dust, whither we are all hastening. 'Tis of infinitely more importance to have the presence of a heavenly Father, and to make progress towards a heavenly home. Let us all take care that we may meet there at last. (Jonathan Edwards Reader p. 312)*