



Reverend Jennifer Smith

Missionary and Speaker

Dear Mercy Me,

Greetings in the precious name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

It is such an honor to share my testimony with you about your song, "I Can Only Imagine." It had such a tremendous impact on me when it first came out – and still does!

This testimony is to some extent personal, but I have overcome! It is now my ministry. I will recount some details as they are relevant to the purpose of writing this letter, as well as the building of my faith!

A little background first: At age eleven, I began drinking and smoking marijuana. By the time I was fourteen, I was a full-blown addict using alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, LSD, and more. As a result, I ended up having a twenty year drug addiction, which led to a \$1000 a day crack habit, eight years of homelessness, jails, and prostitution.

Why is this significant to you? In November 2001, at age 31, I was riding in a vehicle with a particular companion from my street life. I was flipping through the radio stations... undoubtedly looking for a rap song to fit my single-minded lifestyle. I assure you I was NOT in search of anything Christian. I had never listened to that a day in my life. I didn't know the first thing about Christianity.

However, I came across your release "I Can Only Imagine." Now at the time, I had no idea of the name, but what I did know is that it was absolutely stunning, show-stopping song I believe is the term in your circle – but just for an audience of one. I honestly could not change the station. I absolutely loved what I heard. I believe captivated would be appropriate to say.

After some time had gone by, a few weeks at best, I was "clean" but still living some of the manners I was used to.

This is where I Can Only Imagine plays a role in my life and my heart. Before I had ever even said "I Do" at the altar, your song built a faith in me for a God I had never professed of meeting yet.

I knew I had to change – every bit of me! I had recently started going to a local church but had not given my life to Jesus. I was still in outright abuse: physical, emotional, spiritual, even self abuse. You name it. I seriously was so dead inside. This was merely normal.

One night, a man was physically beating me as usual, insisting on his demands. I was miserable. I was demoralized. I was mad. I gave in to survive. The next morning, I borrowed his truck. After taking him to work and dropping him off, I came back to pack up all of my stuff as fast as I could, scared to d.e.a.t.h. If he'd caught me, the consequences would be bad, very bad.

Well naturally the devil started to tell me that I could not do it. It would not work. I will never change. I'd done this a hundred times. I was doomed with this life. There really is not a God, and if there was, He didn't care for me anyway. I had done too many appalling things.

Nonetheless, I worked hard. I loaded that truck faster than lightning. I just knew I had to. Something was different this time. I told myself that over and over. I finished. I didn't take long. I didn't have a lot of belongings.

Finally, I sat down in the driver's seat and took a deep breath. Then a thought came to me, so I proposed the thought out loud, "God, if you're real, and if I am doing the right thing, please let "that" song come on."

I cranked the truck, and IT DID! It really did! It started on the very first note of your song, I Can Only Imagine!

I didn't have a clue what "that" song was, but God did. He knew exactly which song I was talking about, "I Can Only Imagine!" That day I could do more than imagine; I could believe! It was absolutely life changing! And actually, to this day, I cannot even tell you how the radio station was on a location that would even play that song... it just was!

I didn't have a clue where I was going to go or what I was going to do, but God did! I had so much peace just from "that" one song! I sang so loud as if I knew the words. Hahaha. I remember it like it was yesterday! Peace, that's what I knew! Encountered, that's what I got!

How can something as simple as a song seem so big? God's ways are above our ways. He meant for your song to be out right at that moment, right at that time.

This is so huge to me. See, I was SO bound. I was the extreme of addicts. I weighed less than a hundred pounds; I would stay up using for eight and nine days in a row. I robbed, stole, cheated, lied, broke up families, abandoned my own, did some of the most unfathomable things, been to jail countless times... was even on the most wanted list for north-central Florida with a reward on my head, and for the first time EVER, I experienced a taste of freedom. That song was/is/still SO powerful!

Oh by the way, it is our anniversary! November 5th! So why am I writing you this nine years down the road? I'm writing because I FINALLY get to see you LIVE! This meeting has been on the top of my wish list for years. I am so grateful that God really does give us the desires of our heart!

To let you know, I am STILL running hard after Jesus! I am a full time missionary to homeless people, crack addicts, prisoners, and prostitutes. HA! I also travel and speak about my testimony, glorifying God every breath of the way! I stomped in the devil's face nine years ago, and I am stomping in it today! Oh thank you Holy Spirit!

Throughout the years, I have told many people this testimony to encourage them in their faith. Now I get the privilege of sharing it with you. Amen God.

In closing, I would love to personally thank you for your love for Jesus; furthermore, thank you for your talents and gifts being used for His Kingdom. I am a life YOU have helped change.

God Bless YOU, Mercy Me! It is an honor to worship the King of Kings with you and through you!

Imagining Eternity,

Jennifer F. Smith