Steven Curtis Chapman is a contemporary Christian writer/musician who has single handedly altered and shaped many parts of my life. As a very young listener, I was often exposed to his music on the way to and from church every Sunday morning. Back then, I valued Steven for his fun and catchy sound, but as time went on, that appreciation soon became much more important and meaningful to me. As I grew, so did his music. Through his brilliant use of theme throughout his entire career, Steven’s new works can and will continue to be as timeless as his older ones. Steven has sold over nine million recordings, and he has released over 20 albums. All of this success is an indication that in every sense, Chapman is a true professional.

Born in Paducah, Kentucky, Steven Curtis Chapman has always had country music in his blood. Growing up, Chapman learned to play several instruments while hanging out in his father's music store, excelling at guitar and piano (Brennan). These instruments would later become a vital part of his ministry. In 1987, he signed with Sparrow Records as a songwriter, and the rest was history.

The main reason that I enjoy Steven Curtis Chapman’s music and writing is because of his use of theme throughout each one of his albums. "Theme has always been so important for me," says Chapman. “I've got to be hearing clearly from God about what it is that He's giving me to share from this platform. It doesn't have to be earth shattering for everyone else, but it has to be for me” (Chapman). Steven’s earlier albums, First Hand, Real Life Conversations, More to This Life, For the Sake of the Call, and The Great Adventure all capture the early nineties feel of music, but with ground breaking
lyrics that opened the door for future Christian artists. An example of these inspirational and thoughtful lyrics can be seen in the song, More to This Life: So where do we start – To find every part of what makes this life complete – If we turn our eyes to Jesus, we’ll find – That life’s true beginning is there at the cross where He died – Jesus died to bring us more to this life than living and dying - More than just trying to make it through the day - More to this life - More than these eyes alone can see, and there’s more than this life alone can be. Regardless of your point of view, these lyrics are a hint of his ability as well as an insight to his is timeless writing. This song was written in 1989, and it is still not only a favorite of mine, but a favorite of many listeners today. The cacophony of the entire song draws the listener’s ear right into the song. Chapman’s use of hyperboles and metaphors show his brilliant creativity: If we turn our eyes to Jesus, we’ll find – That life’s true beginning is there at the cross where He died.

Moving through the nineties, Steven released about an album a year, winning numerous awards for his works. Chapman also released a Greatest Hits album in 1997, which included hits like, The Great Adventure, For the Sake of the Call, More to This Life, I Will Be Here, Heaven in the Real World, and Lord of the Dance. During this era, Chapman mixed his southern country style with a more contemporary approach, creating a sound no one had previously heard in the Christian music genre. From the acoustic riffs to the slow piano ballads, this age in Steven’s music defined him to be one of the greatest Christian artists ever – not just because of his great music, but also because of the way he is able to manipulate and mold great content into true poetry.

Branching off the Christian stage, Steven wrote many love songs to his wife Mary Beth, and they became instant hits that are still well known today. I Will Be Here is one of those works: I will be here when you feel like being quiet – When you need to speak your
mind, I will listen – And I will be here when the laughter turns to crying – Through the winning, losing, and trying – We’ll be together – I will be here. The variety Steven offers in his works is so vast, thus having a wide mixture of fans, which devoutly listen to his music. Songs like these are not just songs, but parts of many individual’s lives. We as listeners tend to take the classic songs that we know and love for granted. When you think about it, all these thoughts and ideas had to come from somewhere. From using certain diction to phrasing each line and verse, Steven has excelled immensely throughout his career as a writer and as a musician.

Progressing further into the career of Steven Curtis Chapman, I find that his latest works are perhaps his most meaningful. Steven’s latest album, This Moment, includes a vast array of real life stories and inspirational events that occurred throughout the life of this 50-time Dove Award winner. His use of theme during this album is a true reflection of where he is as a writer because even the title track, This Moment, has a deeper meaning that what it seems. “I want to remind people that God is more concerned with our day-to-day than we might think. He is not just in the valley or on the mountaintop. He’s on the straight open road, too. I hope we can begin to really experience what He’s doing in this moment” (Chapman). Notice that even in this quote, Steven utilizes his skill of using metaphors by saying that “He’s not just in the valley or on the mountaintop.” The valley, in this context, is the part of a person’s life that is down and unhappy. The mountain is a “spiritual high,” if you will, and the feeling that life can’t get much better.

Stepping further into the album, it is pleasing to discover how Chapman seamlessly applies his chosen theme across various sonic setting and three distinct areas: family, global mindedness, and worship. In the ballad entitled, Cinderella, Steven gets caught up in the beautiful moment of a father dancing with his daughter from childhood
into adulthood, unknowing spinning what could be his biggest cross-format radio hit to date in the process. So personal and so universal, it was the first song written for *This Moment* and the one among so many greats that is most certain to last (Chapman).

In the end, the work of any writer is most easily judged by both its timeliness and its timelessness. Steven Curtis Chapman has spoken to a generation in a way that few, if any have accomplished, but he has also has spoken enduring words to future generations in a way that will be eternally meaningful. “The words of Revelation 1:19 – ‘write, therefore, the things that are seen’ – kept coming back to me,” he recalls. “It was as if God was saying, ‘Just write what you know.’”
Works Cited


