

More Precious Than Silver

By Phil Christensen

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A job at McDonald's, a broken fast and a simple act of repentance combine to set the stage for Lynn DeShazo's "More Precious Than Silver." The account, perhaps foolish by the world's standards, birthed one of the most loved praise songs of our generation and launched the songwriting career of a profoundly influential psalmist.

DeShazo learned to play guitar at age 11, the same year she became a Christian. During her teen years, she listened closely to the radio and developed a good ear for popular music.

As a freshman in college, DeShazo's musical and devotional life began to blend, but her early efforts at writing praise songs were meager.

Her entire repertoire consisted of only three songs at the end of three years, but she remembers that the early material seemed to evoke "a strong response in people."

After graduating in 1978, DeShazo took a humble job to support her involvement with a campus ministry at Auburn University. "I did the thing that all parents hope their child will do upon graduating," she says, laughing, "I went to work for McDonald's!" It was a time for her to discover praise and worship, but also to learn spiritual disciplines, including fasting. One foodless Wednesday her manager placed her on "fryer duty" at work, where she and buckets of French fries began a battle of the wills.

"Those fries just kept getting bigger as the day went on," she says. "I began to meditate on those fries." After looking to the left and to the right, she helped herself. Immediately waves of guilt washed over her. When her shift was completed, she went to the Lord and repented. DeShazo was impressed immediately with Colossians 2:3, that in Christ is "hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." With this, "for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her," from Proverbs 8:11.

"In my spirit, I believe God linked those things together and I began to worship the Lord and sing. The song just came out of my heart in worship to the Lord; I had a sense of God's presence and that He had really given me something."

Lord, You are / More precious than silver / Lord, You are / More costly than gold / Lord,
You are / More beautiful than diamonds / And nothing I desire compares with You.

She took a few days to polish the chorus before sharing with her local church. A few weeks later she added the verse many have not heard:

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And who can weigh the value / Of knowing You? / Who can judge the worth / Of who You are? / Who can count the blessings / Of loving You? / Who can say / Just how great You are?

Her worship leader liked the song very much and it was well received by the church. Visitors carried the simple chorus to their home fellowships. When it arrived at Christ For The Nations Institute in Dallas, Texas, it became a favorite among students.

In 1982 and 1983, DeShazo began to get regular requests for permission to use "More Precious Than Silver." She was baffled at how so many had learned the piece. "I sure hadn't taught it to them!" she says. "It was exciting, though, to realize that all these people out there had heard this song and were ministered to by it."

If the song was already spreading like a brush fire, Hosanna! Music certainly breathed on the flames. In 1986, it appeared on HIM's fifth recording, the popular *Glory To The King*. It has since appeared on at least a dozen Integrity releases and scores of independent recordings. "More Precious Than Silver" is now published in almost every hymnal and songbook; CCLI reports it consistently among the top 25 most-licensed songs.

Once she became a staff writer with Hosanna! Integrity, DeShazo penned such classics as "Yahweh Is Holy," "Be Magnified," "Some May Trust In Chariots," "Lead Me To The Rock," and "Turn My Heart." Worship leaders around the world associate Lynn DeShazo with well-crafted praise; many regard her works as genuine worship landmarks and place her with great hymn writers like Fanny Crosby and Francis Havergal.

"If I've developed a niche," she says, "it's for the singable, often simple worship song." "The emergence of the song in my life," she says, "can be directly attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit."

In addition to her global ministry, DeShazo also embraces a local ministry, the Liberty Church of Birmingham, Alabama. She seeks to balance and integrate these two spheres of her life. "I've always felt the local church was very important" she says. At 41, DeShazo travels and teaches and is thankful for intercessors at home that keep track of her schedule and pray for her. The accountability of a local church, she says, "keeps you from getting a big head," admitting that people sometimes put her in a celebrity status. "Once they get to know me, they find out I'm just 'people' like them."

"I think folks are relieved," she summarizes, "to hear that 'More Precious Than Silver' was written as a result of someone blowing it!"