

## **GUIDE MY FEET**

**Produced, Written and Directed by Lulie Haddad**

**Associate Producer: Lillian Baulding**

**NARRATOR:** This is the story of a journey from rejection to revolution

**NARRATOR:** It is the story of two men, a generation apart, whose destinies demanded they challenge the traditional church.

**THOMAS A. DORSEY:** You couldn't go into a church and tell 'em do you want to sing a gospel song? The preacher wouldn't let you do it--most of them said you can only preach the gospel, you can't sing no gospel if you want to sing a song go ahead and sing it they told you just like that. I've been thrown out of some of the best the churches in America (laughs).

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** I took that cross down so I could say to folks, the suffering is not up there, the suffering is out here and from now on, you're the cross.

**NARRATOR:** It was a journey of believers and non-believers. . .Saturday nights and Sunday mornings.

**NARRATOR:** A story of the loss of hope and the possibility of new faith.

**NARRATOR:** For more than 30 years Rev. Cecil Williams has been ministering in the heart of San Francisco's red light district, known as the "Tenderloin". Williams says that Glide Memorial United Methodist Church lies at the intersection of despair and hope.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** Church is not four walls. Church is the people. We are the church. We are the church. People still want to pin it up on the building, because if they can, they would say, "We don't want you in our building because this is our church." And so they reject people based on the fact that they don't want to get their walls dirty. Or they don't want to get their walls sweaty. They don't want the walls to dance with the people in time. It's important for us to all realize that we are the church. Can't claim the building as the church. We've done that too long.

**NARRATOR:** Many come to Glide church for his message of acceptance. Many who come hear Williams speak of his own spiritual journey. A journey that began in the Jim Crow South of the 1930s.

**REEDY WILLIAMS:** We grew up in a little small town. St. Angelo, Texas. We lived on Eighth Street, on the corner in a big wooden house. It's five boys and one girl.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** I think when I came out of my mother's womb my family said, "You know, you're going to be somebody. You're going to do something. You're going to make it." As far as I can remember "You know you really OK, you're a smart kid".

**REEDY WILLIAMS:** Cecil was called "Rev" because he was the only kid I ever knew who knew what he wanted to do when he was 10 or 12 years old.

**NARRATOR:** Williams was chosen by his family to be a minister, a leader--encouraged to always speak his mind. But he was a child growing up in the segregated South.

**NARRATOR:** He watched his father enter the white church through the back door, a church where he worked as a janitor all week but he was not welcome to worship on Sunday

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** I kept asking my mother and members of the family--what makes us so different that they cannot, as whites, respond in kind. If they're all right, we ought to be all right, you know.

They kept trying to explain it to me, but I felt so rejected.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** We grew up in the church and we stayed practically all day long the church had become for us the place where you come and work out your stuff. Whatever you're going through, the church always offered some form of relief and release when we stayed around in community and rejoiced together and--and clapped our hands and shouted together it relieved you of some of that stuff you had gone through in the past.

**JAMES H. CONE:** The music and the preaching, and the worship service represent black people accepting themselves and rejecting white definitions of them as non-persons They have a sense of themselves in the music and in the preaching, and by doing that they, of course, accept themselves as they are, and they don't give a damn what white people say.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** Church became my refuge. I became stronger. I began to understand that even though we had a commitment to--to make the church the church, yet the church had a commitment to help us become free.

**NARRATOR:** Like millions before him, Williams decided that part of his quest for freedom meant leaving the South. Between the first and second world wars more than a million black southerners came North in a move called the "second emancipation."

The journey out of the South was the largest internal migration the country had ever known.

**JAMES H. CONE:** When poor black people from the South, made their way to the North, it was a movement of faith. It was a religious people making their trek toward the promised land. where for Abraham, it was Canaan for black people it was the North.

**NARRATOR:** When the trains reached North and crossed the Ohio River, many migrants sank to their knees and sang spirituals. Men stopped their watches as if to signify--the beginning of a new day. Their voices, their hopes were heard in the poetry of Langston Hughes.

**CECIL WILLIAMS READS LANGSTON HUGHES:** "I pick up my life and take it with me. And I put it down in Chicago, Detroit, Buffalo, Scranton I am fed up with Jim Crow laws. People who are cruel and afraid, who lynch and run, I pick up my life and take it away. On a one-way ticket- Gone up North, Gone out West, Gone!"

**NARRATOR:** In 1916, a seventeen-year-old musician arrived in Chicago, seeking his version of the 'promised land'. No one thought that Thomas Dorsey, a piano player from Atlanta's Red Light district would someday create a revolution in sacred music--especially not Dorsey himself. He had come to make a living.

**THOMAS A. DORSEY:** Looking for money man, good money you didn't make any money in the South at that time. My father worked many time for 40-50 cents a day.

**NARRATOR:** Thomas Dorsey was born in rural Georgia. Dorsey had been raised in a deeply religious household. He listened to his parents read the bible cover to cover every year. His father was a Baptist minister. His mother, the church organist.

**LENA MCLIN:** My grandma got up every morning singing. On the days you would be trying to sleep, you would say, Grandmom, why don't you stop singing? "I'm serving the Lord". And she would pat her foot and sing.

**MICHAEL W. HARRIS:** This was a child raised in the church. He talked about standing under the porch of their house and having a hat and a cane, which his parents had given him as a small child, and pretending to preach.

**NARRATOR :** When the Dorsey's moved to Atlanta everything changed. Thomas Dorsey at age 11 dropped out of school and took a job at a local vaudeville theater. There, he was exposed day to day to the "tell it like it is" style of blues. He taught himself to play it. To compose it. The blues became his new faith. It was music associated with brothels, the down and out. A world away from "proper" church going people like his mother and father.

**HORACE CLARENCE BOYER:** Even though he, this church music was the one that got him interested in all kinds of music, once he got to the 81 Theater in Atlanta, heard Eddie Heywood play that piano, heard Ma Rainey, saw Butter Beans and Susie in their acts, it took his mind. He couldn't get over it.

**JAMES H. CONE:** The blues is a spirit in black people that helps them to know that they are human beings, even though they are not primarily Sunday people. They are they people of Saturday night, who find their own bodies and their own rhythm of their bodies in relation to each other, as an expression of their humanity, just as much as singing the songs about Jesus.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** The blues goes right to what you're suffering what you've been through When the Blues is played it gives you a sense of "I'm not going to go down. No matter what you say, I'm not going to go down, and I'm not going to give up, and that's it." That's very spiritual.

**NARRATOR:** Young Thomas Dorsey, his head filled with the blues, arrived with his pockets empty. But on his first night in Chicago he found a party to play, full of newcomers just like him.

**THOMAS A. DORSEY:** When the immigrants began to come in, I am talking about from the South now, they'd have to raise this rent money and they would have these what they called those parties, house rent parties to raise their money and I got in with a bunch there and I had a house rent party to play every night.

**NARRATOR:** For southerners, coming North had been a leap of faith. But they were crammed into the city's segregated South Side. And to most of Chicago's established African American community they were poor and they were "country".

**MURIEL B. WILSON:** There was a certain embarrassment of people who didn't know how to adjust. But on the other hand, you have to go with the major standards of the community, and that meant the white community as well. If you wanted to work in a white factory, you would have to follow the directions. And so people were trying to prepare, African Americans who were here were trying to prepare these migrants for these positions so they, too, could raise their standards of living.

**NARRATOR:** Many African Americans already living in the North provided for the migrants. But others made it clear that their "country" ways were unacceptable. That message came clearly from many black churches of the North.

**REVEREND JEREMIAH A. WRIGHT JR.:** They had old, established, silk stocking churches; African American Baptist, Catholic, Episcopal, Silk Stocking is

a term used to mean stuffy, snotty nobody says amen, you put on your finest clothes, and you attend service orderly, peacefully and worship God, aright, and persons who are not of that ilk are not welcome, and the congregation will make you feel very unwelcome in a silk stocking church.

**HORACE CLARENCE BOYER:** There was the feeling that the more white you acted, the more you would be accepted by white people. There was not that kind of pride about having lived through slavery, up in the early part of the century. So that the whole emphasis was ridding every Negro of everything that was Negroid, including the food, including the clothing, and here, including the church service ritual. So all of a sudden, now, we get Brahms and we get Handel. And everybody loves Brahms and Handel, particularly those who created Brahms and Handel.

And here we begin to get a whole conflict between the way people are going to worship. And many preachers said, don't sing those slave songs altogether.

**NARRATOR:** Many migrants were bewildered at what they found in Chicago. Rejection from their own. Resentment from white citizens. In 1919, race riots swept across Chicago and other great migration cities.

**MURIEL B. WILSON:** It was a pretty violent time. You can imagine how these migrants must have felt. Here they thought they had left this behind, and they are coming face-to-face with it again. It had to be very, very traumatic for them.

**NARRATOR:** But the migrants kept coming. And with city life came the need to redefine who they were. Redefine their faith. It was a challenge that would confront Dorsey in the 1920s. The same challenge confronted Cecil Williams decades later.

**NARRATOR:** In 1966 Rev. Cecil Williams arrived in San Francisco to take on the challenge of a failing church. Glide was in the heart of the declining "Tenderloin" district and had a 35 member middle class, white congregation.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** What I did was to try to create possibilities of how a church with 35 people could come to life.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** There were so many barriers here. There was the altar, and the altar rail. And there was the choir loft. The pulpit was way up. I was saying to myself if you're going to make it come to life, you got to get close to the people.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** So I came down, stepped over the altar, walked down the center aisle, and began to preach. And as I was preaching, the folks got up and walked out on me.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** The next Sunday, I decided I'd step over that altar again, but

this time I'd go to the door where they went out the previous Sunday. And said I am standing at this door "You're going to have to pass me if you're going to get out."

**NARRATOR:** The Glide congregation begged to have Williams removed. And when the bishop stood by him, most of them left--and never came back.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** Not only did I not feel accepted or acceptable, but see, I had been through this before, coming up in St. Angelo, Texas.

**NARRATOR:** The divide between acceptance and rejection had always caused Williams great pain. When he was 10 years old it proved unbearable. For months the young boy was haunted by visions and voices---Visions that the moon would swallow him. Voices that at first told him to die, and then to fight. Each night his family feared for him. And each night they prayed over him.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** This child experience, which confronted me with everything that I had gave me the deepest part of humanity's existence.

**REEDY WILLIAMS:** I don't know if that was the devil after him or whether it was some means of--of the Lord conveying a message to him. Maybe it was Christianity coming after him. Maybe it was his spirituality coming after him. People would come and sit with him night after night, day after day people would sit and pray.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** One of the passages in the New Testament is you got to give up your life if you are going to gain it. You have to have some kind of experience that just turns you upside down, tears you up. And if you don't, it's very difficult to overcome some of the-- some of, some of the really mean things we've had happen in our lives

**NARRATOR:** Now Williams was a pastor without a congregation. Shaped by the pain of his childhood he felt connected to the outcasts of the neighborhood. So he made a decision--to go to every bar every corner convincing the people of the Tenderloin there was a place for them at Glide.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** I knew that I had to not only risk everything but I had to really step into the midst of the situation itself. You go to the depths, you go to the most dangerous situation you can face and you bring it to life.

**NARRATOR:** In 1925 Thomas Dorsey was on top of the world. On stage with Ma Rainey--in sold out shows. And his sweetheart Nettie Harper finally agreed to marry him--and accompany him on tour.

**MICHAEL W. HARRIS:** Days later she finds herself on a train and ironing clothes for Ma Rainey she had to get used to their life ---it was troublesome, but

not trouble.

**NARRATOR:** Dorsey was playing the Blues, the “Devil’s music”, and making good money at it.

**LENA MCLIN:** Aunt Nettie wanted him to come out of the world, so to speak and come into the church.

**LENA MCLIN:** He had reached the epitome of what he wanted to be he just wanted to stay there. You know, people don’t change easily. And I think that the Lord had to just bring him down. And I think-- I am not saying this to say that the Lord is, ah, has vengeance. But I think that things happen in our lives sometimes to wake us up and to make us see.

**NARRATOR:** One night while on stage, Dorsey first noticed what he called an “unsteadiness” in his playing.

**MICHAEL W. HARRIS:** He said he is playing at this club, and he tries to play some more and he can’t, I would say to him, what happened? Were you paralyzed, a numbness? He doesn’t remember any of these things and he said, but I know my fingers—I know I could move my fingers. I just couldn’t play. Think of that. I have the muscular ability to move, but I can’t play. In other words, I can’t make music. I can’t create.

**NARRATOR:** Dorsey’s illness stretched out for two years. He dropped down to 117 pounds but doctors could not find anything physically wrong.

**MICHAEL W. HARRIS:** Nettie’s there and all he can do is sit around and he is aware of becoming an emotional burden on her but not being able to do anything about it.

**NARRATOR:** At the urging of Nettie’s sister he agreed to visit Bishop Haley, a local minister, with a reputation for healing.

**MICHAEL W. HARRIS:** Dorsey described going to his office and the man said, you have no business being in this condition. Then Dorsey describes it, Haley reached over and pulled a snake or a serpent out of him and, he said, from that moment on, he felt healed.

**HORACE CLARENCE BOYER:** He said a minister said, “Mr. Dorsey, you’re not as sick in body as you are in mind. If you will stop singing the devil’s music and sing for the Lord, you will be healed.”

**NARRATOR:** No sooner had Dorsey absorbed the minister’s message then he heard about the death of a friend. Dorsey had been ill, yet spared. His faith was stirred. After not having composed in 2 years, Dorsey wrote a poem and put it to

music. The music was Saturday night. But the text. The text was Sunday morning. In that moment Dorsey married sacred words to Blues and gave birth to a new musical form. People would come to call it Gospel. Gospel music.

**LENA MCLIN:** One of the first songs he wrote was: "I was standing by the bedside of a neighbor who was just about to cross the swelling tide. And I asked him if he would do me a favor, kindly take this message to the other side.

**THOMAS A. DORSEY:** *Singing* "If you see my savior, tell him that you saw me. When you saw me, I was on my way. You may meet some old friend who may ask you for me, tell them I am coming home some day. Good news on each side!

**LENA MCLIN:** When he wrote his gospel songs, he mailed to all the churches he could, and he thought he put stamps there for them to return. He got one answer. And for the next 3 years nothing happened.

**NARRATOR:** Unable to make a living from Gospel music. Dorsey returned to the Blues. In 1928, he recorded "It's Tight Like That" with Tampa Red. The song was a huge hit. Dorsey kept writing religious songs while at the same time turning out secular hits with a double meaning. Nettie urged him to remember Bishop Haley's plea--that he should work for the Lord.

**LENA MCLIN:** He started to get into church but then it would be back and forth. He was doing both at the same time and my grandmother was tearing him apart at the same time about doing both.

**NARRATOR:** Dorsey was in search of his destiny as were the thousands of other migrants by his side. Many newcomers also shared his sense of alienation.

**JAMES H. CONE:** When black people got north they were not received, by their own people, the way they expected to be received. It created a great deal of anxiety in them. Because they began to have no resources for coping with the new world in which they lived in. And that was a profound, profound rejection, profound, deep anxiety.

**NARRATOR:** Throughout the 1920s migrants followed their own expressions of faith. Some turned their backs on traditional Christianity. Bishop Ida Robinson established her own denomination after a vision that God told her to create a path for female leadership in the church. In New York, Rabbis Matthew and Ford taught Judaism and a spiritual connection with Biblical Israel. Father Divine built an integrated following from coast to coast employing and feeding thousands during the Great Depression.

**FATHER DIVINE:** That is what all of this is about and that is what has stirred the nation up from A to Z. Five million that are willing to stand with me for this truth!

**NARRATOR:** Headquartered in Chicago, Noble Drew Ali re-introduced a version of Islam he called The Moorish Science Temple of America. Islam originally made its way across the Atlantic with African Muslims but generations later, Islam was virtually lost. Noble Drew Ali told his followers they must leave European Christianity and come home to Allah. Members sang traditional hymns but changed the Christian lyrics to express their new faith.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** If you don't adapt your religion, you won't have very much religion. You have to make sure that in one way or another that the— that the motion of your religion moves in ways that will lift you to a new place. In other words you can't keep just the way you were and your religious beliefs as they were then and think they will survive.

**SERMON:** My brothers and sisters my text will be found this morning in the second chapter of St. Matthew. —Amen. Subject- "A lie was told but God Know'd it" -Amen.

**NARRATOR:** Many migrants also found their way to the local storefront Baptist and Holiness-Pentecostal churches starting up in Chicago and across the country. In the Storefronts, they re-created the intimate and expressive services they had in the South.

**CAMILLE ROBERTS:** When they start the service they'd open with prayer, and then they'd sing, and then if you wanted to tell what had happened to you or how you become saved or what drew you in and then they would have the sermon.

**HORACE CLARENCE BOYER:** Service would go from 11:00 until 2:00. And then if you act like you had to go somewhere, the minister would say things like, "Now, oh, you can go to the show and you can stay all day, and you can go to the dance and you can stay all day, but you come in God's house and you can't stay?" And it makes you really feel so guilty, you know. You'll say, "Well, I'll just sit up here for another hour."

**MURIEL B. WILSON:** When Granny would come to Chicago, she would look for the churches that she liked. She would take us to these churches. The minister would get up and he is saying, "You hear me Lord? Yes, Lord. You hear me, Lord? Yes, Lord. Yes, you hear me, Lord." And of course the sisters in the back would get to holler, "Yes, hear you, Lord,"

**CAMILLE ROBERTS:** You just turn yourself a-loose. It's a turning a-loose of you, and let the spirit come in. The saints put joy in it because he said, "Come into his house with thanksgiving and praises." So this is where they learned to praise and not be ashamed to praise. And they had a name of being crazy and

things like that and then there's a scripture saying that they would mock you, and that they'd call you crazy. But then you were not supposed to let that— If you know that you're happy and you know that you have the spirit, then you rejoice openly.

**HORACE CLARENCE BOYER:** The sanctified church was creating—a kind of shout song. These songs tended to be congregational. Congregational, but observing that wonderful African tradition of the call, where the call might be:

*Have you got good religion?*

And the response is:

*Certainly, Lord.*

the call:

*Have you got good religion?*

The response is:

*Certainly, Lord.*

*Have you got good religion?*

*Certainly, Lord.*

Well now that's the tradition that's going to create this sanctified music. Two things that were interesting about this. There's repetition. Now, let me tell you about repetition in African American music. Repetition is the means through which the—the—the message, the essence of African American music is gotten over. And when you listen to African American music, you're going to hear a lot of repetition so get ready for it.

**THOMAS A. DORSEY:** Well there has always been a beat as you call it in the church and if they didn't have a piano or an organ they did it with their feet. Pat their feet, pat their hands.

**NARRATOR:** Dorsey set out to revive churches that he said had gone “cold and dry”. Living off his Blues earnings he developed the idea of a “Gospel Chorus” and sold his songs as sheet music. Teamed with Pentecostal singer Sallie Martin—they tried to bring into the mainline churches his improvisation of Gospel Blues and her storefront style.

**THOMAS A. DORSEY:** You couldn't go into a church and tell 'em do you want to sing a gospel song? The preacher wouldn't let you do it--most of them said you can only preach the gospel, you can't sing no gospel if you want to sing a song go ahead and sing it they told you just like that. I've been thrown out of some of the best the churches in America (laughs).

**REVEREND JEREMIAH A. WRIGHT, JR.:** So anything that smacks of jazz, and anything that smacks of the blues, and you know that's dirty; they're always talking about sex, and here comes this other music that makes you feel good, like it makes you move like the blues or jazz do, you know that's of the Devil. So, that was the attitude. You have a lot of resistance to Thomas Dorsey's music.

Everybody knew that he played for Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey. they'd been to his shows. (Laughter.) It's all right to see him in that venue, but not here in church.

**HORACE CLARENCE BOYER:** Gospel music was viewed with everything that lower class people represent. I meant, it was the blues up against a symphony. After all, the mainline churches had put in some time. They had put in money. They had put in effort. And then you have— you can hear all this foot patting. I meant, “That’s disgusting.” That’s the way they behaved.

**THOMAS A. DORSEY:** (What made it so different?) The rhythm, the rhythm the beat “dum, da, dum, da” and the syncopation, “dum, dum, dum (he sings) it’s on the beat, it’s on he snap, (he sings) it’s forever, I am his, I am his, he is mine went to the beat and carried it along and the folk would go along with it in their seats.

**NARRATOR:** Dorsey coached his singers, most of whom were recent arrivals from the South, to “holler, clap, jump and shout!” He told them that this music could be an expression of themselves as it had been for him. But many ministers continued to reject this new Gospel sound. Four decades later, in San Francisco, Rev. Cecil Williams would also push to bring the music of Saturday night into Sunday worship. It was 1966.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** It was close to Christmastime, I asked a jazz musician to bring his group in

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** And sure enough word got out that we were going to do this Jazz, Gospel, Blues music.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** That Sunday morning this place was full. First time this church had been full, I think, in I don’t know how long.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** We decided a music had to reflect pain, hurt, devastation of the lives of people our music had to express that suffering and yet that hope.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** It’s not religion, it’s a spiritual kind of understanding of the style of life of human beings. I am most interested in fully becoming human and that’s quite different from religion because religion establishes itself because it wants to either Christianize people or it wants to segmentize people or it wants to isolate people. What we must do is let people determine the destinies of their own lives.

**JANICE MIRIKITANI:** Cecil was so audacious in his vision and his belief that the church, in order to be the church, had to open its doors and its walls to all people. So he broke down all the barriers between the sanctuary, and the street he opened the doors and said, “Everyone is welcome. All are accepted.”

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** I looked at the style of life of Jesus in the New Testament

and he was no sweet milk toast kind of person. You know, he was with the prostitutes, he was with the poor, he was with the tax collectors. He was with those who were shunned and pushed aside and oppressed. He went against the government man.

**NARRATOR:** Williams' radical message and his music began to draw crowds of people. He decided to push even further, removing the cross from the sanctuary.

**JANICE MIRIKITANI:** He said, "the cross is not a staid, solid thing. It is— It lives within you. It reaches out to those who need the most.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** It's those who are on the fringes of society who have never been accepted or acceptable. They were the ones who came. They came because this was the place they could find that there were people who were engaged in the struggle to try to make things better for them, for us, and for all of us.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** One thing I decided some time ago, that's why you see me in this today. Is that I'm going to be different. I'm going to be different and I want a church that is different. I don't want no, no down and out and guilty, awful church that keeps people in sin all the time. I want some joy. I want some people lifted up. I want some recovery. I want some renewal.

**NARRATOR:** Williams invited political activists like Angela Davis to speak at Sunday services. The congregation broke church tradition welcoming people of all faiths and all sexual orientations.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** I want to change the church. I want to change the church so it will never be the same, where it will turn its back on people and say, "Only your kind can be a part of the church."

**NARRATOR:** Williams began to build programs that addressed the hardships of the community. He surrounded himself with staff who had come from the street into Glide.

**NARRATOR:** Dorsey had been fighting to get Gospel music accepted but he continued playing both sides --one foot in the Blues and one foot in Gospel.

**NARRATOR:** After 7 years of marriage Nettie was about to give birth to their first child. It was the Summer of 1932. Dorsey had set out to perform some of his religious music at a revival three-hundred miles from home. His first night there he received a telegram.

**THOMAS A. DORSEY:** I took it. Read it. I almost fell out. Says hurry home, your wife just died. I don't know how you would accept that, but I could not accept it at all.

A friend of mine put me in the car. I got home, I jumped out and ran in to see if it was really true. And the one of the girls just started crying saying "Nettie just died, Nettie just died, Nettie just died."

**NARRATOR:** She had died in childbirth. That night Dorsey said his only solace was his baby boy. "I realized that there was joy in the midst of sorrow."

**LENA MCLIN:** The baby lived 'til the next morning, and the baby died. I think the baby had struggled too long trying to get here. It was really something. But see that made an impression on him. And he went the other way. He turned around.

**HORACE CLARENCE BOYER:** In order to express himself, he goes to the piano. And unlike most songs, where you have to sit and fidget with the words and turn them upside down, he said the words poured out of him almost as a gift.

**LENA MCLIN:** I don't think he realized that he wrote "Precious Lord." I think that the Lord spoke through him. I think he just bore his soul: "Precious Lord, take my hand. Lead me on, let me stand. I'm tired. I'm weak. I'm worn."

**MICHAEL W. HARRIS:** They, too, found it very important to hook into something that could reach down into the very depths of one's emotion and grief and express it musically.

**REVEREND JEREMIAH A. WRIGHT JR:** Persons of deep faith are not exempt from crisis, they are not exempt from hardship, they are not exempt from disappointment. They are not exempt from getting knocked down by life and by circumstances and at those times when you are knocked down you can't make it on your own, not on your own strength, you need a strength that is not your own.

**NARRATOR:** "Precious Lord" is the song which brought gospel music into the mainline churches. It has been translated into more than fifty languages. Thomas Dorsey would write over 500 gospel songs and create a music publishing network. It was Dorsey who trained Gospel innovators like Mahalia Jackson, Roberta Martin and James Cleveland.

**LENA MCLIN:** He was a pace setter, he was a path maker and many are following his path now. Because regardless people will always have to define the gospel song because every generation has to say what it has to say in its own way.

**NARRATOR:** Today Cecil Williams' Glide Church which started with 35 parishioners has a congregation numbering more than 7,000.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** Come home everybody. For everybody needs a home Come home to the Spirit. A home of unconditional love.

**NARRATOR:** Williams' own spiritual journey spoke to thousands. And so they came. The poor came. The wealthy came. The people of the Tenderloin came

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** Going back to what we found when we came here. Some of that is still prevalent in society that is why the struggle continues. It will always be around, I think, and we will try to eradicate as much of the problems as we possibly can. But it will never be easy. This church must always, then, be radical. We cannot be nice and sweet and be so out of it that we've missed being with the people who are hurting the most.

**CECIL WILLIAMS:** Many of you who have come to Glide have talked about you are engaging in a spiritual quest. When you seek spirituality that does not put you out of the world, it puts you decisively in the world. So you -so you can begin to not only change your life, but change the lives of people that are in great need, or lives of people who need change. Everybody needs changing sometime. Can I get an Amen on that? All right.