

# Blender

## “Jesus Juice!”

Published: May 2005

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After a decade of being worshipped by disenfranchised teens, Korn guitarist Brian “Head” Welch, 34, is leaving the band he helped found 13 years ago to follow a higher power, and has penned a personal song to rapper 50 Cent.

“I thought I had it all – money, fame, pretty women – but I came to a point where I didn’t want to live,” he told more than 10,000 members of the congregation at Valley Bible Fellowship in his hometown of Bakersfield, California, in February.

“Brian has found out that God’s real, and he’s stoked,” Senior Pastor Ron Vietti interjected to thunderous applause.

“I am so in love with this world,” Welch told Blender from his Bakersfield home. “I’ve got my arms wide open. I’d die for anyone on this earth. I feel like there’s a spotlight that’s being shined upon me by God – it’s like a dream come true!”

Following his standing-room-only appearance at the church, the rocker made a pilgrimage to Israel in late February retracing the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Traveling by camel, Welch toured the Holy Land and was baptized in the Jordan river, where John the Baptist anointed Jesus.

Welch’s spiritual awakening blossomed last fall after a business associate sent him a cryptic message. “I was making millions in real estate, and my broker woke up in the middle of the night and sent me an email saying, ‘Don’t think I’m weird, Brian, but God woke me up in the middle of the night to send you this verse.’”

The scriptural passage was Matthew 11:28 – “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” – and it continued to resonate with Welch throughout Korn’s tour last November.

“After the shows, I’d go to the back of the bus and pray, ‘God, would you please just kill me and put me out of my misery?’ I would tell him, ‘I’m rich and I’m miserable! I’m addicted to meth and rehab isn’t working!’ I think God was leading me towards wanting to die because He’s the only one who could save me.”

Upon his return to Bakersfield, Welch read the Bible and accompanied the evangelical broker to a church service at Valley Bible Fellowship. With his hood

pulled over his head, the rocker sat in the front pew; by the end of the service, he came forward to announce his intention to surrender to God.

“We’re a nontraditional congregation so having a rock star join our church is not a big shock-a-roni,” Executive Pastor Jim Crews said. True to their relaxed approach to faith, the clergy have supported Welch’s decision to tattoo MATTHEW 11:28 on his neck and J-E-S-U-S across his knuckles.

“The letters are facing him; whenever he gets tempted and reaches for something, he’ll be reminded of Jesus,” said Crews.

The service at which Welch delivered his Christian “testimony” inspired 40 churchgoers to surrender their lives to God. In the days following Welch’s speech, pastors say, 300 people have come forward and the church’s Web site has received more than 1.5 million visitors.

“That Sunday morning was off the hook, man!” said Crews. “Twelve-year-old heavy metal kids and 40-year-old school principals were legitimately affected by what Brian was saying.”

Welch now hopes a certain bullet-ridden rapper will heed his call.

“I’m writing a song to 50 that’s like a letter from God,” said Welch. “He says he loves God, but then he contradicts himself. The song’s out of love so I’m not going to release it unless he starts talking trash about me.”

The song is a part of Welch’s larger plan, through a forthcoming secular solo project, to “extend Korn’s music to cover another emotion: happiness.”

“We put celebrities on pedestals, so for someone like Brian to say, ‘It’s not there, man. It’s chasing the wind,’ is a huge message,” Crews said. “You almost wonder whether, if someone had e-mailed Kurt Cobain a verse, there’d have been another outcome in his life.”

Korn, who have released seven albums and sold more than 13 million records in the U.S., will carry on without Welch. Despite the band’s statement wishing their former bandmate well, Welch tells a different story.

“Those guys no longer talk to me. Jonathan [Davis] won’t return my calls. They’re mad because I left Korn at a very important time for the band, but I had no choice.”