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newsboys

3, 2, 1... Restart

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FEATURES



ON THE COVER:
newsboys
3, 2, 1... Restart

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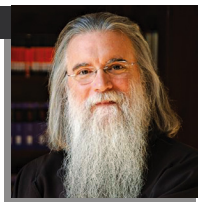
Steven Curtis Chapman

How Glory Unfolds



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DEPARTMENTS

FROM THE EDITOR

COMING NEXT MONTH

THEIR OWN WORDS

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YOUR HEART — Excerpt from *God Will Carry You Through* by Max Lucado

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Natalie Grant
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INDIE — Matt Papa

URBAN — United Tenors

CROSSOVER — Johnnyswim



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YOUR HOME STUDIO
with Dustin Kirkendall

CREATE
Cindy Wilt Colville's Songwriter Tips

STORY BEHIND THE SONG
Decyfer Down's "Say Hello"

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Laura Shares The Heart
Behind Her New Album



These past few weeks have reminded many of us of our fragility and the brevity of our lives here on earth.

Disasters and attacks have left many stunned, devastating, confused and hurting. From Syria to Washington, D.C. to Colorado and Kenya, life has rendered us speechless.

It's in these moments that we must pull together as a body of believers, as brothers and sisters, to help those in mourning, to do what we can to show grace and peace in the midst of chaos. One of the most effective ways we can do that is through music. I've worked with many music therapists in the past and am utterly convinced that music lends healing that nothing else can.

Music from artists like the newsboys who are willing to take artistic leaps to continue their tradition of excellence and relevance...music from Steven Curtis Chapman who has walked a road of great loss with great dignity, lending inspiration and hope to countless others.

Nothing in this world can replace what is lost when tragedies occur. No song, no sermon, no book will bring back life as we know and understand it. But there is one thing that can truly help us heal and move forward...only one thing—the love of Christ. And in the face of disaster, when words are clumsy and evasive, perhaps it's a song that will translate that love.

Perhaps it's a song that will rise above the depravity that is all around us, to remind us that in our weakness and fragility—He is strong. And no matter how dark this world may be, He has overcome.



Caroline Lusk
Editor, CCM Digital



Andy Argyrakis is a Chicago-based entertainment writer/photographer who appears in the *Chicago Tribune*, *Illinois Entertainer*, *Hear/Say Magazine*, *Concert Livewire* and more.



Grace Cartwright Aspinwall is a freelance writer from Oregon, and the founder of Wonderment Entertainment. She has been in the music industry since 2006.



Matt Conner is a music writer for the *Indianapolis Star*, *Relevant* and *Metromix* and the founding editor of *StereoSubversion.com*.



Andrew Greer is a graduate of Belmont University. A former employee of Rockettown Records, he now enjoys life as a writer and musician in Nashville, Tennessee.



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MARTIN SMITH
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10.08.2013

JASON DUNN
INSECURITY (SINGLE)
PARADIGM COLLECTIVE/SONY RED

RIGHTEOUS VENDETTA
THE FIRE INSIDE
INDIE

10.15.2013



NATALIE GRANT
HURRICANE
CURB RECORDS/WORD

ICON FOR HIRE
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TOOTH & NAIL RECORDS/NEW DAY

10.22.2013



ROYAL TAILOR
ROYAL TAILOR
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VICTORY RECORDS/PROVIDENT

VERTICAL CHURCH
THE ROCK WON'T MOVE
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INTRODUCING EDITOR'S PICK

Our favorite artists, tours and happenings right now
In-depth, exclusive, online only at CCMMagazine.com

ARTIST: RYAN STEVENSON

Gotee Records new signee and singer/songwriter, Ryan Stevenson has a story as compelling as his music. The former paramedic has watched life come and go, literally, within his own two hands. Along the way, he witnessed the truth of God's power and intervention in the midst of human helplessness.

Using his music as a conduit to share what God has done in his life and heart, he piqued the interest of CCM vet TobyMac. A few months later, he was signed to Gotee Records and has a single racing up the charts from his critically acclaimed EP.

[+ CLICK HERE FOR CCM'S EXTENDED PROFILE ON RYAN—THIS MONTH'S EDITOR'S PICK.](#)

TOUR: MICHAEL W. SMITH AND JASON CRABB

What do you get when you cross a Dove-Award winning artist of the year with, arguably, the most iconic artist in the history of contemporary Christian music? You get a great show and an unforgettable musical event. As Michael W. Smith wraps up the final leg of his Worship Around the World Tour, signer-extraordinaire and the reigning Dove Artist of the Year, Jason Crabb, will join him. With 12 dates on the calendar, this is bound to be a momentous occasion.

[+ CLICK HERE FOR CCM'S EXTENDED INTERVIEW WITH THE TWO!](#)

MUSIC/FILM EVENT: GRACE UNPLUGGED

Christian films have come miles in terms of production quality over the last few years. *Grace Unplugged* absolutely continues the trend. With a cast of familiar faces, the story is compelling, the acting is on point and the truth of God comes through in a way that's refreshingly not condescending or forced. Making her major film debut, as well as landing a slot on the star-studded soundtrack, Jamie Grace shows that she's a multi-talented force of nature with an unlimited future ahead.

Check back later this month for a one-on-one interview with Jamie, [click here to enjoy the trailer](#) and be sure to hit up *Grace Unplugged* at the theater when it releases, October 4.



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AT CCMMAGAZINE.COM!**

NEW PHOTO GALLERY!

Check out CCM's exclusive
pix of Disney's Night of Joy!

**More music news all month
long!**



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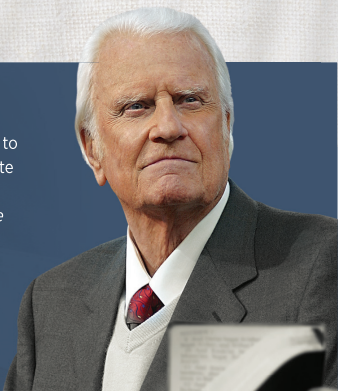


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THE NEVERCLAIM

CCM: *You've got an incredibly distinct sound and have signed with one of the top labels in the industry. How did all this come about?*

We started leading worship at our church in Vancouver, WA called The Vineyard. We've always known God was calling us to not only have a local impact, but a larger worldwide impact as well. As we strived to remain faithful in each step, the Lord began to open more and more doors for us. After touring with Third Day, Mac Powell introduced us to our label. They got behind our vision, music and ministry and the rest is history.

GETTING TO KNOW THEM...



ALBUM NAME:
THE NEVERCLAIM
STREET DATE:
SEPTEMBER 24, 2013
**ESSENTIAL RECORDS/
PROVIDENT LABEL GROUP**

THE NEVERCLAIM IS:

Jeremiah Carlson – lead vocals, acoustic guitar
Mitchell Maldonado – keys, banjo, guitar
Chuck Hill – bass and upright bass
Josh Anderson – lead guitar
Matthew Warren – guitar
Jared Key – drums, percussion

WHAT'S NEW ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

CCM: *When did you meet Jesus and know your ministry was intended to be for Him?*

The band is full of guys with different testimonies. I personally came to Christ when I was 15-years-old. I wasn't raised in church and, actually, I came to know Jesus through reading the Bible. He revealed Himself to me in such a powerful way and instantly started giving me vision and a passion to see worldwide revival. The vision and heart of The Neverclaim come out of this story. We desire to see people come into radical relationship with God, and out of that intimacy with Him, we want to see the world won through Christ. We want to never claim the glory for ourselves.

CCM: *Tell us about your sound and style. Whose fans will likely become your fans as well?*

Our sound comes from six different guys with diverse taste in music. All of us love good old fashion Rock n Roll, but we all come from different musical backgrounds. We would describe our music as passion-filled, alternative rock with elements of folk. Generally, if folks like Third Day, Kevin Prosch, Rich Mullins, Bruce Springsteen, Keith Green, Hall and Oats, The Decembrist, Foo Fighters, Keith Urban and Vineyard Worship, they'll probably fall in line with us as well.

CCM: *Who do you credit as influences in your life and ministry?*

John Wimber, Charles Spurgeon, Ravi Zacharias, Alistair Begg, Chuck Swindoll, John Piper, Robby Dawkins, Todd White and Phil Strout, just to name a few. These men have influenced us dramatically in our vision and heart for ministry.

CCM: *Tell us about the upcoming project!*

Our current album releases on Essential Records (Sept. 24, 2013). It is a self-titled record with 10 songs that we poured our hearts, souls and minds into. We had the honor to work with Paul Moak and Jason Ingram as our producers. Our goal with this record is to see people wrecked by the presence of God's love that permeates the tracks beginning to end.

CCM: *What's the story behind the inspiration of the record?*

The Neverclaim record reflects on a number of themes that are all centered around the greatness of Jesus and His 'calling' for us. The song "Revival" probably sums of the spirit of the record as a whole. This song came out of a time with Jesus, where I felt His love like never before. I was experiencing a deeper revelation of His love for me and, simultaneously, I felt a deeper love for people. It is impossible to be in love with Jesus and not to 'burn' for him. "Revival" calls us as a chosen people who were made for such a time as this to see revival across the world. If you feel like you don't qualify, perfect! God doesn't call the qualified, but he qualifies the called! **CCM**

+ THE NEVERCLAIM IS ON TOUR ALL FALL WITH SANCTUS REAL, CITIZEN WAY AND EVER FOUND. CHECK OUT WWW.THENEVERCLAIM.COM FOR DATES. WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/THENEVERCLAIM WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/THENEVERCLAIM WWW.TWITTER.COM/THENEVERCLAIM WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/THENEVERCLAIM



1 Dove Award-winner Cheri Keaggy (left) chats and performs songs from her current CD *So I Can Tell* on TBN's "Praise the Lord," hosted by Jason Crabb (right).

2 The Fuzed Worship gang says goodbye at the airport after a conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

3 After sharing stories and songs from her newest album, *Roots For the Journey*, on "The Harvest Show," Yancy visits with fellow guests, including actor Drew Waters (left) and film producer Rick Eldridge (right), both on the promotional rounds for their new movie *The Ultimate Life*.

4 & 5 Worshipful singer/songwriter David Glenn records his new album, *Relentless*, in Third Day's Kennesaw, GA studio with Scotty Wilbanks as producer. Glenn also gets in some quality time outside the studio with his daughter Michaela Grace.



6



7



Photo: Kali LaHaie

6 Montell Jordan and T-Bone were caught tweeting and instagraming before a multi-artist concert at Victory World Church in Atlanta, Georgia.

7 Moody Radio morning drive-time host and Frontiers recording artist Perry LaHaie spends some time with his son Taylor, 18, on a family vacation at Big Star Lake in Baldwin, Michigan. When not water-skiing, LaHaie is promoting his new CD, *Ahead*, as well as working with Frontiers to take the Gospel to the Muslim world.

8 Gotee recording artist Ryan Stevenson meets the Duck Commander himself, "Duck Dynasty's" Phil Robertson, at an event in Nashville.

8

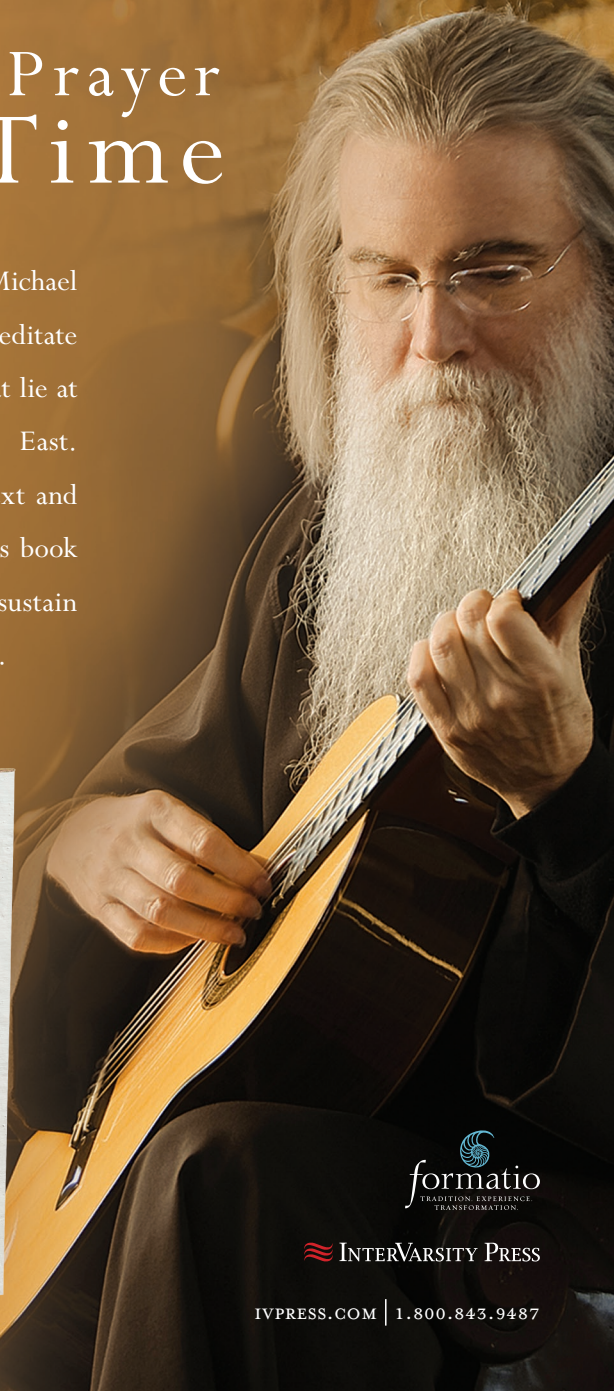
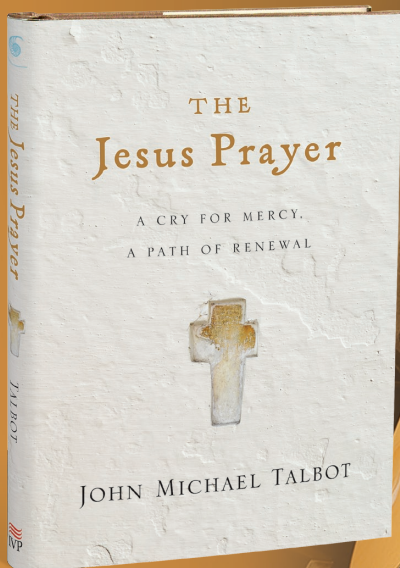


9 & 10 Those who came early to the Carnival Of Madness Tour (featuring Shinedown, Papa Roach and Skillet) were rewarded with a short but solid set from Skillet's protégés We As Human, who are quickly following in the veterans' footsteps with a ferocious modern rock sound and just as meaty of a message.



An Ancient Prayer for Our Time

In this new book by John Michael Talbot readers are invited to meditate on the twelve simple words that lie at the heart of the Christian East. Complete with historical context and exercises for self-reflection, this book shows how a single prayer could sustain the spiritual life of a civilization.




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“CARNIVAL OF MADNESS” TOUR

US CELLULAR COLISEUM/ BLOOMINGTON, IL

Photos by Andy Argyrakis

Hitting arenas and amphitheaters all across America, the annual “Carnival of Madness” Tour is once again a premier destination for modern rock fans with Skillet smack dab in the middle of this year’s action.

The faith-based foursome just kicked off its touring season supporting the brand new record *Rise* (Atlantic/Word) and active rock anthems like “Sick Of It” or “Not Gonna Die” had no trouble fitting in with past staples like “Hero” or “Whispers In The Dark,” all of which found John Cooper leading the charge with arena-ready confidence.

Musically, keyboardist/guitarist Korey Cooper, drummer/co-vocalist Jen Ledger and guitarist Seth Morrison have never sounded better, especially on metallic gems like the new “Circus For A Psycho” and the classic “Rebirthing.” All the while, the overt lyrics were equally effective, unabashedly sharing members’ beliefs in the decidedly secular setting. **CCM**



**CLICK HERE FOR FULL
CONCERT REVIEW.**



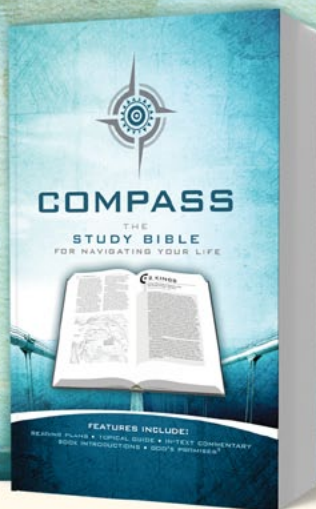
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STRYPER

BB KING'S/ NEW YORK CITY

Photos by Bert Saraco

On a hot, soupy New York City night in July, the Yellow and Black did, indeed *attack*, as Stryper—the undisputed masters of Christian-themed Pop Metal—took to the stage of BB King's club in the heart of Times Square. Front-man Michael Sweet (who, unbelievably, has just turned *fifty*) looked fit, tan and ready to rock, as did the rest of the band: Tim Gaines (bass, vocals), Oz Fox (guitar, vocals) and Robert Sweet (drums, visual timekeeper). This, the original Stryper line-up, showed no signs of wear for their 30 years in the business of creating crunchy, hooky metal. The stripes are still there although, thankfully, there was no spandex in sight.



**CLICK HERE FOR FULL
CONCERT REVIEW.**



GOD'S WORD In Perfect Harmony.

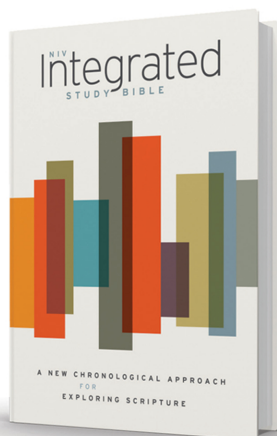


ISAIAH 52:13

ACTS 1:8-11

EPHESIANS 1:19-22

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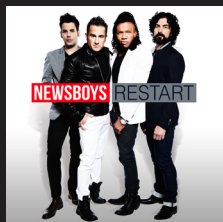
LET THE
COUNT-
DOWN
BEGIN
3, 2, 1...RESTART

By Caroline Lusk

Not many people get a chance at reinvention.

Somehow, time, family, responsibilities, finances get in the way of dreaming about and acting on who we really want to be...or how we can truly realize our potential.

Not so with the newsboys. After Four GRAMMY nominations, 5 GMA Dove Awards, over 26 No. 1 Radio singles, over 7 million albums sold, 16 albums recorded and 6 RIAA Gold Certifications, they refuse to settle for the familiar or comfortable.



Three years ago, with new lead singer Michael Tait, the group was clearly 'Reborn,' as the title of that project suggested. This time around, they've decided it was time to restart. And restart they did.

"It sounds crazy coming from guys who have been doing this as long as we have, but it feels like as a band, as an entity, we're really just getting started," says drummer and veteran member Duncan Phillips. "It seems like all the previous records have been building up to this moment right here. This is unequivocally the finest record I've ever been a part of."

It's a record that didn't come quickly or easily. Combing through dozens of songs, the entire process took about two years. It was time well-spent, particularly

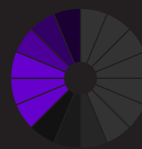
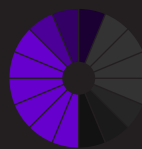
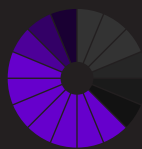
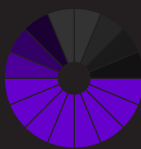
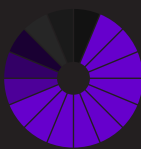
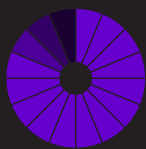
considering what the title of the album represents to the band.

"Sometimes in life, you fall down and you lose your way," says Michael. "Just like on a computer, sometimes it messes up and you have to reboot. That's how it is in life. You have to go back to the basics."

Part of the basics for veteran musicians like them is crafting the absolute best, most commercial, cutting edge music as possible. "Christian music is the only genre that's specifically known for its lyrical content," Duncan explains. "All other genres are about a style. Because of that the world has often viewed Christian music as second rate. We wanted to make sure that this album was as good or better than anything else out right now...including secular music."



Photo: Kristin Barlowe



Of course, with a bevy of top-notch producers, seven mix engineers and close to 70 songs under consideration for the final project, it's not surprising that those that made the cut are part of a groundbreaking collection.

"I've never been through such a distilling process," says Michael.

When asked what kinds of songs they were searching for, Michael answers with a laugh, "these songs!"

Clearly, the search was a success. The songs have compelling moments of lyrical profundity...some even a throwback to powerful songs of yesterday, such as "Love Like I Mean It."

"Love is still a verb," says Michael, loosely referencing the dcTalk hit from back in the day, "Luv is a Verb."

"What you do is what you love. If you really live a life loving like you mean it, you'll change the world," he concludes.

Enter the opening track—"That's How You Change the World." A fist-pumping, electronic welcome mat to the listener, it invites them not only to join in a musical experience, but a powerful spiritual and personal mission to get out there and see change happen.

The following tracks retain the intensity, particularly on single, "Live With Abandon."

I wanna live with abandon/ Give You all that I am/ Every part of my heart

Jesus/ I place in Your hands.

"Playing these songs live is totally different than playing them in a studio," says keyboardist, Jeff Frankenstein. "To see the reaction we're getting as people are hearing these songs for the first time is pretty amazing."

From teen girls who have an anthem all their own in "Go Glow" to everyone out there with a soft spot in their heart for momma, there's a little bit of something for everyone on the record. That emotional ebb and flow is perhaps even more significant for the band following the recent loss of Michael's mother, who the song, "That Home," is about.

Suffice it to say, *Restart* is more than just one more album. The 'back to basics' idea is anything but basic when it comes to style, delivery and substance. Michael heaps high praise on the album with a simple but powerful statement:

"I have not felt this way about anything I've been involved in musically since, 'Jesus Freak.'"

Any Christian music fan knows that that's a bold statement. But considering the source, it's a compelling endorsement for this project. Since their formation in the 80s, the newsboys have consistently pushed the envelope, stretched the boundaries of what Christian music could be and in the process, developed one of

the most loyal followings any band in the history of CCM has enjoyed. With *Restart*, they've done it again.

It would have been easy to play out the same formula from 2010's *Born Again* that launched three No. 1 radio hits or 2012's *God's Not Dead*, which sold more than 300,000 copies...but they've never been the kind to take the easy road.

"The pressure was there to make more of the same," says Michael. "But why not risk something? Why not restart it?"

Seizing the moment, the passion and the opportunity for all it was worth, the newsboys have continued their journey of reinvention.

Fresh sounds, fresh energy, grounded in the faith and call that has kept them doing what they do for over two decades.

With "world class songs," as Michael calls them, it's clear that this restart has as promising a future as is the legacy of the past.

World class songs, world class band... this not only stands up to anything else out there commercially, it stands out. Without question, this is reinvention at it's finest.

So grab the album, start your countdown and get ready to launch into something new with the newsboys once again.

3, 2, 1....restart. **CCM**

"WHAT YOU DO IS WHAT YOU LOVE.
IF YOU REALLY LIVE A LIFE LOVING
LIKE YOU MEAN IT, YOU'LL CHANGE
THE WORLD." - MICHAEL TAIT



A full-length portrait of Steven Curtis Chapman. He is standing against a background of crumpled white paper. He is wearing a black jacket over a white shirt and a black tie, and he has glasses. He is smiling and holding a Fender Telecaster guitar with a sunburst finish. The guitar is held diagonally across his body.

STEVEN CURTIS CHAPMAN

*GLORIOUSLY UNFOLDED
AND UNFOLDING STILL*

By Caroline Lusk



LIFE is a series of folding and unfolding. We fold, compress and put away thing we don't need or don't want at the present time.

We fold letters to send or to hide.

We fold our arms to protect or to keep others away.

We fold to preserve a sense of control... to compress things into a manageable shape and size.

Unfolding is messy, revealing and can be uncomfortable.

Unfolding removes control and breaks down our guard.

Unfolding leaves us vulnerable and exposed.

Unfolding is the work of God

Steven Curtis Chapman knows what it's like to be opened up, spread thin, with creases and wrinkled edges showing. He knows what it's like to surrender control of

circumstances and out come.

He has been unfolded by the Hand of God and, though painful at times, the unfolding has been glorious...

"These last few years have been some of the hardest chapters of my life... unthinkable chapters," Steven shares. "At points it's easy to think that this is it. This is the story. It's hard and painful and we're doing to live with some of the trauma of losing Maria. At times it feels like the end is closing in. But for me, the importance of this record and these songs is to share that this is one chapter in a story. God knows the plans He has for us and they're not summed up in one small sliver in this one chapter. Can we dare to believe that God is telling an epic story with our lives. If we reduce it to one chapter it's as foolish as picking up a book, reading one chapter and nothing else. He really is finishing the work He started. It

**“HE REALLY
IS FINISHING
THE WORK
HE STARTED.
IT WAS GOOD
AND IT’S
GOING TO BE
GOOD AGAIN.”**



was good and it's going to be good again."

It's that same faith that has informed, created, shaped and refined Steven's music his entire life; but most especially in the years following Maria's death. From *Beauty Will Rise*, which reflected the grieving and relenting to *Joy* [Christmas album], which honestly came about when holidays started to become bearable again, to this latest project, which captures the hope of a story yet to be finished.

"Music has been a part of everything I have believed and will anchor myself to again. Music has always been that anchor for me to hold onto," says Steven. "To celebrate joy, to begin to laugh again... Through all the journey has allowed me to go through, music has been the gift God has given us. When words aren't enough, it has been that faithful friend."

That devotion will be on display as Steven sets out on a tour this fall with Laura Story and Jason Gray, who, as Steven says, "have had their own stories to share."

"I'm excited to share this record on tour and sing some of the songs that have carried us through the darkest days."

Though there are creases, chaos and times still brimming with acute pain, Steven is bravely, honestly allowing God to continue the work of unfolding the rest of his story. And that is a glorious sight to behold. **CCM**



**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
STEVENCURTISCHAPMAN.COM**



GOING UP

PHIL WICKHAM FINDS NEW MEANING ON HIGH
BY ANDREW GREER



Since his major label debut seven years ago, singer-songwriter Phil Wickham has produced a versatile worship catalog serving as a soundtrack for mega corporate congregations as effectively as poignant moments of personal reflection. Furthering his commitment to write songs that motivate Christians to connect with God, his latest offering, *The Ascension* (Fair Trade Services), derives its title and tutelage from the ancient Jewish peoples' tradition of using music as spiritual preparation during their pilgrimages to the Holy City. Here the late twenty-something music staple and first-time father tells CCM more about writing and recording with worship in mind.

CCM: What was the inspiration behind the title and track listing of *The Ascension*?

Phil Wickham: A couple times a year the Jewish people would gather together

in the holy city of Jerusalem to worship God. As they walked up the hills to the temple, they would sing and worship with "songs of ascent" to prepare their hearts in excitement and remembrance of what God had done. This is a beautiful picture of the people of God ascending together in anticipation to be in the presence of God.

Going over the story of my life since we released *Response* a couple years back, my wife and I now have two little girls, Penelope, 2, and Mabel, who was born in July. God has used our girls to spur our hearts closer to Him and to long for more of His presence. We don't want to just fill out a list of what it means to be a Christian. We want to run into the presence of God daily. To go deeper... So I wrote these songs about wanting more of Him. I want this record to spur people's hearts, as it did mine, to grow closer to the heart of God.

CCM: *You have had quite a bit of commercial success. But most of us think of Phil Wickham primarily as a worship writer. What is the driving motivator in your songwriting?*

Phil: I never pasted a certain set of rules up on my wall to follow. I write from my heart. And there is nothing more satisfying to me as a writer, musician and artist than writing songs used by people who follow Jesus to worship and remember Him. This has been my heart since I was leading worship for my youth group in junior high. I consider it an honor and massive responsibility. And I love doing it.

CCM: *Do you ever hear stories from listeners who have received a new understanding of worship through your music?*

Phil: Yes. It is so cool to get to be a part of people's lives through their stereos. And to hear all the stories from people where [through music they discover] God is with us. That He cares. That He is involved. And that our lives are not dependent on who we have been, but who we are in Christ... It's a real, breathing relationship. For those light



bulbs to go on in people's hearts and minds through the truth in the music I write is beyond amazing. I am so humbled.

CCM: *With so many modern worship critics out there, what is your take, as a worship leader and songwriter, on the musical landscape of the genre?*

Phil: I hope every writer is writing as creatively as they can. If that is happening and they are walking the will of God, then what might be boring and bland for some might be absolutely life changing for others. But what I've learned over the years is the detriment of a critical spirit. Many times the simple stuff is what reaches the most people. Most people don't have a music degree. They simply care about getting through the next day. And if a song speaks into that, it seems to me God can use it all if we give it to Him to be used.

In my songwriting, I think about what is the best possible way I can say the things God has put on my heart, sing about them and then create them on record. We put our heart and soul into these records. We try to hold ourselves accountable to reach higher than the easiest rhyme. I hope every one is doing that. If they are not, that's a bummer.


CCM: *Having experienced the birth of both of your daughters since the release of your last record, how has fatherhood impacted your life and music?*

Phil: You can prepare for a lot of stuff in life. But once we had Penelope, everything went out the window. You learn things for the first time. You go into survival mode sometimes. You learn to forget about yourself, especially

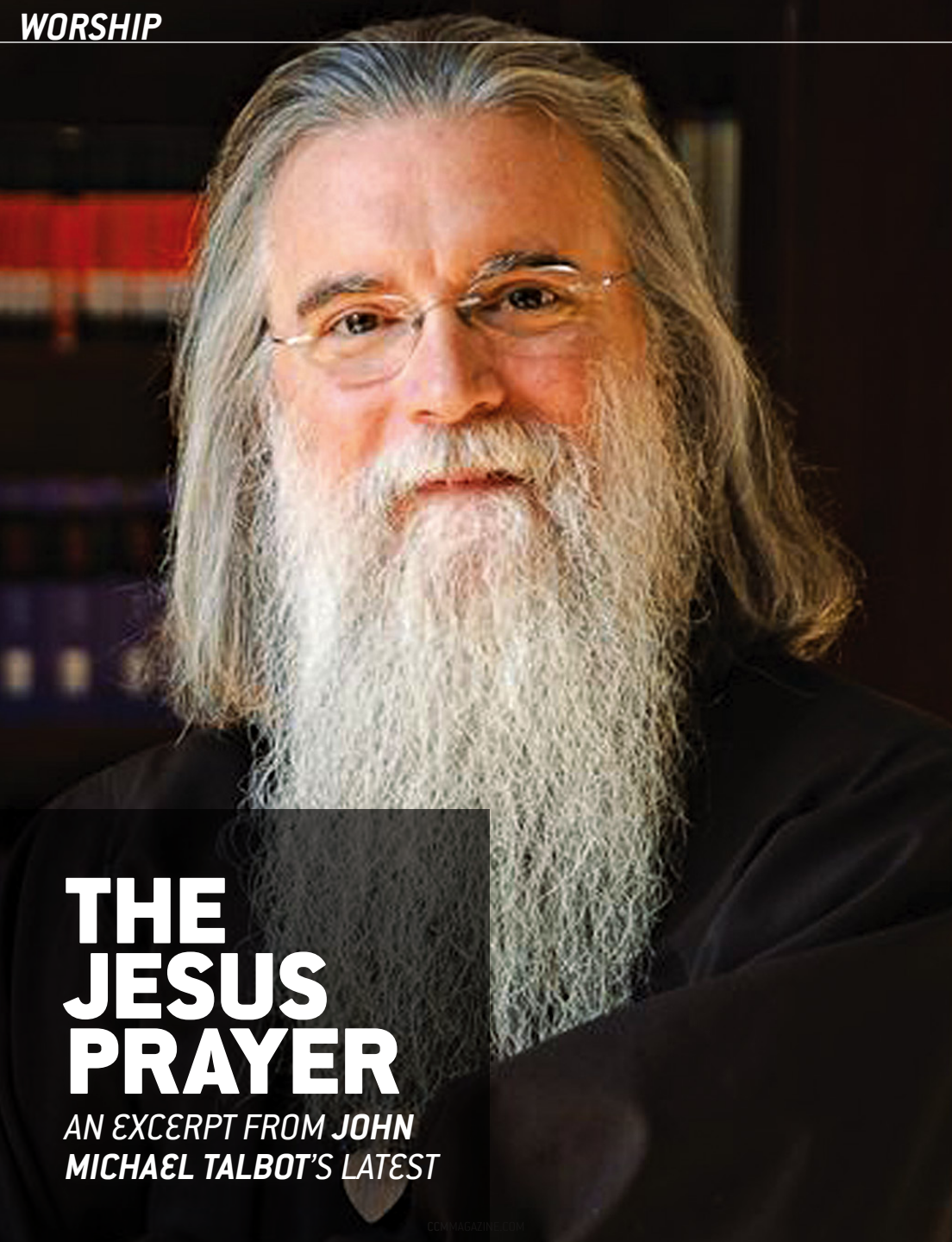


when you are cleaning up throw up from some restaurant floor. [Laughs] It is crazy when something that brings so much extra responsibility is so full of blessing and joy and so right.

Having a family has enriched us on all levels, including our spiritual walks and lives with Jesus. That maturity permeates *The Ascension*. These are the best songs I have ever written. I said what I wanted to say and accomplished what I wanted to accomplish. There are no regrets. I'm so proud of how it turned out and how everybody worked so hard on it. [CCM](#)

 **CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE OFFICIAL LYRIC VIDEO FOR PHIL'S "THIS IS AMAZING GRACE."**

 **FOR MORE UNFORMATION, VISIT PHILWICKHAM.COM**

A close-up portrait of John Michael Talbot, a man with long, flowing white hair and a full white beard. He is wearing thin-rimmed glasses and a dark, possibly black, garment. The background is dark and out of focus, with some warm, reddish-orange light visible on the left side. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

THE JESUS PRAYER

**AN EXCERPT FROM JOHN
MICHAEL TALBOT'S LATEST**

John Michael Talbot is an award-winning Christian musician, writer, motivational speaker and itinerant minister to churches and parishes around the world. His songs were the first by a Catholic artist to cross well-defined boundaries and gain acceptance by Protestant listeners. He was also the recipient of several prestigious awards. He won the Dove Award for Worship Album of the Year for "Light Eternal," with producer and longtime friend Phil Perkins, and he became one of only nine artists to receive the President's Merit Award from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. In 1988 he was named the No. 1 Christian Artist by *Billboard* magazine.

John Michael also began to write books from his wealth of study and personal experience of integrated monastic life. His books include *Reflections on St. Francis*, *The World Is My Cloister* and *The Universal Monk*. John Michael's 24th book, *Blessings of St. Benedict*, was published in September 2011.

His latest book is called *The Jesus Prayer* and examines the philosophy behind this rosary, or repetitive prayer. Below is an excerpt from the book.

Some, like the fourth-century Messalian Euchites, went to the absurd extreme of constant prayer to the neglect of everything else. Others, like the monks of Cluny in tenth-century Europe, established a constant rotation of monks who prayed in their churches. The notion was that, as the body of Christ, if one was praying, all were praying. The Eastern monastic fathers taught to unite the Jesus Prayer with every breath. This enables a person to go about daily activity while praying constantly. We

need not be in a church or chapel, or even in a prayer space to practice this prayer. Think about it: What is the one thing we do without ceasing? We breathe. If we are not breathing, chances are we are already dead!

St. Hesychios the Priest (eighth or ninth century) said in *On Watchfulness and Holiness*, "Just as it is impossible to ... live without breathing ... we should use the name of Jesus as we do our own breath. Let the Jesus Prayer cleave to your breath, and in a few days you will find that it is possible [to pray without ceasing]. With your breathing combine watchfulness and the name of Jesus."

So, from the perspective of praying in the breath or Spirit of God with our spirit, or of praying "without ceasing," uniting prayer with our breath works very well. I have been teaching the Jesus Prayer for about a decade in retreats at our Little Portion Retreat Center, and more recently in hundreds of three-day parish missions all across America. People are responding! Most say that the Jesus Prayer helps them find a place of legitimate meditation with the use of their breath. Months and years after a particular mission I still receive encouraging communications that confirm that this prayer has a profound effect on personal prayer life and the entire life of the church and the world. **CCM**

Adapted from the introduction



DARRELL EVANS

STILL SERVING AN AWESOME GOD

Best known as the writer of songs like “Trading my Sorrows,” “Let the River Flow,” “Your Love is Extravagant,” and “Freedom,” Darrell Evans is considered by many to be a pioneer in the modern worship music movement. A passionate follower of Jesus Christ first, a devoted husband and loving father, Darrell has four beautiful children—daughter Leah and three sons Connor, Zachary and Grayson and final child Makenzie due February 2014. “They are my heart and world. My kids have changed my life for the better. I want to be the Godly father and leader that they need.”

Darrell’s latest album, *Awesome God is He*, reflects Darrell’s passion and love for His God, while capturing his growth as a

worshipper and musician. CCM caught up with Darrell to get the heart behind the project.

The songs, the inspiration, the focus...

This project has songs of celebration, high praise, intimacy and encouragement. These are expressed in a few different musical styles that tie into each other very effectively. The impetus behind the songs on “Awesome God is He” was to provide various spiritual springboards for the church in general to remember the greatness of God in praise while connecting with His grace for the individual worshipper. I was driven by the themes of the authority, strength, and faithfulness of God and inspired by the Fatherhood, nearness and redemptive, loving nature of God. I focused on Jesus’ Name and was careful to include over 15 different references to the names of God on this project.

An awesome word to describe an awesome God...

I grew up with ‘awesome’ as a commonly used adjective that rarely described something of greatness. It was synonymous

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with the word, 'cool.' I felt that there was room for a new song in the church that expresses why God is awesome. Three verses, the chorus, and the end tag in "Awesome God is He" convey what I think about God's awesomeness. Existing in the Holy Trinity, bringing about the worlds with His voice, salvation of mankind, His unending reign over His creation, and His good news spread through the praises of the redeemed. Other songs like, "A Mighty Fortress," "You Could Never be Praised Enough" and "Unto the King" carry on the idea of the greatness of God and His goodness to us. He lives in unapproachable light and yet has pursued relationship with us through Jesus Christ. I am in awe of a God Who holds the worlds in His hands and yet makes His Father heart approachable by sending Jesus to walk among His own creation. He is above all others yet has pursued us to redeem, restore, and have intimate relationship with mankind. That is awesome!

Deeper waters...deep language, deep theology, deep faith...

Words mean things. I've always felt that Sting was an amazing songwriter whose lyrics are almost untouchable. But I am encouraged that the same words that are available to him are available to me. I am not afraid to use words like, "fragrance" and "intoxicating" if they can illustrate the ideas that I feel need to be expressed

within the context of Christian theology and our relationship with the Lord. After the Bible, the thesaurus is my greatest resource when writing a song. Sometimes, it's difficult to get away from phrases that are common but my desire is to be uncommon whenever possible. I'll write a simply worded phrase first and think on it for a while until I can come up with a less used way of expressing that idea. The other challenge is singability. But sometimes a word that seems to be unsingable, like, "extravagant" can find a way to work. I'm not afraid to try. If I can sing it, I'll test it on the road to see if it works for others. Other times, the simplest, most used wording is appropriate and then a fresh melody and musical arrangement is the key to a song being fresh and new. The greatest truth is

that all creativity and ministry flows out of a true and ongoing relationship with Jesus. If I'm just trying to write a catchy lyric or melody, in the end, that's all it will be. If it comes from acknowledging God's presence in my life and my outspoken desire to respond to Him, it will be honest and compelling to others. My goal is to help people see Jesus clearer and the hope that is in Him. If using uncommon words or phrases will help accomplish this, then that's what I will go after. Words mean things. [CCM](#)



**CLICK HERE TO READ THE
FULL INTERVIEW!**

Welcome to the Classic Christian Artist's Section



Another Classic Problem

What is it about "current" radio today? Out of one side of their mouths, DJ's say things like "We love the 'classic' artists of the 80's and 90's like Sandi Patty, Steve Green, Twila Paris, Larnelle Harris, Wayne Watson, etc....they helped to build CCM today." But out of the other side they say things like "We can't play their music because our listeners only want to hear current songs." Really? I'm a listener and I would love to hear more of the music I grew up on. I would love to introduce my children to these artists and their music, but some panel of 20 something's have decided for us all. Who cares that most donors to non-commercial stations are over 40 years old, and most people who buy advertising on commercial stations are 40+ year old business owners. Who cares what those people (and others like them) want to hear, right? If you feel like you have the mental space to listen to and appreciate more songs from more artists,

then it is on you to let your local stations know. Why? Because they honestly think they know what you want.

Maybe it's time for us to speak up and show support for these artists when they are performing near us. Maybe it's time for the millions of fans that love the music of these artists to show a little love and support them by encouraging radio, retailers and promoters to bring their music back. Join with me in letting them know that we still love the artists who helped build CCM.



Dennis Fioravanti

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ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

MORE THAN WONDERFUL

**SANDI PATTY AND LARNELLE HARRIS
LOOK TO THE FUTURE**

Kayla
Fioravanti



In 1983 Larnelle Harris and Sandi Patty released the duet "More Than Wonderful." Their duet continues to bless and encourage people even today with its timeless message that has influenced multiple generations.

Looking back over the years, Larnelle says, "The song, written by Lanny Wolfe, was just a wonderful lyric, and it helped many of us to tell our testimony. When somebody asks, 'What does the Lord mean to you?' this song could have been taken directly from scripture, knowing Him and being His, and being recipients of His grace is more than any of us could ever ask or think. And yet He loved us enough, and cared for us enough, to make it possible for us to be in fellowship with the Father."

When they first recorded the song in 1983, Larnelle and Sandi couldn't get their schedules together to go in the studio at the same time. Larnelle went in first and laid his part down, and then Sandi came in a few days later and laid her part down. Larnelle and Sandi quickly rehearsed "More Than Wonderful" just before going on stage to sing it together for the first time ever.

According to Larnelle, "I don't remember too much about that. I was standing there, and this was happening, but the Spirit of the Lord was so heavy on me personally that I have trouble remembering having sung it. I remember when it started, and I remember when it was over, and I saw the crowd. Everybody was just on their feet praising the Lord. It was just a wonderful time."

"Lord, if you're going to allow this to be done – if you don't want me to sing anymore – You must have something awfully good coming."

Sandi reminisced, "There's been a lot of life lived since Larnelle and I sang that song for the very first time. I just sang this song with him two nights ago. It is one of the greatest

musical privileges of my life to sing with him."

Larnelle and Sandi have met on the stage regularly to sing together over the years. Both of them continue to be blessed with their musical ministries. Now, 30 years after recording "More Than Wonderful" the longtime friends and colleagues will be recording a new version of "More Than Wonderful," but this time they will do it in the same room while on the Sandi Patty & Friends Caribbean Cruise next February.



SOLO CAREERS WITH MULTIPLE DUET OPPORTUNITIES

According to Sandi, a great duet partnership comes from great camaraderie off the stage that shows up onstage when two different artists come together. But Sandi believes the most important thing for duet partners is to have life and faith goals in common as followers of Jesus Christ, and both truly believe the message they are singing.

Sandi has had the opportunity to sing with a multitude of gifted singers. When asked

who her favorite duet partner has been Sandi answered, "My favorite person that I've gotten to sing with over the years actually is my husband. Probably about 10 years ago, he started the song 'The Prayer' which Andre Boccelli and Celine Dion sang. My husband studied voice at Michigan State, and he just sings it so beautifully. So he's probably my favorite person to sing with, just because we can be as passionate as the song demands. It's so very special."

Larnelle also believes relationship plays a huge role in making a great duet partner, "I think the obvious, of course, is somebody that can carry a tune. The other unspoken thing is a relationship. There are a lot of people who I have had the opportunity to do things with over the years, and out of most of those situations have come a relationship. It's just people developing friendships and enjoying one another's company, and I think that makes

here. I know you're heart, and you know mine. And now we, with reckless abandon, can just sing this offering that God has given us. Hopefully others will be blessed, but guaranteed I know that we will."

CRISIS OFFSTAGE

During the last 30 years Larnelle and Sandi have each seen their careers soar to incredible heights and have been blessed abundantly with fruitful careers. But in each of their careers they faced different struggles that temporarily quieted them.

For one year in his career, Larnelle didn't sing. He was singing loud and hitting high notes until one morning he woke up and his voice was suffering. His endurance dropped and before long he could only sing a few songs before he was too hoarse to speak. He went to doctors and speech pathologists to determine what was happening. He didn't get too many answers other than a diagnosis of nodules forming on his vocal chords.

Larnelle described the diagnosis by saying, "You talk about a word that scares singers, and it is nodules – little growths on your vocal chords. So I came home distraught and depressed and, for some reason, started to reread the Bible. I read it, and I meditated on it, and I read it and I read it." Larnelle questioned why God was doing this to him until as he continued to read in his Bible he finally prayed, "Lord, if you're going to allow this to be done – if you don't want me to sing anymore – You must have something awfully good coming." Larnelle continued bathing in scripture, and he began to understand that God knows what we need before we need it. Larnelle understood that, "He was saying to me, 'You can trust me. I love you. I'm going to use you.' Everybody has an 'Abraham story'. That was mine." The depression started to



a great duet. For instance, when Steve Green and I sing 'Teach Me To Love', we have lived that. I've watched Steve grow in that regard in his faith, and Steve has watched me grow, and all of us are still growing in our faith. And so when I stand on stage with Steve, I trust that. It's like singing with your brother or sister. Forget the music; we're having a discussion

leave after that, and Larnelle found it easier to think, consider and to listen to the guidance that God was giving him. God has been true to His word in Larnelle's life, "And He would have been true to His word if I had won a Grammy or not. If I had had to change careers and sell cars. He just would have been moving me to a different station."

Sandi faced a completely different crisis in her singing career, but one that also drew her closer to God. In 1992 when Sandi made a full confession regarding rumors surrounding her divorce. She was certain that the doors to her singing career were closed, but God continued to use Sandi's voice and story. According to Sandi she set her career goals aside to get right with God. "For me, it came to a point in my life that it was more important for me to be right and clean before the Lord, and if that meant that I would never sing again, then so be it. I just could not damage control any more. So really, in my mind, I was just going to teach and be a mom, and try to be passionate about the rest of my days, whether I was performing or not."



Despite, and some times because of Sandi's testimony, offers to sing and speak started coming in, followed by an opportunity to join the Women of Faith team. Sandi knew God was opening doors

for her, "Because in my heart, they were really closed. And I understand that sin has consequences. I get all of that. I was really at peace with it. So it really wasn't anything that I set out to rebuild. I mean, I really walked away

from it. I felt like that was the right thing for me to do. "As opportunities opened up Sandi wondered, "Um, do you know the whole story? Are you sure you want me to come?" The doors were opening as people wanted her to share how faithful God was in the tough times, and to give people who are going through tough times some encouragement. Sandi explains, "I don't want to miss the opportunity to encourage someone going through a tough time, to challenge someone as my heart was challenged during those times, to ask tough questions, to say that God is the God of second chances. He's going to walk through this restoration with you. I just want to serve Him and honor Him with every door that is open."

THE POWER OF PRAYER

The prayers of Larnelle's mother as she prayed for his father made an influential impact on his career. As Larnelle tells it, "I grew up in a Pentecostal Holiness Church. I was a little guy listening to my mom pray my dad into the Kingdom. He wasn't a Christian at that time, and I didn't really understand it at the time. Most of this is from looking back on it. I would listen to her, and kneel with her at night as she would pray for him. I sure remember my mom praying for my dad. And I remember him coming to the Lord. And I remember what his life was like later on. And I remember that he never let that go. And this little boy needed to see that." Larnelle was greatly influenced by the prayers he witnessed his mom pray that God answered in his dad's life. Those answered prayers were tangible evidence to him that there is indeed a God.

Sandi tells how praying the Lord's Prayer has impacted her life. Sandi and her husband pray the Lord's Prayer every morning and



every night, even when they are not together. Sandi explains, "We pray much more than that throughout the day, but we've made a commitment to pray that, and when we get to, "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," a lot of times we will add, "Thy will be done on us, and Jonathan and Jennifer and Donnie and Aly and Erin and Mollie and Sam, as it is in heaven." We begin to put people's names in there. And all of a sudden, that makes how we're praying become very, very personal. So as a word of encouragement, if you don't know how to pray, the Lord's Prayer is a great place to begin."

THE FUTURE

Thirty years after the release of "More Than Wonderful" both Larnelle and Sandi continue to bless audiences by praising the name of Jesus from the stage by taking part in the Sandi & Friends, The Big Three tours, an upcoming cruise and individual solo dates. Sandi has a new CD release titled Everlasting and Larnelle just finished the Alive project

with TBN. Both singers see their ministries as a blessing from God and together they will record a new version of "More Than Wonderful."

Regarding the ups, downs and sometimes steady pace of Sandi's career, she says, "I know that there's nobody in this life who is perfect, except for our Lord and Savior. It's about the journey. Sometimes, I used to think that my faith journey was a stopwatch, and I had to get this done then, and this done here, and if I didn't make that happen ... But it's really about it being a compass, and just moving in the right direction. Sometimes that might look like standing still, but I can still face the right direction when I'm standing still."

Larnelle said, "We're still out there sharing His message. The one thing that is not generational in terms of its potency, and its popularity – we may argue about whether you believe it or not – Jesus is Lord. He is the King of Kings. He is the Lord of Lords. He is the rewarder of all those who diligently seek and pant after Him. And what are you going to do with that? Now that you've heard it, what are you going to do with it? I am most concerned about sharing that message with the people within my sphere of influence, and that has nothing to do with concerts. So my popularity, who gives a rip about that? Just like stocks, it goes up and down on any given day because we are in this generational thing, this celebrity thing. I'm not trying to sell celebrity. I'm trying to sell credibility. I'm sharing the Word of God, thanking Him for the life that He has given me in Jesus Christ. Period. End of story."



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kayla Fioravanti is a wife, mother and seasoned author of several books, and an active conference speaker. Kayla's books include, *How to Publish: The Author-preneur's Guide to Self-Publishing*, *The Art, Science & Business of Aromatherapy*, *DIY Kitchen Chemistry* and *When I was Young I Flew the Sun Like a Kite*, all published by Selah Press, LLC.

NEWS & HAPPENINGS OCTOBER 2013



Whiteheart In The Studio

Whiteheart is working on a new EP due out next year. Stay tuned for how you can be involved in their upcoming Kickstarter campaign. You will hear many of the past members playing in this new contemporary rock album that is expected to take CCM by storm all over again.

tinyurl.com/WhiteHeartMusic



Cruise with Kathy Troccoli

Join this Unforgettable Christian Cruise on the Among Friends Caribbean Cruise with Kathy Troccoli. Set sale with Kathy and her friends Rita Springer, Elli Lofaro, Michael O'Brien and First Call. This is going to be one of the most relaxing and refreshing times ever.

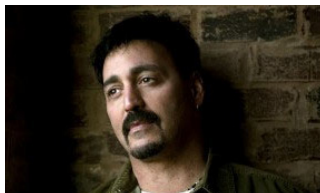
tinyurl.com/CruiseWithKathyTroccoli



The Glorious Unfolding Tour

The Glorious Unfolding Tour with Steven Curtis Chapman, Laura Story and Jason Gray is now touring the US in several cities. We love to see "classic" artists like Steven Curtis out with the newer artists like Laura and Jason. There is still lots that the "classic" CCM artists can contribute today. Check out all the dates here:

tinyurl.com/TheGloriousUnfolding



John Elefante Talks Adoption

Former "Kansas" lead singer John Elefante is using his newest single "This Time" to talk about his adopted daughter's birth and bring attention to Online for Life, an educational non-profit working to rescue babies from abortion. "If our song can in any way bring attention to this issue and encourage those who are considering abortion to choose life through options such as adoption, then we couldn't be happier", Elefante says.

tinyurl.com/ElefanteAdoption



First Call is Making Music

First Call is working on a NEW project and we couldn't be more excited here at CCA Magazine. First Call is a vocal group formed in 1985 by original members Bonnie Keen, Marty McCall and Melodie Tunney. You will remember songs like "The Reason We Sing" and "Undivided" among others. Like their Facebook page to get updates on the release.

tinyurl.com/FirstCallNewProject



PC&D Offer Hope

Phillips, Craig and Dean are welcoming the holidays with their second Christmas CD, Hope For All The World. The project features eleven songs, including a few traditional songs like "O Come All Ye Faithful" and "The First Noel". The guys will perform selected songs from the album on the December leg of their tour.

tinyurl.com/PCDChristmas

STORY BEHIND THE SONG

SOMEBODY HAS TO MAKE THE MUSIC

Stan Moser

In 1976, it came to our attention that The Imperials were open to leaving the Benson Company and recording for Word. Honestly, The Imperials made a great decision. Due to the success of Andrae and Evie along with our Canaan Record label, we had built the most effective sales and distribution system in the industry by far.

The Imperials were a real groundbreaking group. They were formed in 1964 as a southern gospel quartet and were immensely successful. You may know the name of one of the original Imperials, Armond Morales. A great man, and a friend of mine to this day although we haven't had lunch in years.

The members of The Imperials changed from time to time (well, honestly, an Imperials reunion would probably draw 50 former members), and their music began to reflect the new singers. When Sherman Andrus and Terry Blackwood joined Jim Murray and Armond in 1974, and The Imperials sound began a radical transformation. They became an iconic Contemporary Christian Music group.

After releasing their biggest selling album, "No Shortage," for the Benson Company in 1975, Sherman and Terry decided to leave the group. Sherman and Terry were clearly



the driving force behind the contemporary sound of The Imperials, and their departure left a big hole in the group. But as we would soon discover, the new guys Armond and Jim added to The Imperials were pretty good.

Dave Will stepped in to sing lead and a young kid from Arkansas named Russ Taff was added to fill out the sound as the baritone. We now know that God had a far different part for Russ Taff to sing. Another iconic personality had just entered the stage.

"No Shortage" was a very big album. I recall hearing that the Benson Company had sold 50,000 units. Of course, we convinced Armond and Jim that we could bring them to Word and do even better. Signing The Imperials was a big deal for us, but it did cause a problem. They had become a contemporary music

group with a southern gospel history that our more traditional church music audience could never accept. In other words, they just didn't fit our Myrrh label. And they didn't fit Canaan Records or the Word label either.

The answer was to form a new record label where we could house The Imperials and other artists who weren't totally contemporary (Myrrh), traditional (Word) or southern gospel (Canaan). That is exactly how the Dayspring label came to life. It was created for The Imperials and ultimately became the home of many successful artists like First Call, Kenny Marks, Wayne Watson, Morris Chapman, and many others. I guess necessity really is the mother of invention.

We advanced \$30,000 for the group's first Dayspring recording, and their producer delivered an absolutely unacceptable recording. I still remember sitting in my Word office with Roland Lundy and Dan Johnson preparing to play the master tape on a 15 IPS reel-to-reel player. Our anticipation was high. The result was devastating. As we trudged through the last song on the tape, I rewound it and put it back in the box. I looked at Dan and Roland and said something like this, "No one will ever hear this record." I promptly put the recording under my desk. It remained there under my feet for the next five years. I wanted to be certain that nobody ever heard that album, and they never did.

The next day I placed a call to an old friend. My words were simple, "We've got a deadline for releasing a new Imperials record, and what we have in the can just won't work. Can you produce a new Imperials recording for us in the next six weeks?" We didn't have an emergency planning meeting or conduct a focus group to solve this problem. I just called the only guy I knew who might be able to bail us out. And he did.

He agreed to produce that record, and the rest is history...literally. Before long we released The Imperials' "Sail On" and sold over 300,000 copies. In other words, The Imperials went from selling 50,000 albums to 300,000 from one release to the next. That was a huge success in our industry, and everyone took notice.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Stan Moser is a leading consultant in Christian ministry, music and publishing. He has held executive positions at Word Inc., StarSong Communications and Maranatha! Music. Stan lives in Brentwood, Tennessee, is the Founder &

President of Kingdom Men Ministries and serves as Men's Pastor at The Gate Community Church.

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ON MY HEART | WAYNE WATSON

rehearsing WORSHIP

Sadly, I've been in churches leading worship where the initial goal was to get people to put their Blackberries down so worship could happen.

I've come to love worship music over the last decade. More than that, I've come to love and find a great deal of joy in the act of worshipping God.

All of this is quite a change from my early life and musical career, where very few of my songs would be defined as what we now refer to as "worship" music. From the beginning though, I've wanted people to be able to experience the act of worship as they listened and contemplated the message. That place of worship is a very, very private place in our heart that exposes gratitude, grace, forgiveness and need. Ultimately, the intimate depths of all that might be going on in someone's heart is really the business of the Father and the child at worship.

While worship has taken on new meanings to me, I still make hasty conclusions about the success of an event by relying on awfully limited human resources and emotions. We've got to be careful that we don't resort to those kinds of conclusions based simply on what we see with our eyes. I'm pretty sure that, most times (probably all the time) there are lots of things going on in the hearts of people who are open to the voice of God. And most of those things are taking place without any visible evidence that we might be aware of at the moment.

I've been in all kinds of environments where worship was taking place. I remember being a young child in church and hearing either the music minister or pastor exhorting us to

"smile" or more specifically, "if your heart is happy today, notify your face". While I understand his point, the truth is this: we simply can't know what those we are worshipping alongside are going through. I suppose, that somewhere in our subconscious, we think people are right where we are. . . that they're experiencing God as we are. . . that they're happy or sad or thankful or needy . . . just like we are. When you stop to think about it, that's pretty unrealistic, a little self-absorbed and, to some degree, a little lacking in compassion.

In most cases, I'm finding that as my heart tunes in to what God wants to say or do, others will follow. Unlike the settings at a lot of concert arenas, when I'm leading worship it is not a performance. And you don't need me to tell you that it's time to worship. That's a line that can be easily crossed.

And of course, there are enough examples of funny or strange things that happen during worship to fill volumes. One friend of mine shared how he was watching his congregation worship one Sunday morning, only to spot a dear lady (in the south we'd precede this story with a "bless her heart"), with uplifted face and hands to heaven, checking a cracked nail! One night, as I was singing and leading some worship songs, I stopped to share a word or two when a little girl near the front said, "When's he gonna sing again?" And she was not using her inside voice, either.

Message received. From the mouths of babes and all that.

YOU JUST NEVER KNOW

One of the first worship songs I wrote was "Almighty". I remember some of the team from Word Records coming to my house in Houston to talk over the upcoming project and listen to the new songs I'd written. I probably had a dozen or more for them to listen to. As they walked into my studio, right

before they closed the door (I wasn't going in... I don't need to be present to witness somebody poking holes in my babies!), I remember telling them, "Hey guys, there's this one song on the cassette (yes, cassette) that I probably shouldn't have put on there 'cause I'm pretty sure it won't be on this record. It's called Almighty and, honestly, I'm not crazy about it".

About an hour later, they emerged, looked me straight in the face and said (in a "bless your heart" sort of way), "Uhhh...you're crazy".

Ok. I've been called worse.



My mom always told me that if I ever had a song in "the hymnbook" I'd really have done it. Well, Almighty did end up landing in a few hymnbooks (back when people were still using hymn books) and mom was very proud - in the noblest sense of the word. I love singing Almighty and it still knocks me out when, most nights, people jump in and sing along from the very start. I'll confess, when I started this journey over thirty years back, I never imagined that!

Since there are hundreds and hundreds of really good worship songs at our disposal, we once asked people at my church to write down songs they liked and wanted to add to our worship services. We not only got suggestions of what TO do, we got instructions as to what NOT to do. Yikes. People are serious about their music.

PLATFORM OR STUMBLING BLOCK?

Music is powerful in the hands of our God. And because it's so powerful, it can become an obstacle or a divisive element, just as easily as it can become an empowering and motivating force.

A church I worshipped in for a while hired a new pastor, and one of the first things he did was visit the youth worship service. The youth service was an energetic experience and the way the kids expressed their love for God was amazing. The problem was, most of the other members of the church didn't get to see it as the adults were all having a service in the main worship center. The new pastor asked the teenagers to give up their service for a while so that the adults could see and hear what was going on. He wanted them to see how the teenagers demonstrated their love for God in worship. And, he wanted the teenagers to see and hear how the adults worshiped and how they showed their love - their awe in the presence of the Lord. He wanted them to learn to respect the warriors with a few more years and a few more battle scars that made up the membership - to learn to appreciate the shoulders they were standing upon.

The church I'm a member of today, still holds a "revival" during the month of August. It's not really a month long revival like we had a long time ago, but it's an opportunity for us to focus on the old gospel songs that were the early worship songs of the church. Honestly, they're not writing many songs like these anymore. These songs had, and still have, a great place in our hearts and in our churches. Not just for some sentimental "Oh, let's go back and remember the good old days" reasons, but because these are songs filled with tremendous messages. Songs like, All Hail the Power of Jesus Name, My Jesus I Love Thee and The Solid Rock. It's an opportunity to sing these songs, and lots of others like

them, often. Sometimes we tweak them toward a more contemporary setting, but the heart and the message is still there. To me, it doesn't matter so much what style a classic hymn, tune and lyric might come packaged in... I just know this; I want my grandchildren and generations beyond them to know these songs - these words!

I put together a small band of excellent players to join me for each August revival. An upright bass, a mandolin, a fiddle and a few others make those old songs come to life. We tweak them a little, just to keep everybody on their toes. And even though I'm risking the wrath of a few folks by messing with these classics, I always look forward to August at the church. We don't pretend to be breaking new ground musically or have some dazzling production, we're honestly just trying to worship and invite everyone in the room to come along. And they do!

Today, as I was driving to the church for a couple hours of rehearsal in preparation for the upcoming Sunday, I realized that even this rehearsal was "worship". And that was my prayer for the time we spent together.

We don't practice to worship. We worship every day - wherever we are! God willing, we will do it again and again and again and again...



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wayne Watson has been writing, singing, and recording Christian music since 1979, appeared in thousands of concerts all over the world and received Grammy Awards and nominations, Dove Awards and 23 number one singles on Christian radio. Wayne is still actively touring and doing the work of sharing The Faith through music. Connect with Wayne at waynewatson.com



Steve Green **BACK TO NORMAL**

Paul's Epitaph

~ Part Two ~

Locked in a Roman dungeon and certain that a violent death awaited him, the Apostle Paul wrote his final letter to Timothy, his beloved son in the faith. After admonishing Timothy to stand firm and prepare himself for impostors and deceivers within the church, Paul summed up his own life in these words, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." 2 Timothy 4:7

The second phrase of Paul's summary, "I have finished the race" should be a great encouragement to all of us! For Paul, the finish line was in sight. It was a marker to cross, death's doorway into eternal joy. There is no sound of defeat in Paul's voice, but rather a note of joyful expectation. There was a crown of righteousness waiting for him, not simply the reward for faithfulness, but the promised perfection of conscience, mind and character that is ours only through Jesus Christ.

Paul uses the personal pronoun "I" in speaking of his own finish, yet from the rest of his writings it is clear that he spent his life and energy to ensure that his brothers and sisters would finish the race as well. (Colossians 2:1-4) After all, Paul knew that the Christian life he called a "race" is not primarily an individual contest, but rather is

something we run as a family. He told the believers in Philippi, "Let each of you look not only to his own interest, but also to the interests of others." (Philippians 2:4)

In June of 2012, Meghan Vogel became the 1600-meter state champion and the first girl in 20 years from West Liberty-Salem High School in Salem, Ohio to win a track title. After her victory, and exhausted from the exertion, Meghan still had to run the 3200 meter race. What people remember that day about Meghan is not her win, but her heart. As she rounded the final turn of her second race and headed down the straightaway, one of her rivals collapsed in front of her, just 20 meters from the finish line. Without thinking, Meghan stopped, knelt and pulled Arden McMath to her feet, carrying her toward the finish. In an act of selflessness, Meghan paused just before the line and holding Arden in front of her, let her cross the finish line first.

Notice that Paul talks about finishing the race, not about how long it takes or even the condition of the runner at the finish line. Finishing the race is really about grace. Whether it is a long and arduous contest or a very short run (such as that last minute confession made by the dying thief crucified next to our Lord), God has determined to bring to completion the work He began. In the end, we discover that He has carried us for every step, and brought us safely home.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steve launched his solo career in 1984 and has since sold more than five million albums. He has been honored with four Grammy nominations, 18 Number One songs, and seven Dove Awards. Steve continues to tour extensively nationwide and internationally. He is currently tour in the God of All Glory Tour along with Twila Paris, Larnelle Harris and Wayne Watson. Connect with Steve at www.stevegreenministries.org/

LESSONS FROM THE CROSSE | RENEE CROSSE

JOY ANYONE?

There are many times as a woman, wife, mom and friend, that I have needed more joy. The stress of all we face can leave our joy tanks on empty and our bodies and souls feeling drained.

We've all heard the expression: "If mama ain't happy...nobody's happy."

There was a time in my life where I was feeling completely drained in the joy department. I became very aware of the impact this was having on my family. I could tell they were tip-toeing around me and I began to pray for God to help me change. I didn't want my family walking on eggshells because of me. I asked for Him to fill me with His joy. I was confident that no matter what I was facing, His joy would be enough. "The joy of the LORD is my strength" was a mantra straight from God's Word that I began to recite regularly. I'd audibly declare this verse as a 'go to' in tense times. When stress arose, I'd calmly repeat over and over "The joy of the Lord is my strength. The joy of the Lord is my strength."

As I prayed for God to strengthen me, He allowed situations to come before me to 'help' on my journey to have more joy in the stressful times. One evening as I was cooking dinner for our family, Clay began to play ball with our dog. All of our kids were in the kitchen doing homework, talking and waiting for dinner. I was cooking a family favorite. Zuppa Toscana, with an Italian salad and garlic

bread. The house smelled divine! Clay and one of our daughters began to bounce the ball from one side of our cooking island to the other. The dog was barking, chasing the ball from side to side and everyone was getting a kick out of this. Everyone except me, that is. As I turned to remove the bread from the oven, I saw the dog's ball as it was in mid-air over the huge pot of soup that was simmering on the stove. It felt like I was watching a slow motion movie clip of what happened next. The ball landed right in the pot of soup. Clay immediately began grabbing towels to clean up the splash, kids began to run and hide behind the curtains and the couch...you get the picture.

They were all bracing for mom to explode, and trust me, I wanted to explode. But I just stood there, closed my eyes, took a deep breath and began to repeat, "The joy of the Lord is my strength. The joy of the Lord is my strength. The joy of the Lord is my strength." I opened my eyes to see lots of eyes staring back at me. They were watching me, waiting to see how I would react. I told them, "I'm in no way endorsing what just happened here in the kitchen while I was cooking dinner, but.....it was kind of funny."

The kids began to laugh, Clay hugged me, apologized, and I felt the atmosphere in our home immediately change for the better. A potentially tense moment was diffused by the

Word of God. I realized again the power that my reactions have on my family. I could have easily shut the evening down by getting mad, stomping off to our bedroom and slamming the door, leaving my family in the kitchen wondering what to do about dinner.

I'm thankful for the outcome in our home that evening. We were able to sit down at the table, laughing about what happened. And yes, I know what you're wondering. You betcha we ate that soup! The "5 second rule" applies there.

Philippians 4:4 tells us "Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again, rejoice." I encourage you to ask the Lord to give you more joy. Write down several things in your life that you can be joyful and thankful for right now. Believe that God will deliver this gift to you.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Renee Crosse is an author, speaker, and co-founder of HolyHomes Ministries with her husband, four-time Dove Award winner Clay Crosse. Renee and Clay have been married since 1990, have 4 children, and live in Bentonville Arkansas where Clay serves as worship pastor at First Baptist Church, Bentonville.

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ADVICE FROM ARTISTS

What word of encouragement or caution would you give to current artists today?

Kayla Fioravanti



CLAY CROSSE:

"I would tell them to always be aware that God has given them that platform. You don't just work hard and earn a platform. It's something that

has to be given to you. The hard work is important, and certainly you have talents, but for some reason God chose you to be on that stage at that time. And I could be talking to an artist who's on a stage at a big arena, or I could be talking to an artist that's on a stage in front of 15 high school students leading worship, because most of them are doing the latter. So I'm telling all them, across the board, this is a high calling, and God has put you there. You might be charming and you might be entertaining. That's great; He's given you those skills. But it's for His glory, and it's big work. Take it seriously as ministry, not entertainment. It doesn't mean that you always have to be serious. You can be fun. You can use the skills God has given you to be funny. But understand that it's less about you and more about Him. It kind of takes the pressure off your shoulders. So I just want to tell artists that this is a great calling on their life, and to stay humble and to stay focused and to stay accountable."



STEVE GREEN:

"If God has something for you to do, then He will do it, be encouraged. There are so many great opportunities today. No one has your

story, and no one will communicate exactly like you. Your voice is needed. And your story is important. The caution is always, I think, to stay low. Maybe seek the lowest place of the place of quiet and let God be the one who advances you. Don't think that the bigger platform is the more blessed platform, or the best platform. It might not be. Sometimes people will come to me and say, "How did you get to where you are? That's where I want to be." And I say, "Well be careful, because if you're looking ahead at a size of platform or a size of exposure or whatever as arriving, then everything between here and there is really wasted. You're going to miss it." What if the biggest thing God has for you is actually something really small and you miss it? Because the way God measures and the way we measure are completely different."



WAYNE WATSON:

"I think, write your heart. Do everything you can to push back from being motivated by what might play on the radio, or what people might like.

Sometimes that makes you write stuff that might not be as cool or hip or popular. But there's a fine line there. I always want to write stuff that I thought people needed to hear, and not so much what they wanted to hear. And it's not going to go on forever. You may be at your high point right now. Depending on how you define high point, what is the definition of success to you? Figure out what that is. If it's a certain number in the bank, that's okay. I think the highest form of success we can aspire to is obedience. It might not take us to the highest number in the bank account. It might not take you to number one on the charts. You may not sell as many CDs as somebody else, but just be obedient to what God puts before you to do."



LARNELLE HARRIS:

"Far be it from me to tell anybody how to live in terms of their craft. I can only say, just understand the subject matter. And that's not just for

young artists. That's for all of us. We sing about the pinnacles of faith. We sing about grace. One of the songs that I love doing so much is, 'Were It Not for Grace' because it breaks my heart knowing what God had to deal with, that He offered me this most precious gift of grace, and covered me with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. I think that we've got to have that experience. That's whether you're just starting out, or in the last season of your life. To understand grace, and how good God is – if I'm not a worshiper of that in my private time, then I'm probably not going to be very good at sharing that with others. Guaranteed."



SANDI PATTY:

"I think the biggest word of caution would be, surround yourself with a group of people who will stand with you, who will hold you accountable, and who will be your voice of truth. Even though what we sing about on the road is real, a lot of times, when you're on the road and make a career of Christian music, there can always be this sense of unreality to it – a sense that things don't count. Whether it's catering or relationships or whatever, you must be grounded first and foremost in your faith, and

then in relationships that will hold you accountable and help you grow. I think the second thing is that just because you're in Christian music, that's not a substitute for our personal relationship with Christ. What we do is work. And it's very meaningful work. But it's still work. It's not our relationship with Jesus Christ. We still have to pursue that and allow Him to pursue us on a daily basis, or we lose our grounding."

REVIEWS | BOOKS

The Jesus Prayer: A Cry for Mercy, a Path of Renewal

John Michael Talbot

(InterVarsity Press Books)

In the pages of John Michael Talbot's newest book, *The Jesus Prayer*, the legendary Christian musician notes that while Catholics may be more familiar with this simple prayer (truly a mainstay since the early church took off), Protestants have been exploring and enjoying it in growing numbers of late.

Here's the prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

That's it.

But it's the very simplicity of these deeply biblical words—prayed in a meditative fashion—that have had a profound impact on believers who've adopted this prayer form (of which Talbot himself is one) as a tool to break through spiritual dryness and connect with God in new ways, he writes.

The *Jesus Prayer* is decidedly practical, not only instructing readers about the background and rich history behind the prayer (via bibliography and suggested reading list) but also devoting entire chapters on words or phrases from the actual prayer and going into depth about them.

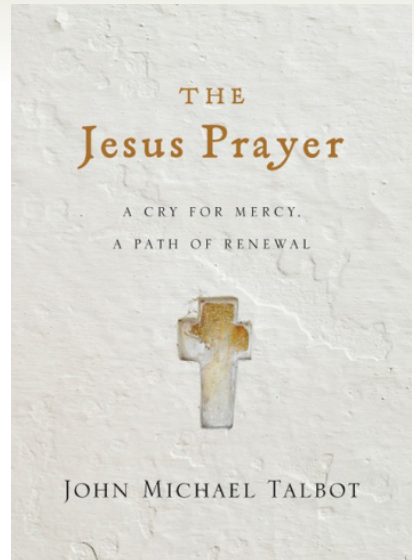
But perhaps most valuable, especially for Protestants who may be skeptical of *The Jesus Prayer* and its roots in Catholicism and Eastern Christianity, is that Talbot speaks as one who sees both sides. Talbot is indeed a Catholic steeped in the monastic tradition, but he began his Christian walk as a Protestant during the heady days of the early 1970s Jesus Movement.

So Talbot understands wariness for prayer forms that, on the surface, appear to go against the biblical mandate of vain repetition—and *The Jesus Prayer* form involves saying the prayer repeatedly in concert with your breathing. But here's where Talbot puts his arm around skeptics: "The trick is to pray repetitions with real meaning, not to stop repetitive prayer altogether!"

Noting the value in Jesus' earthly faith of praying, for example, the Shema Israel ("Hear, [O] Israel") as the "centerpiece of the morning and evening Jewish prayer services," Talbot explains: "Jesus certainly did not take issue with this prayer, but only in repeating it as rote ritual without right meaning and right intention, and as a genuine prayer. So repetitive prayer is not the problem. Vain repetition is."

Based on personal contact he's had with believers at spiritual retreats all across America, Talbot concludes that *The Jesus Prayer* helps fulfill a "legitimate human need for meditative and contemplative prayer that brings health on the spiritual, psychological, emotional and physical levels of life" and is benefitting the entire church.

Winning insights here, especially if you're looking for a tool to charge your daily devotions.



REVIEWS | MUSIC

Freedom

Whiteheart

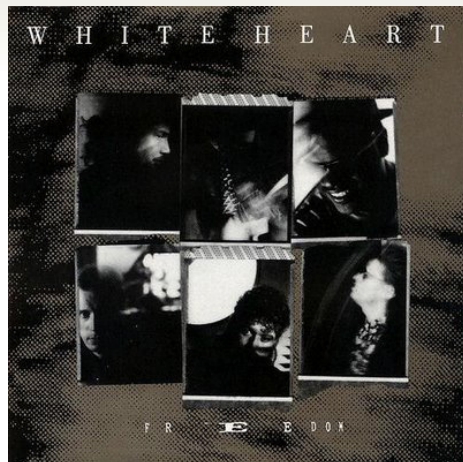
In 1989, Whiteheart released *Freedom* – the sixth album of their career and their third and last title for the Sparrow label. This collection included some of the band's hardest-hitting, most progressive rock tunes up to that point ('Bye Bye Babylon', 'Power Tools', 'Let The Kingdom Come') – but it also contained plenty of the accessible rock melodies ('Over Me', 'Eighth Wonder', 'I'll Meet You There') that appealed to fans that had been with White Heart from their beginning in 1982.

From start to finish, the album's eleven tracks are a successful blend of the guitar and keyboard-driven rock songs that Whiteheart was becoming known for – with melodic, soaring guitar solos and thundering bass and drums – along with a selection of radio-friendly rock ballads. The album's retail sales were fueled by the radio success of the single 'The River Will Flow' (featuring backing vocals by Margaret Becker, Steven Curtis Chapman and Eddie DeGarmo), and *Freedom* would go on to become one of the band's most successful recordings.

Whiteheart was truly hitting its stride as a cohesive songwriting machine on this project. While Mark Gersmehl, Billy Smiley or Gordon Kennedy wrote almost all of the songs on the previous albums; the writing credits this time around were shared by all of the group members. They composed together in pairs and trios - or in the case of the songs 'Babylon', 'Set The Bridge On Fire' and 'Let It Go', they wrote as a creative team of five: Rick Florian, Mark Gersmehl, Gordon Kennedy, Tommy Sims and Billy Smiley. This album also marked the first time that the band gave the producing responsibilities over to someone outside of the group: the capable Brown Bannister.

I recently had the opportunity to sit down with the band and talk about this album. I asked them about the theme that runs through several of the songs on the *Freedom* album: the lyrics of 'Over Me' compare the love of God to a warm, healing rain; while 'Let It Go' promises that "after the storm there's a ray of gold". One of the more aggressive tunes on *Freedom* encourages the believer to 'Set The Bridge On Fire' after crossing over troubled waters into a new life. The guys admitted that this recurring water-related theme was not a conscious effort, but the result of creating an album as a band instead of the product of one or two songwriters. Nonetheless, the theme serves as a lyrical metaphor for the Christian life; reminding us that we should be like water in a dry land – flowing freely through the lives of those we encounter, with the refreshing, life-giving message of Jesus Christ.

Today, nearly 25 years after its release, Whiteheart's *Freedom* continues to be one of Christian music's most refreshing and consistent rock albums; a fitting testimony to the musical power of a band that's ready to rock once again.





Want To Go Out On A Date?

Seems like the longer we've been married, the more we appreciate actually going on dates. The more we date, we realize that we are still in love and genuinely enjoy doing things together. We know that's not the case for some marriages, and this is quite puzzling. When we see marriages that have grown cold, we often wonder, "How exactly do two people fall out of love?" After all, there was certainly a time you dated and liked each other enough to marry, so what happened?

In many cases, people simply get busy. Life is fast and hectic with work demands, kid's schedules, bills, etc. It's easy to neglect spending time together. It's common to drift apart. It starts to feel natural to put our kids before our marriage. A healthy marriage takes work to maintain, but many times we can become so distracted by our schedules and busyness that we lose a vital connectedness to our spouse.

We've picked up several things from our new pastor and his wife. He's talked about taking his wife to a lovely spot off the walking trails to have morning coffee. She mentioned that they try to have breakfast together once a week. This man is a tremendously busy pastor of a large church, yet the example he is living is vitally important. He is never too busy to spend time with his wife.

This skill may not come naturally to a lot of people, so, it's important to schedule dates

with your spouse. And don't feel tied to the old model that date night must be on the weekend, or even at night for that matter. With kids, that might not always work. What about a date for breakfast or lunch? What if it is on a Monday night instead of a weekend? We had a Monday night date recently and really enjoyed the change.

Please know how important this is. One day when your kids leave, it's going to be just the two of you again. Being alone as a couple in an empty nest has proven difficult for some marriages. Gear up for that day by spending time with your spouse today, just the two of you. Breakfast date, lunch date, dinner date, movie date...whatever it is, just make sure you are making a point to do it.

God put you together in this thing called marriage. Honor Him by spending time with the one He created for you. We're reminded of this important verse from Ecclesiastes:

Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NASB)



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Clay and Renee Crosse, through HolyHomes Ministries, challenge Christian homes with a simple and straightforward message to be set-apart for God's glory. The Crosse's have been married for 23 years, have four children, and live in Arlington Tennessee. For more info visit www.claycrosse.com and www.holyhomes.org.

END NOTES

DON FRANCISCO

Life After the Damascus Road

In a previous article I described how, at age 28, Jesus spoke to me audibly, and how the experience ended my vision of an angry, judgmental god. He told me He loved me, revealed Himself in me, and gave me something to sing about.

The first half of my life had been spent in church; the second half on the street. The reason I'd wound up in the latter place was because the first had been intolerable.

So, when Jesus spoke to me that day, I heard Him from outside the usual evangelical box. I hadn't been in a church for years. The people I knew then weren't church folk. Our lives were mostly, as the old country song went, "Dim Lights, Thick Smoke, and Loud, Loud Music". We were all in a place John Lennon described when he spoke of grasping at "whatever helps you make it through the night". Underneath it all was a lot of fear and loneliness.

Then I had that Damascus Road experience. I wasn't out trying to kill Christians like Saul of Tarsus, but my direction was just as wrong. Suddenly I was shown the answer—an answer that neither the church people I'd known before, nor the street people I knew then, had guessed: That God is love, acceptance, and forgiveness. In Jesus, He's reaching out to everyone with open arms, with no agendas, no rules. I wasn't taught that. I experienced it. I knew.

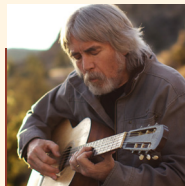
I had to tell them all—the church people and the 'gentiles'! This news was 'way too good to keep to myself. Besides, I was about to burst with it. I knew music could bridge almost any wall of isolation and reach the soul; it had done that for me many times. So, I continued

working to be successful as a songwriter and singer, but now with an entirely different motive—to let people know who our heavenly Father really is.

I attended many churches, but I heard the same stuff that had driven me away from God in the beginning—that He was keeping track of my performance and would turn His back on me if I didn't toe the line or grovel enough. You'd think I'd have learned to just stay away, but I kept hoping to find a place I belonged. (I've got good news: After nearly forty years, I have. It's not a place, though, it's just friends who know Him as I do. It's difficult to organize that. Some of us meet together on Sundays.)

Why do you sing? Is it because of love for people and for the One who loved you first? To help them make the connection you have? For me, that's the only reason that's good enough.

There's a world out there, inside and outside the church walls, that is dying to know His love. Their nights are long, their days pointless, and their relationships unsatisfying. They desperately need to know someone loves them unconditionally and forever. Sing about that.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Don is one of the early pioneers of contemporary Christian music. His story song of the resurrection, "He's Alive", has been a

standard for over 30 years.

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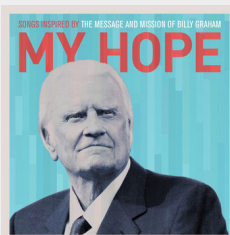
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ADULT CONTEMPORARY

MUSIC



VARIOUS ARTISTS
**My Hope: Songs Inspired
 By the Message and
 Mission of Billy Graham**
 (Capitol CMG)

FOR FANS OF: Amy Grant,
 Michael W. Smith, TobyMac
 ★★★★★

As evangelist extraordinaire Billy Graham gears up for his 95th birthday, Christian music's crème of the crop tip their hats to his incredible legacy. Though the styles vary between Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith, TobyMac, Newsboys, Israel Houghton, Matthew West and many other all-star contributors, the message of the cross comes across so clear it's bound to make this lifelong preacher proud.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: “Take Me Home”
 by Michael W. Smith



TRICIA
Radiate (Inpop Records)
 FOR FANS OF: Britt Nicole,
 Natalie Grant
 ★★★

On her first solo pop album, listeners will be pleasantly surprised to find a pretty, upbeat album that focuses on insecurity and finding purpose in Christ. She shines on “What I Know,” which is well written and beautifully delivered. While it would have been nice to see more lyrical depth, it is, overall, a compelling album.

—Grace S. Aspinwall

WE LIKE: “What I Know”



UNSPOKEN
The World is Waking
 (Centricity)
 FOR FANS OF: for King
 and Country, Sidewalk
 Prophets
 ★★★

Unspoken's new EP, *The World is Waking*, features the smart pop production expected from the Centricity quartet. Five songs are likely too few for a fan base waiting for a full-length, but catchy melodies like “Lift My Life Up” will suffice for now. The gospel flair on “In Your Hands” breaks up the mix well, but Chad Mattson and company sound best when delivering slick pop songs. Mission accomplished on that front.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: “Lift My Life Up”



1 GIRL NATION
1 Girl Nation
 (Reunion Records/
 Provident Label Group)
 FOR FANS OF: Ke\$ha, Jamie
 Grace, Demi Lovato
 ★★★★★

Bursting with energy and positive lyrics any parent will approve, the self-titled debut from 1 Girl Nation is teen-pop gold. Standouts include “Love Like Crazy,” where the girls' vocals are nicely complimented by the boys from Royal Tailor, and “While We're Young,” which is irresistibly catchy. Tarnished only by some awkward rap attempts, this is a worthy effort and solid first project.

—Grace S. Aspinwall

WE LIKE: “Love Like Crazy
 (Feat. Royal Tailor)”

WORSHIP

MUSIC



KIM WALKER SMITH & SKYLER SMITH

Home (Jesus Culture Music)

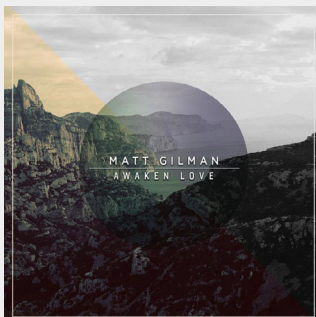
FOR FANS OF: Jesus Culture, Caedmon's Call

★★★

Home is a beautiful blend of folk and pop music, combining the best from each artist. The album is sweetened by the couple's love story, which adds a lovely depth, shown most profoundly on "Beauty of Your Presence" and "Face to Face."

—Grace S. Aspinwall

WE LIKE: "Beauty of Your Presence"



MATT GILMAN

Awaken Love

(Forerunner Music)

★★★★

While there's plenty to love about Matt Gilman's new album *Awaken Love*, it's the worship leader's incredible voice that tops the list. Songs like "As The Deer" and "You Made A Way" are strong congregational compositions on their own, but Gilman's crystal clear vocal delivery brings each track to new heights. Gilman's talent is second-to-none and his inspired delivery will undoubtedly help bring his songs to churches all over.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "You Made A Way"



SOULFIRE REVOLUTION

Revival (Capitol CMG/ Sparrow Records)

FOR FANS OF: Hillsong United, For King and Country

★★

With cameos from TobyMac and Martin Smith, there are a few solid moments on this project, particularly in the vocals and arrangements on, "Count The Stars." "Place of Surrender" also shows off the band's talent with a Hillsong-esque bridge, but the rest of the album is lackluster and a bit simplistic. More creative energy and intricate instrumentation will work well for them in the future.

—Grace S. Aspinwall

WE LIKE: "Count The Stars"

ROCK

MUSIC

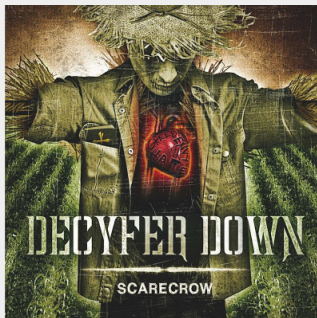
**NEWSBOYS****Restart** (Sparrow Records)FOR FANS OF: TobyMac,
Peter Furler

★★★★

Newsboys fans have rolled with numerous changes over the decades, so there's little reason to believe they won't enjoy the band's latest *Restart*. This time, Michael Tait and company hit the dance floor with an EDM release that might perplex some and excite others. "That's How You Change The World" kicks off the album as a Skrillex outtake. The title track pulses like a top 40-dance number. Electronic dance music is here to stay and clearly so are the Newsboys.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "Enemy"

**DECYFER DOWN****Scarecrow** (Fair Trade)

FOR FANS OF: Disciple, Pillar

★★★★

Four full years have passed since *Crash*, the last full-length from chart-topping rock and roller Decyfer Down. Expectations are high given how long the Grammy-nominated band has taken to follow up, but *Scarecrow* is well worth the wait. The new album shows several impressive sides of Decyfer, from the intense, concise single "Westboro" to the nuanced "Say Hello" that gives a nod to mid-'90s grunge. It's a diversified palette, and Decyfer Down has never sounded better.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "Bleeding Lies"

**7EVEN TH TIME DOWN****Just Say Jesus** (BEC Recordings)FOR FANS OF: Nickelback,
Shinedown, 3 Doors Down

★★★

Writing about a myriad of challenging issues but always keeping Christ at the center, 7even Th Time Down brings an immediate lyrical authenticity to this sophomore release. There's also a lot to devour musically, especially for fans of stadium-filling rock riffs, though the guys sometimes sound a little too derivative of Nickelback and its like-minded spin-offs.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Wait For You"



ROCK SPOTLIGHT

DECYFER DOWN

The five-year wait between Decyfer Down albums means members have a whole lot of life experiences to sing about, which is probably why *Scarecrow* (Fairtrade Services) is one of this entire year's most honest and authentic hard rockin' records. Fans of Skillet, RED and the band's own Grammy-nominated past are sure to be pleased, while the wide-ranging topics will certainly strike a nerve with believers of any musical stripe. Here's more from front man TJ Harris during a conversation with CCM about the new project's many moods, alongside a reminder that salvation is open to absolutely everyone, even those who might not seem like the typical Sunday morning churchgoer.

CCM: What led you to name the album *Scarecrow*?

TJ Harris: "Scarecrow" is a song on the record that talks about a real issue within the church. It's about how some people in the church want to pick and choose who walks through their doors, instead of accepting people where they are and letting God do the rest. And it made for some really cool artwork!

CCM: Your lyrics have always been noticeably deep, but this disc seems to be even more thought-provoking. What do you hope listeners will take away from it?

Harris: As these songs came to life, they spoke to us in so many different ways. I hope when people hear these songs, they take time to examine themselves as we have.

CCM: How would you describe Decyfer Down musically these days?

Harris: Musically, DD is growing and becoming its own thing. We don't really care about what's trending or what's cool. We want to bring the message that God wants to bring with a style of rock that we love.

CCM: Based on your widespread travels, what would you say are some of the most prevalent issues facing the church?

Harris: I think one of the biggest issues facing the church is the inability to work together with other churches on a local level. A lot of times I think it comes down to that *Scarecrow* mentality. And I don't say that to demean anyone. We've all got our faults and shortcomings, but if we aren't examining ourselves and seeking God on how we can do better, then what are we accomplishing?

—Andy Argyrakis

FOR MORE INFORMATION CLICK HERE

INDIE

MUSIC

**MATT BROCK*****From the Land of Shadows***
(Independent)

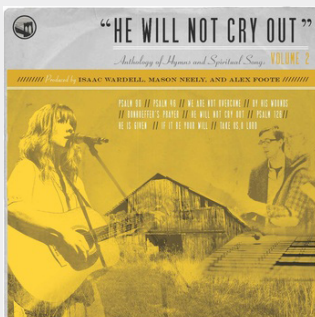
FOR FANS OF: Josh Garrells, All Sons & Daughters, Jason Gray

★★★★

Vulnerably charting his personal pains to expose spiritual light, the singer-songwriter-worship leader and multi-instrumentalist uses a treasury of sweeping melodies to encase his unguarded verses in epic, yet discerning Americana musicianship. Co-writes with Brett Rutledge (Aaron Shust) and wise co-production by his pastor and Nashville artist advocate Jason Egly further focus the mature newcomer's raw recorded pilgrimage with marvelous glimmers of hope.

—Andrew Greer

WE LIKE: "You and Virginia"

**BIFROST ARTS*****He Will Not Cry Out: Anthology of Hymns and Spiritual Songs, Vol. 2*** (Bifrost Arts Music)

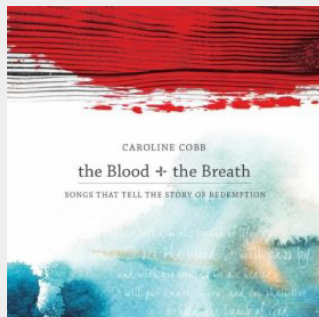
FOR FANS OF: Sandra McCracken, Indelible Grace, Sufjan Stevens

★★★★

Inscribing historical liturgical texts and melodies with indie instrumentation—think weeping pedal steel, dark telecaster, upright piano and roomy gang vocals, Bifrost enlists musicians from various secular music sects to revive and create liturgy in promotion of thoughtful worship in the worldwide church. Indie fans with spiritual leanings will find sweet refuge inside the warm musical wanderings of Bifrost's collective.

—Andrew Greer

WE LIKE: "He Will Not Cry Out"

**CAROLINE COBB*****The Blood + The Breath***
(Independent)

FOR FANS OF: Mindy Smith, Matthew Perryman Jones, Lucinda Williams

★★★★

Musically chronicling the scripture's story through convicted Americana-folk haunts, the Texas singer-songwriter traces Messianic hope amidst humanity's dark and harried lineage. Produced by Josh Moore (Derek Webb, Caedmon's Call), Cobb's acoustic-based interpretations of redemption is spellbinding. Add a Top 10 iTunes Gospel debut and her illuminating compositions deserve a say in the church's modern musical landscape.

—Andrew Greer

WE LIKE: "The Passover Song" (ft. Sean Carter)

INDIE SPOTLIGHT



MATT PAPA

It's a busy fall season for Matt Papa. Not only is the worship leader and songwriter releasing a new album entitled *Look & Live*, but he's doing so through his own record label, 2 Cities Music. It's a dream come true for Matt, allowing him a platform to make music his way without any outside pressure or distractions.

CCM: *Can you tell us about the music on **Look & Live**? Is this something that you put together after you've written several songs and see a common thread or does it work the other way around?*

Matt: I've heard many songwriters say before that songwriting is like therapy. I think that's true, but it's more than that for me. You write about what moves you, as you catalog your life's devotion. In this season, I was captivated by what it means to behold the glory of God. I spent about eight months studying the word "glory" because of all the word's ethereal vagueness. I read lots of books on the subject so when I sat down to write all of those themes just came out. I didn't really try to do a concept album. I guess it just happened.

CCM: *How was it working with **Stu G** on this project?*

Matt: A blast! Stu is such a great guy and a great talent. He pushed me where I needed to be pushed and steered me where I needed to be steered. His playing is so passionate and authentic. I was a big fan of his work in the band *Delirious?* and he brought the same artistry and dedication to this record, for which I am grateful.

CCM: *Can you tell us about the new label? How long have you wanted to do that?*

Matt: It's been a dream for a few years now. I want to create a home for ministry-minded artists whose bottom line isn't to make money, but rather whose bottom line is to help people see the wisdom and beauty of Jesus Christ. I don't have anything against money or even the Christian industry as a whole, but when money becomes the bottom line it almost always means that beauty gets cheapened and God gets shrunken.

CCM: *Can you tell us what else you have on the horizon?*

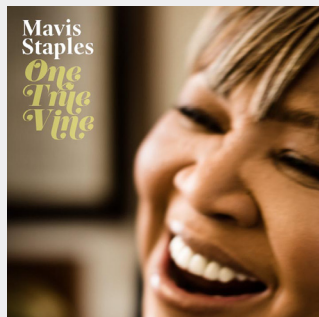
Matt: I'm currently working on a book that will be released next year through Bethany House and it's the same title as the new album, *Look & Live*. The band and I will be touring in support of the new album over the next coming months, while I'm also heavily involved in serving at my church in Durham, North Carolina. I'll be preaching more in the future for the college ministry at the church, so there are good days ahead. Just gotta keep runnin'!

—Matt Conner

FOR MORE INFORMATION CLICK HERE

URBAN

MUSIC

**MAVIS STAPLES*****One True Vine*** (Anti-Records)

FOR FANS OF: The Staple Singers, Mahalia Jackson, O Brother Where Art Thou

★★★★

Nothing sort of a national treasure, longtime Staple Singers leader turned soloist Mavis Staples once again delivers a hauntingly beautiful rootsy gospel record. Produced for the second project in a row by Wilco's Jeff Tweedy, the collection is equally suitable for the church as the hipsters, but never comes across as anything less than an all out spiritual revival.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Sow Good Seeds"

**TONY TILLMAN*****The Tillman EP***

(Reflection Music Group)

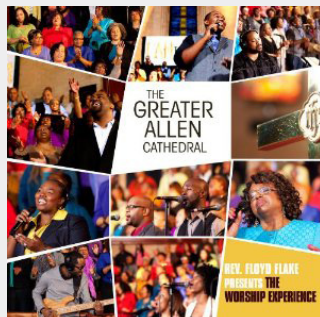
FOR FANS OF: Tedashii, Canon

★★★

Tony Tillman's new EP, *The Tillman EP*, speaks directly from the hip-hop artist's experience with hitting rock bottom and finding redemption and opportunity on the other side. With a sweet guest list that includes Sho Baraka, Tedashii and Beckah Shae, Tillman's short set speaks directly from his life. "Hourglass" is a real treat, but it's hard to top the insight and intensity of "Psycho".

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "Psycho (ft. Canon)"

**GREATER ALLEN CATHEDRAL*****Rev. Floyd Flake presents The Worship Experience***

(RCA Inspiration)

FOR FANS OF: Isaac Carree, Ron Kenoly, Hezekiah Walker

★★★

Melding the full-voiced choir drive of traditional gospel with the smooth grooves of urban praise and worship, the celebrated music ministry derived from GAC's 18,000 mega-member congregation exhibits powerful musical fluency. Whether inspirational balladeering, B3-backed old-school revival stomps or R&B choruses, for those looking for more from gospel choirs, GAC has created and mastered a true musical experience.

—Andrew Greer

WE LIKE: "Your Grace"



UNITED TENORS

A gospel music forerunner for nearly thirty years, Grammy winner Fred Hammond recently found himself longing for the male worship sound of twenty years ago through gospel vocal ensembles like Commissioned—of which he was a founding member. Extending an invitation to R&B singer Dave Hollister, producer Eric Roberson (Jill Scott, DJ Jazzy Jeff) and current gospel favorite Brian Courtney Wilson to fashion an all-male urban worship experience, Hammond gives *CCM* a glimpse into the genesis and motivation of the super group and one of the genre's bestselling records of the year—*United Tenors* (RCA Inspiration).

CCM: *What inspired you to create another male vocal band?*

Fred Hammond: Creatively, about a year ago, I started hearing a male group sound similar to Commissioned's first sound. It was internal and very clear. I knew then I needed to assemble a male group.

CCM: *With four distinct voices, was it difficult to ensemble the four together once you hit the studio?*

Fred: Ensembling was very easy. I understand everyone's range. Dave is most comfortable singing the lower notes. I hold down the middle range. Eric sings middle and top with ease. And Brian has an absolute extended high range. So I made sure everyone played to their truest strength and it all worked out.

CCM: *What did the creative process look like?*

Fred: When I was writing the songs I sang all the parts on each track. Then the guys listened to and put their own stamp on each part. There was total peace while recording. We loved being in the room together. Everybody supported everybody. It was cool. It was fun. And it was easy. Even the photoshoot was the best I've been involved with since Commissioned's first!

CCM: *What is the ultimate mission driving The United Tenors?*

Fred: When men sing together, it's powerful. For a long time women have been at the forefront of the gospel music sound. We want to complement that and show what it looks like when men worship together—and that men can worship together.

—Andrew Greer

FOR MORE INFORMATION CLICK HERE

CROSSOVER

MUSIC


BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA
I'll Find a Way

(Sony Masterworks)

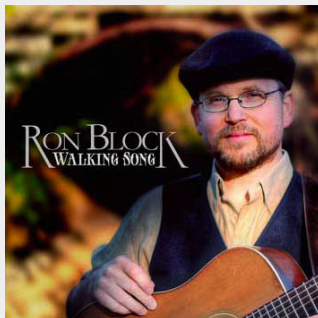
FOR FANS OF: Bon Iver, Ben Harper, Solomon Burke

★★★★

Take a gospel music institution that's been around since the 1930s, add in production from indie/folk hero Justin Vernon (of Bon Iver fame) and get ready to rejoice with an endless parade of heavenly harmonies. Younger generations are sure to gravitate towards duets with Vernon, Patty Griffin and Shara Worden from My Brightest Diamond, though no matter collaborative or solo, the troupe retains its unshakable faith foundation.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Jubilee" with Patty Griffin


RON BLOCK
Walking Song (Rounder)

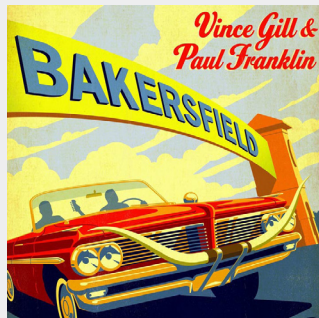
FOR FANS OF: Allison Krauss & Union Station

★★★★★

Ron Block is the spiritual center and celebrated banjo player in Allison Krauss' backing band, Union Station. Every few years, the bluegrass legend steps out on his own to release a solo album, yet he's never come close to the beauty and warmth of his latest, *Walking Song*. With three instrumental tracks and numerous originals, it's hard to believe these aren't traditional Americana staples, but that's a testament to the ability of Block and co-writer Rebecca Reynolds. A Grammy nomination is a real possibility here.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "Walking Song"


VINCE GILL & PAUL FRANKLIN
Bakersfield (MCA Nashville)

FOR FANS OF: Buck Owens, Merle Haggard, Glen Campbell

★★★★

Neotraditional country star (and Amy Grant's hubby) Vince Gill teams with highly respected steel guitarist Paul Franklin to pay tribute to Buck Owens and Merle Haggard, two pioneers of the "Bakersfield Sound" from the early 1960s through mid-'70s. While it certainly makes for a successful modern day collaboration, *Bakersfield* is also a vibrant testament to ten vital California-inspired country tunes from back in the day worth rediscovering.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "I Can't Be Myself"



CROSSOVER SPOTLIGHT

JOHNNYSWIM

After years chasing solo careers in the music industry, true love and artistic chemistry brought Abner Ramirez and Amanda Sudano together to form Johnnyswim. It's not clear why things didn't click before, but the mutual pop instinct is crystal clear on the band's brilliant EP, *Heart Beats*.

We're not the only ones who love Johnnyswim. The pair played The Tonight Show with Jay Leno earlier this summer and The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson recently highlighted the band. VH1 featured them as a "You Oughta Know" artist, and now they're working on a new full-length that will keep the buzz rolling. Here's an inside look at one of the hottest couples in the industry.

CCM: Can you tell us about the new album. What are you aiming for?

Abner: For us, our purpose is to be really honest. In honesty, you find something you could never be ashamed of. There's no internal thing where you tried to be cool or tried to reach for something specific. You just don't care. So far, that's worked for us to just be honest. I'm happy it's a hopeful record, but I'm even happier that it's an honest record.

CCM: What do you mean by an honest record?

Abner: You can tell when you're listening to an album if it's honest or not. You know the songs instinctively that were written to make a dollar and those that had to get out because the writer had something they had to birth. After all that's happened to us, there's so much that has to get out that we'd be cheapening the process and doing ourselves a disservice if we just tried to be cool. If there's any other motivation than just being true to our own story, then it's not worth it.

CCM: Is that what you resonate with?

Abner: Absolutely. For us, it's not about making a record that sounds cool or makes money. We want it to make a difference in the lives of people. We want it to help them in some way to deal with the circumstances that surround them, to maybe help give some perspective. The only way you can do that is by being honest.

—Matt Conner

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FILMS

ENTERTAINMENT



IN A WORLD...

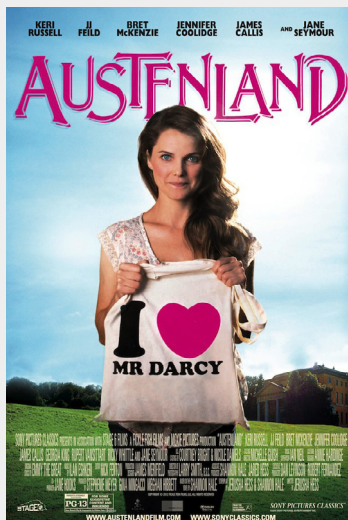
Starring: Lake Bell, Demetri Martin

Director: Lake Bell

Studio: Team G, 3311 Productions

★★★★

Lake Bell blossoms as a star to watch in this delightful dramedy about a girl named Carol who attempts to break into the male-dominated world of movie voiceover work (think about the titular words in a movie trailer). With a similar feel to indie hits like *Juno* and *Little Miss Sunshine*, *In a World...* is both hilarious and endearing. And as the writer, director and star, Bell definitely puts herself on the map for breakout star of 2013.



AUSTENLAND

Starring: Keri Russell, Jane Seymour, JJ Feild

Director: Jerusha Hess

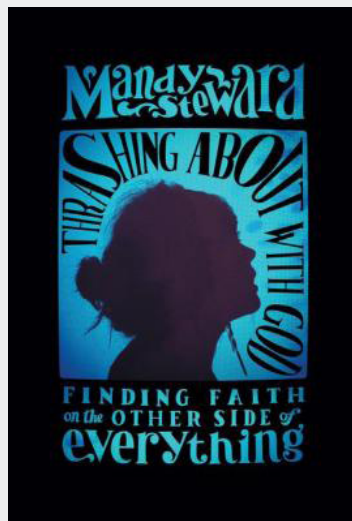
Studio: Fickle Fish Films

★★★

For the legion of *Pride & Prejudice* fans, especially the 1995 BBC adaptation, a new romantic comedy might hit a little close to home—in a good way. *Austenland* is the tale of Jane Hayes, a girl who can't quite get over her crush on Colin Firth/Mr. Darcy. Her near obsession takes her on an international trip to relive her dream in a resort based on Jane Austen. The end result is a fun and endearing journey about the longing for love and the length we go to fill it.

BOOKS

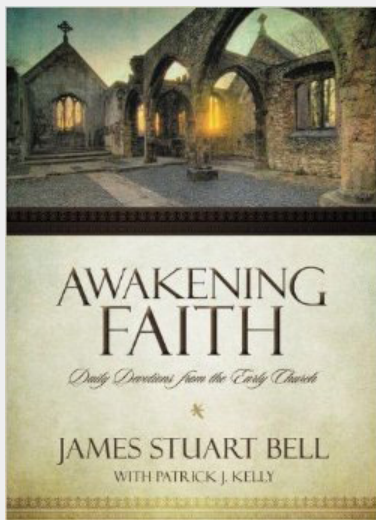
ENTERTAINMENT



THRASHING ABOUT WITH GOD

Authors: Mandy Steward
Publisher: David C. Cook

Blogger-turned-author Mandy Steward has expanded her popular honest, conversational style into book form with the refreshing and disarming *Thrashing About With God*. Steward's ability to say "out loud" what many Christians are likely thinking will bring her an audience akin to Donald Miller's *Blue Like Jazz* as she allows for divergent answers for common questions. For those looking for a fresh perspective, Steward's new book is worth your time.



AWAKENING FAITH: DAILY DEVOTIONS FROM THE EARLIEST CHRISTIANS

Author: James Stuart Bell with Patrick J. Kelly
Publisher: Zondervan

James Stuart Bell has made an impressive and inspirational career compiling the writings of figures like Charles Spurgeon and A.W. Tozer. His latest book, *Awakening Faith*, is a book of 365 devotional readings centered on a short scripture passage with corresponding insight from some of the fathers of the Christian faith. From Augustine to Polycarp, Bell helps Christianity's rich tapestry and tradition illuminate faith in modern times.

IN THE STUDIO WITH PAUL BALOCHE

Album Title: *Christmas Worship*

Release Date: October 29, 2013

Label: Integrity Music

Recording Studio: Studios, churches and homes in Colorado Springs, CO, Texas and New York City

Producers: Michael Rossback, Ben Gowell and Paul Baloché

Number of Songs: 12

VERTICALLY SINGING: As a worship pastor at a local church for the past 23 years, I have always wrestled with how to keep a sense of worship alive during the Christmas season. We all love the content of carols, but they don't often facilitate a vertical expression of worship. For example, "O Holy Night"—we're singing about a night, not to God—yet I love that song. So the idea with *Christmas Worship* was to take classic carols and combine them with modern worship choruses to help facilitate worship throughout the season. —Paul Baloché

CAROL CHOICES: The final litmus test for choosing which songs to record was paying attention to the Christian carols that have resonated within our home church, and then asking: Does the song allow for the addition of a simple vertical worship response without losing the content and heart of the carol? —P.B.

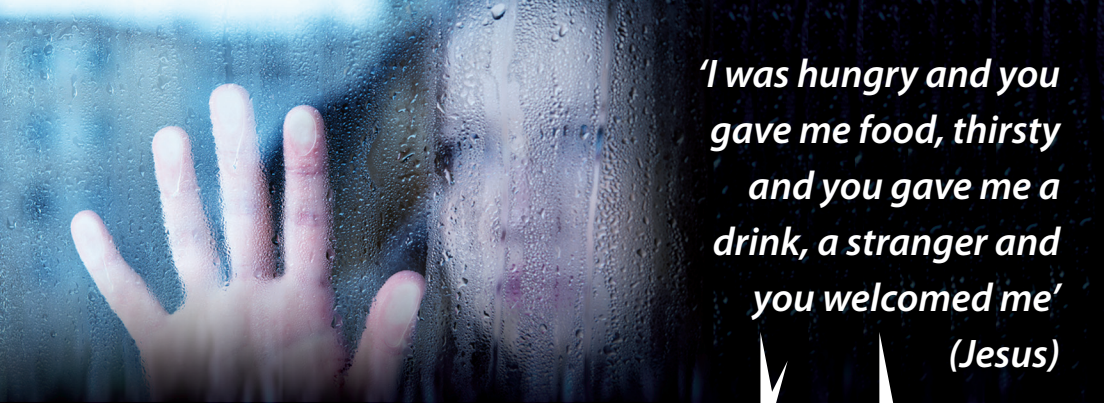
HAPPY CHRISTMAS: The album is very upbeat and happy with an Americana,



under-produced kind of production. It has a bit of Beatles, moments of urban gospel and an Americana "foot stomp" kind of sound, except for the string quartet arrangements and horn parts provided by John Arndt of "The Brilliants." —P.B.

'TIS THE SUMMER: The album was recorded in June and July of this year which made me think about my Australian friends who typically celebrate Christmas during the summer months. We set up the Christmas tree, Christmas lights and let the eggnog flow. —P.B.

+ FOR MORE INFORMATION ON PAUL, VISIT LEADWORSHIP.COM.



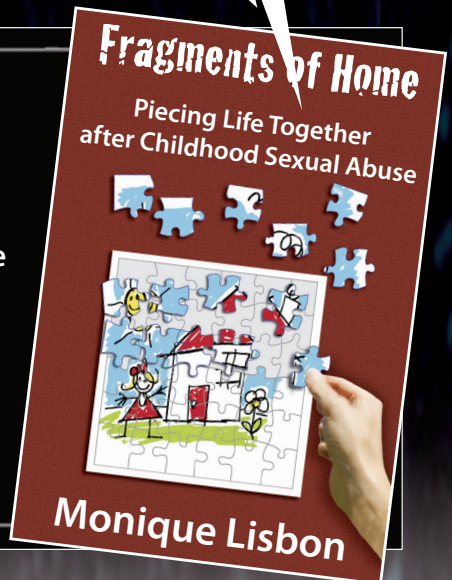
*'I was hungry and you
gave me food, thirsty
and you gave me a
drink, a stranger and
you welcomed me'
(Jesus)*

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YOUR HOME STUDIO

BATSON GUITAR COMPANY

A WORSHIP LEADER'S DREAM COME TRUE

Nashville, Tenn., based Batson Guitar Company has made a name for itself in an arena that is more exclusive and difficult to break into than the entertainment industry—lutherie (guitar building). Cory Batson's first musical love was the drums, which later translated into some of the most innovative and inspiring acoustic guitar sounds ever experienced. "I'd always heard people compare the soundboard of an acoustic guitar to the head of a drum, and I thought... man I would NEVER cut a big hole in my drum heads!" Enter the "no-hole" acoustic guitar.

On a Batson guitar the fret board is cantilevered (elevated) and doesn't even touch the soundboard. The strings are guided linearly through a beautiful tail piece which means the strings extend from one end of the guitar to the other for extra vibration and resonance, and they experience only a slight bend when making contact with the bridge. Best of all, there's no hole in the soundboard! Instead there is a sound port strategically placed in the side of the guitar pointed directly at the player.

Think of violins—the sound holes (f-holes) are pointed up when it's being played, yet the audience still experiences the full depth of sound it creates. Such is the case with a Batson. One of the best side effects of the

no-hole design is that there's NO feedback when plugging in to play live, making it a worship leader's dream come true. Although Batson Guitar Company has built its fame on their handmade masterpieces, Cory has spent the last few years trying to translate his passion for exotic woods and custom appointments into a guitar that is affordable to the "everyday player." Cory has successfully launched the very first line of import guitars and I was privileged enough to review one of the first off the line.

Being a Batson fan for years and having played one of their \$6,500 guitars myself, I have high expectations for anything bearing the Batson Moniker. The Artist Series Grand Concert I was sent did not disappoint. This guitar is all things Batson—the elevated fretboard, tailpiece, sound port... it's all there. The medium-sized, solid wood Artist Series Grand Concert style has a gorgeous cedar top with highly figured East-Indian Rosewood back and sides and mahogany neck. The body is surrounded in a 4-layer wood binding—ebony/maple/ebony and finished off with 3A curly maple binding. A maple cap adorns the neck heel, and the mother of pearl headstock inlay and beautiful chrome Batson-branded Gotoh tuners give the whole thing just enough sparkle. The

YOUR HOME STUDIO

guitar is finished with a furniture-grade high gloss giving the instrument a very expensive look and feel.

Of course, the most important thing is the sound. When you play a Batson you don't just hear it, you experience it. The whole guitar vibrates against your body, you feel the sound waves rise up from the sound port onto your neck and face, crispy high notes shimmer while bass frequencies that were once thought impossible to produce through an acoustic guitar resonate and settle in your chest. It is truly unlike any guitar you have ever played—

incredibly sensitive, so even the softest touch renders clean, clear audible notes that resonate for days.

The new import guitars consist of three series—the Torres (starting at \$874.99 MSRP); the Artist (starting at \$1699.99 MSRP); and the soon to be released Exotic Series (starting at \$2499.99 MSRP)—so no matter what your budget, you can experience what a Batson is all about. CCM

+ FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT BATSONGUITARS.COM.



CREATE

DON'T GIVE UP!

FINDING OPPORTUNITIES TO USE YOUR MUSIC

with Cindy Wilt Colville

I'm married with kids, have a full-time job and, while I love songwriting, I feel that the time has come to give up on the idea that music will ever be more than a hobby. Before I do that though, other than having a big artist cut my song, what are some outlets I might find for the songs I am writing?

In Christian music there are fewer major label artists cutting songs that they didn't either write or co-write. A majority of songwriters signed with the major publishers have one or more other jobs to supplement the shrinking advances and income made from songs getting recorded.

There are few songwriters that have achieved "overnight" success. For so many it took years to develop their craft and then they had to work hard to find an audience to listen to their songs. Jennie Lee Riddle is a great example of a songwriter who trusted in God's timing for when she would be able to share her songs with an audience beyond her own family. She was in her late 30s when she had the opportunity to share a song she had written 10 years prior. That song is "Revelation Song."

As an independent songwriter, the good news is that there are significant kingdom opportunities for your songs starting right where you live. A place to start looking for an audience is to ask the question of where songs are being used in your home, your

church, your community, your schools, your state and surrounding states. The key will be to write songs that are resonating with whomever your audience is. If they like your songs they will share them with others. If no one is asking to hear more of your songs, then keep working on your craft.

There are opportunities to write songs right in your own home—songs for your children, a love song for your spouse, wedding celebrations, Mother's Day, Father's Day and family videos. Another outlet is your church. So many churches have a large variety of ministries beyond just the worship services, and original songs would be a huge blessing in Celebrate Recovery gatherings, Sunday School, women's and men's Bible studies, retreats, theme songs for mission videos and others. In your community there are outdoor festivals, coffee houses, restaurants, stores that play local music, kids events, sports events, senior centers, hospice, prisons and many others.

I encourage you to continue writing songs whenever you can find the time in your busy schedule and be looking for opportunities to share your gifts starting right in your own home, church and community.

Cindy Wilt Colville is a music publisher and songwriting consultant. For more information about the services she provides to songwriters please visit her website www.cindywiltcolville.com. Cindy is leading a Songwriting Intensive Retreat October 24–27 in Nashville, TN.

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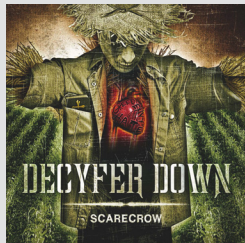
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STORY BEHIND THE SONG

“SAY HELLO”

ARTIST: DECYFER DOWN

ALBUM: *SCARECROW*



Decyfer Down has never shied away from extremes in their music—lyrically or otherwise. But their latest, *Scarecrow*, features songs

brimming with the gritty, messy-though-beautiful stuff of life. “Say Hello” is a

track borne of unimaginable horror...and unimaginable grace. TJ Harris of the band shares the story below.

“‘Say Hello’ is a song about one of my wife’s close friends. At one time in her life, her friend was heavily into drugs. One night she attempted to commit suicide. The gun accidentally fired toward the wall. She killed her grandmother in the other room. In the small town she lived in, the word traveled fast and she was instantly labeled and shunned, like she had a scarlet letter on her chest. This song tells that story from my wife’s point of view, but also tells of God’s unfailing love for us and that we should also show toward one another.” —TJ Harris CCM



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THE GIFT WITH A BEATING HEART

EXCERPT FROM CH. 6,
LITTLE BLACK SHEEP



At a party in
Petaluma,
I met a
guy who
had a large
stash of
cocaine that
he freely
carved into

rails, striping the mirror on
the coffee table. He latched
on to me, chattering away
about his life and his theories
about life with the stuttering
untempered surge of thought
that is the common exchange
among drug abusers. But
I recognized a gravy train



when I saw one and happily listened to his conversational nonsense in exchange for unlimited access to his blow, and by sunup I had a steady boyfriend. His name was Rick, and he had a long-term job doing trim work on the buildings that dotted George Lucas's Industrial Light & Magic compound in San Marin. At that point he had been working on the property for several years and had a nice house in Petaluma, and initially I thought I had hit the lottery. Rick was handsome, generous with his drugs, and in many ways well-meaning. But the substance of the relationship was contained in a tiny glass vial, and we had absolutely nothing in common beyond that. After less than a month, we both realized that there wasn't enough cocaine anywhere to make us compatible, although, ever attentive to my own interests, I stuck around long enough to attend the Industrial Light & Magic Christmas party that was held in San Francisco that December. That was it. Except it wasn't it. I discovered several weeks later that I was pregnant.

I fell into a new low of apprehension and dread. I genuinely believed that the worst had come upon me and that this event brought over pamphlets from the crisis pregnancy center where she worked, and I read about the embryo as an individual life with a beating heart and brain waves that was probably already sucking its uniquely printed thumb in my womb. I read about the horror of various current termination methods, such as vacuuming, and the irreparable physical and emotional damage that I would do to myself if I were to abort.

The pamphlet was designed to appeal to everything maternal in me, but it was unnecessary. I wouldn't have aborted the baby. But not because I trusted God or thought that He would help me—far from it. And it was not because I held any deep convictions, spiritually, morally, politically, or otherwise. I simply was too broken and too terrified to do anything but accept my lot, even though I had no idea how I was going to manage. I could not even stay sober for a month, let alone nine of them. I assumed that I would fail at pregnancy just as I had at every other aspect of my life and that God's righteous punishment for my crimes, the bitter end I had been fully expecting all along, would be a baby with birth defects, a living testament to my own wretchedness.

My family accepted the news with the air of weary inevitability that had become part and parcel of my stream of bad tidings. But my mother felt strongly about Right to Life issues and, in spite of her own justified concerns, offered her support and encouragement, which I deeply appreciated. My father's response was disappointment, which I expected, but also kindness, which I did not expect. Neel and my friends drew near and offered help.

The only one who wanted nothing to do with any of it was Rick. I went to see him and told him the situation. He responded by questioning whether or not the baby was his, which was a legitimate concern, but I was sure—not because of any faithfulness on my part but because of a lack of other opportunities. Then he said he would pay for an abortion, but he didn't want any part of bringing a baby into the

aftermath of a failed relationship. Frankly, I was relieved. I was already overwhelmed and didn't want to have to deal with another opinion, so I quickly told him he was off the hook in every way and then asked if I could have access to medical records if I needed them. We did not speak again for a long, long while.

I went back to St. Johns, the little Episcopal church, and was greeted with compassion and practical help. Women, young and old, rallied around me, and I began to feel a bit stronger. I became determined to have a clean pregnancy and started walking every day and trying to eat well. My health insurance with BankCal had cleared just a couple of weeks before my conception, and I was elated to find that I had a policy that paid for everything, with the exception of a small co-pay. I wondered if maybe that was a gift from God.

Emotionally I would swing wildly from my initial dread to thinking that maybe I could be a mother to inquiring with private adoption agencies, wanting a situation far more stable than anything I could provide for my baby. I had no idea where I was going; I got out of bed every morning and held on to whatever was in front of me.

Weekends where I would fall back into drinking and using, causing even the most hardened drug dealers to refuse to cater to me when I showed up at their doors in maternity clothes and an obvious baby bump. I found a way though, and the remorse and desolation that followed were lower than any place I had been before.

I had long since stopped caring much about my own well-being, but the knowledge that someone else, someone

defenseless with no say in the matter, was involved was crushing to me and confirmed every bit of disgust I had ever felt about myself—and then some. I would crawl up out of the shame and white-knuckle my way through another couple of months before it happened again.

Once I called my mother to tell her of my latest relapse, and she became enraged, reminding me that Jesus said in every gospel but one that anyone who harmed a child would do better with a millstone tied around their neck and tossed in the sea than to face the punishment that awaited them. I knew she was trying to protect the baby, I knew I had been seeking this kind of response calling her in the first place, I knew I needed help, but I didn't know where to get it—and at that point, neither did she. In 1982, addiction-treatment centers were hardly on the horizon, let alone part of the public lexicon, and even if they had been, I don't know that I would have considered myself a candidate. I was convinced it was a moral failure. But it was a moral failure I was powerless to overcome. I began to cry out to God in a way that I had not done before, as an advocate for the baby, which made me bolder.

I questioned His integrity entrusting a life to me. I did not expect Him to help me for my sake, but I asked Him to help me stay sober, to help me find a loving adoptive family, to help me, please, just help me.

In the midst of this, I began to feel the baby move, and with each little somersault in my womb, my heart responded. For the first time in my life I belonged to someone and someone belonged to me. I realized

that this wasn't just a baby. It was my baby. I did everything I could to keep myself from drinking and using—which mostly meant switching to food, which, in this instance, was acceptable to me. Still, there were moments when my resolve caved in, and I was at the bar again, unable to stay away. Finally, in my last trimester, the urge to pick up lifted, and I was able to finish my pregnancy sober.

With every kick and flutter, though, it became obvious to me that whatever happened, it was not in me to give my baby up. That little heartbeat was the only thing keeping me tied to the planet, the only thing that gave me any desire for a future. Toward the end of my pregnancy, I told my mother that I would keep the baby, fully expecting her to challenge my decision and remind me that I was the poorest of choices for motherhood, but to my surprise she tearfully said that she wanted that too. She became even more supportive, coming over to walk with me, attending Lamaze classes with me, helping plan a massive baby shower with my friends that supplied nearly everything I needed and, most importantly, giving me a feeling of courage and hope with her own implacable optimism and faith.

In September of 1982, I began to have contractions and went into labor two weeks after my due date. In California, natural childbirth was a badge of honor that everyone I knew wore proudly, and though I had never waited to discover my pain tolerance before killing it with one thing or another, my intent was to join the ranks of all the brave women who had gone before me.

But labor was like having an internal expander installed in my uterus, cranking it quickly from zero to ten, letting it collapse, and cranking again every five minutes until every bone, every muscle, every bit of sinew felt close to snapping. I can't say I behaved nobly; I can't say much about it at all except I stayed with it for fourteen hours, after which my doctor did an exam and told me my baby was breech and I would need a cesarean section. I was relieved to know that I would be getting painkillers under a doctor's orders, excited and extremely fearful about my child's condition all at the same time.

The C-section was fairly quick and unremarkable. I was sedated but awake and have a blurry memory of a tiny infant brought close before I was taken to recovery. My mother met me there and exclaimed: "I have seen her, and she is gorgeous!" I quickly asked her if everything was all right—implicitly and even expectantly wondering about defects. "No, no, no," she said. "All is well."

I fell asleep for a couple of hours, and when I woke, a nurse brought my daughter to me, bundled in a pink blanket and wearing a little cap that I lifted to find a Mohawk of blonde curls. She was perfect. She was beautiful and perfect. I named her Rebecca Neel. And in that moment, I had my first recognized encounter with God as I know Him today. It was as if He pulled back an invisible curtain and said to me: "See, I'm not who you think I am." [CCM](#)

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NATALIE GRANT DARES TO BE

A PASSION, A CALLING, A MOVEMENT

Natalie Grant has never shied away from seeking truth. Her songs resonate with hopeful evidence of God's love, provision and purpose for our lives. Her work in fighting human trafficking through her organization, Abolition International, is fueled by her unwavering faith in a God who sees all, knows all, loves all and wants to see the best for His children—all of them.

Underneath this strong, driven exterior, though, resides a woman who has wrestled the demons of insecurity and self-doubt. She has walked the path of unhealthy choices for the sake of attaining a false sense of self-worth, most evident in her struggle with and recovery from an eating disorder. She has also walked the long road back to the altar of an unconditional, loving God who radically pulls her beyond herself

“THE PROMISES OF GOD DO NOT HAVE AN EXPIRATION DATE.”

everyday. Now, she's leading a movement to show other women that He desires the same for them. Hence, *Dare to Be*.

Dare to Be began as an idea that for those who truly embrace all God has in store, joy is abundant and life takes on new intention and drive. This idea became a devotional and now is a conference held around the country, where women can hear the truth of their worth and boldly dare to be more. Partnering with her best friend, author/speaker Charlotte Gambill, the *Dare to Be* Revolution has begun. Natalie shares more with CCM about the movement and how it feels to be living recklessly within the arms of a limitless God.

CCM: *What prompted this passion for you?*

NATALIE GRANT: To really believe that I am who God says I am is a challenge. All of us struggle with insecurities. We hear from culture or friends or family, or even the past, ideas about who we are. It's so easy to listen to those choices even though so many of them are full of lies. I want to rediscover who it is that God says I am. I want the truth to choke out the lies.

CCM: *So what exactly is Dare to Be?*

NATALIE GRANT: *Dare to Be* is an event for women that we've been touring around the country the last year. We've done twenty conferences already. It was birthed out of a need that we saw in our own lives. I'm a mom to three small kids. I work outside the

home and feel pulled in so many directions. My best friend, Charlotte Gambill, mom to two young kids, has shared many of the same struggles. We met at a conference where we both were ministering, and through conversation, realized there were so many things we need to just remind women about who they are. We must define ourselves in the way God defines us. I struggled with that for so much of my life—feeling insecure, ill equipped and inadequate, feeling not good enough. But when I continue to seek out the promises of God, who He describes me and believes me to be, the plans He has for me, I can start to see the real truth. The promises of God do not have an expiration date.

CCM: *After 20 conferences under your belt already, what fruit are you seeing? What are your hopes for the long-term impact of this movement?*

NATALIE GRANT: We've heard from so many women about how just daring to believe we are who God says we are actually changes friendship, marriages, families... As women really being to digest the truth of who we are in Christ, it will change communities and change the world. **CCM**



LEARN MORE AT NATALIEGRANT.COM.

WORLD ON FIRE

*IN THE WAKE OF TRAGEDY AROUND THE GLOBE,
ARTISTS OFFER THOUGHTS OF HOPE AND HEALING*



The last several weeks have witnessed a horrifying barrage of events resulting in loss of life, severe casualties and a general sense of fear and uncertainty around the world.

On August 21, a chemical attack in Syria claimed approximately 1300 lives and injured over 3500 more. On September 16, a gunman stormed a Washington, D.C. Naval Yard, killing 12 and losing his own life. On September 21, several gunmen attacked a civilian population at an upscale mall in Kenya. Over 60 people lost their lives. Add to that the incessant flooding in Colorado that has cost at least 10 lives and wreaked unprecedented damage.

All of this during the month of September when many are remembering the horror of September 11, twelve years ago... Our world is a scary place. People do unimaginable things. Nature renders humanity pitifully vulnerable. And at the end of the day, we are reminded that our lives are fragile and fleeting.

As Christians, what is our response to these travesties? How do we counter the darkness? There's no one right answer. Common sense tells us to rally our support, do what we can to send help, to go help... and constantly, consistently, pray.

At CCM, we wish we could do more. But what we can do and will do is to ensure that these events aren't forgotten. We won't shy away from discussing them even though they are sad or may make us uncomfortable. Moreover, we want you to know what the artists that you read about and hear on the radio are thinking and doing about these events.

No one can adequately put into words the scale of tragedies like these, or the senselessness of violence, or the helplessness of man versus nature. But we can offer words of encouragement and hope. And let our words spur us to action. The world is a dark place...but we have within us a light. Now, it's our responsibility to share it, despite and because of the darkness.

"My heart breaks for those that are suffering so greatly. And as a mom, I'm struggling for the right words to explain the horrifying realities of the world we live in to my little ones. It's in times like these, however, that living out our faith is imperative. May we show a hurting world that a relationship with Jesus brings unexplainable peace through the darkest storm, and through our words AND actions as the church, may we open our arms with love and generosity, to be the hands and feet of Jesus". —**NATALIE GRANT**

"My thoughts and prayers are with all affected by the shootings today in D.C. and the floods in Colorado." —**Amy Grant via Facebook**

"Praying peace & comfort for the victims & families of the #NavyYardShooting & #Colorado floods."

—**MANDISA (@MANDISAOFFICIAL)**

"Praying for God's peace over all affected by the terrible shooting in D.C. today."

—**CHRIS TOMLIN VIA FACEBOOK**

"It is very overwhelming when I hear about what is going on in the world, but it's not that shocking. We know how this story ends—darkness will get darker and the light will grow brighter as we watch and pray for a new Kingdom to come. We know that Jesus will come back as King and establish justice and make all these wrong things right. When I feel hopeless and overwhelmed I remember the Lord's prayer and how He cares about these things even more than I do, and will turn things around." —**LARA LONDON**

"When we face challenges like those facing our nation this week, it is easy to lose our focus.

Take your eyes off of the problems that you're facing and put your eyes on Jesus. Life is never fair, but God is always good!"

—**HARDIE AVENUE FRONTMAN YURI MAYBA**

"It has become more and more difficult to watch the news these days. One tragic event after another serves as a sobering reminder that we live in a broken and hurting world. Watching these most recent floods in Colorado force people out of house and home has increased my awareness that as much as we'd like to believe we are, we are not the ones in control of our world or this life. I pray for all who are hurting today, from Colorado all the way to Syria. And these days I find that my prayers turn their focus more to Heaven and the promise of a place where there will be no sorrow and no tears."

—**MATTHEW WEST**

The struggle is real. Bad things happen and tragedy abounds. Everyday lives are lost and the choice is mine: Do I selfishly desensitize myself and block out the outside world? Or do I remember that these are real people, with kids and parents and love and these are the very same people like myself, that God loves. Deep down, my heart breaks for the families of these victims. Although I can't undo what's been done, this painful experience (whether it be the domestic shooting in D.C., or the foreign injustice in Syria) can help shape me to think about others. To offer them up in prayer. If we all started thinking of our brothers and sisters, looking out for our fellow man, we would live in a very different world. Today, let us start with praying for those in pain. Joining them where they are.

—**DANIEL BIRO, HAWK NELSON**

My deepest prayer and condolences to those of you who have lost loved ones in these recent tragedies. My prayer is that this trial wouldn't cause you to lose your joy or peace, but that it would cause you to dig down deeper into your joy and peace, which is God. Our never-changing, never-failing Father... He is loving. He is wise. He is good. His dearest peace to all of you. —MATT PAPA

Events like the recent flooding in Colorado and the shooting in D.C. only remind us that this world is not our Home. Our thoughts and prayers are with all those left in the wake of such tragedies. We don't understand why God allows our present sufferings and we read in Scripture that Creation itself groans in frustration, waiting for things to be made new and right. In times like these, I cling to

Isaiah 55:9 where God assures us His ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts than our thoughts. May our faith in God's love and power only strengthen during this time of trial. —AARON SHUST

Every time we, as a nation, go through hard times we get closer together as "one nation under God." These tragedies are no exception for our need to get together and pray, support and encourage those going through rough times. No matter what, God is faithful even when we don't understand the circumstances of these tragic events. We are praying for you guys. God bless you!

—ARIEL MUNOZ/UNSPOKEN (DRUMS)



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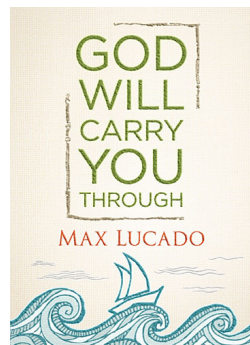
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ULTIMATE VICTORY

AN EXCERPT FROM

GOD WILL CARRY YOU THROUGH



That you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. —Ephesians 1:18-21 NKJV

Life turns every person upside down. No one escapes unscathed. Not the woman who discovers her husband is having an affair. Not the businessman who has his investments embezzled by a crooked colleague. Not the teenager who discovers that a night of romance has resulted in a surprise pregnancy. Not the pastor who feels his faith shaken by questions of suffering and fear.

We'd be foolish to think we are invulnerable.

But we'd be just as foolish to think that evil wins the day.

The Bible vibrates with the steady drumbeat of faith: God recycles evil into righteousness. Perhaps you read this in search of a quick fix for your challenges. "How to Overcome Obstacles in Five Easy Steps." Sorry to disappoint. I don't have an easy solution or a magic wand. I have found something—Someone—far better. God himself. When God gets in the middle of life, evil becomes good.

Haven't we seen this discovery in the story of Joseph? Saddled with setbacks: family rejection, deportation, slavery, and imprisonment. Yet he emerged triumphant, a hero of his generation. Among his final recorded words are these comments to his brothers: "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20 NKJV).

This is the repeated pattern in Scripture. *Evil. God. Good.*

See the cross on the hill? Can you hear the soldiers pound the nails? Jesus' enemies smirk. Satan's demons lurk. All that is evil rubs its hands in glee. "This time," Satan whispers. "This time I will win."

For a silent Saturday it appeared he did. The final breath. The battered body. Mary

wept. Blood seeped down the timber into the dirt. Followers lowered God's Son as the sun set. Soldiers sealed the tomb, and night fell over the earth. Yet what Satan intended as the ultimate evil, God used for the ultimate good. God rolled the rock away. Jesus walked out on Sunday morning, a smile on his face and a bounce to his step. And if you look closely, you see Satan scampering from the cemetery with his forked tail between his legs.

"Will I ever win?" he grumbles.

No. He won't. [CCM](#)



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MAKING IT ALL WORK

with Love and the Outcome

Jodi King and Christ Rademaker, the duo that comprises Love and the Outcome, has had one of the strongest beginnings of any group in recent history. Heralded by *Billboard Magazine* as a duo on the rise, added to radio stations across the country and critically acclaimed, there's something undeniably special about the pair. What's more, is that they're accomplishing their career and ministry goals while juggling one of the most difficult jobs of all—marriage.

The two have opened up to CCM to answer questions about how they make it all work and how they keep Christ at the center of their hearts and their hearts at the center of their home.

CCM: *Marriage is a hard job! How do you manage to juggle that while working together?*

JODI: Chris and I met on the road. We were both part of a worship collective that travelled across Canada doing worship events, so life on the road is our normal! When we got married we were in separate bands for the first two years, so being in a band together is something we don't take for granted. Looking back I can see how God was preparing us for the journey we're on now. Our current challenge is trying to find a balance between home life and road life...band life and married life. We're learning to set boundaries between the two. When it's rehearsal time we need to be able to say,



"Hey, I don't like that bass riff. Can you go back to what you were playing before?" And vice versa without taking offense...

That's what being in a band is all about. Our combination creates something better than what we do on our own. Date night is the key to our home life! We turn off the phones, close the laptops and leave the car parked. We do our best to ride our bikes and walk everywhere when we're home. Chris is really good about leaving me little love notes, and I'm always baking him his favorite cookies. Those little things go a long way and remind us that we're husband and wife first, band mates second. It's a new thing for us, so we're always working at it. We will never stop working at it! CCM



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