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P.O.D. AWAKE & ALIVE BUT IS THE CALLING RUNNING ITS FINAL COURSE?



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FEATURES

P.O.D.

Front man Sonny Sandoval discusses the band's latest album, their ongoing struggle to prove their faith in the face of controversy, and reveals the true cost of life on the road.

**Max Lucado**

Affirmed pastor, author Max Lucado expounds on the illustrations of Joshua and asks, "Why do we deny ourselves our inheritance, our glory?"

**Paul Baloche**

Releasing his second album featuring vertical enhancements to seasonal classics, the renown leader continues to challenge us to make Christmas a season of worship. FREE resources for worship leaders inside!

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DEPARTMENTS

FROM THE EDITOR

PHOTOS

OUT AND ABOUT

Pics of your favorite Christian artists on the road, off the road and everywhere in between



REVIEWS

**NATALIE GRANT, JORDAN
FELIZ, CHRISTMAS MUSIC
2015 + MORE!**



Have faith! | It has been almost three days since the cowardly, and senseless acts of war in Paris that claimed the lives of 129 (currently confirmed) and left more than 350 innocent wounded, and I'm still stunned. I'm awestruck by hatred, and the reckless abandon by which it was thrown about by radical Islamic terrorists, in France that night.

Considering the source, I shouldn't be surprised at the response published by satirical, and self-proclaimed atheist French publication **Charlie Hebdo**, in their statement: *Friends from the whole world, thank you for #PrayForParis, but we don't need more religion. Our faith goes to music! Kisses! Life! Champagne and Joy! #ParisIsAboutLife.*

Not surprised, but still in shock.

In times like these, maybe it's easier, or more convenient, to put one's faith into things such as music, affection, food and drink... tangible items that make us feel good. In of themselves, those things aren't necessarily wrong, and I'd be willing to bet that Paris offers the best in some of those items specifically. But personally, I think the sentiment is a cop out, cowardice. Additionally I would ask, "When the music stops playing, and when the wine runs out—where is your faith, then?"

We recently got to spend some time with **Natalie Grant**, as she will be featured on the cover of our December 1, 2015 edition of *CCM Magazine*. She mentioned that 1 Peter 5:10 is just one verse of scripture she has held tightly to in her life—verses 8-10 (ESV): *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*

Friends, don't give up the faith. No one, including the God-breathed Word itself, said that following Christ is going to be a cupcake party. There will be suffering, but God has promised us restoration, confirmation, strength—and will establish His order out of our chaos. Have faith!

#PrayForParis

Blessings,



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



Lena Ziegler is a native of Northeast PA, though she currently resides in Bowling Green, KY where she is pursuing her M.F.A. in Creative Writing at Western KY University. Her passions include all things involving the written word, music, the arts, and social justice.



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

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1



2

COMPILED BY ANDY ARGYRAKIS

1 & **2** Holy wow! **Matt Maher** appeared on the same stage as **Aretha Franklin**, **Andrea Bocelli**, **The Fray**, comedian **Jim Gaffigan**, actor **Jim Caviezel**, and yes, **Pope Francis**, when he performed for the masses during the **Festival of Families** in Philadelphia. Maher took a break in the VIP room to talk with his wife **Kristin** and Jim Caviezel, along with Gaffigan.





3 Provident artists **Jon Guerra**, **Jason Crabb** and **Tim Timmons**, along with **Made To Thrive's** new artist **Hannah Kerr**, enjoy some communal van time in between sessions during the Christian Music Broadcasters Conference at Disney World.

4 Anytime **Stevie Wonder** hits the road, it's a happening, but considering he's currently playing the game-changing "Songs In The Key Of Life" album in its entirety, it's nothing short of must see show. "Love's In Need Of Love Today" and "Have A Talk With God" were our top picks at the Chicago performance of the 1976 masterpiece that's influenced practically everyone in soul, funk, pop, gospel and rock yet still sounds ahead of its time. (Photo by Andy Argyrakis)





5 CBS Evening News visits Muscle Shoals for a chat with FAME Studios founder **Rick Hall** about his new autobiography, *The Man From Muscle Shoals* (Heritage Builders Publishing), which chronicles his production of such legendary artists as **Aretha Franklin, Wilson Pickett, Etta James, Candi Staton, Alabama, Tom Jones, The Osmonds, Clarence Carter, Wayne Newton** and countless others.



6 **Mark Strassmann** from CBS interviews gospel and soul great **Candi Staton** inside FAME Studios about what it was like to record at the historic venue in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement.



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SAD E

**P.O.D. LEAD SINGER SONNY SANDOVAL
DISCUSSES THE BAND'S LATEST ALBUM, THEIR
ONGOING STRUGGLE TO PROVE THEIR FAITH IN
THE FACE OF CONTROVERSY, AND REVEALS THE
TRUE COST OF LIFE ON THE ROAD.
BY LENA ZIEGLER**

It's

not every day that dreadlocks, tattoos, and alternative rap-metal become the face of Christian music. But in the early 2000s **P.O.D.** did just that, topping the charts of both Christian and mainstream radio with their highly publicized third studio release, ***The Fundamentals Of Southtown***, which was certified Platinum in 2000, followed by ***Satellite***, certified Triple-Platinum in 2002. With electrifying singles “Alive” and “Youth Of The Nation,” P.O.D. was bringing inspirational music to the masses and redefining the image of what it means to be a Christian in popular culture. But with incredible success came a tremendous battle—an ongoing struggle to appeal both to the fans spiritually moved by their music and those simply hooked by their hard sound and raw talent.

With remarkable honesty, P.O.D. lead singer **Sonny Sandoval** opened up to *CCM Magazine*, sharing the band's exhausting career-long crusade to prove their faith to the Christian community while staying true to themselves, the emotional journey toward redemption illustrated on their new album, and the true cost of pushing forward with God's message, even when their hearts are calling them someplace else.

“We've been touring for a long time and the older you get, being married with kids, you know, that's the hardest part for me, missing home a lot,” Sandoval said, with a surprising frankness. “We've been doing this for so long, I feel like I'm just waiting, just praying and asking God, when's it over? I don't mean that in a bad way, but I just get tired and my heart is at home. But I feel that there is still a need and people are still listening, so it's not over until it's over.”

But with over twelve million records sold, three GRAMMY nominations, and ongoing



crossover success, after twenty-three years of making music, personal sacrifices, and industry controversy, P.O.D. has not slowed down. Released on August 21, 2015 their ninth studio album, ***The Awakening***, is one of their most ambitious to date—a concept album following the journey of a lost soul in search of salvation.

“We wrote this record for our fan base,” Sandoval explained. “All these new kids and new music, they kind-of pick apart your art like a buffet, with iTunes, buying only one song. Obviously you want to sell your records and hope that you gain new fans, but this is for our old school fans that dig a little deeper, find the messages and really listen to it from beginning to end. There are so many hidden things going on. We are not trying to be too



literal with it. It's one of those things that we just hope that maybe two years down the road someone is like, 'Dude! I think this is what they did!'" he added with a laugh.

But despite the album's subtle and at times overt leanings toward God, Sandoval maintains this album is not just for believers, but for anyone who can identify with feeling lost.

"It's about this character going through life and everything, all struggles, all evils, ups and downs, and you have to make choices and decisions. This isn't meant to be a religious record or for Christians only. It's an art piece and we're hoping once people dive in, believing and trusting—because that's how God works—the spirit can speak through it to those who listen and connect with it. So

it really does have to do with sin, redemption, forgiveness, love, and it's all tied in there, P.O.D. style."

The album's first single "This Goes Out to You," is like an anthem. Powerful, hard-hitting, and resonating with the kind of chorus you sing along to, before realizing you're doing it. The lyrics speak to an unnamed subject, a source of inspiration and respect, as well as a topic of conversation among fans determined to figure out *who* is the 'you.'

"We want people to listen, think, and have their own interpretation. It could be about a loved one, someone they respect—maybe its God—but that's for the *listener* to decide," Sandoval said, amused by our attempt to solve the mystery. "But believing that

**“FOR MY HEART, I WANT TO SEE PEOPLE
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SPOT A BROKEN HEART, TO MAKE THEM
SMILE AND SAY ‘HEY, GOD’S GOT YOU’ –
DESPITE OUR OWN DOUBTS AT TIMES.”**

-SONNY SANDOVAL



everything we do, that God and the Holy Spirit are in control, and the music is the communicator, He is going to communicate what He wants to communicate. God is speaking to their hearts because He knows them. I don't know them. Know what I mean? It's the spirit of God that has intimate connections to these listeners."

However, "This Goes Out to You" is not the only song Sandoval hopes listeners connect with. With influences of reggae, ska, and hard rock, the musically diverse album also hits hard with tracks like "Criminal Conversations," "Revolución," and "The Awakening."

"I definitely think 'Criminal' has got a uniqueness to it, and in my heart and in my mind, I always thought that's going to be the most controversial song. I love the way it came out. There's just a feel to it, and once people do find out the real meaning, it's deep. It's really true," he said. "We've been playing 'The Awakening,' and it already has a connection with people without them ever hearing it before. I believe that's our new 'Alive.' Is it as successful or not? I don't know. But when we perform it, I think we all *believe it*, I believe we all feel it."

Despite P.O.D.'s consistent devotion to their faith, Sandoval was careful as he spoke, never trading his personal truth for what may be expected of him as a Christian artist in a Christian band, but still treading lightly when explaining why the band struggles with being labeled as one.

"It was the world that said, 'Dude, you guys are Christian, right,' because we were so honest, open and vulnerable about our faith, and at the time even very militant about it... which we've learned to replace with love," he laughed. "But never did we ever market my Jesus to sell records."

But even after two decades of fierce commitment to making music with inspirational messages, Sandoval admitted that they still feel like outsiders in an

industry where they really don't fit in, describing one of the band's earliest gigs when they were invited to perform at a church in a nearby Southern California neighborhood.

"We finally got asked to play at a Christian church event, and we were like, 'Cool, we'll play wherever you allow us to play!' It wasn't event thirty seconds into the first song, and they cut us off by claiming it was 'ungodly' and 'not of the Lord,' recalled Sandoval. "That was confirmation in our hearts that we were being accepted into the streets already—we were playing clubs, opening up for mainstream bands, playing at bars—and the moment we were asked to do a Christian thing, we were shut down for not being 'Christian enough.'"

Hitting an obvious nerve with the subject of acceptance, it was clear that Sandoval suffers an open wound not yet healed even after years of success reaching Christian and non-Christian fans alike. As he recounted, it's difficult to describe his somber tone and demeanor, and when asked how it made him feel to be judged and ridiculed by fellow believers, he said with a sigh, "I'm not gonna lie...it's heartbreaking."

"Heartbreaking" seemed like a soft choice of words compared to the the deep level of hurt in Sandoval's voice, but he continued to share the impact that these types of judgments had on him, as well as those living "alternative" lifestyles has had on his relationship with God.

"As a man of faith, filled with the spirit, that's the thing that has been the biggest struggle in my walk with God," he said. "It's been the bitterness that keeps coming up, because I keep looking at God's people. When my attention is focused on God's people and all the wrong things that we do in the name of ignorance, it frustrates my walk with God. Because someone who claims to know the Lord, they can sit here and by the look of you say, 'That guy doesn't know the Lord.' But

when have they ever sat down and listened to our hearts? That is something I wrestle with. But, God sits me down in his lap and speaks His mind and says, 'I know son, I know. Just keep your eyes on me and, what I've called you to do.'"

Though many bands would have caved under the pressure to be either more "mainstream" or "more Christian," Sandoval stands strong in his belief that they wouldn't be where they are today, or have the same impact on their listeners, if they had changed who they are just to "fit in."

"We always said, 'We were never Christian enough for Christians, and we were too Christian for the world.' The moment you mention 'Jesus,' you're just 'too Christian.' So we had to be ten times better than the bands we played with," Sandoval explained. "But we're not changing who we are, we're

just living out our testimony, our faith for people that dig it, trusting that the message was getting through. I believe it is still a testimony that we have the tools to reach the very people that our churches, pastors, and our evangelists aren't reaching."

With that statement, Sandoval drives home a great point. By largely fitting outside the mold of what most people envision when they think of a "Christian band," P.O.D. has been able to play a unique role in the lives of their fans in producing uncompromised, powerful music, and spiritually connecting with individuals outside of the Church's reach.

"[It's inevitable that] I'll run into somebody later this week who will say, 'Dude I saw you twenty years ago. I was sitting in this bar you guys played, and I didn't give my life to the Lord *that* moment, but you guys were an instrument—you guys had a part in it. All



because I remember you playing in front of ten people in this little bar in Chino, twenty years ago...’ That’s when you have those ‘a-ha’ moments, when God says, ‘See, I told you, I know what I’m doing.’”

Sandoval continued, “It’s easier to go to a youth conference and tell everyone to say, ‘Jesus!’ and you have 20,000 people screaming, and you believe *that’s* God moving—and I’m sure it is. But try being in front of 20,000 people that are going to hell, with that different mentality, where your heart is broken and it is weeping for these people and you’re thinking, ‘I don’t want to overdo it, because I don’t want to preach and turn them away.’ Because they’ve already been turned away, and that’s the thing. You

craziest guys in San Diego. But he didn’t preach to anybody, and just [told everyone], ‘God changed my life, and I’m gonna live it!’ And because he lived it, really *lived* it, God started to change the people around him. My mother being one of them.”

Though raised a Catholic, Sandoval confessed he never had a personal relationship with God. And as a teenager, even after his mother was saved, he didn’t feel the impact of God in his own life until his mom was diagnosed with leukemia when he was just eighteen, which brought him to a standstill.

“I watched her be what Christianity is supposed to be. I watched her, until her last breath, be what Jesus was calling her to be.

“TRY BEING IN FRONT OF 20,000 PEOPLE WHO ARE LIKELY GOING TO HELL—WITH THAT MINDSET—WHILE YOUR HEART IS BROKEN FOR THEM AND YOU’RE THINKING, ‘I DON’T WANT TO OVERDO IT, BECAUSE I DON’T WANT TO TURN THEM AWAY BY PREACHING.’”

—SONNY SANDOVAL

need to know how to speak their language, because a lot of them have heard the ‘Christian language’ all their lives, yet they still didn’t have a relationship with God. I got saved because God met me where I was at.”

A native of Southern California, Sandoval grew up in a young, migrant family he described as, “products of the street.” He witnessed friends and family partying, selling drugs, and admits he was headed down the same road until his uncle and mother were saved.

“Long story short, my uncle gets saved. A true conversion. He was like, one of the

And it made me want that, I *desired* that. I desired that peace and that love. And so on the day she died, before she passed away, in those last moments I asked God into my heart. I said a prayer, and I had a real conversation with the Lord, and I believe He forgave me and saved me right there. And when I told that to my mom, she was already kind-of in a coma state, it wasn’t long after that that she went to meet the Lord.”

Sandoval credited this defining moment of transformation as the foundation on which his entire life with Christ has been built, and the direct cause of his desire to serve the

Lord, ultimately leading toward his journey into music.

“Once you start to experience the realness, you begin to have a burden for people who don’t know God. And then you’re like, ‘We need to tell them, we need to go out there,’ because you know, *this* is the truth. Never did I have the desire to be in a rock band—that was the furthest thing from my mind. I was the shyest kid you’d meet!” Sandoval said. “But when I asked God, when I prayed and said, ‘God will you use my life? I don’t know much, I don’t have much, but would you use my life?’ All of a sudden I got asked to be in this band. And I was like, ‘Okay, *that’s* not of God, because I don’t know what I’m doing!’ I didn’t have the skills, and I wasn’t a musician. I couldn’t even stand in front of people and talk!”

But after years of following underground musicians in the alternative rock scene of Southern California, hearing them voice their beliefs, passions, and opinions through music, Sandoval was inspired to do the same, using his voice as a channel for God’s truth.

“Everyone’s there for something, whether you’re a vegan, a straightedge, a Buddhist—they are on that stage screaming what they believe in. And I respect all of those people, because they stood in front of whoever would come to their shows and screamed to their faces what they believed in, and I thought ‘I can do that!’” he said, with a hearty laugh. “*That* I can do! I could tell people God changed my life—I can do that! And that’s all the testimony I needed.

“For my heart, I want to see people get saved,” he continued. “[P.O.D.] might not be Bible scholars, but we sure know how to spot a broken heart and be able to make them smile and say, ‘Hey, God’s got you.’ Despite even our own doubts sometimes.”

Doubts in anyone’s life can be pervasive. But for a successful Christian rock band, touring the country and playing music is about more than self-promotion. It is

ultimately about spreading God’s message of love and healing, and for P.O.D., the added weight of maybe being some individuals only shot at hearing it.

“That’s the *only* thing that makes this worthwhile,” Sandoval said with a sigh, admitting P.O.D.’s unique role in reaching people unlikely to be reached otherwise, is both a burden and a reward evident not only in his personal life, but in his spiritual life as well.

“Who doesn’t want to be in the church seven days a week? I do. I need that. To me, that’s like my medic in the battlefield. I need to go to church. I need to sit and be with God, and just be restored. But there is this real life battle and so, as any spiritual soldier, I get tired, you know? And so I ask God all of the time, ‘Is this it?’”

When the conversation fell back to his family, his emotions took a turn. “I’ll be celebrating my nineteenth anniversary with my wife this November. I’ve known her twenty-five years. She was there before [P.O.D.], and before I was saved. I love being married, I love my three kids. I can break down just talking about them,” he said, noticeably moved.

“They’ve taught me more about my faith and guided me more toward God than anything and anyone has. Experiencing them and being a father, I can understand how God sees me. Not *as* God, and you know, He’s in control and how I should fear Him, but how god sees *me* is how I see my kids. I am loving them, I am forgiving them, I am trying to guide them, and they don’t always listen,” he added with a laugh. “But I’m trying to speak the truth to them, I’m watching over them, I’m protecting them, I’m guarding their hearts, I’m guarding their minds. So I connect with God on that level, because that’s Christianity, that’s your relationship with Jesus.”

Being a father, which he described as the greatest joy in his life, has also led to the



greatest feelings of grief, as he continues to watch his kids grow older, at times from a far while on tour, out of the country, and even long days recording. His pain is palpable, his anguish authentic, not only for the lost moments with his children, but for the fear so many parents share, of their children getting hurt, feeling lost, and at the very worst, abandoned.

“Sometimes people will say, ‘Well, I’m doing the Lord’s work,’ and then they neglect and forget their own kids and their own families, then they’re families turn away from the Lord. Because, maybe Dad was out saving the world, but [his family] really

needed him. And I see that more when I’m speaking at churches, or hanging out with pastor’s kids, than anywhere else. And so my grief, my worry and concern, is if *my* kids are strong enough.”

But it’s not just the fear of his children’s potential weakness that aids in Sandoval’s worries, it’s the stories from other kids that he’s exposed to every day on tour, struggling with so much pain, and feeling incredibly alone.

“I go and I tour, and you know my biggest grief, because I talk to kids all the time, from suicide attempts, to cutters, to drugs, to everything that the world gives them,



that the *enemy* gives them. And I'm always believing, 'Well that can't touch *my* kids.' But, why? Because..." His voice cracked as he paused, then Sandoval took in a deep breath before continuing through a muffled cry. "Because, supposedly, 'I know Jesus?' That [the things I see other kids dealing with] can never touch my family? But that's not true. So these kids I talk to all the time, they are kids. They have just been exposed to too much.

"So a grief for me is that, when I'm supposed to be putting my kids first, I constantly have to keep giving them over to the Lord, trusting He will protect and watch over them. Am I giving them enough? Am I giving them enough of You? Am I being the person I'm supposed to be? And I have to hope they understand. And they know without a shadow of a doubt that their Dad is out there, and people are coming to know Jesus because of what he does. But are they okay with the cost? Am I *ok* with the cost?"

But where there is fear, confusion, and guilt, there is also a commitment. Not just from Sandoval, but the entire band, who together, create a unique musical and spiritual force to be reckoned with. Through a long-standing career, overcoming adversity

and their own struggles with faith, P.O.D. has managed, with astounding success, to reach far beyond the CCM audience, and successfully break through the barriers of mainstream radio. With their iconic sound, boundless creativity, and dedication to spreading God's message, P.O.D. is here to stay. Until of course, God has other plans.

"If God says to go home and be with my family, you best believe I'm going home to be with my family. I don't need to be a rock star, I don't need to be in a rock 'n roll band, I don't need any of that stuff. I never asked for it. It just happened. And to go back to what I said before, I'm always asking God, 'When ever you're done?' Sandoval laughed, tired with sincerity.

"When ever I'm done, let me know.' I don't want to give up too soon. I want to know it's all finished. I want to leave and lay it all down when I believe it's finished, and God has said, 'Well done,' and we could all move on with the next phase of our lives. Whatever that is." CCM

+ FOR MORE, READ "A CONVERSATION WITH SONNY SANDOVAL—AN INTRO," FEATURED IN THE OCTOBER 1, 2015 EDITION OF CCM MAGAZINE ON CCMAGAZINE.COM

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GLORY DAYS—

START LIVING YOURS, RIGHT HERE AND RIGHT NOW

Affirmed Pastor, Author
MAX LUCADO *Expounds On*
The Illustrations of Joshua
And Asks, ‘Why Do We Deny
Ourselves Our Inheritance,
Our Glory?’

BY CAROLINE LUSK

A From the beginning of the Old Testament, to the end of the Book of Revelation, the idea of “glory” appears and reappears throughout scripture. The contexts vary, as do the applications, but the Bible offers a consistent lens through which we can examine the presence or absence of glory in our own lives, despite our modern understanding of the word—honor won by notable achievements, or magnificence and great beauty.

It is with this biblical lens through which **Max Lucado** has constructed his latest book, ***Glory Days***. The author of over one hundred books has been dubbed “America’s Pastor” (Christianity Today) and “The Best Preacher in America” (Reader’s Digest), and has devoted most of his days helping others discover the fullness of life in Christ.

“If you look at most of our lives, we really have everything we need,” says Lucado. “But so few of us realize that. With the decline of the nation, we forget that we can still have personal *Glory Days* in the midst of it.”

Unpacking the understanding and acquisition of glory, as experienced in everyday life, Lucado offers a road map to readers, as well as a tool box for overcoming the greatest obstacle to experiencing glory—ourselves.

“Why do we impede our access to glory?” asks Lucado. “I came across some research that said nine out of ten Christians would not describe their lives as ‘victorious.’ They felt stuck.

“Many of us feel like we’re in the doldrums, just not making any spiritual progress,” he continues. “We battle the same battles and face the same temptations. We don’t have more joy or insight than we had last year. It’s very common, but let’s not assume that business as usual should remain ‘business as usual.’ It’s time to change our definition of the normal Christian life.”

From normal to glorious, Lucado developed the idea and presented it to his own church with overwhelmingly positive responses. *Glory Days* brings that sermon series to the rest of us, the basic premise being that we are actually living the *Glory Days* here and now, if we could simply open our eyes, to see this glory and to receive it. Using an extended metaphor of Joshua and the Battle of Jericho, Lucado illustrates and makes accessible the process by which Joshua achieved glory, certainly a viable application for all of us.

“I’ve always loved the book of Joshua,” says Lucado. “Jericho is a picture of a stronghold—one that seemed insurmountable. Even

though the children of Israel had enjoyed seven years of success in their conquest of the Promised Land, they never really got the application of it. Jericho was the ogre on the bridge that had to come down. But there was no way, so they thought, to bring it down.”

The Israelites were living according to circumstances and not their inheritance. By so doing, they became fearful, doubtful and far from lives of glory. Lucado draws a compelling parallel between the Israelites and our own lives today.

“Joshua, chapter one, sets the tone so well,” says Lucado. “The big ideas here are fighting from victory and meditating on the Word of God. He didn’t say anything about

the Word of God, I don’t need anything else. I’ve already got enough to help me.

“There have been many times when I think about our unlimited access to God’s power and glory and think, ‘Christ is in me? Really? Regular, old me?’ You’d think that is a promise reserved for the angels. It’s as real today as ever, but is becoming an untaught, underdeveloped truth for our generation. Personally, though, I’m excited and enthused about what the future may bring. When the culture shifts, the gospel shines even brighter.”

Proof abounds in support of that theory. Just a few months ago, Lucado joined **Chris Tomlin** for a sold-out concert event at

“Many of us feel like we’re in the doldrums, just not making any spiritual progress. We battle the same battles and face the same temptations. We don’t have more joy or insight than we had last year. It’s very common, but let’s not assume that business as usual should remain ‘business as usual.’ It’s time to change our definition of the normal Christian life.” – **MAX LUCADO**

a battle plan, or soldiers, or weapons. All the things we think of in the midst of battle preparations are never mentioned. When we do daily study and meditate on scripture, our faith can go deeper and we can begin living out His victory, day by day.”

With the clarity and accessibility that is his trademark, Lucado articulates the powerful shifts we can experience when we commit to daily reading and thinking about God.

“I want to live out my inheritance and truly be a different person from the inside out. I want to be set apart to rule with Christ in the Heavens, but that also means that Christ is ruling inside of me right now. The old self is gone, but the new self in me. If I were to spend the rest of my life knowing just that and studying

Madison Square Garden in New York, NY.

“I’ve been going up to New York City for ministry events for thirty years,” he says. “I never dreamed I would live to see the day where Madison Square Garden would be sold out with people worshipping for three hours.”

Much like God surprised him with a sold-out event in the heart of modern society, so too did God surprise Joshua and the Israelites with a victory that defied common sense and human capacity.

“The Israelites just had a handful of soldiers deployed against a huge army,” says Lucado. ‘It gives a picture of how God is the One who brings about the victories.”

The book goes on to detail God’s instructions, and rather unorthodox

methods, by which Joshua and the Israelites came out on top.

From walking around the city, blowing horns, praying and carrying the ark, God's methodology didn't adhere to standard military practice in the least. It was God's way of achieving the desired outcome by disarming the crutches that man continues to grip tightly.

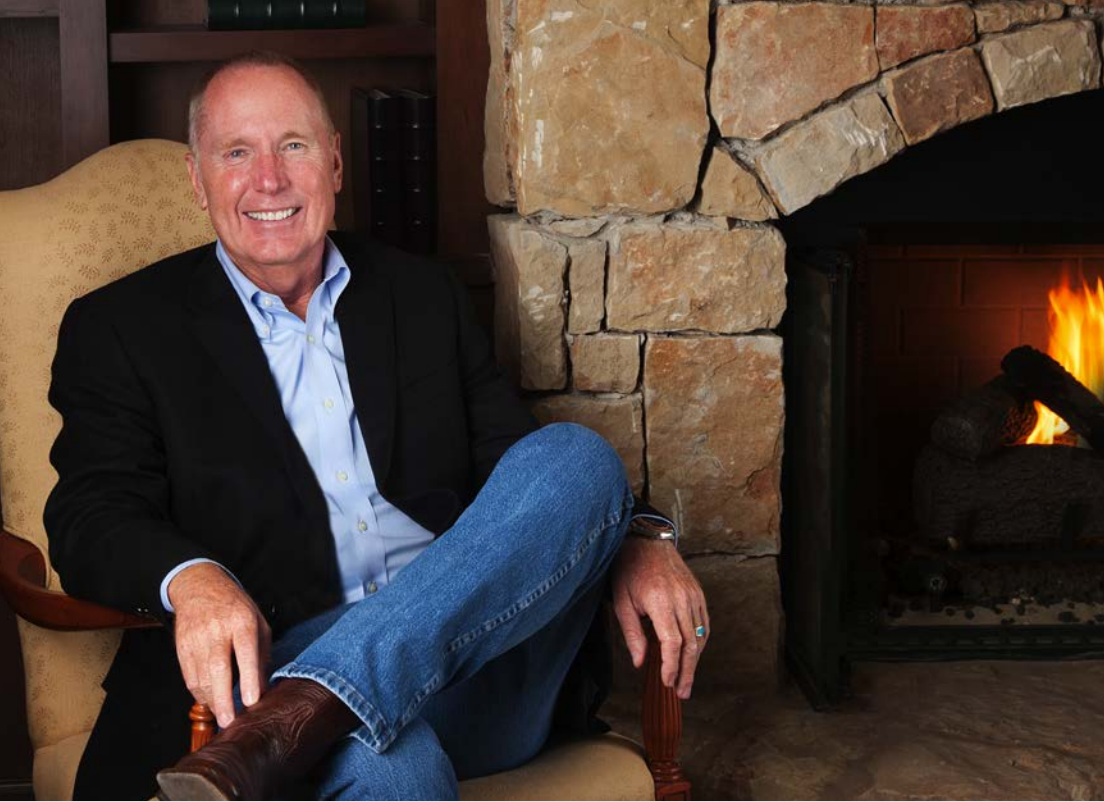
"We would expect God to have told Joshua, 'Go and conquer the land,'" suggests Lucado. "Rather, He said, 'Receive.' He also said not to fight for victory, but 'from victory.' That's a subtle, but important paradigm shift. We need to believe that we *will* overcome. We are co-heirs. The promised land life is our inheritance."

Balancing the promise of heaven with the reality of life in a fallen world, Lucado is careful not to presume that everything should be, and will be wonderful all of the time.

"I never want to give the impression that there will be no struggles," confirms Lucado. "Joshua's people had battle after battle. Granted, they had victory after victory, but it was never anything they did on their own. God helped them win, and He will help you win whatever conflict you are facing and help you fight from a place of victory."

Such statements aren't thrown out aimlessly, hoping that they'll stick to a reader's heart and mind. Rather, Lucado offers practical advice on how to approach





these battles and achieve the glory of victory in visceral and simple ways.

“Joshua struggled, but he battled it with worship,” says Lucado. “He put the ark in the middle of the group, as God instructed, and they walked around the walls...just like God instructed.

“When we worship, put God in the middle and focus our attention there, I believe we can still accomplish such great things today,” he says. “By putting Him in the center, we’re inviting supernatural things to happen.”

Supernatural things, such as selling out Madison Square Garden for a worship event.

Things like the Church exploding in China, despite the risk to believers.

Things like bright spots of glory, wonder and love penetrating the darkness of the shroud, concealing a nation seemingly in decline.

“The government is not about Kingdom business,” adds Lucado. “It’s our responsibility to teach others about being disciples and what we need to do to walk by faith in the Spirit. You absolutely have to let God’s Word be your guide.”

At the end of the day, *Glory Days* is a celebration of the life available to all Christians here and now. It’s an invitation to begin relishing in the joy of salvation, and the time He has given us—which is right now.

Lucado wisely points out that, much like Joshua and the Israelites, God’s method for revealing glory in our own lives may seem awkward and uncouth—walking around a city wall, blowing trumpets and worshipping—but it will always lead us home, and into those golden days, only if we let it. [CCM](#)

With all the talk about the changes in healthcare, it's nice to know that our family has a God-honoring alternative.

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PAUL BALOCHE ASPIRES TO MAKE CHRISTMAS A SEASON OF WORSHIP

BY MELISSA RIDDLE CHALOS



FREE RESOURCES FOR WORSHIP LEADERS

Any artist who records a Christmas record will tell you straight up, it's often an intense search for creativity, as much as anything else. In all seriousness and for the millionth time, "O, Holy Night" cannot get any holier. And as brilliantly beautiful as "Mary Did You Know?" can be, the secret of that song is out. Mary knows. And so does all of Christendom.

For singer/songwriter **Paul Baloche**, writer of worship standards "Hosanna," "Our God Saves," "Your Name" and "A New Hallelujah," the challenge is unique because he's aiming higher than nostalgia, higher than recreating the sounds of the season. Baloche aspires to make Christmas a season of worship.

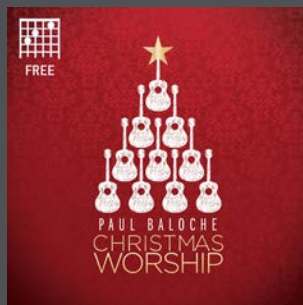
"As a worship pastor, I understand how it goes," Baloche explains. "Every year, Thanksgiving comes around, and it's time to pull out the carols that our churches love to sing and somehow find a way to make them more personal, as part of corporate worship."

Released October 2, 2015, **Christmas Worship Vol. 2** re-imagines the classic carols of Christmas for the season's Sunday morning set. Featuring unforgettable classics seamlessly married with vertical worship lyrics, this collection embodies Baloche's 30-year mission in ministry to equip worshipers and worship leaders with songs and resources that help them express glory to God.

"I've always been conscientious of what a privilege it is to put words in the mouths of believers, to write words to help others express their love to God," he says. And this album is no different.

"There is so much content and beauty

Seeding the movement of encouraging worshippers around the globe to take all the nostalgia and sounds of the upcoming Christmas season, and make it a season of worship, renown leader **Paul Baloche** is offering a free digital songbook of both his **Christmas Worship Vol. 1** and **Christmas Worship Vol. 2** albums. The latter, released last month from **Integrity Music**.



Worship leaders, and anyone wishing to accept the gift, may go to WeAreWorship.com (or click the images above) and login or register for free on the site to receive the *Christmas Worship* digital songbook.



“THERE IS SO MUCH CONTENT AND BEAUTY AND THEOLOGY IN A SONG LIKE ‘HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING’ AND ‘WHAT CHILD IS THIS?,’ BUT MOST OF THESE TRADITIONAL CAROLS ARE NOT VERTICAL IN NATURE; NOT SPEAKING TO THE LORD. THEY FEEL A BIT THIRD-PERSON. ‘O, HOLY NIGHT’ IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE,” HE CONTINUES. “AT THE CLIMAX, WE’RE SINGING, HANDS RAISED, TO A THING, ‘OH, NIGHT DIVINE.’”

– PAUL BALOCHE

and theology in a song like 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing' and 'What Child Is This?,' but most of these traditional carols are not vertical in nature; not speaking to the Lord. They feel a bit third-person. 'O, Holy Night' is a perfect example," he continues. "At the climax, we're singing, hands raised, to a thing, 'Oh, night divine.' By adding a simple chorus at the end, a response to the beauty of the lyric, melody, and the nostalgia of these beautiful carols, and then segueing into a first-person response in keeping with the Advent season, it's amazing the shift in perspective."

Produced by Baloche and **Michael Rossback (The Brilliance/Desperation Band)** *Christmas Worship Vol. 2* follows the 2013 release of *Christmas Worship Vol. 1* and continues the collaborative, community aesthetic about which Baloche is most passionate.

Modern folk/worship duo **All Sons & Daughters** put a beautifully simple spin on "Joy To the World/Our God Saves" while Irish worship leader **Kathryn Scott** joins Baloche on "O Holy Night/Love Shines Bright." **Lenny LeBlanc**, with whom Baloche wrote the Dove Award-winning song "Above All," contributes to the reimagining of "The First Noel/Above All."

Onajé Jefferson (Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir/New Breed) gives "It Came Upon A Midnight Clear/Glorious" a soulful gospel vibe and, **WorshipMob's Gina Milne** adds a sweet tenderness to "What Child Is This/Praise Emmanuel."

"I didn't want to force anything to work," Baloche says of the album's approach, "I just wanted to be open to the possibilities. To almost 'under produce' and allow these collaborations to unfold. Unforced, a very natural and seamless transition from the carol to the vertical moment."

An excellent example of this is his collaboration with veteran British worship

They can also watch on the site Baloche's "how to play" tutorial of "For Unto Us A Child Is Born/Open The Eyes Of My Heart" (from *Christmas Worship Vol. 2*).



Taking the new Christmas music and messages on the road, Baloche's touring/workshop/teaching schedule takes him around the world. After leading his "LeadWorship" workshops and concerts in Issaquah, WA (Nov. 13-14), he will be traveling to The Netherlands (Nov. 18), and a "MissionWorship" event in the United Kingdom (Nov. 20-22), before returning to North America for a series of Canadian Christmas events to begin Dec. 4.

Nov 13-14, USA, Issaquah, WA
Nov 18, The Netherlands, TBA
Nov 20-22, United Kingdom, Eastbourne
Dec 4, Canada, Moncton, NB
Dec 5, Canada, Montreal, QC
Dec 6, Canada, Ottawa, QC
Dec 7, Canada, Orillia, ON
Dec 9, Canada, Toronto, ON
Dec 11, Canada, Goderich, ON
Dec 12, Canada, St. Thomas, ON
Dec 13, Canada, Waterloo, ON
Jan 29-31, Canada, Edmonton, AB



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leader **Graham Kendrick** on a reimagined version of their song “Creation’s King,” now titled “Newborn King.”

Another highlight is “When Love Crossed Over,” a new song written by Baloché’s wife **Rita** and performed by **Madison Cunningham**, a young Calvary Chapel worship leader and daughter of Costa Mesa worship pastor **Scott Cunningham**.

One glorious night / When love crossed over / And cast aside / Both crown and throne / To live beside / The common man... / Come kneel beside / This child of God

In addition, the traditional “Silent Night” gets the Baloché family treatment, with Rita

and their son **David** joining Paul on vocals. David also plays guitar on the project.

“In many ways, I’m even more excited about *Christmas Worship Vol. 2* because of the collective, community nature of it,” Baloché says. “So many friendships and relationships have been forged through the years, this is like a ‘Paul Baloché and Friends’ project, which is such a beautiful thing. There are different streams and generations represented in this effort, and each one inspires me in different ways to write and sing and be better.” **CCM**



**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT LEADWORSHIP.COM
AND PAUL BALOCHE ON FACEBOOK.**



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NATALIE GRANT

Be One (Curb)

FOR FANS OF: Francesca Battistelli,

Laura Story



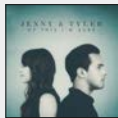
Natalie Grant has a larger platform than ever these days. Her last release, *Hurricane*, landed at the top of the Christian charts, and the GRAMMY nominated vocalist has built a global following with three million albums sold. On her ninth studio album, *Be One*, Grant has released a musical set of songs as outstretched as her reach.

From the sparse-inspired arrangement of “Nothing But The Blood,” to the club pop vibe of “Never Miss A Beat,” Grant’s new album holds something for everyone, fans new and old. The title track opens the album with a call for Christians to unite and “be the change” in the world. It’s an indelible upbeat number that serves its position well. Meanwhile, “Clean,” and “King of the World” are slower ballads that reach deep into familiar themes and make them feel fresh again.

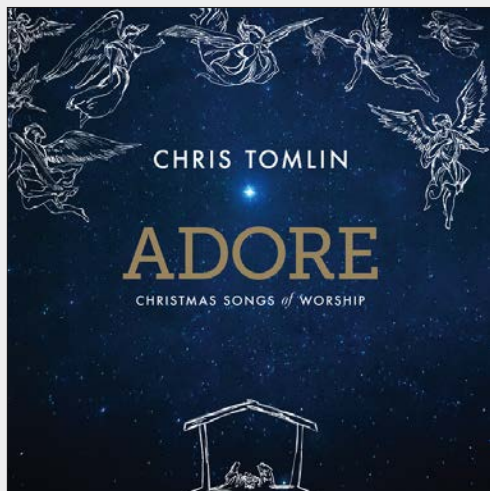
With plenty of pop tunes, worship refrains and showcases for her Dove Award-winning voice, Grant’s many fans are likely to make this her biggest commercial success to date.

—Matt Conner

IN THIS ISSUE



WE LIKE: “King of the World”

**CHRIS TOMLIN*****Adore: Songs of Christmas Worship****(sixsteps/Capitol CMG)*

★★★★☆

Six years after Chris Tomlin released his first Christmas album, *Glory in the Highest*, the GRAMMY-winning songwriter is back with *Adore: Songs of Christmas Worship*. Tomlin needs no introduction as the most successful worship leader of a generation, which means that these songs are bound to find a home among many individuals and congregations this holiday season. The good news is that *Adore* is an inspired album from beginning to end. “He Shall Reign Forever” sets the reverent tone with a beautiful refrain and reflection on God’s greatness. Guests like Kristyn Getty help Tomlin on familiar songs like “Silent Night,” while the powerful vocals of Lauren Daigle bolster originals like “Noel.” Guests aside, Tomlin is still the star, leading us all to the manger to, once again, honor the Savior this Christmas.

–Matt Conner

WE LIKE: “He Shall Reign Forever”

**REND COLLECTIVE*****Campfire Christmas (Vol. 1)****(Rend Family/Sparrow)*

★★★★☆

Fresh from the release of their chart-topping album *As Family We Go*, Rend Collective is putting the musical star atop a tree made of momentum with a holiday release entitled *Campfire Christmas (Vol. 1)*. Already well known for their celebratory refrains and vibrant live shows, the band brings significant joy through their yuletide inventions (and reinventions). Christmas staples are turned on their head with the imaginative takes on “O Come All Ye Faithful (Let Us Adore Him)” and “Joy to the World (You Are My Joy).” Even more inspired is the band’s more straightforward version of “O Holy Night (O Night Divine).” However the album’s true highlight is its nod to the band’s Northern Irish roots on the lone non-traditional track, a cover of Ash’s “Shining Light.”

–Matt Conner

WE LIKE: “Shining Light”

**LAURA STORY*****God With Us*** (Fair Trade Services)

★★★★☆

She's won a GRAMMY and multiple Doves, penned some of the contemporary church's most meaningful praise songs and is also an accomplished author, but up until now, Laura Story has yet to release a Christmas collection. Nonetheless, the singer/songwriter/worship leader with a heaven-sent voice dives right in like she's been singing seasonal standards such as "O Come All Ye Faithful," "Angels We Have Heard On High" and "Silent Night" all her life. Naturally, the project is also packed with its fair share of thought-provoking originals (most notably "Love Is Here"), alongside guest artists Steven Curtis Chapman and Brandon Heath, both of whom further enhance this beautiful, sometimes grand batch of timeless pop swaddled in a charming seasonal glow.

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Love Is Here"

**KIM WALKER-SMITH*****When Christmas Comes*** (Jesus Culture Music)

★★★★☆

Some holiday album releases focus on updating the traditional with fresh takes on familiar songs and brand new compositions. Others, like Kim Walker-Smith's *When Christmas Comes*, keep it traditional with a straightforward set of Christmas classics. Fans of the Jesus Culture worship leader will no doubt enjoy this loaded album packed with seventeen songs to set the mood for the Christmas season. "Silent Night," "Away in a Manger," "Angels We Have Heard on High" and "O Holy Night" are all present, along with a heavenly host of others you'll know and appreciate once again. Given Walker-Smith's incredible vocal prowess, her take on "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" is especially powerful.

—Matt Conner

WE LIKE: "O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

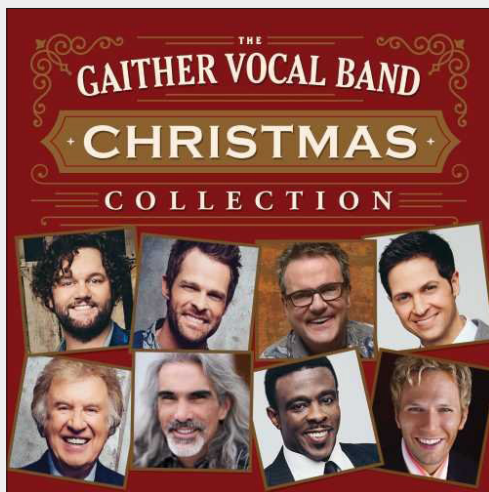
**DANNY GOKEY***Christmas Is Here* (Daywind)

★★★★☆

Christmas may be here, but Danny Gokey's vocals are always in season. Performing an album full of classics, including vocally demanding selections like "Mary Did You Know," Irving Berlin's "White Christmas" and the traditional "O, Holy Night," Gokey's silky singing will warmly fill your dwelling on the coldest of holiday evenings. Mostly reflecting the gleeful exuberance of the season, the album does close with a touching rendition of "Give Me Jesus," appropriately reminding listeners of why we celebrate. The two originals co-penned by Gokey, "Lift Up Your Eyes" and the title track "Christmas Is Here," will closely appeal to the *American Idol* demographic, and his performance of "The Most Wonderful Time Of The Year" may eventually become a Christmas compilation standard.

–Kevin Sparkman

WE LIKE: "The Most Wonderful Time Of The Year"

**THE GAITHER VOCAL BAND***Christmas Collection* (Gaither Music Group)

★★★★☆

The members may have changed, but if there's any thread that's tied every era of The Gaither Vocal Band together, it's a diverse blend of dynamic voices sung in perfect harmony. This collection of six new tunes and six holiday standards boasts names as world renown as Bill Gaither, David Phelps, Michael English, Mark Lowry and Guy Penrod (amongst many other top notch talents), though make no mistake, individual fame takes a distant backseat to Christ's coming birth. Longtime fans of the southern gospel group or more casual listeners looking for a pitch perfect celebration of the season are all apt to benefit from this impeccably produced meeting of multiple generations.

–Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Go Tell It On The Mountain"



SANCTUS REAL
Best Of Sanctus Real

(Capitol/Sparrow)
FOR FANS OF: *Building 429,*
Big Daddy Weave,
Tenth Avenue North
★★★★★

Matt Hammitt, and the rest of the boys from Toledo, announced the lead singer's departure from Sanctus Real the right way, with the release of a project that's now twenty years in the making. This *Best Of* compilation will take fans on a memorable journey over the course of Hammitt-led highlights such as "Say It Loud," to Everything About You (*Fight The Tide*), and their #1's like "Lead Me" (*Pieces Of A Real Heart*).

—Kevin Sparkman

WE LIKE: "Longer Than A Lifetime" (a new original)



JORDAN FELIZ
Beloved (Centricity Music)
FOR FANS OF: *OneRepublic,*
for KING & COUNTRY,
Imagine Dragons
★★★★☆

He may have come from the mainstream as singer for rockers A Current Affair (including time on the Vans Warped Tour), but given his spiritually specific songwriting these days, it's perhaps most appropriate that Jordan Feliz landed in the Christian music arena. The believer's solo debut disc shows off his seasoned status with redemptive, socially relevant lyrics wound around driving guitars, stomping backbeats and periodic electronics (plus several stripped down alternate versions of tracks for those who learn towards the lighter side of the dial).

—Andy Argyrakis

WE LIKE: "Dancing Through The Fire"



JENNY & TYLER
Of This I'm Sure
(Residence Music)
FOR FANS OF: *Gungor, Joy Williams, JJ Heller*
★★★★☆

With refreshing sounds, and sing-able melodies to boot, *Of This I'm Sure* by husband-wife duo Jenny & Tyler is a sure-fire hit to wrap up 2015. If your ears perk at vocal nods to Mat Kearney and Americana arrangements in the likes of The Avett Brothers and Patty Griffin, then Jenny & Tyler's latest, in addition to their entire catalogue, is a must for you. The couple's sleeve-ridden sincerity and attention to painstaking detail make this project especially enjoyable.

—Kevin Sparkman

WE LIKE: "When I Meet You"

A FEW OF OUR

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Favorite
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THINGS

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Little
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Designed specifically for toddlers, *Little Words Matter* line launches with five books and focuses on teaching Biblical truths, and stories to little ones. Each book is simply illustrated—appealing to an age group who learns visually. The books contain a limited word count—perfect for short attention spans and growing vocabulary, and they are the perfect way to begin teaching simple biblical truths. *Little Words Matter* books are also durable and can handle a lot of toddler wear and tear.

In *Jesus*, children will be introduced to His story from birth to resurrection. In *Noah's Ark*, children will learn about the story of Noah and God's plan for him and his family. These stories were written and designed to help a child memorize and repeat back the key elements in the story.

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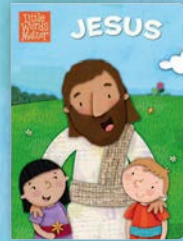
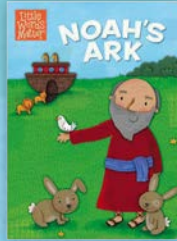
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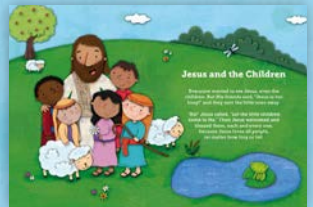
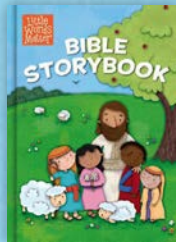
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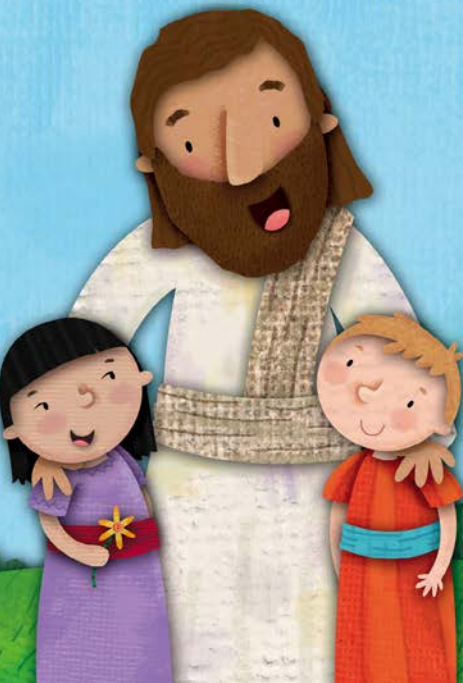
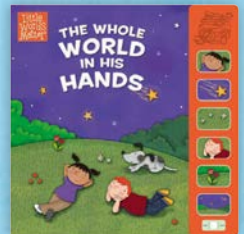
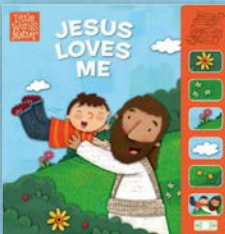
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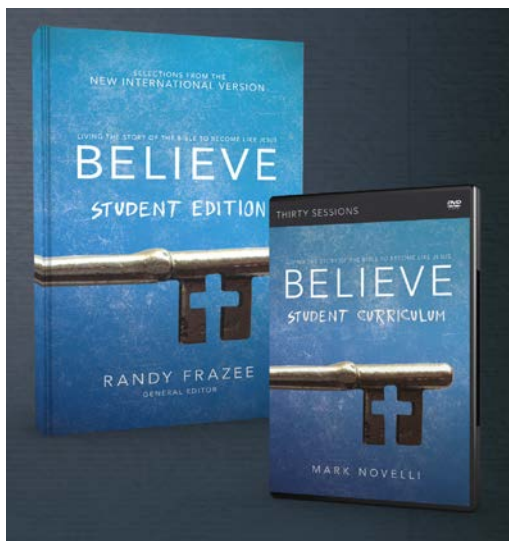


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The Believe Storybook shows children the 60 Believe principles in a vibrant storybook Bible. Each story from the Bible showcases the themes, combined with captivating and dramatic illustrations by Steve Adams, children and adults alike will be inspired to become more like their savior and the person they were meant to be.

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Your Kids Know the Story of the Bible.



But do they know what it means?

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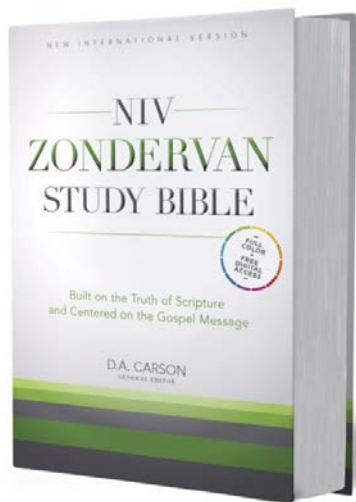


The *Believe Student and Children's Curriculum* helps you teach 30 big ideas found in Scripture, and contains 30 complete lessons each for twos, preschool, early elementary, and later elementary.



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R. Albert Mohler, Jr.
President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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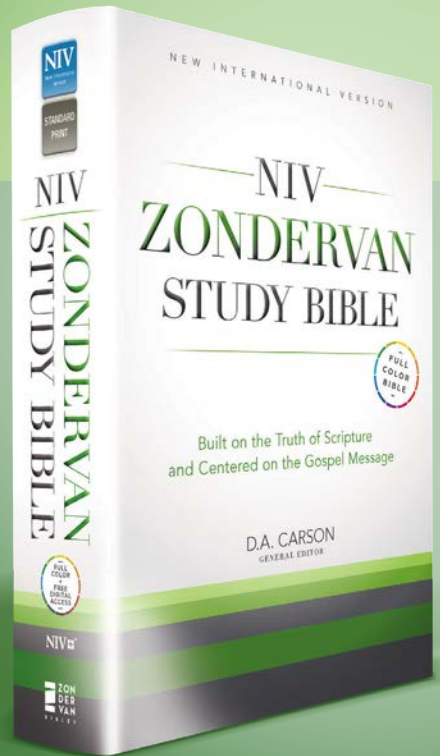
– R. ALBERT MOHLER, JR.

PRESIDENT OF THE SOUTHERN
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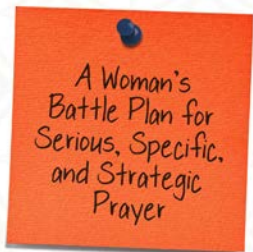
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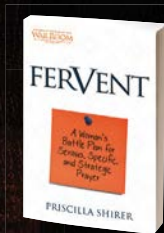
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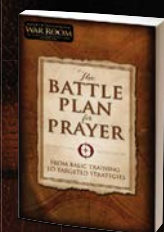


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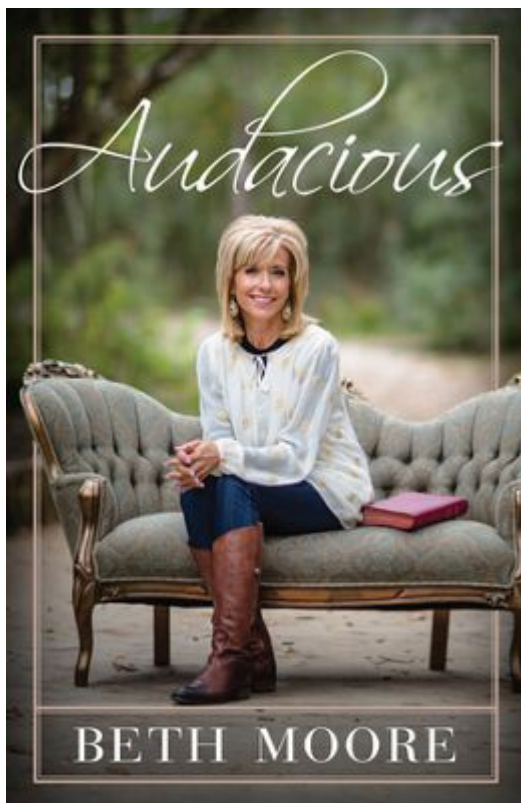
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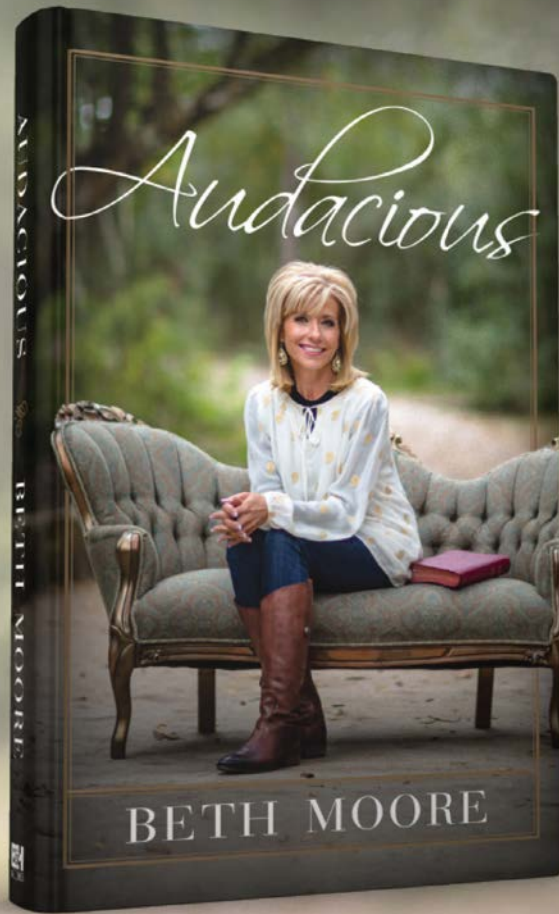
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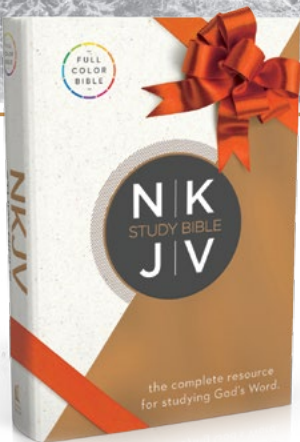


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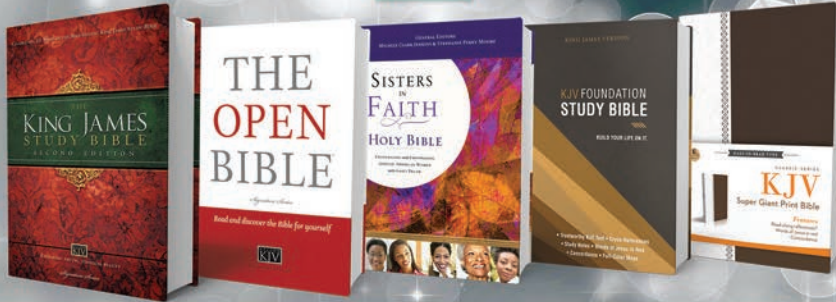
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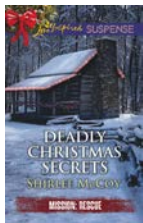
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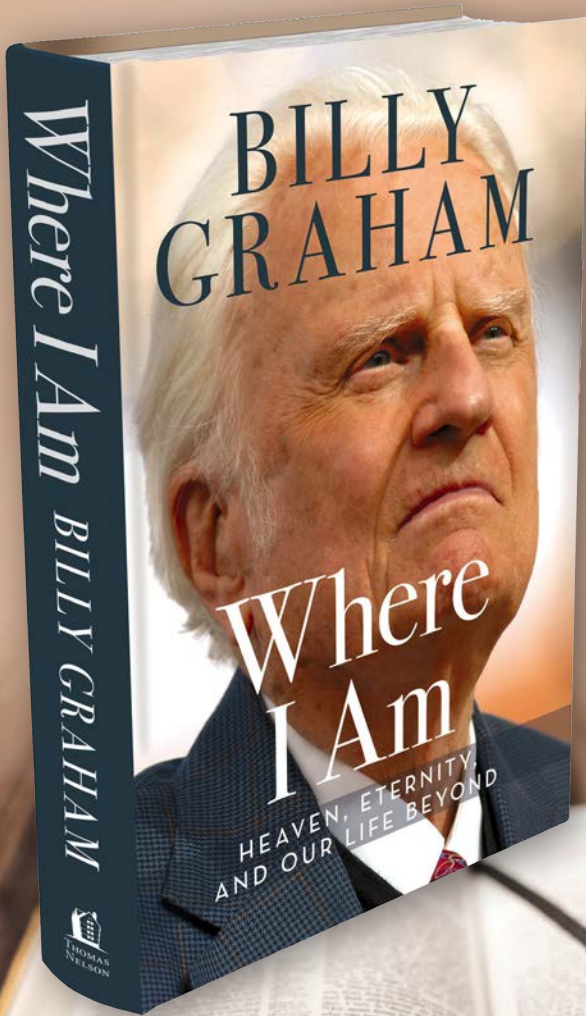
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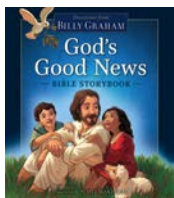
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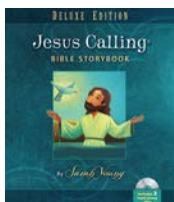


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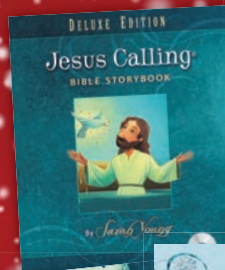
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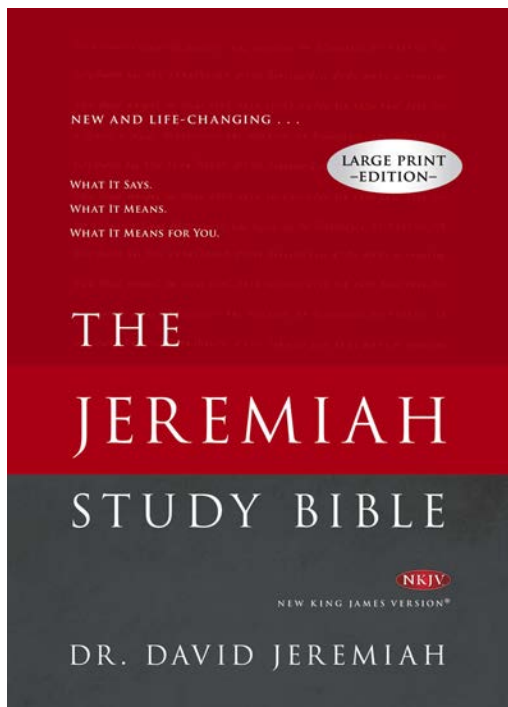
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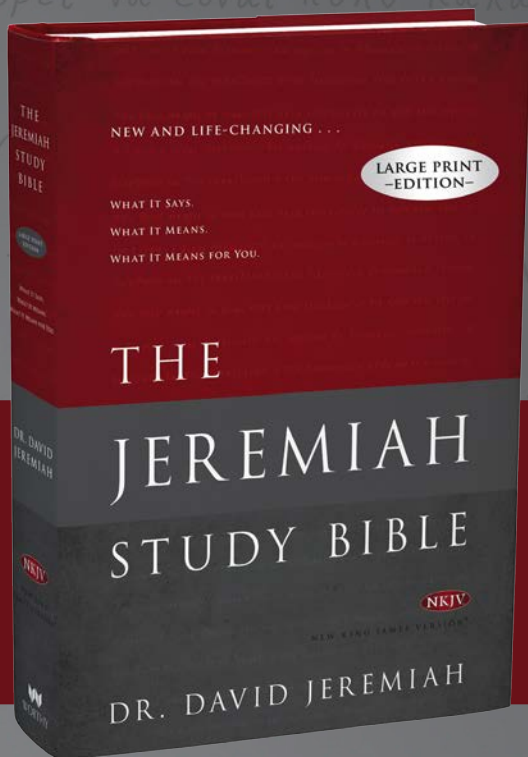
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