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CCM

# MATTHEW WEST

WHY IT'S NOW,  
OR NEVER?

THE AWARD-WINNING  
SONGWRITER-AUTHOR  
REVEALS WHY HE  
MUST GO EVEN  
DEEPER, OR ELSE



MATT REDMAN  
BETTER TOGETHER



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## Matthew West

Why it's now, or never for the award-winning fan-favorite...or else.



## Matt Redman

Famed lyricist & music-maker says, "The more, the merrier!" on new album.



## KB

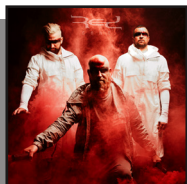
This hip-hop'er explains a truly freeing, upside message that changed his life. photo by: Joe Gonzalez



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# OUT & ABOUT

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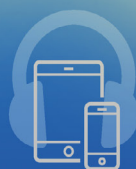
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# Matthew West — It's Now, Or Never

The multi award-winning songwriter-author reveals why he must go even deeper, or else

By Kevin Sparkman

Things seem to be firing on all cylinders for multiple award-winning and ever fan-favorite **Matthew West**. In fact, we won't even follow up the previous sentence with a "However..." statement, as to deliver an all-too-inevitable letdown after the proverbial build-up. Nope, things are great for the singer-songwriter, his career, and his family. He just feels the urgency to dig in a little harder, dive a little deeper—or else.

Perhaps it's his P.K. personality (preacher's kid), and the keen lifelong insight of being one kicking in? As he tells us in our *CCM Magazine* cover story interview below, he's had his fair share of tragedy—with resulting songs and albums. "I think that's why they always say songwriters long for rainy days," West shared with a laugh. The well-known jokester among friends in the music community, and all-around on-stage entertainer, West is deadly serious about the messages inspired on his brand new album, ***All In*** (**Sparrow Records**, Sep. 22, 2017). "A lot of times I wind up writing songs, and I feel like it's a song for the crowd or a song for my fans, and then the Lord simply says, 'This song's for you.' So, I sing it and send it to the world, and it turns into a boomerang—right back around and hits me in the head."

But beyond just being held accountable for the music he makes, West's desires to go "all in" at home is first and foremost on his heart. In a day and age where we're exposed to an "all access"

style of media, a perched view into anyone and everyone—how rare is it that we can actually peer into the heart-or-hearts? For Matthew West, he's keeping himself in check to make sure his motives aren't just motions, and he's letting us *all* in on it.

***CCM Magazine: With the release of All In, you're putting some statements out there—so, what has been going on in you that gave birth to this particular release?***

**Matthew West:** Of course. First of all, the message has to be real to me for me to make a record about it. Because if it's not something that I'm not dealing with in my everyday life already, then it's going to be hard for me to really dig in and create. I always want to make a record that holds a message that I'm passionate about, and so, this whole concept of "All In" is something that rose up from within my own personal journey of where I'm at right now in my life.

I had just finished a book that I was writing about discovering my identity called, ***Hello My Name Is***, and as I began writing songs or the new record, I was sort of in this phase of, "I had written and shared a lot about my story in that book," and it was coming out of that experience that made me start to think about some areas of my life where I felt like God was challenging me to go deeper. He seemed to be saying at every turn, "Look in this area of your life. You don't even know I have so much more for you than you've even tapped in to, but you're settling for less than what I'm offering you."

So, one of the things that I wrote about in the book was about being a "professional Christian." What a "professional Christian" [to me] is somebody who lives their personal faith in Christ in a public spotlight, and that's been my life. I'm a preacher's kid, so all eyes were always on me, and now I'm a Christian singer and



writer, and all eyes are [still] on me, and I guess there's a danger that I've noticed when you get to the point where you're more concerned about "looking the part" than you are about actually living the part. And this is where "All In" came from.

So, the heart behind the songs that I started to write for this album was just, "Okay, how can I fight that at every turn? How can I fight the, 'I'm trying to look the part' of being a great dad and husband, but am I really digging in and being proactive about my time with my family? Or, am I kind-of 'phoning it in,' more concerned about making sure I get to watch ***Monday Night Football***?" You know what I mean?

That was kind of the genesis of this idea of just going, "Lord, I know you've got more for me. Show me the areas of my life where You're calling me to go deeper." So, the practicality of that is basically probably summed up in this one thought: I think that every single one of us, at any moment in our lives has at least one area of our lives where we could be going deeper, where we could be living with more abandon, where we could be taking God's hand and really letting Him lead us into a fuller life. [For some], it's could be their personal relationship with Christ? I know that my audience that I sing to, a lot of them are like me that have been in church for a long time, but maybe it's just become really "second nature." It's just, "what we do." It's not necessarily who we are. Maybe it's little things that seem trivial but are actually monumental like, "Am I letting my quiet time with the Lord slip?" And then it's things that I've started to write about on this record were in the areas of, "How can I go all-in inside the four walls of my own home?"

I've been married for fourteen years. Am I really being the husband that my wife needs to be? Or, am I more focused on my career and my music? Am I really being the dad my kids





need me to be? Do they know that I see them, that I care about them, and that they matter to me? So, those are some of the kind-of hard-hitting questions that I've been asking myself, and that's how these songs were born out of my own personal soul searching on what it looks like for me to be "all in," not just look like I'm all-in to an audience of fans that listen to my music.

***CCM: Surprisingly, we have never heard of the phrase, "professional Christian" before...***

**MW:** I just came up with that one day when I was writing the book because the it was all about different names that are on our "name tags," and different identities that we tend to allow to define us—false identities, and a lot of the stuff you'd think about. For example, if I asked you, "What are some false identities that the devil's tried to make you believe about yourself?" Well, a lot of times, we would immediately go to the names of "bad" and "negative" stuff, the stuff that's related to sin in our lives, shame, or past mistakes the enemy tries to get us to believe. Like, "We're too far gone," and, "We messed up too many times and God doesn't love us anymore," ...that kind of stuff.

But sometimes, it's the stuff that looks good on the surface that can actually be the most dangerous. So, honestly, being that "professional Christian" was what I felt like the Lord was showing me about myself, and that's what I am. I'm not proud of it. If I'm being honest, I learned [how to be] that at a young age. As a preacher's kid, I knew that if I raised my hands during the slow songs in worship, other parents would probably elbow their kids and be like, "See, why can't you be more spiritual like the preacher's kid?"

But deep down, was I really worshiping God, or was it just for the appearance of it? Fast forward, I'm a contemporary

Christian singer, and I wonder how many other contemporary Christian singers have struggled with that same thing—where we just “turn it on.” We get on stage. We turn it on. You become that “thing,” but then your personal walk with the Lord is nowhere near as vibrant and alive as you portray it to be during your concert. So, that’s me just speaking from the heart, just saying, “I’ve got, ‘call that what it is,’ in order for me to rise above and become something other than that.

***CCM: You’ve accomplished a lot in your career to this point, and especially more recently, you seem to be on a roll. How has that contributed to this season of your life?***

**MW:** Well, I think a lot of times we would tend to think that the most inspiring seasons come out of the most broken seasons of our lives, and I’ve been there. I bet if you asked anybody who’s a follower of Christ, “Have you ever faced a storm or a trial in your life, and if so, what did God show you through that?” You’d probably hear tons of stories because it’s a fact that God meets us in our brokenness, speaks to us in our brokenness, and grows us through our brokenness.

But I would also say that through this process, like you mentioned, I’ve had a lot of awesome things happen in my life lately. I’m not at a place where I was in 2008 when I was having vocal cord surgery, and I thought my career was over. Yet, that was an inspiring season because God brought me to my knees, and I was at this place of total helplessness and dependency, and a lot of songs came out of that experience. To me, this has been a season of going, “Okay, how do I stay desperate for the Lord even though I don’t feel desperate for the Lord? How do I stay on my knees, relying only on Him when it sure feels like I got this thing under control without Him?” That’s what, to me, *All In* is about. It’s like, man, whether I’m facing the best days of my

life or the worst trial of my life, God's calling me to live a life of complete and total dependence on Him instead of living my life going, "Man, I got this. Life is good."

I guess that's good evidence that, while I'm not perfect, my heart does belong to the Lord—because, even in these days of success and good things, I still feel this tug in my heart saying, "Guess what? There's still more for you. There's more for you." And maybe it's sometimes having some of those awards or successes happen that you realize, "Okay, this is not the end-all be-all." This didn't bring me the fulfillment that I thought it would. It's a constant check-of-my-motives, like, "What am I doing this for? What really matters?"

I write a lot on this record about my family, about my daughters, and about my wife because I think I'm in this point where I am seeing the successes happen that I dreamed and worked so hard for, but I'm feeling like the Lord's reminding me, "That's all well and good, but don't forget who I've called you to be inside your own home. Don't get so caught up in being a name and a success in your career that you miss the boat at home. Don't go to those places where your kids from up resenting you for it, and your marriage doesn't flourish like I've designed it to be." You know what I mean?

This whole thing is a prayer, "Lord, keep me desperate. Keep me relying on You in times of blessing and plenty, and in times of trial, as well."

***CCM: What felt different in the songwriting cabin this go around?***

**MW:** Well, the first thing that felt different was it was this cabin that was actually built by country singer legend **Alan Jackson**. I



was really concerned, because every day I drove to the cabin, all I could hear in my head was Alan Jackson singing, “Way down yonder on the Chattahoochie...” So, subconsciously, I was trying NOT to make a country record [*laughs*]! But in all seriousness, I had been focusing my writing over the last several years on collecting people’s stories and telling the stories of other people’s lives, and that had just become part of my creative process.

People send their testimonies to me, and then I spend time with those testimonies, and somehow songs have been written out of them. With this album, I just, again, I think maybe it comes back to the fact that I had just written that book, and my own personal story was sort of free-in-my-mind and in-my-heart, that the songs just started to take a turn. They took a turn toward the really intensely personal side of things.

Not like, “Oh, I’m showing you the darkest pages of my diary,” kind-of thing, just literally writing from my own personal experience. So, it got kind-of scary at times, but also exciting. The thought that I was about to make a record that shared more of my story with my fans or listeners than I had ever done before, I could tell something special was taking place in that regard. I’ve sort-of pulled back the curtain a little. I’ve been sharing stories from others for so long, now I’m telling my story too.

***CCM: So, what’s it feel like to now be stepping out of the cabin with this new and personal material?***

**MW:** Honestly, I always get super-nervous before I put a record out. After it’s done, I start to criticize. I’m my own toughest critic, but honestly, I’m kind of feeling different this time, and maybe it’s because of some of the enthusiasm that I’m sensing even from my record label around this album. I’m thankful to have a team around me that doesn’t over-hype things, you know? I

don't have people going, "Dude, this is the greatest album in the history of the world!" But, I do have my trusted people around me that are saying, "Man, there's some special things on this record. This feels like we're about to head into a season of great things, and these songs are going to speak to people."

So, I think I'm still nervous, just because I'm weird like that. You know, you'd think that I'd sort-of cross a barrier where I could rest and go, "Man, okay. There's enough people that have informed me that they like my music. It's okay. You don't have to worry." But I think I'll always be nervous about that. But, for the most part, I'm really fired up about it because at the end of the day, as a creative person, as an artist, as a songwriter, all you can do is be as honest as you know how to be and hope that that resonates with people. I feel like that's taken place on this record. It's spoken to me, and so, I think that's what gets me more excited—to see how it's going to speak to other people because it spoke to me first.

Writing that book unlocked something for me, and then I also think that this record has just taken me to different places musically. I don't know that I'll always knock it out of the park 100% of the time, but my goal is never to travel the same ground twice musically or lyrically. Hopefully people can say, "Okay, I may not like every one of his songs, but he's always coming out with something that's a unique statement both musically and lyrically," and I hope that's the case this time. There's elements of this record that are way more pop than I've done in the past, and then there's elements of this record that are straight up singer-songwriter, almost country kind-of vibe. I love that in today's [music] industry there's a freedom to be all across the board, you can be as eclectic as you want to be.

***CCM: We look forward to that duet with Alan Jackson, then...***

MW: Oh, yeah!

***CCM: Last time we talked was about the book, and we asked you about writing for CCM Magazine back in the day, and to that you said, “I was amazed at how many parallel paths there were between the journey of a songwriter and the person trying to write the song of their life.” With this particular album release at this time of your life, where do you see God leading you in these moments?***

MW: That’s a big question. I think I’m sort of feeling that this may be why I called the record *All In?* I feel like there’s this sense of my life, which feels like “now, or never.” Like, I have this heightened awareness to a window that exists where I’ve got an eleven-year old daughter who’s not yet in high school but will be soon. This is your window where you’ve been married for fourteen years. God’s blessed you with your best friend, but have you treated her like your best friend? Have you put her needs before your own?

This is my window to make sure and to decide, “Is my marriage going to be good, or is my marriage going to be unbelievable for the long haul? Is my relationship with my kids going to be average, or is it going to be a special bond that lasts for a lifetime? Is the music that I make going to be run-of-the-mill rah-rah that gets the Christians encouraged, but never really moves the needle in terms of real cultural impact—or is it going to be different, and is it going to be motivating and inspiring the people?”

I guess I’m at a point where I’m thinking a lot about legacy. What’s my legacy going to be as a father, as a husband, as a



human being, as a follower of Christ? I guess I'm just realizing that while music is an important part of my life and a gift that God has given me, there's so much more to my legacy than that.

There's a lyric on the record, it's a song called "The Beautiful Things We Miss," and it probably most accurately sums up my heart right now and around this entire album. It just says, "I don't want to miss it. I don't want to look back some day and find everything that really mattered was right in front of me this whole time. Open up my eyes Lord. Keep me in the moment just like this before the beautiful things we love become the beautiful things we miss." [CCM](#)

A portrait of Matt Redman, a man with dark hair and a light beard, wearing a black V-neck shirt. He is leaning against a green wall. A green horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image.

# **MATT REDMAN**

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# Matt Redman — Better Together

Getting by with a little help from his friends in creating a glorious soundtrack for the every day, the eternal

By Matt Conner

After thirteen solo albums and myriad other collaborations and appearances, few artists can speak on the subject of worship music with the authority that **Matt Redman** can. The two-time GRAMMY-winner has penned some of the most memorable and beloved praise and worship songs used in churches around the globe today, but even after such extensive (and impressive) experience, Redman remains both centered and flexible in two key areas: theological depth and musical collaboration.

For Redman, a successful song is musically fresh yet theologically anchored. That formula explains the creative approach behind his new album, ***Glory Song***, which boasts an incredible array of collaborators and songwriters. Redman says it's important for him to invite new voices into the mix in order for an album to arrive where he's musically happy with the results.

"There are fourteen songwriters on this record, a couple of producers, and a lot of very experienced musician who all brought something special to the project," says Redman. "I think collaboration and bringing newness into the mix is so important. If the equation is always the same, you're always going to end up with a really similar result. So every time, you have to change something in the equation. I think that gives it a chance of sounding different or saying something new."



If you caught the 48th annual Dove Awards, you witnessed one of Redman's dynamic new collaborations as **Tasha Cobbs Leonard** took the stage with Redman to perform their duet, "Gracefully Broken." That gospel flavor was intentional from the beginning, says Redman, and Leonard was not the only gospel artist behind the scenes.

"On *Glory Song*, right from the beginning I was intent on leaning into some Gospel music influence and I knew I'd need the help of friends for that. **Aaron Lindsey**, Tasha Cobbs Leonard and **Kierra Sheard** were all kind enough to lend their gifting to this album, and I couldn't be more grateful. They helped us get where we were aiming, and there's no way we would have arrived there without their partnership in this. That's probably a good kingdom of God dynamic to employ as much as we can. We're better together!"

Beyond the spirited sounds brought in by the impressive guest line-up, Redman says there were other reasons, personal and professional, why he chose to invite them to be a part of the album.

"It was a very conscious decision to team up with Cobbs Leonard, Sheard and Lindsey and also to use **Jason McGee** and his choir really prominently on the record," says Redman. "I did it first for relational reasons; it was a joy to team up with some old friends, and make some new ones. Secondly, it was for musical reasons, since I knew we could sharpen each other and bring the best out of each other in that way.

"Third, I'm so aware of some of the racial injustice issues that still are so evident today in society, and it feels like in the church we could do a better job of modeling more unity and standing with each other. Obviously that's a big subject with strong feel-

ings and many layers, and I'm just a little Englishman, so I don't have a right to weigh in on this. But I care about the body of Christ, and I know we could do better on this.

"I don't think there's a lot of enmity between these various streams of the church, but often I don't feel like there's much effort either," he continues. "Teaming up with some friends from the Gospel music stream for this record was just my tiny attempt to work and worship a bit more together. And I'm so glad I did. I learned so much, made some new friends, and enjoyed the music that came out of it."

*Glory Song* is musically interesting and lively, but it also lives up to the scriptural standards for which the renown worship leader was aiming. Redman's songs have always been rich in kingdom imagery and resonant with eternal truth. *Glory Song* is certainly no different.

"I think God's song always needs to be a glorious one," Redman says. "Especially lyrically, it's vital that we don't dumb down or dilute down how we convey God, or approach Him, in our songs. My concern sometimes is that the music keeps evolving and progressing and the excellence in production is probably better than ever, but lyrically, I don't think we're shown the same progress."

"Talk to most preachers, pastors or theologians and they'll probably note that as a concern in today's worshipping church," he continues. "I don't have all the answers, but I know it's an area we've got to keep challenging ourselves in. So there's a prayer on this record where I sing out, 'Did we lose the awe of God? Where has all the reverence gone? God, restore the glory song.'"

Redman says his ability to keep his craft focused in a Biblical sense comes from his own devotion to being in the word. He





follows a reading pattern given to him by an 81-year-old pastor who has served as a mentor and friend.

“I have a good friend, **Dr. R.T. Kendall**, an 81-year-old preacher from Nashville who recently introduced me an old Bible reading plan he goes through. It’s by a Scottish pastor from the early 1800s named Robert McCheyne. It’s a really nice way to get through scripture with four different portions for each day. So it’ll be a chapter from **1 Kings**, a **Psalm**, a chapter from a New Testament letter plus a story from the Gospels. I’m finding it is a nice way to read, as none of the passages are super long and you get really good variety. I’d been following the plan a while when I couldn’t figure out why McCheyne’s name seemed so familiar. As it turns out, I borrowed and adapted some of his old lyrics from the hymn “When This Passing World Is Done” for use in my song “Endless Hallelujah,” the closing track on the **10,000 Reasons** record!

More than anything, Redman says he hopes for *Glory Song* to resonate with listeners right where they are at, infiltrating the present with glimpses of the future kingdom. The key for Redman, once again, is balance, with his musical hopes occupying the space between “everyday” and “eternal.”

“I love it most when a record or a song contains something of the everyday and also something of the eternal. In other words, we’re singing about these grand themes—God’s ways and God’s story—and yet they don’t feel ethereal or irrelevant or out of touch. Instead we’re singing [them] in a way where they apply to our everyday lives. That would be my hope for this record, that it wouldn’t be so ‘heavenly minded to be of no earthly use,’ but it might connect some glorious truths to our daily lives and along the way usher in some hope, peace or stability.” **CCM**



**KB**

*photo: Mary Caroline Russel*

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# KB — Truly Free

The ever-vocal emcee explains that experiencing true freedom can only be found when we're bound to God

By David Daniels

On October 20, 2017, **Reach Records** artist **KB** released his third studio album, ***Today We Rebel***, which features **Lecrae, Andy Mineo, and for KING & COUNTRY**. The highly-anticipated successor of KB's *Billboard*-charting sophomore effort, ***Tomorrow We Live***, trumpets the power of freedom. KB's definition of freedom, though, may challenge that of its listeners.

As the album released to a worldwide ear, we wanted to get a deeper understanding of what inspired the message behind KB's newest LP in this engaging *CCM Magazine* interview.

***CCM Magazine: During pre-launch promotion, you stated, "The only way to deal with an un-free world is to become so absolutely free that your very existence is an act of rebellion." Where did that idea come from?***

**KB:** I got it from reading. I'm a reader. I like to read broadly. [Freedom] is a concept that people have been grappling with for a long, long time—this tension between interests, because everybody has their own interests. Everybody has their own agendas, and so I've been struck by how people have dealt with the concept of freedom over the years. For me, it's kind of boiled down to masters and slaves.

It reminds me of the text in scripture where **Paul** says, "Let nothing master you, because if you give yourself to it to serve its



pleasures, you become its slave. Be a slave to no one besides a slave to righteousness.”

Everybody wants to be free and not bound by anything. I’m with that. I’m just saying that no person or thing will bind me because I’m bound to God. Which, I think escalates this type of freedom, because this type of freedom is actually afforded to us by the protection that we have in being bound by the Kingdom and nothing else.

***CCM: What were some of the most influential books you read on that concept?***

**KB:** There’s a book called *The Very Good Gospel* by Lisa Sharon Harper, where she essentially takes the idea of the gospel, and she bases in scripture, as opposed to how a lot of what we get these days through memes and online clips. We’re so entrenched in pop-theology and pop-Christianity, to the point where when people start talking about what the Bible actually has to say about what the gospel really is, it begins to sound weird and foreign.

What Harper does is root the gospel in this idea of *shalom*—that God has a vision to apply His Good News to all of life. How can a slave in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade experience the Good News of the gospel when all they’re exposed to is the abuse of the gospel? How can the gospel speak to those who have been misplaced? The marginalized? How can the gospel speak to those who don’t see its relevance, because it’s been mainly painted to them in a way that seems irrelevant?

That’s a good book that’s really helped to shape my thinking in this area.

**CCM:** *Would you say that was the primary source of inspiration for the album, or were there also others?*

**KB:** I can answer that from a few different angles. Bottom line is: I love to read about people who were able to experience freedom under chaos, like people that you see on my album cover: **Martin Luther, Frederick Douglas, Charles Spurgeon.** I also have modern influences, like my pastor down in Tampa, who's a father to me and my mentor. That's a big concept for him—freedom. Freedom from sin and freedom to live as courageous, as bold, and as impactful as God would allow you to be. To not become a product of your environment.

That's a major, multi-stream theme in my life. I heard this quote the other day that said, "We are not products of our environments, but our environments are products of us." That's a key aim for this album.

**CCM:** *In the title of your album, **Today We Rebel**, who are "we," and who/what are they rebelling against?*

**KB:** "We" is Jesus's people, God's people—period. That is my country. I'm American. I'm black in my heritage, and proud of both of those. But I'm not more proud of that than I am of being a member of the Kingdom of God.

What are rebelling against is anything that would want to take our freedom. Again, that's another multi-layered thing. That can be Jesus saying, "On this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it." That means there is a move for the gates of hell, the kingdom of darkness, to overcome what we have. Our reaction to that is rebellion.

We will not become the products of anybody's political agenda. We will not become the product of our own love for security. That's another big thing that I highlight as we go through this project... That the problem's not just out there. The oppression is not just out there. The spirit of colonization exists in all of us. It's sin. It's this piece of us that wants to dominate and take things that don't belong to us and make it our own, and, primarily and most ultimately, our lives do not belong to us. They belong to God. We even have to rebel against that selfishness in us that wants to take our lives for our own purposes.

The beautiful thing about that idea is that this resistance actually leads to freedom; that my being completely bound to God gives me the most happiness I can enjoy in this world. A place where no one's judgment ultimately defines who I am because ultimately, God is my only judge. I don't need the salvation of a president, the salvation of a politician, or the salvation of anyone person for that matter, because my salvation has already been secured.

***CCM: Perhaps the most memorable song on the album is "The Art Of Drifting." Do you mind sharing the story behind that track?***

**KB:** The song's actually inspired from a dream that I had. If you listen in the first verse, it says, "I had a dream last night, this is what I saw." I embellish the story a lot in the song, but in the dream, I just experienced this sort-of apathy for God and Church, and my music just became a business. I literally woke up in tears. My wife had left me. My kids were gone. Luckily (in reality), I was at home, so my wife was next to me, so when I woke up I actually hugged her, because the dream scared me.

I went on to write that song because, the fact of the matter is, that drift is so subtle. We're all experiencing drift on some level,



and God-forbid you open your eyes, and you're so far from the shore and trying to figure out where to pick up the pieces. That song is really speaking to, first and foremost, the fear of drift in my own life. Then, it's also a challenge to the Christian music industry—no doubt, it's so easy for us to forget Who we're doing all of this for. I said that on a for KING & COUNTRY song: "We get so busy doing Your work that we forgot Who we're working for." In that respect, it's also a call to repentance because a lot of things that I wrote in that song are true to what many people are experiencing, including myself.

**CCM:** *How do you, KB, protect yourself against that drift?*

**KB:** I'm going to be 100-percent honest with you. I don't even care that this is a Christian magazine, I'll say what I would say to anyone: the Bible. Period. I remember hearing it early in my Christian walk, "This book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book." Through all of the phases where, "This is boring. I don't understand any of this. I don't want anything to do with it," or, "I just would rather get on Instagram or Twitter," it's fighting through all of that.

One of the issues with pop-theology and pop-Christianity is that we blindly accept that everything has been done by Jesus, so we just sort-of float until we get to where we're going and forget about the urgencies of texts like, *Fight the good fight of faith. Hold fast to eternity.* You have to grip this. **Dallas Willard** said, "Grace is not opposed to effort. It is opposed to earning."

We have to expend ourselves for the sake of our souls, for the sake of our happiness. Ultimately, isn't that what we all want? We want to be happy. God is actually saying, "My glory at its highest actually translates to your happiness at its highest."

Staying faithful to our spouses, enjoying our families and not having lives that are riddled with chaos, addiction and abuse. That's the thing about it, the things that we drift away to don't actually make us happy. They injure us. God would keep us from that, and one of the primary means He does that is through His Word, because when you open that book, it's Him speaking. We can't really have relationship with people if we don't allow them to speak to us.

In my own life, I'm at my weakest when I'm away from that book, and I'm at my most secure when I'm close to it. It can't just be about reading it to check off a checklist, or even dissecting it like it's science. But it is approaching it devotionally, listening for the voice of God to do something miraculous to your heart.

***CCM: I've heard you express your interest in apologetics in the past, and that passion seemed to come out most on "New Portrait." Could you share the story behind that song?***

**KB:** There's a movement in the city I was born in, St. Petersburg, I won't name them, but they're considered a terrorist organization. I think the FBI takes it so far to say they're a "terrorist organization," but they are certainly anti-police. They call officers "pigs" and want to kick them out of the community. They're very militant. They're non-violent, but very angry. I think some of the anger is justified, but parts of it just sound like it's white hatred and black nationalism.

I actually went to go spend some time with them. I didn't know who they were, but I knew that they were active in the city that I love, St. Pete, and they have a headquarters, so I went. I left my wife in the car because I know they're against interracial marriage, so I didn't want to get upset in there if they were to disrespect my wife. I went inside and said, "Hey, I'm from the commu-

nity, and I just want to know what y'all do and see if I can talk to somebody."

Long story short, I spent an hour up there. I tried to be as affirming as possible. Then when I started to talk, I was like, "Well I just want y'all to know, I am a Christian." Everybody gasped in the room. "[Gasp] Do you realize what you're doing?" I think for the first time they had a conscious black Christian who had answers for why there was no issue with Christianity and Africans. I took them through history. I started challenging them, and they had no answer for me because they hadn't thought about it before.

I even told them, "Your hatred for white supremacy is actually making you a victim of white supremacy because the belief that Christianity is the 'white man's religion' is the height of what white supremacists would want you to think, right? They want you to think that they own it. They want you to assimilate to their thing, and that's what you believe, and it's wrong. The most biblical, more historical way to look at this is to see Christianity as something that belongs to, first of all, the Lord—God Almighty—and He extended it not in Europe first, but in the Middle East."

I wrote the song essentially off of that conversation to really help people realize that there have been many who have abused the name of the Lord for evil—and that's a challenge for people, rightfully so—but you have to realize the risen Savior, the real Jesus, always emerges from the fake ones.

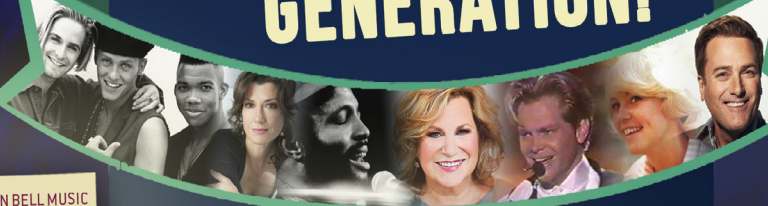
**CCM:** *So did that group disband after you refuted them?*

**KB:** I wish [*laughs*]. I think they got stronger. CCM

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| CHARACTERISTIC                        | EXPLANATION  | MATTHEW    | MARK       | LUKE       | JOHN       |
|---------------------------------------|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Jesus is the Son of God.              | Through His culture, the doctrine, the doctrine, and Jesus' fulfillment of the promise, Jesus is the Son of God.   | 16:16, 28  | 11         | 10:31      | 10         |
| Jesus is God who became human.        | Jesus is both fully God and fully man. The divine and humanity of Jesus are revealed through the testimony of the gospel writers and the disciples.      | 1:1, 18:10 | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 |
| Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah.     | Jesus is the Messiah, the promised deliverer of the nation of Israel and of all humanity.  | 16:16, 28  | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 |
| Jesus came to save sinners.           | Jesus' purpose in earth was to save sinners by taking their punishment on Himself.   | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 |
| Jesus has power to forgive sin.       | Because He is God, Jesus has the authority to forgive sin.   | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 |
| Jesus has authority over death.       | Jesus has the power to raise the dead. He conquered death through His perfect life, sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection.                        | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 |
| Jesus has power to give eternal life. | God has given Jesus authority to give eternal life to all who believe in Him.  | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 |
| Jesus healed the sick.                | Jesus has the power to heal all physical ailments, while on earth, He healed every people, from Rome with the demoniac to the blind and lame from birth. | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 |
| Jesus taught with authority.          | As the Son of God, Jesus has authority over heaven and earth.  | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 |
| Jesus is compassionate.               | Jesus showed compassion for all people—those who were lost and those who followed Him.   | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 |
| Jesus experienced sorrow.             | Jesus experienced sorrow and many other emotions.  | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 |
| Jesus never disobeyed God.            | Jesus lived a perfect life without sin. Even though He was tempted, He refused to sin. Scripture is clear: Jesus never disobeyed God.                    | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 | 1:1, 10:18 |

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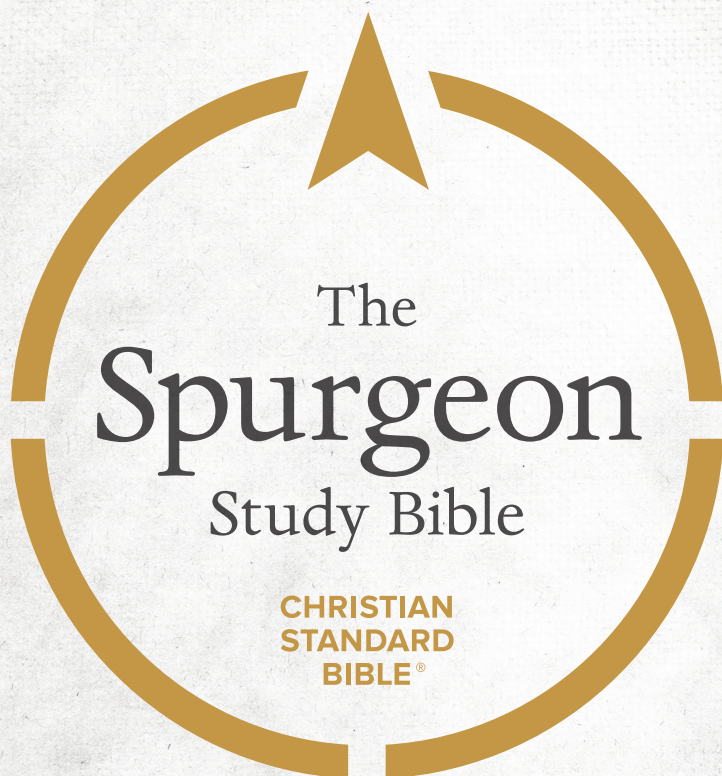
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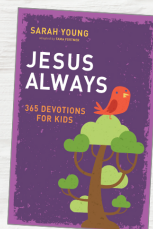
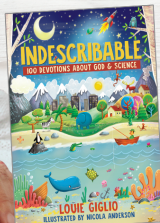
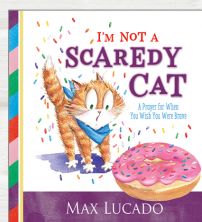
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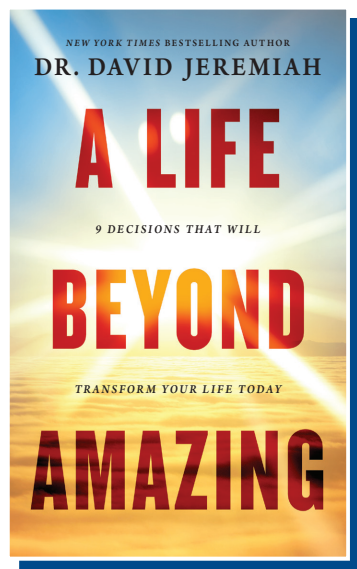
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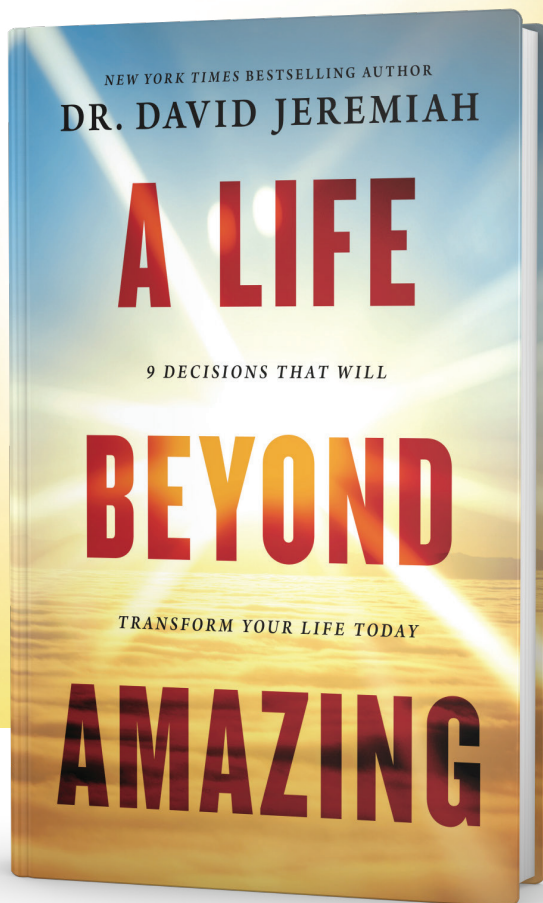
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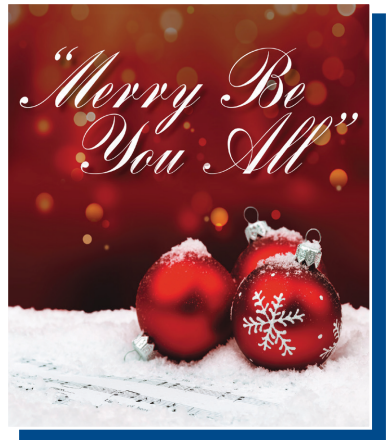
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