

A photograph of four men standing in a row in front of a highly decorative wrought-iron gate. The men are all wearing dark grey or black suits with white shirts and dark ties. They are all smiling at the camera. The gate behind them is ornate with scrollwork and a central panel that appears to have a stained glass or painted design. The background beyond the gate is slightly blurred, showing more of the gate structure and some foliage.

Brian Free: Gimmicks vs Gospel and other insights from an SG vet

In This Issue:

Matthew Paul Turner, Hear No Evil, & Jesus' PR
Candy Christmas' Bridge Ministry
Returning to Branson | Delighting in God

THE PUBLISHER'S PERSPECTIVE: A VIDEO MESSAGE TO READERS FROM ROB PATZ

**Rob is
excited about
the Diamond
Awards. Like,
really excited.**

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2010 SGN SCOOPS DIGITAL DIAMOND AWARDS



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THANK YOU FOR VOTING IN ROUND ONE!

Round 2 begins with our APRIL Issue

Monday, April 5

The Diamond Awards Ceremony
will take place at
Branson Gospel Music Convention
Thursday, July 1, 2010, 5:30 PM
Hilton Convention Center - Branson, MO

It is the Lord's desire- and ours here at SGN Scoops Digital- that you become one of His followers. God has promised eternity in Heaven with Him for all those who accept Him as their Personal Savior. It's as easy as "ABC":

A: Admit that you are a sinner.

Romans 3:23- For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

B: Believe that, because of your sin, you deserve to spend eternity in Hell. However, Jesus shed His blood and died on the cross of Calvary to pay the debt for our sin. He then rose from the dead three days later, proving His victory over death, Hell, and the grave. He offers this as a free gift to anyone who will accept it in faith.

Romans 5:8- But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 6:23- For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Call upon Jesus and ask Him to come into your heart, forgive your sins, and make you one of His children.

Romans 10:9- That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Romans 10:13- For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

If you would like to accept God's free gift of salvation, then all you have to do is pray and ask Him.

Your prayer might sound something like this:

Dear Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I know that I deserve Hell because of it. However, I believe that you died on the cross and rose again in three days to pay for my sin. I ask you to come into my heart, cleanse my sin, and make me one of your children. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.

Please remember that simply saying a prayer doesn't save you. You must believe this in your heart as well.

If you have any questions about salvation, or if you just prayed to receive Christ, please e-mail us at sgnscoops@gmail.com. We'd love to rejoice with you! God bless you!



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SGN Scoops exists to showcase what is distinguished, intriguing, and real about southern & country gospel music. We seek with our stories to shed light on people fulfilling a call to minister - to make or support the making of music that excites an audience and glorifies God.
And we seek to do it interactively.

Hear NO Propaganda

Fans read books and hear music and visit websites and as of late, join Fan Pages and read Twitter streams.

Fans open their wallets, slap down their debit cards, and buy stuff.

Fans tell their friends, "You have to see this/hear this/read this."

As an editor, I have to work hard to separate myself from my fandoms.

As an editor, I am fortunate to meet people whose work I have admired and whom I may not have otherwise been able to meet.

And as an editor, I have to be nice and nod a lot if I am encountered with writing or publishing something that maybe I don't care for so very much (that, of course, never happens at *Scoops*).

This month, I was excited to happen to be in Nashville at the right time to speak with one of my favorite people to follow on Twitter, where he is known as JesusNeedsNewPR. "He" is author Matthew Paul Turner. Amongst my Christian friends, he is a point of some divisiveness, one that lends itself to a great question for our time: How much "mainstream" can be a part of our "mainstream Christianity" before it ceases to be Christian-like?

I consider myself a sarcastic gal, as does pretty much every person who knows me beyond an introductory conversation (or reads my Twitter stream). I

believe sarcasm has a use and has boundaries. I also believe that for the most part, it's up to individuals to decide where their own sarcasm-borders reside.

Perhaps mine is too lax and too far from the holiness God desires for all of us. I don't

know, though I'm growing ever more sensitive to the answer. What I do know is that in preparation for my interview, I met a Matthew Paul Turner who is quite different from the snarky persona he holds in the Twitterverse. Upon reading his new memoir, *Hear No Evil*, and an earlier one, *Churched*, I knew Turner could have been one of those boys near my age whom I grew up with at Calvary Temple Assembly of God, one who seemed perfect and spiritual on the outside but was conflicted and questioning on the inside as to how to find God's "perfect will," how to express his faith without feeling like a weirdo, how to reconcile denominational differences, and perhaps most importantly to readers of this magazine, what kind of music was "OK" for Christians to listen to.

At the same time I was reading Turner's books, a dear friend of mine who has a group classified as Southern Gospel was pondering, lamenting a bit, what it takes to be accepted by the SG industry. How many bookings or charted songs or awards are necessary? Is a certain look really necessary? Does everything need to sound the same? Many of us circled 'round to tell him how it doesn't matter what the industry thinks; it only matters that we follow God's call.

But as I gave my friend those words, I knew that was only part of the truth. Of course, those of us who work jobs and follow callings into Christian-based businesses or ministry-related industry or whatever we want to call it, very likely began with the intention of keeping God's glory and His kingdom at the forefront of our efforts and our mission statements. Meanwhile, we live in a world that is not Christ-centered, and so we need to constantly work for excellence, or popularity, or just something that sets us apart from everyone else trying to do what we're trying to do... so that we can pay our bills and have some fun and yes, so we can feel good about ourselves.

Turner is painfully transparent in taking us through a journey of self-awareness on a road to... well, ministry? I don't know how many of our readers, how many of my Christian friends



KELLY CAPIROTTI BURTON,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



THINGS MATTHEW PAUL TURNER & I AGREE ON: GREY'S ANATOMY, AMY GRANT, SCARY/CHEESY PAINTINGS OF THE RAPTURE, THE POWER OF TWITTER, AND... WELL, READ THE REST ON PAGE 17.

continued~

from across four generations, would consider Turner's offerings a ministry. His truth hurts, and often, his truths about the Christian music industry, including and sometimes especially the southern gospel one, are not pretty. I can only say they minister to me, in a way that teaches me: *You are not alone for feeling this way. God understands our confusion, our muddled priorities, our dreams. And you know what? He also understands just what we need and how to get us to a place that fulfills us.*

On top of all that, meeting Turner at a Starbucks on a busy Saturday morning was pretty much like meeting up with a cousin or a friend from work. I was put at ease by his sincerity, his casual way of conversing, his ability to make me laugh and at one point, get teary, and his obvious heart to excel at that first ministry God gave all of us – "love one another as I have loved you."

Alongside my talk with Turner in this issue you will find Lorraine Walker's interview with Brian Free, who discusses an array of topics that, like Turner's, might make us a little uncomfortable at first read. Words like "gimmick" and "popularity" don't usually find their way

into a polite chat about Christian music, because we're not supposed to notice or care about those things. But like Turner's world, Free's is one where a very real Christian walk takes place in a very real un-Christian-like world. I was as enlightened by some of Free's comments as I was by Turner's essays.

There are enough bland reviews and biographical regurgitations and wordy celebrations of Christian artists and their art out there. I'm excited, even if cautiously so sometimes, to offer different perspectives in *Scoops*. It doesn't mean every reader is going to like them. It doesn't even mean that I will like them! But it does mean we're sticking to the mantra we relaunched with six (6 already?!) months ago: *We'll take our cues from the people making the news and the ones reading it. SGN Scoops will focus not only on the tops of the charts or the shelves of the stores or the pages of other magazines, but on the countless facets of the southern and country and sometimes contemporary gospel music world.*

For better or worse, whether straight-laced or edgy, we present to you those making the Christian art that both reflects and shapes our times.

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Southern Gospel Music Guild Presents Annual Harmony Honors

By Lou Will Hildreth

This is an early invitation to our readers and to Kelly Burton, editor of this fabulous Scoops Digital Magazine, to Rod Burton, and to our friend Rob Patz to join us in Nashville, April 19th.....Here's the story behind the invitation.

On a busy morning in my Nashville office, in the early eighties, I received a phone call from one of my gospel music colleagues with an invitation to meet with several industry leaders to discuss ways to preserve the interest in Southern Gospel music within the industry. Later that day, we met around a conference table and the SOUTHERN GOSPEL MUSIC GUILD was born. I remember the passion and the concern expressed at that first meeting as we discussed the need to broaden the ap-

peal of Southern gospel to both the fans and industry professionals. Through the years, this organization has been a solid influence in increasing the awareness of the power of Southern Gospel music. For the past few years, the President of the SGMG has been a dynamic lady named Judy Nelon whose leadership has been superb.

A highlight each year for gospel music fans and industry personnel is the HARMONY HONORS,

an awards show produced by the Southern Gospel Music Guild. Judy Nelon and her committee have an incredible program scheduled for Monday April 19th at the Gaylord Opryland Resort Hotel, Nashville, Tennessee, as once again we gather for the **Southern Gospel Music Guild's annual Harmony Honors.** Judy Nelon has secured a great lineup of

talent for this event, and many of us will be reliving wonderful memories of early quartet days when Judy presents the "President's Honor Award" to the **Oak Ridge Boys.** Last year's recipient of this award was presented to Barbara Mandrell, creating the anticipated media attention for Southern Gospel music. This year, along with the Oak Ridge Boys, we will be blessed and entertained by the incredible talent of Guy Penrod, Jason Crabb, Bowling Family, Jeff & Sheri Easter, the Isaacs, Collingsworth Family, Kingsmen, Tribute Quartet, Karen Peck & New River, and Gold City Quartet.

Family Friendly entertainment, a television network programming Southern Gospel Music 24/7, has scheduled exciting activities surrounding this SGMG Awards Show, beginning with Sunday Praise April 18th, and ending with morning, afternoon, and evening concerts April 20th in the Tennessee Ballroom at the beautiful Opryland Hotel. For information and reservations call 1-800-898-7418 or 615-609-6777.

We will be there for all three days of this momentous event working with Diana Thomas, Fresh Well Media and Family Friendly Entertainment. We salute Judy Nelon and the SGMG Board as they "pull out all stops" in presenting this year's Harmony Honors on Monday night. The bottom line for all of us is to lift up the name of Jesus!

Contact Lou Hildreth: P. O. Box 271106 Houston, TX 77277 | gosplvideo@aol.com | www.louhildreth.com



Judy Nelon, President of the Southern Gospel Music Guild, and Lou Hildreth, one of the founders of SGMG, invite you to the "Annual Harmony Honors" at Opryland Resort Hotel, Nashville, April 19th





Culture War Part 4: A New Hope?

By Tom Holste

In my first column in September, I suggested that Christians stop using boycotts as a means of influencing culture. In November, I recommended that Christians instead get more involved in the arts. (I mainly meant movies, TV, and some music. Southern Gospel is one of the few areas in Christian culture where aesthetics are given high priority.) In January, I pointed out that many "Christian" attempts at art, such as *Left Behind*, are extremely poorly made compared with their secular counterparts.

On this last point, I received some feedback that I might have been too harsh. Perhaps it would help to say that *Left Behind* is not the worst of its kind, only the most famous, and therefore an easy frame of reference for most of the readers. I don't mean to throw brickbats at anyone trying to spread the gospel, just asking if we can step up the quality of the work. It is, after all, highly unlikely that LaHaye and Jenkins lost any sleep over my silly little quips. Nonetheless, I really meant no harm, and I apologize to anyone who was offended.

So what does make for good Christian art?

I think one of the finest examples in our current culture is the music of Sixpence None the Richer.

Many of the readers of this column will know who Sixpence is, though perhaps not of all them realize that this is a Christian band. Sixpence gets lots of secular airplay with frothy (and, admittedly, fun) love songs like "Kiss Me" and "There She Goes," and the band had at least one big hit in Christian radio with "Breathe." But the tracks that don't receive regular airplay are in fact some of the deepest, most profound Christian music I've ever heard.

"Too Far Gone," a then-new track created for their 2004 "Best of" album, deals with a believer struggling with the worry of losing one's salvation. Of course, in reality, Christ is too good to ever let go of us. But what

believer serious about his or her faith hasn't struggled with that doubt at some point, when truly confronted with the depravity of their own sin? Who hasn't cried out, like Isaiah, "Go away from me, God, for I am a wicked person"? And the song does remind us by the end that, in fact, "you'll never be too far gone to be saved."

"The Lines of My Earth," from their 1997 self-titled album (though not their debut album), is about creative and spiritual dryness. "We Have Forgotten," from the same album, is about our tendency to cling to our comfort zones when God would want to push us in a new direction. Both "The Fatherless and the Widow" (from their first album of the same name) and "Soul" (also from that album) deal with lyricist Matt Slocum's concern that his father may never have accepted Christ, and so he may not get to see him again when he gets to heaven.

OK, I know what you're thinking: "Morbid much?" Don't worry. Not every song is like the ones described above. ("The Ground You Shook" and "You're Here" are examples of their lighter material.) But it's refreshing to hear Christian songs with the kind of naked honesty that David showed when writing the Psalms, or lyrics that sound like they came from Ecclesiastes. Too many Christian artists spend all their time bragging about living in the victory. For those of us who aren't



perfect, it's cathartic to hear other Christians having some of the same struggles.

Also, like good art should, many of Sixpence's songs have more than one possible interpretation. Is "The Garden" (from 1995's *This Beautiful Mess*) simply a sympathetic song for a heartbroken friend whose par-amour refused to commit, or is it metaphorically referring to the "wedding" of Christ to the church, and the sorrow that comes from those who won't be there? Is 1994's "Musings" a celebration of the diversity of creation, or an exploration of how Christ reaches out to the world through the various cultures (as Paul says, "I have become all things to all people, that I might save some")?

Is 2002's "Eyes Wide Open" a de-glamorization of the prostitution industry, through the eyes of one hooker contemplating suicide, or simply about a young woman dying to self and being born in Christ while contemplating life on a late-night walk? ("Hallelujah, she's one for the money, two for the show / Time to go / Back to life / Back to dreams without tears / She's saving what she killed / She'll built herself a loom / And spin another womb / She's goodbye, bye, bye / To the world now . . .") Or is it about something else altogether?

Sixpence's lyrics are complex and thought-provoking, like great poetry, which is perhaps why they don't have a bigger audience in a culture (religious and secular) that likes entertainment with solutions in five minutes.

For those of you wondering why I'm bringing up Sixpence now, six years after they disbanded, perhaps you haven't heard the good news yet. Sixpence re-formed last year, and a new studio album is in the works. After the announcement of getting back together, the band appeared on David Letterman's show. Letterman asked lead singer Leah Nash to explain what the band's name means, and what followed is one of the most goosebump-inducing witnessses that I've ever seen on regular broadcast TV:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJDldjmb_04

I truly believe that the Lord is going to say amazing things to his people and to the world at large in the years ahead through Sixpence. There's never been a better time to check out their back catalog and get on board this amazing train.

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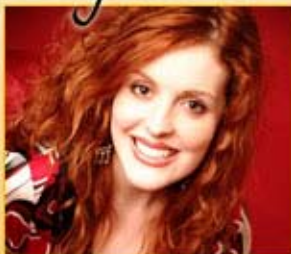
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Rhonda Frye's Faith Boost>>

Delighting in God's Work

Throughout the ages, God has consistently used the ordinary to do extraordinary things. God equips whom He calls, but often I've wondered how He goes about distributing assignments. It's a common desire to want to be chosen for great tasks. Who doesn't want to do big things for God? I asked God this question and soon after, He began to give insight.

I teach preschool music in day cares in my hometown. I tour the center room by room with a cart full of music, instruments, dancing ribbons, books, puppets and more. When I enter the classroom, some children squeal with delight at my presence. Those children are eager to learn and participate during our session. I can't help myself from giving those children extra smiles and even ask them to assist me with special tasks. I love all of them, but the ones who are "into me" are the ones I call upon most. I've noticed all the children respond to me differently. Some are "into me", some have grown tired of me and few are disinterested. Some are so distracted they wander away engaging themselves elsewhere. As I teach, I encourage everyone to participate, but occasionally I have to leave the group to fetch a "wanderer" –but

and special assignments." He continued, "Like you, I love them all but I don't force myself on anyone, but will intervene to rescue those in danger." Since that day, the Lord has shown scriptures and has helped me put together a list of what He looks for when distributing Kingdom assignments. Like most everyone, I long to do great things for God and would like to share the list God has given me. God is looking for those who are:

Delighting in God - A person who delights in God is eager to spend time in His presence. Their priorities revolve around spending quality time with Him so they can know Him on a deeper level each day. It's the person who goes to sleep thinking about God, wakes up thinking about Him and arranges their schedule to be with Him. They cherish God's word and His presence more than anything else.

- Psalm 37: 4 "Take delight in the Lord and He will give you your heart's desires."
- 2 Chron 16:9 "The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him."

Pure - Rick Warren states: "God can do tremendous things through people who don't care who gets the credit." – Christianity Today. Friends, God is looking for pure motives and clean hands. Throughout scripture we find God is serious about holiness and holiness is NOT an option. There are blessings for those who take holiness seriously. Paul says it best so I encourage you to read this verse several times and let it sink deeply:

- 2 Timothy 2: 20-22 "In a wealthy home some utensils are made of gold and silver and some are made of wood and clay. The expensive utensils are used for SPECIAL OCCASIONS and the cheap ones are for everyday use. IF you keep yourself pure, you will be a SPECIAL UTENSIL for honorable use. Your life will be clean, and you will be ready for the Master to use you for every good work. Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. INSTEAD pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with PURE hearts."

Obedient- God is looking for radical, not reasonable obedience, there is a difference. "Radical obedience



God loves all His children equally, but will force Himself on none of them.

ONLY if he is in danger.

One afternoon, an African- American toddler caught my eye as I was leaving. With enthusiasm, she smiled, waved and blew kisses. Needless to say, my heart swelled with pride as I kissed her cheeks, said "I love you" and "good bye." With the door closing behind me, her giggles turned to wailing and the Lord began speaking to my heart. "Rhonda, this is a glimpse of how I feel. Like you, I don't see race, class or gender, but my children who are "into me" get my attention

to God means you obey Him immediately and joyfully, doing whatever He tells you to do. It means you are so surrendered to His will that you are able to go wherever leads, whenever He says." – Katie Brazelton, "Praying for Purpose" God is not going to give us new assignments until we have done what He's already told us to do - it's that simple!

- John 14:15 "If you love me, obey my commandments."
- I Samuel 15: 22 "What is more pleasing to the Lord your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to His voice? LISTEN! Obedience is better than sacrifice and submission is better than offering the fat of rams."

Faithful - Faithfulness is defined as: The character of one who can be relied upon. (Enhanced Strong's Lexicon 1995) God is looking for people who are faithful in ALL things - the great and small. Faithfulness when everyone is watching or no one is watching. Faithful to God, to people, to assignments and to commitments. Yes, faithfulness in ALL things is a requirement.

- Luke 15: 10- Jesus' words: "IF you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities."
- Matthew 25: 21 - Jesus' words: The master was full of praise. "Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsi-

bilities. Let's celebrate together!"

Willing to suffer and pay greatly- Great Kingdom assignments require our lives, there is no other way around it. Paul's words are heart wrenching, hardly glamorous.

- Acts 20: 19-24; "You know that from the day I set foot in the province of Asia until now I have done the Lords work humbly and with many tears. I have endured the trials that came to me from the plots of the Jews. I never shrank back from telling you what you needed to hear, either publicly or in your homes. I have one message for Jews and Greeks alike- the necessity of repenting from sin and turning to God and having faith in our Lord Jesus. And now I am bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. I don't know what awaits me, except that the Holy Spirit tells me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead. But my life is worth NOTHING to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus - of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God."

Tick- tock, tick- tock, time is running out for mankind to become right with God even as you read this. Someone somewhere has slipped into eternity. God is looking for those who delight in Him, whose hearts are pure and hands are clean. He's looking for those who are obedient, faithful and willing to give up their lives to lead the perishing to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. God is distributing assignments. Can He count on you?

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Brian Free, a nearly three decade vet of southern gospel, scoops on topics ranging from song choice to popularity to delivering the Message:

GIMMICKS VS GOSPEL

BY LORRAINE
WALKER

In a world that celebrates mediocrity in talent and moral fiber, Brian Free has worked to uphold both musical and ethical standards in Southern Gospel for almost thirty years. Assurance may push the envelope on style but they don't blur the lines on integrity. Brian Free and Assurance is all about class, credibility and clearly communicating the message of the Cross.

Brian Free and Assurance experienced group changes in the past year that has altered the group dynamic somewhat but not their focus. The last fifteen months were difficult on the country and its people economically, yet Assurance found their audience growing as people

began to look for a message of hope.

"2009 was a very good year for our group even though a lot took place around the world and in our country," says Free. "However, when tough times come along, people turn back to God. It's sad and good all at the same time. It's sad that it takes hard times to get people to turn their attention back to the Lord and come back to church, but we have seen that a lot this year. It's been good for us to be able to talk to a lot of people, to share and minister with the message in these songs that God has given us. I know people say 2009 was full of a lot of negative things and that's true if you dwell on them, but the good things far outweigh the negatives."

"When things are good, people go along and they tend to forget they need the Lord," Free continues. "We need Him on a daily basis, and it shouldn't take a bad economy, or the twin towers falling down or anything else to make us turn to the Lord. But we are all human and we deal with human nature and human emotions, and He will do whatever it takes to get us focused on Him."

As the people and the country move into a more positive era, Assurance is also heading full steam into a new season. "2010 will be a busy year as we have two new CDs coming out," says Free. "The first one will be released in the spring which will be a totally a cappella recording. In September, we will be releasing a CD with all new material in time for the National Quartet Convention. I'm starting to work again on the show, Four, for those who watch the show on the Gospel Music Channel. Our schedule will be busy with a couple of cruises. It's a wonderful thing to be able to do what you love to do and be able to go places like Alaska. It's a blessing from God."

Compiling material for new recordings and for stage presentation can be a challenge as artists look for the right mix of music, ministry and marketing appeal. "I'm nearly three decades in the industry," says Free. "As of April I will be celebrating 29 years of full-time ministry since I started with Gold City. So the decisions regarding our music often come from watching trends, seeing what works on stage and what doesn't, and it is not an exact science by any means."

Free continues, "Musically, I trust the Lord to deal with my heart and deal with the guys' hearts."

CONTINUES-



and tell us the songs to pick. As far as interpretation of the songs, we pretty much stay with the writer and work together with them. I won't pick a song that I don't think the writer and I can work together to allow us to deliver the song the way we need to deliver it. It can be a great song, but not every song is for every group. So if we can't deliver the song from our heart and do the song justice, then we won't do it."

"For instance, the song 'Four Days Late' by Karen Peck and New River: it was a huge song for them. We couldn't have sung the song the way they sang it, and in turn, they couldn't do 'Long As I've Got King Jesus.' Everyone has to find out what works for them. It's a tightrope sometimes and you have to be careful about picking the right program." Free comments that he tries to set the basic program for the night but tries to remain sensitive to the need to change the songs if necessary.

"We are here to serve the audience," says Free. "So if I see we are serving up a dish they like, I will serve some more of it!" Assurance is very frank onstage regarding their desire to deliver straightforward lyrics and to minister to their audience, without a lot of extraneous flare that Free compares to a 'circus'.

"When it gets to the point where a gimmick has to be what my ministry's success is based upon, personally, I would stay home. We don't need to have a gimmick; we are presenting the message of Jesus Christ. Everyone is not going to like our ministry. I'm not concerned about that." Free shares, "We do the very best we can to do what God has called us to do. We present our ministry and the people that like our ministry support us. Thank God there are a lot that do."

"The people that don't like us, I understand, I don't hold it against them and I don't get upset with them," Free continues. "But in turn, I'm not going to change

what we do simply because a gimmick comes along. I've seen many gimmicks come and go. What remains and what stands the test of time is the heart of the ministry. That's where we are and that's our focus. We do music we enjoy doing, which touches us, that we are excited about doing and that stylistically we enjoy. There is an audience for it."

The pressures of the industry and performance can be incredible for artists, even those with years of experience and a firm grasp of their place in ministry. Some artists find it difficult to remain grounded in the midst of life events and career stress. Free admits that this can be a challenge in the Christian music industry. Assurance members have strong church ties to assist them in remaining firm in their faith.

"We all have home churches and pastors we talk to," says Free. "I'm with my Pastor quite often. We talk at least once or twice a week and email as well if I have questions. If I want to share what's on my heart or have an opinion on something, he's there. He and my wife are my accountability partners. You need that."

"There are times in my life when Satan has been in my way," continues Free. "I may think or look at something a certain way, or view things the way they shouldn't be viewed, and somebody has to bring me back into line. I'm far from perfect, so it's good for me to have accountability partners that will say to me, 'Brian I love you but that's not the way to do things' or 'That's wrong. You don't need to look at things that way', or, 'You don't need to have those ideas. You need to stay focused on this'. We all need that. I think everyone member has the same relationship their Pastor."

Free says his wife is his biggest accountability partner. "You get out of line and my wife, she'll tell you really quick. She doesn't hesitate. She is a five-foot-four fireball."

One of the dangers of not remaining focused on the purpose of ministry is that artists become too affected by the attention and hype surrounding the industry. In some cases, it can cause people to become disillusioned and leave their calling. Free says he has always felt blessed to be able to sing Southern Gospel and knows he is being allowed the privilege to minister in this way because God decided to use him for this purpose.

"It's not anything within me, so there's no ego to burst," says Free. "If I have a bad night, so be it, I do the best I can. I am far from perfect, I'm human and I'm going to





Publicity photos courtesy of BFA. Concert photo by Lorraine Walker.

make mistakes. I'm going to mess up and when I do, I'm the first one to say, 'Ouch, that hurt!'"

"There isn't any ego to deal with in any of our guys." Free continues, "We are down-to-earth guys. If you aren't going to be real, you can't connect with real people. After nearly three decades in the industry, I'm jaded when it comes to people that are not real. I can't handle it and I don't suffer fools very well. That's just one of my faults. I have problems with anyone who thinks they are anything because as humans we are only dirt when it comes right down to it."

"My righteousness at its best is just filthy rags in the eyes of God. And the filthy rags that the scripture is referring to here are the rags off a leper's body, if you research the original Greek and Hebrew. So that's the nastiest rags you can imagine and that is my righteousness at its best. I have no reason to be haughty and no reason to have an ego, so that's never been an issue with me. And if I ever made a comment that was the least little bit in that direction, my wife would quickly stop me. So I've always been focused."

Brian Free is an ordained minister and takes his calling to rightly divide the Word of truth very seriously. "When you are given the privilege to stand on a stage and preach and sing the Word of God, you are also given a great responsibility. That comes at a high price. We have to be careful because we are responsible for what we say to God's people, what we do and how we present ourselves."

"The Bible is very plain," says Free. "If you do anything to mislead, you'd be better off having a millstone tied around your neck and cast into the sea. The millstone the Bible is referring to here would weigh about 800 pounds. So if they tie that around your neck and throw you in the ocean, you aren't coming back up!"

"I don't want to be responsible for misguiding or misleading anybody." Free continues, "This includes how you present yourself, the places you go, how you walk, the way you talk, your facial expressions, your attitude, everything. You only have one chance to make a good first impression on somebody you haven't seen before. That's it. You only have one time. For those that take that lightly, that's because it's all about them. If it's just all about you, you don't care what anyone else thinks, so it doesn't matter. You are your own little universe."

Free mentions that he has seen a change in this kind of thinking within Southern Gospel, and is glad to see that more people are recognizing their responsibility to others. "When I first came into Southern Gospel music, there were remnants of the early days. In the early days of quartet music, Southern Gospel was a show and nothing but a show. Most of those guys didn't claim to know Christ and didn't claim to be Christians. They would live a double life on the road and off stage, and sometimes even on stage."

"It has gotten much better in my opinion," says Free.

CONTINUES-

"I know that may offend some people who were fans back in the '40's, '50's and '60's, but there were a lot of groups out there that were singing God's music simply to make a living and were not there for the right reason. That has changed in a lot of ways."

Brian Free says they have heard up-and-coming groups that are musically skilled and also ministry-minded, taking their responsibility to God seriously. "Austin's Bridge are my favorite new group. We have worked with them a few times and I love what they do. They are down to earth and they are real people, as well as being extremely talented. I love their musical style. They offer a little bit of everything. They have cool songs and then break off into a straight hymn."

"Austin's Bridge are going to have an audience but there are going to be people who don't like what they do. But again, like I said, you can't try to appeal to everybody. Not everyone is going to like what you do. You have to do what you do, stay focused and drive toward that market." These goals, says Free, will help an artist remain on track with their ministry.

Just as an artist has to have goals for their music, they also need to develop personal spiritual goals to remain focused. "My goal every day is to be closer to the Lord," says Free. "I need to be a better Christian. I need to think more on Godly things, to act more on faith, to do everything we need to do on a daily basis to grow. I've got a long way to go before I become the kind of Christian I want to be."

Free laughingly says he thinks he's used just about every devotional book that's been printed to aid in his daily walk with the Lord. "They are wonderful and they've ministered to my life. I find that I learn more and enjoy it more, when I just flat out study the Word of God. I get out my Bible and my Strong's Concordance and just study. I use a couple of different versions of the Bible including King James Version and the New International Version, and I search for what the true meaning is of the scripture I'm studying. I look it all up and study the original Greek and Hebrew, if it's not obvious what is being talked about."

"There is a bible scholar that passed away many years ago, that was extremely famous within the Christian community, by the name of Finis Jennings Dake," says Free. "He put out a Dake Study Bible and a series of books called, 'God's Plan For Man'. It covers everything from the Pre-Adamite world to the Millennium. It answers a lot of questions and Dake shows you where to find these answers in scripture and where to cross-reference in the original Greek

and Hebrew."

"I like studying," continues Free. "When I get up to preach, I'm not a 'stomp-and-snort' type of preacher, I'm more of a teacher. I love to learn and teach the Word of God."

As Brian Free moves into his third decade of ministry and Assurance continues to reach out to their audience, Free wants to see the group become even more effective for the Kingdom of God and to see more people saved. "Not that we do anything but present the Message. We don't necessarily have to be there when the seeds are harvested, but we should at least plant them. If the Lord allows us to be for the harvest, that's great, but at least let us be planters."

"If God allows us greater popularity, that's great, because the more popular you are, the more people you reach," says Free. "That's what keeps you on the road. If no one wants to hear you, you aren't going to be doing it very long. I want us to become more popular within the Christian community and within the Church, so that we can carry the message and share our hearts. We want to share the message that God has given to us."

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Christian Fitness Expert and author Lorette Willis is the Director of Praise-Moves, offering fitness programs, DVDs, books and training for those interested in a Christian alternative to yoga, and fitness for spirit, soul and body at www.praisemoves.com twitter.com/Fit4Christ facebook.com/praisemoves



Evie Hawkins's love for writing spun many articles that were read by music industry professionals and lead to the development of the Evie Hawkins Agency, in Nashville. Evie keeps residence in Alabama and Tennessee, and enjoys as much time as possible with her husband, their family, and the musicians whom she loves very much. eviehawkinsagency.net.



Chad Hayes is a pastor, husband, and father to an adorable one year old. He is also the resident CD reviewer for SGMRadio.com



Jesus Doesn't Need PR

Writer, blogger, speaker, and tweeter Matthew Paul Turner cannot be summed up in 140 characters. Story & Photos
By Kelly Capriotti Burton

If you didn't know, Twitter comes with drama. And as it is with real life lunch tables, it goes with social media: misstep and you'll be banned, dropped, or UN-followed.

A few months ago, a friend of mine unfollowed Matthew Paul Turner for being "arrogant." I guess I can see it. He posts paintings of Jesus on his blog and makes fun of them. He picks on renowned preachers. Sometimes he employs bathroom humor. Is this the kind of guy we want using our Lord and Savior's name in his online persona?

Turns out, you likely went to church with a few of Matthews. Perhaps you have a brother or a cousin like him. Perhaps you are much like him yourself. Matthew is a Generation-X Christian, one raised as a fundamental Baptist, in a church where the only instrument allowed was a piano. Matthew is a married father whose eyes well when he recounts the moments of his son's birth, when a dear friend still grieving her own baby's passing was present to support them. Matthew is a man who cleverly markets his ideas and his products on Twitter and one who is not ashamed to say in the middle of a crowded coffeehouse, "I believe the Bible is the truth."

Matthew just released a new memoir, *Hear No Evil*, in which he traces his spiritual growth and emotional maturation through his experiences with music, which include discovering Sandy Patti, befriending a pair of wanna-be-star brothers, dissing Bob Dylan in a class full of Dylan worshipers, and defending Amy Grant to his mother and his publisher. The sensitive account contrasts somewhat to the snark of "JesusNeedsNew-PR," which Matthew readily admits reflects only a portion of who he is.

"I can write a decent punch line once in awhile," Matthew says. "And I point out what everyone else is thinking anyway. But it's a small part of me.

"You can read 140 characters 150 times, but you are still only seeing a part of a person," he continues.

"Someone might look at my Twitter stream when I'm watching something on TV and think, 'Matthew sure watches a lot of TV,' when the fact is, we don't even have cable!"

Upon knowing Matthew only from his Twitter, his popular blog by the same name, and a fresh reading of *Hear No Evil*, I met him with a list of questions intended to stir some witting phrases and expound on already-recorded anecdotes. Turns out, the questions weren't necessary. Answers, thoughts, and connections flowed readily.

Music and Culture

Matthew attended Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee as a music major. He tried his hand at a number of jobs in the music business, perhaps most notably an editor of *CCM Magazine*. While he readily admits he can't consider himself a fan of southern gospel music, he certainly showed a knowledge and appreciation for it.

"Southern gospel is one of the few styles of music that grows out of somebody's roots and culture," he said. "In Uganda [where he recently visited with World Vision] all the music the kids sang grew out of their culture, comes from their parents."

In both instances, he says, the music style is demonstrative of a legacy and story being handed down through music.

"We get caught up in the cool factor of music," Matthew says. "There's the music that is the culture, and there's the culture of the music." We paused here to share knowing factoids about SG singers in sequins and matching suits.

"The music is the music. It's the music industry that adds all the pomp and circumstance."

Hear No Evil traces a lot of different archetypes of Christian music: artists who go to bars, artists who pretend to be virgins, promoters who work feverishly to make their stars seem pure. But Matthew does not

seek to vilify those people in his writing.

"The most humorous thing I've learned is that the people who make up the Christian music industry are not perfect," he says.

In *Hear No Evil*, Matthew terms singers living out certain expectations against their natural tendencies as being "contractually obligated to act like Christians." But, he says, that is not a cynical view.

"Some companies have had lifestyle oriented contractual agreements...We all know what that is. There is an unwritten contract we live by. There are certain things we wouldn't want certain people to know we were doing."

Ultimately, Matthew's passion might be music, but his message is not focused on it.

"Every story in *Hear No Evil*, while it's about the Christian music industry, it really lends itself to Christianity in America, what we look like and what we've become."

Have we become the cynical jokes that Matthew is net-famous for making?

devalues the story of God to try to prove it."

Expounding, Matthew recalls the story of the man known as the father of our faith. "Abraham did not know - he believed - that God would make a mighty nation out of his lineage. We can look back and pull it apart and try to apply it."

But what if the story itself is what we're to cling to, and not a lesson to be stretched or molded to our modern lives? "Abraham believed," Matthew says, "And through belief, doing what he believed was right, making mistakes, journeying the best he could through the many circumstances he faced, eventually, he saw God do what he believed God would do."

For many of us, that is the best we can hope to do. So why is it do challenging for the modern American Christian to take Bible lessons at face value?

Matthew says, "When we give something we know context, it becomes something different."

God of Childhood, God of Now

Generation X is known for its existentialism, and Mat-

Humorously Cynical, or

Cynically Humorous

"People can call me cynical, and I am at times, but the truth is: [what I say] is reality. And we can laugh at it."

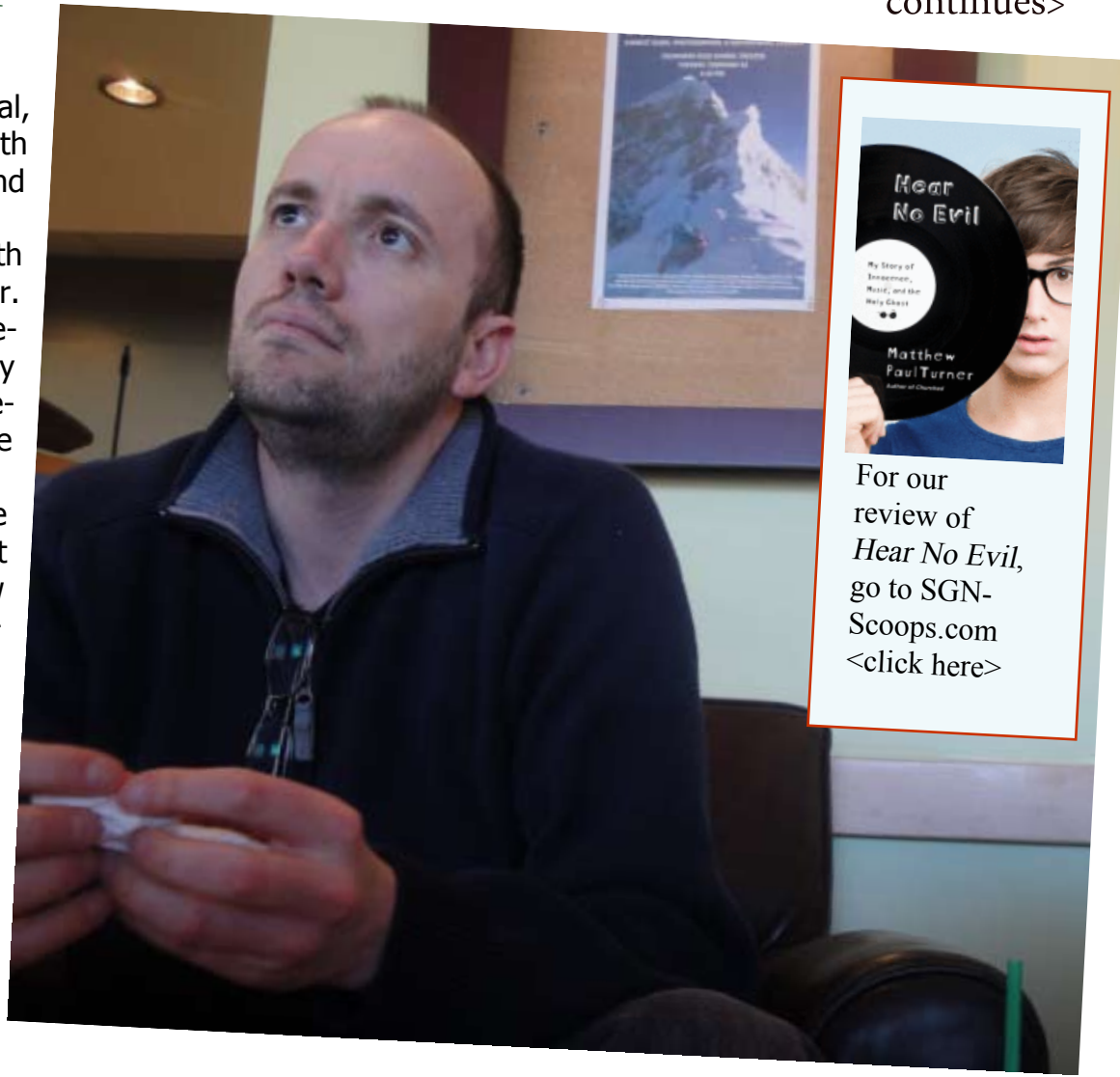
To many, Christianity and faith in God is not a laughing matter. To Matthew it seems sometimes better to laugh than cry at the mess Christians sometimes make of the God and the stories their faith centers on.

"At the end of the day we have faith that something is true. Culture is going to throw doubts at that. Science is going to try to disprove it. Our goal is to continue to have faith."

But instead, he says, Christians get entangled in the wars our culture is fighting.

"We turn [our faith] into something we can prove. We give 'Six Reasons Why This Particular Verse Is True.' It

continues>



For our review of *Hear No Evil*, go to SGN-Scoops.com <click here>

threw is there with many of us when it comes to reconciling our upbringings, our views of life's tragedies, and our own ideas about who God is.

This is when he tells me that he believes the Bible is the truth, and that, "God is sovereign. But, can I believe God is good and merciful and full of hope and be okay with 97 percent of China going to hell? Is that mercy?"

This is a topic that brings out zealotry in Matthew. He speaks of the Christian thread America has running through its culture, and even with that, those people brought up in church sometimes have difficulty engaging it. What if, he poses, we were raised in a totally different culture, in which the idea of Christianity was foreign to us? What if we as Christian-centered people were witnessed to by a Hindu?

"You'd politely nod and then go on," Matthew answers. "Most people do not go against what is in their culture."

So what becomes of the non-Christian culture? "It's hard to think of China and India and apply my childhood belief to that scenario. I mean, I'm praying to God to provide \$200 for rent next month. That same God is going to send a billion people to hell? It just doesn't add up."

What did Jesus do?

Before you determine Matthew must not have been paying attention in Sunday School, consider his perspective on what Christians worldwide are commemorating right now during the Lent season.

"I believe in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross," he says. "Redemption is big!

"We as Christians have spent 2,000 years trying to minimize a miraculous event that is much bigger and much more open minded, much more merciful and gracious than we can imagine."

He speaks of the "stupid" anecdotes in Christian history, the "ugly" acts committed in the name of Christ. And while Christians today are typically not found burning their neighbors at a stake, they are sometimes guilty of different forms of torment, be it unfair judgment or shunning or really inadequate counsel.

Matthew proposes the plight of infertile women, ones who have been every bit as faithful and prayerful as Hannah (mother of Samuel) in the Bible. Hannah is often used to counsel infertile women, to inspire them to hope, but as Matthew points out, "You can stick people in someone else's story and assume it's going to happen for them. You can shout it from the moun-

tain tops, say it over and over in your head.

"But sometimes, the person still doesn't have a baby. And instead of trying to give someone an explanation, we can just sit beside, say 'I'm here' and I'm going to walk with you."

The file cabinet

"I know people who think of God as having a Rolodex," Matthew says. I laugh, but he is serious! "They picture God flipping through and randomly deciding who gets what. And a lot of us think that way."

This, Matthew says, is where his cynicism and his humor comes in. "All of us think at one time or another that God has a file folder with our name on it, and he's looking at them saying, 'I'm going to give her a baby today, and I'm going to not give her a baby today. I'm going to give them cancer, but I'm going to take their cancer away.'"

If that were the case, he says, he would want his file folder thrown on the ground somewhere. "I think I spent much of my life waiting for God to hurt me," Matthew says. He recalls his three sisters talking about cancer statistics, which prophesied that since one in four women will get cancer, one of them was likely to get it

The mixture of science and faith over the last 50 years has dramatically changed how we deal with

disease, death, and loss, he continues. Life expectancy is different. Infertility has some solutions. There used to be "more mystery," he says, and "When there is mystery, there is more faith.



[People back then] clung to God because that was really all they had."

The Twittersphere.

We bring the conversation full circle when we talk about something else modern Christians have: a circle that grows ever small with the increasing popularity of social media tools and blogging.

Matthew, who boasts over 20 thousand followers on Twitter and follows nearly that many back, sees the positive and negative of so many intertwined lives.

"It makes me sound a little callous," he starts. "But for some people, Twitter, blogging, Facebook, is the new soap opera. You can be involved in the stories of other people, and you can also communicate with them and connect with other people who care about them."

But like anything, this phenomenon can have a backlash. "I've seen men and women rally around people and I've seen them quickly turn on someone," he recalls. "That's when the soap opera breaks down, because we're real people."

Twitter is a hotbed for all things cultural, and that means our spiritual and religious culture as well. People who go looking for validation, development, or simply likeness to their faith will run into Matthew should their search bring them to Twitter. What will he ultimately give them?

"It's a powerful thing, to say I'm going into the hospital today, please pray, and have 4000 people comment. That is power, that is God's family coming together."

And when they don't come together?

"I have had some unbelievable [critical] messages sent to me. But I will write all day long with someone interested in having a dialogue."

Matthew is Christian guy, one who loves music and obviously loves his family and is as sensitive when watching *Grey's Anatomy* as he is snarky when watching *The Bachelor*. Though his satirical posts might make him seen as taking lightly the Lord of Christian faith, his view of Jesus is a man of grace, a giver of life, and one who, by all accounts and in Matthew's own words, "doesn't need PR!"



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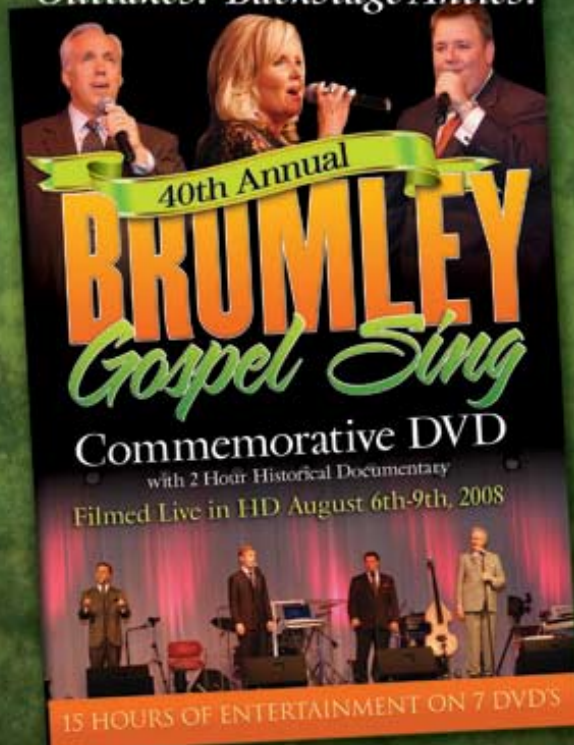
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God's Love That Built a Bridge

Candy Christmas' Ministry Vision Now Helps the Homeless in Nashville & Throughout the World

By D. Ann Bailey



As a 13 year old girl, standing on stage singing "I Came On Business For the King" little did Candy Hemphill know the many roads that business would take her down. Thirty-seven years later, Candy Hemphill Christmas is still about the King's business with a very different ministry, The Bridge.

While much of her life has been spent singing in front of gospel music fans and working in churches with her husband Kent, six years ago her ministry took a dramatic twist. Compassion for those less fortunate led Candy to take a pot of jambalaya to feed some families that were living under Jefferson Street Bridge in Nashville. While there she shared the gospel and found her heart's desire was to work with those in need.

What began as a simple act of compassion has turned into a ministry that is impacting many on the streets of Nashville and around the world. Every Tuesday night you will find Candy and up to 150 volunteers feeding those gathered at the Jefferson Street Bridge as well as providing coats, blankets and other needs. Those creature comforts taken care of, Candy and the volunteers then share the gospel and minister to the spiritual and emotional needs of those there. Those ministering may be from across

town, across the state, across the country or as far away as Uganda.

"I have been a part of the Bridge Ministry since 2006," says volunteer Tara Jackson. "This ministry is not only life changing for the homeless that we help & serve, but life changing for those of us that are serving...in any capacity. I have, personally, seen incredible growth in my walk with the Lord and in my own personal music ministry as a result of living out God's Word."

At first, it was Candy and Kent's family garage used to store clothes, new shoes, and food items, but now The Bridge has a large warehouse and dedicated volunteers who help in feeding and clothing those that show up on Tuesday night for food and the message. Last year they saw as many as 450 people show up on a given night. The Tuesday before Christmas they have a traditional candle light service where each person

who attends receives, in addition to a great meal and the gospel, a new coat, a blanket, and carrying bag containing scarves, gloves, socks and candy.

Almost two years ago health regulations threatened to close down the ministry as DHEC rules set specific guidelines on how prepared food must be handled. While no one will argue that it is important that prepared food be handled properly, The Bridge was feeding homeless that often received little other food. Then the Lord provided two mobile kitchens that allowed them to keep the food prepared and safe for those on the streets.

In recent days the regulations have been changed to state if that if a notice is posted saying that the food preparation isn't under DHEC requirements the standards are not enforceable. This allows for more areas and people to be reached as often a mobile food kitchen isn't available in the area where the need is great. Jasmine Christmas Brady, Candy and Kent's daughter, says, "We learned this was as a direct result to their doors almost closing. The government recognized the needs we are meeting and wanted us to be able to expand. Truly that was another answer to prayer."

The outreach of The Bridge has brought help from across the United States not just from the Nashville area as the need as been communicated with churches and Christians around the country. The face of homelessness has changed and more families and children have been coming since the economic turn in 2008. God is changing lives and breaking bonds of many who have found their way to The Bridge.

In the last year and a half there have been many expansions to the outreach of The Bridge; groups and churches have come from Georgia, Alabama, Oklahoma and seen the work and are taken this back into their own communities and begun ministries there as well. Rob Tripp, son of Laverne and Edith, leads a group from his church in Gallatin, TN to minister to that area as part of their outreach.

Last summer The Bridge partnered with Feed The Children. In July they were able to provide food, hygiene products, Avon, and crocks to over 5,000 families. On the last Tuesday in September they saw a crowd larger than even Christmas usually is, as they fed about 450 homeless and had over 150 volunteers.



Opposite page: A close-up of some touched by the Bridge. This page clockwise from top: Candy Christmas shares as other volunteers pray and encourage those in need; People line up at the 2009 Feed the Children event; Volunteers unload boxes of food and supplies. All photos courtesy of The Bridge Ministry.



They had prepared for about 300 and they literally saw the miracle of the loaves and fishes over again as God multiplied the food. A church from Jasper AL had come that night with sleeping bags and provided these at a time when temperatures were taking a nose dive. God truly blessed and filled the place as they had church under the bridge. The Bridge also works with the Children's Backpack program that sends food home from schools for families that cannot meet the hunger need in their families. Hunger does not discriminate; you may have had a six figure job a year ago and be struggling to feed your family this year. The Bridge has become a mission, a food bank, a place of refuge, a place where spiritual as well as physical needs can be met.

Many cities in our nation do all they can to rid themselves of the homeless. A large number of cities have programs that buy bus tickets for the homeless to other cities. Nashville is one of the cities that many of these people are bused to. You may think that these folks are 'bums', worthless people who chose not to

[continues>](#)

work, however a great number of those that attend The Bridge ministries are working at minimum wage jobs. Those jobs do not provide enough to them to have a roof over their heads. In the Nashville area the average age of a homeless male is 38 and female is 32. 90% of them have successful work histories and many are currently employed but when minimum wage is \$5.85 and it takes approximately \$10.54 per hour to provide shelter for your family, many of them fall into a gap. They long for a home of their own and the life they once had yet their current wage allows for only dreams, which is not part of their reality.

In October God began to lay Haiti on Candy's heart and they began looking for a place to rent or buy to reach out to the many orphans on the streets of Haiti. In November they found property to lease and began Candy's House in Port Au Prince, Haiti. As the earthquakes hit Haiti in January they were pleased to know that Candy's house was safe but the need there was even greater than before.

What many don't realize is that even though Candy's House and many other outreaches are still standing, they can't enter back into the buildings until they are inspected and they must pay for inspection. So many families and children are on the streets even when buildings are not in need of repair. Pastor Parisian, his wife and family who run Candy's house are sleeping out under the stars as the house has not been inspected yet. On Sunday February 28, 2010, Candy & Kent Christmas and their daughter Jasmine and her husband are leaving for Haiti in hopes of cutting through some of the red tape and getting Candy's house open again. They also want to minister to those in the area as much as possible. In addition they plan to look a property for a permanent location of Candy's house.

Candy concludes, "The Bridge Ministry is reaching out to so many and we need your prayers and if possible your help. If you are in Nashville on a Tuesday evening make your way to the Jefferson Street Bridge, set up starts at 5:30 pm."

The service follows at 6:00 and you are sure to be blessed and touched by the ministry God built with just a pot of jambalaya as the starting point. You can learn more about The Bridge at or by emailing office@bridgeministry.org .

Scoops Welcomes Our New Feature Writer ~ D. Ann Bailey!

A senior manager with Resurgent Capital Services, D. Ann Bailey makes her home in South Carolina. As part of a 4 generation household, she enjoys spending time with her family, mom and dad, daughter Alicia and granddaughter Erin. Her love for SGM began in the late 60s watching Bob Poole's Gospel Favorites, Gospel Singing Jubilee, It's Happening with the Oak Ridge Boys, The Kingsmen Quartet, The Blue Ridge Quartet and the Thrasher Brothers on television. At 18 she became involved with a local radio station that played SGM for part of their programming and in 1981 she began writing for a local paper, Hometown Music News. Since then she has written monthly columns for Gospel Music News, The Gospel Voice, Sogospelnews.com, CMP and feature articles for the Singing News. She has been involved in promotion of local gospel concerts and occasionally worked with groups coming through the area to set up dates. She is also active in her local church and enjoys both the music and message presented there. She has been part of the choir, worked with the mission council and the ladies mission group there. Currently in addition to her job at Resurgent, her family and church, she serves on the advisory board of Harvest Hope Food Bank. Her work with this Faith based organization allows her to reach out to the community showing God's love not only in spiritual ways but helping to meet the physical needs as well.

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The way I see it, people either love Branson or they've never been there."

Branson, Missouri is a tiny town in America's heartland that boasts 8 million visitors a year and is home for less than 8 thousand residents. For decades it has been touted as everything from a country music hub to a gospel music hub to the potential home of a brand new Disney resort. What it is: the live entertainment capital of the world; its more than 50 theaters outnumber those found on Broadway!

With theaters both old-fashioned and highly modern lining "The Strip" – a two-mile Main Street though the center of town, Branson offers entertainment options for everyone while keeping all of them family-friendly.

Julia Carroll, who expressed the opinion above, has

lived with her family in the town of Branson for just under a year. After living in Ohio and just outside of Chicago, the change for them has been a big one, but a welcome one.

"During the winter, you can stand at one end of the strip and whisper to someone at the other end," she jokes. "But in just a few weeks, the shades will roll up, the lights will be on, and the shows will go on once again. That same road will be filled with cars all day long."

Branson traditionally takes a hiatus during January, February, and part of March. Many theaters, hotels, and restaurants – including the Dunkin' Donuts – close for the season. When that hiatus ends, over 100 daily shows and dozens of special events (as well as 400 restaurants, shopping and amusement parks) will call people to this 19-square-mile city.

"I love Branson!" says Brenda Denney, singer with 2nd Generation who recently relocated to an Arkansas town just 45 minutes outside of Branson. "We love to sing here, of course, but we also love to shop, eat, meet people, and catch a show when we can."

Both Carroll and Denney are personally and professionally involved in one of Branson's newest and proudest special events: The Branson Gospel Music Convention.

In 2009, the Branson GMC debuted in the town's sole convention center, owned by Hilton and located across from the popular Branson Landing. Over 150 southern and country gospel artists and 2000 audience members filled the four day event,

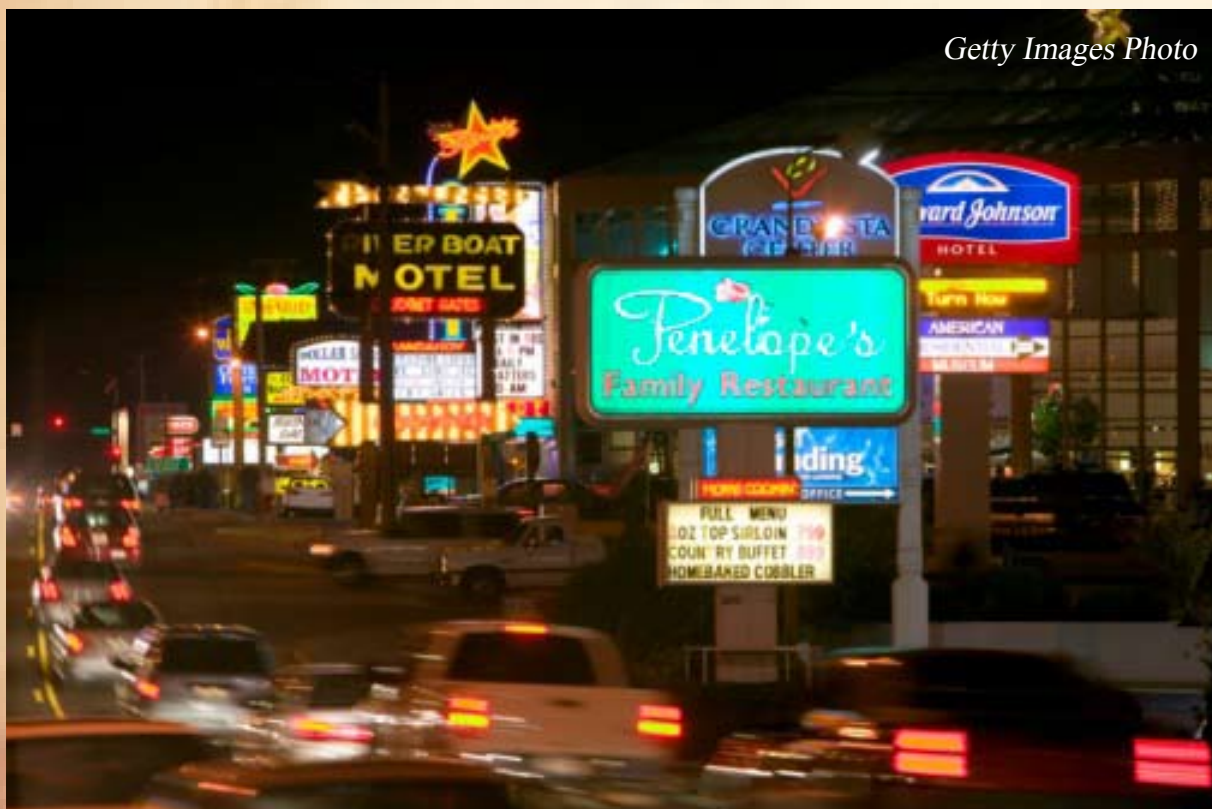
Bright Lights, Little City:

BRANSON

Home of Branson Gospel Music Convention

By Evie Hawkins

Getty Images Photo





Backstage at the 2009 Branson GMC: Patz, Denney, Homeland Entertainment's Scott Godsey, Jonathan Edwards of Ascension Quartet and KWFC-FM radio, and Chris Unthank of Souther Spin Entertainment and Sunday Edition. Photo by Evie Hawkins

arrived in Branson, with our 'convention in a box,' as she called it, we were in no way prepared for how God would move."

Denney recalls a sense of family amongst the artists, many whom had never attended a convention before.

"I worked backstage through many of the concerts," she says, "And we literally cheered for and in some cases prayed for the artists up on stage. Ministry can be expensive – it costs us time and money but sometimes other sacrifices: relationships, family obligations, health, and confidence. There were people who arrived at Branson GMC with baggage – and they left it there! They were able to minister and to receive ministry."

Carroll recalls, "I walked into the convention center to set up a booth for a local eatery, and I was floored by what I saw. There was a lot of activity – music of course, but also talking, hugging, even praying. I was pleased to bring my family there to catch some it."

This year, both Denney and Carroll are working for the convention, using their relationships in and knowledge of the town to promote and improve aspects of Branson GMC.

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‘[Branson GMC] began as a crazy idea... we were in no way prepared for how God would move.’

“The city of Branson, straight from the mouth of Mayor [Raeanne] Presley welcomes gospel music and specifically, Branson GMC. It’s bringing new people to the town who are enjoying what it has to offer,” Carroll says. “We expect a bigger turnout for 2010 and we’re excited to be working on ways to make the week as enjoyable and exciting as possible for each visitor.”

Convention staff was working at press time to confirm additional anchor artists to the convention lineup, but 2010’s roster already includes an array of new and veteran, local and national names such as HisSong, Dino, Chuck Wagon Gang, Beyond the Ashes, Kenny Bishop, Melody Boys, and Hinson Revival.

“This isn’t your grandma’s convention!” Carroll jokes. “This is taking place in the middle of the summer, which means parents, grandparents, teenagers, and little ones will be in attendance. Naturally, our goal is to have styles of gospel music to please as many people as possible.”

Branson GMC will again host the SGN Scoops-owned Diamond Awards, a fan-voted ceremony honoring southern gospel – and new this year, country gospel



Branson Landing is a mixture of food, shopping, live music, and a beautiful waterfront.
Photo by Branson EDGE

– artists and entities.

“I don’t have time to tell you about it!” Rob Patz, owner of SGN Scoops, says. “I am working around the clock to bring an all-new, super-charged, really FUN show to our fans this year!”

Well, ok then.

Reserved seating tickets are currently on sale for the 5-day, 4-night event, with general admission seats set to be released this month. For details on Branson’s newest gospel event, go to www.BransonGMC.com

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CHRISTY SUTHERLAND

Grew up singing, helping singers grow: Scott Godsey

By Jerry 'JT' Tinkle

Scott Godsey is a name that will be familiar with a lot of readers, as he was once a member of The Northmen, a group based out of Fort Wayne, Indiana, for many years. Having recently undergone hernia surgery and tending to his wife, who was recovering from a tonsillectomy, Scott was more difficult to reach than usual. We're happy to report he and wife Ashlee are both on the mend!

Scott was truly thrust into the southern gospel music arena at the ripe old age of 2 weeks! At the time his father Alan Godsey, his mother Cathy Godsey, and other members of his family had been on the road doing family ministry. There were various makeups of the ministry, including a true family group, a group of mixed members known as The Jubilees, and finally, what came to be known as The Northmen.

Scott told us that his mother claims he was on the bus at two weeks of age, and that he cannot remember a time when he was not on a bus, travelling all over the country, singing for the Lord all weekend, each and every week. As the changes came about within the group, and as members came and left, the popularity of the group called The Northmen grew. For many years, 200 dates a year was a common occurrence for Scott, and after a while, the Northmen changed from an all-male quartet into a singing trio, backed by mother Cathy on piano.

Being immersed with his family in business and ministry prepared Scott in a unique way. "Every day I would see my dad on the phone making things happen, not waiting on things to fall in his lap," Scott recalls. "Work hard, play hard. Singing in a quartet is the easy part; it's the hard work behind the scenes that is difficult. He helped me on and off stage."

The Northmen grew in popularity over the years, even being selected to sing on the main stage a couple of times at the prestigious National Quartet Convention. To top that off, the group started getting airplay for some of their songs on the radio, even landing a song on the Singing News national chart. The song "Exit Of The

Grave" became the first charting song for The Northmen. Scott sang the lead vocal.

He says, "I was 14 years old when "Exit Of The Grave" came out. I was so excited to hear our song on the radio. You would think that everything would change, but it didn't. Life was the same." Even so, the hard work started by his father started to pay off for the group, and Scott began to see what it was like to be on the inside of Southern Gospel music making, learning firsthand what it was like to put a project together.

During the time that "Exit of the Grave" became a radio hit, The Northmen were associated with the Eddie Crook Company, where the group continued with many charting songs. The company was headed by Eddie Crook himself, who was once the piano player for The Happy Goodmans, and to be able to learn the ropes of the business side of things from one of the best was a valuable learning experience for the young Godsey.

"Eddie Crook is a smart business man," Scott says, "He had many good ideas which we implemented in our daily routine. Most of all, he is a friend and has always done his best to help."

Being on a major recording label like The Eddie Crook Company afforded Scott some opportunities that some artists never experience. The Northmen travelled all over the United States, and to several foreign countries while Scott was a member. Scott counts a trip to Colorado as one of his favorites. "We had some great



concerts and we were also having multiple problems with the bus- not good when you're in the Rockies."

Another favorite: "One of the most interesting trips was to Hamilton, Ontario at Cops Coliseum. It was the Central Canadian Quartet Convention. It was great to meet groups from Canada! Some of them I still have great relationships with!"

As time went on, and as Godsey matured, it became apparent to him that it was time to move on, to seek other avenues in the music business, and to pursue those dreams he had of producing and helping other artists in the ministry of making music for the Lord

So how difficult was it to break the news to his parents, and to (former Northmen member) Brad Luzadder? "They all knew I wanted to do something different with my life," Scott says. "All I ever wanted to do was sing, sing, sing..... But I also always wanted to be a producer, and I wanted to live in Nashville. I knocked on someones door keeping a select group of artists happy and to seek and find new talent. I had other responsibilities in production, engineering, publishing, producing audio recordings, videos, and special events. I had many job titles, but I didn't care about that. I just wanted to work hard, coming in early and staying late until the job was done!"

His time with The Eddie Crook Company, combined with college and other entry-level jobs in the business led him to pursue his current position, with Homeland Entertainment Group of Nashville, Tennessee. He shared the story of getting to that place: "I talked to Nick Bruno, among other industry leaders, and shared what was on my heart. I felt like there was a need for change. I knew I didn't have all the answers, but I wanted to do something more. After many conversations with the people at Homeland Entertainment Group, I knew it was my new home."

He says his responsibilities are greater now than they were at Eddie Crook Company. "Now everyone that walks in the door is my responsibility, and I want to have a personal relationship with all our artists."

"We produce the best quality record we can for our artists," Scott continues. "But beyond producing quality recordings we have taken the next step. We have a radio department that does true promotions, not just tracking. We are aggressive when it comes to rival marketing. But our best and most innovative marketing program is our Brush Arbor Jubilee TV show."

Part of Scott's job at Homeland is to seek out and find new artists for the company. He told us that there are many things he looks for in a new artist. "Are they vocally talented? There are many that are, but can they emcee as well? Do they hold the crowd's attention? What are they like off stage? Are they personable? But really, I have to like them first and foremost, because I have to work with them on a weekly basis. So, therefore, if we don't get along well, everything is out the window," he says.

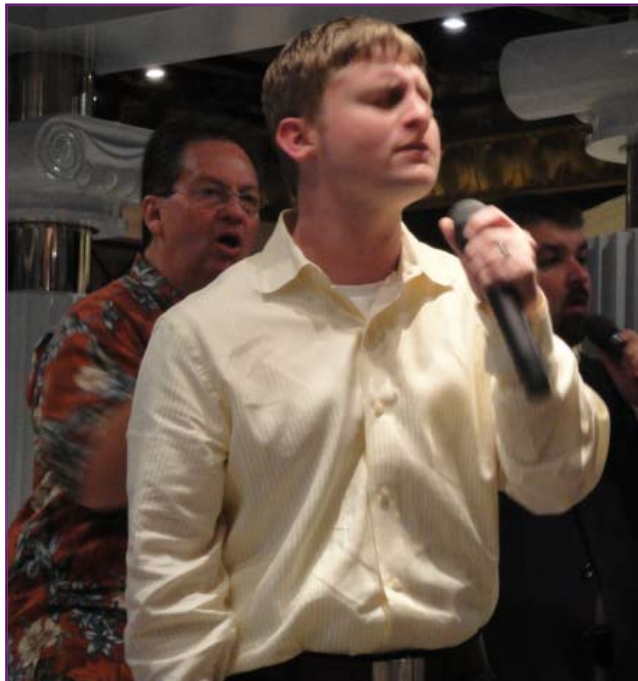
On a personal note, part of Scott's contentment in staying off the road has to do with his being a fairly new member of the married club. "My wife Ashleigh and I met in middle school, then later dated in high school and throughout our college days," he recalls. "For the big proposal, I made a fancy dinner at my house in Indiana and had roses everywhere. I surprised her with a ring, but I faked her out by giving her a necklace first."

He continues, "I'm glad she said yes. Otherwise I would have had two pieces of jewelry to return."

The couple was married in their hometown of Fort Wayne, Indiana before Scott "took her to Nashville." They now make their home in Gallatin, Tennessee.

Having compressed a lot of experiences into his 24 years, we wonder what is in store for Scott. Does he have plans to venture back into singing, or has he hung up his spurs?

"I have no plans to get back on the road", Scott relates. "I wouldn't say 'never,' but [the opportunity] would have to be something special. I love working behind the scenes, making other ministries stronger. I like being a part of ministries without singing every weekend."



Scott recently put together a gospel cruise event for Homeland Entertainment, which afforded him a few opportunities to sing as well. Also pictured: Alan Godset, Johnathan Edwards.

Fool-Proof Weight Loss

"Christian Fitness" by Laurette Willis

"Fool-Proof Weight Loss"? Is that even possible? Yes. From a purely physical standpoint, there are a few things you can do that have been proven to absolutely work. Add to that several scriptural elements which include the Lord's help, and you have "Fool-Proof" methods that can mean the difference between success and "same-old, same-old."

First, let's look at the physical.

Researches from the Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research followed more than 2,000 people who wanted to lose weight. They encouraged them to write down their meals and snacks throughout the day.

The biggest single predictor of whether a participant lost weight or not was whether he or she kept a food journal.

Successful weight loss and weight management as a result of keeping a food journal beat out exercise habits, body mass index or age. Interestingly, the number of pounds lost was in direct correlation to the number of days they wrote in their diary or log.

Keeping a food diary is an eye-opening experience for those of us who think we "eat like a bird." That may not be such a wise comparison. Did you know that birds eat constantly and some eat one-quarter to one-half of their body weight per day? Anybody up for a fifty-pound hamburger with ten

pounds of fries? Yikes!

Here are a few more reasons keeping a food journal makes good sense.

Cutting back on between-meal snacks and "grazing"

Think back to what you ate yesterday. You may remember breakfast, lunch and dinner, but do you recall everything you ate and drank yesterday? Even if you just took "a taste" of something, each little taste adds up. Considering most mouthfuls of food average 25 calories, six extra nibbles a day are an extra 150 calories, which can add up to an extra 15 pounds per year.

How much DO you eat in a day?

Writing it down is a wake-up call for many of us. Do you eat by the portion size, or by the plateful?

My husband Paul (a.k.a. "Paul the Pasta Prince") was crestfallen when he learned one portion of pasta is not a plateful but ½ cup or about the size of a fist (he asked if it could be about the size of an open fist filled with pasta).

Eating out has its drawbacks when it comes to portion-conscious eating. A good rule of thumb is to ask your server to put half your entrée in a take-home container before it is brought to your table. You'll be less likely to open the container while seated at the table; you'll eat less and probably enjoy it more, feel less sleepy after your meal, and wind up with a quick lunch for the next day.

Are you getting enough of the right nutrients?

Keeping a food journal will also reveal to you the nutrition you are getting in your daily meals. Think you're eating the recommended 5-9 portions of fruit and vegetables per day? Looking at the food journal for a week may reveal that ketchup was the fruit and vegetable du jour and Twinkies are a new food group.

Make sure you're taking your whole food vitamins every day and add some concentrated greens (usually come in powdered or granulated form) to sprinkle on your food to make up for the perfection we don't reach every day.

What are your food triggers?

Looking for that feeling of fullness food cannot fill (but Jesus can)? Bored? Lonely?



Looking at a project to be completed and the temporary distraction of snacking keeps calling you to the refrigerator or candy machine?

Along with the notations about food, get a handle on the emotions that accompany unplanned snacking—or binges. When you notice patterns, you can ask the Lord to help you change them.

This leads us to the best way to lose weight or make any changes in your life at all: ask the Lord to help you.

Commit your food plan to the Lord daily.

Keeping a food journal throughout the day is a great idea – and writing a food plan in your journal that morning or the night before is even better. Keep it simple, or detailed and close enough to you so you can refer to it during the day. Why? For two reasons:

1. You've heard the expression, "Those who fail to plan, plan to fail." By planning what you will eat, you're less likely to fall prey to last-minute choices made when blood sugar is low and thinking a bit fuzzy.

2. It will give you a plan you can commit to the Lord

and ask Him to help you keep it. The wonderful thing is that He absolutely will help you.

"Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts will be established." Proverbs 16:3.


I literally hold my food plan for the day up to the Lord during my Morning Prayer time. "Lord, I commit my food plan to You today. I trust You to help me walk in the fruit of the Spirit today, including self-discipline. I place my food plan, my whole day and my life in Your hands. I present my body a living sacrifice to You, Lord, holy and acceptable which is my reasonable service. And I will not be conformed to this world, but by Your grace I am being transformed by the renewing of my mind on Your holy Word. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

Following these weight loss methods are absolutely fool-proof because a woman who follows the Lord is NO FOOL! So if they're so effective they can be considered fool-proof, imagine what a wise woman of the Word like YOU can do!

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1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese or herbed goat cheese(my favorite)

1/4 tsp garlic powder...have fun...add your favorite spices!

Dash italian seasoning and red pepper flakes to taste!

2 (10 1/8 ounce) packages Pillsbury Refrigerated Crescent Dinner Rolls

Optional: You may add a very small amount of finely chopped vegetables in place of some of the meat or add about 4 oz. chopped veggies and add 4 oz. more herbed goat or cream cheese.

Preheat oven to 350.

Take out the crescent rolls, and separate into the individual triangles.

Flatten each triangle and slice it so that it becomes three small triangles.

Dice or chop your meats into tiny, tiny pieces.

Mix the meats into the cheese, stir very well so all of the meat pieces are mixed into the cheese mixture.

Take a little spoonful of your cheese/meat mixture and put it in the middle of one of your crescent rolls triangles.

Pinch up all of the sides around the filling.

Repeat and place them all on a cookie sheet.

Bake for the amount of time stated on the crescent rolls for approximately 10-12 minutes.

Let cool for a few minutes before serving!

Makes around 48.

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What will be on your family's table for Easter dinner?

We'd love to hear your traditions:

facebook.com/sgnscoops or kelly@sgnscoops.com



Keep It Simple Guacamole - Kelly Burton

Put DOWN the seasoning packet.

4 ripe avacados
(ripe=squeezable but not mushy)
1 medium sweet onion, diced

1 'handful' of fresh cilantro, chopped
fresh jalepeno (one half or whole, depending on how spicy you like it), diced

1 whole lime

Kosher or sea salt

*Optional: 1 small orange

Cut each avacodo all the way around, length wise.
Split open and pop out the seed.

Scrape avacado out of shells using a spoon.

Use a masher to blend avacodos to a creamy consistency (there will be lumps).

Add onion, cilantro, and jalepeno. Mix well.

Add approximately one teaspoon of salt, more or less as needed. Squeeze the juice from one half of a fresh lime. Optional (but tasty): Squeeze juice from about one-fourth of an orange.

Blend well. Garnish with cilantro & serve with tortilla chips.

Tips: If you are not serving guacamole right away, keep one or two of the seeds in with the dip to retain freshness. This will also keep leftover guacamole fresh for a day or two. Just a little bit left? Spread on sandwiches for tomorrow's lunch or dollop on your vegetable soup.

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The Church and the 'Why' Generation

Third & final in a series
by Lorraine Walker
Originally published at SGMRadio.com

Y2Y: Reaching the Vanishing Generation

The "Y Generation", those in their late teens and twenties, have been leaving the organized Church at an alarming rate. In Part One of this series, we discussed the incredible statistics that report upwards of 95% of this generation is leaving the Church after graduation from high school and not returning. These young people are also absent from the audience of Southern Gospel Music, even though there are young and very talented artists in our field today. Does this absence sound the death knell for Southern Gospel?

In a recent interview with Josh Singletary of Tribute Quartet, he mentioned that he doesn't quite agree with this statement. "Ever since I've started this journey in Gospel Music, the strongest topic of concern has been centered around youth: 'Where will this music be in 10 years? How can we pull young people toward this music? If we don't do something, this music will be gone...'. You know, I'm not so sure that there is much of a worry and I'll tell you why.

"Everywhere we go, I see many new fans," says Josh. "The young people are constantly growing up. We have a fresh audience coming

up all of the time. Our songs minister to people who have lived life. Young people are ...well, young. I see a large group of youth who are fans, but I also see a fresh batch of fans who were just recently young."

Jimmy Doolley, Southern Gospel soloist, says he has a small percentage of Generation Y's in his audience. "But over the past few years we have been blessed to share our ministry at a lot of youth events where there are lots of younger people. It is so important that we reach out to them more now than ever... I think people are hurting and depressed more than ever and many things that these young people go through are so serious... we need to be more open to change to reach them."

In Part Two of this series, entitled "Generation Whine", we talked about other reasons the Y'ers are leaving and whether their points are valid or just an excuse for not listening to, and obeying, the truth of the Word. Has the Church taught this generation that serving Christ is all

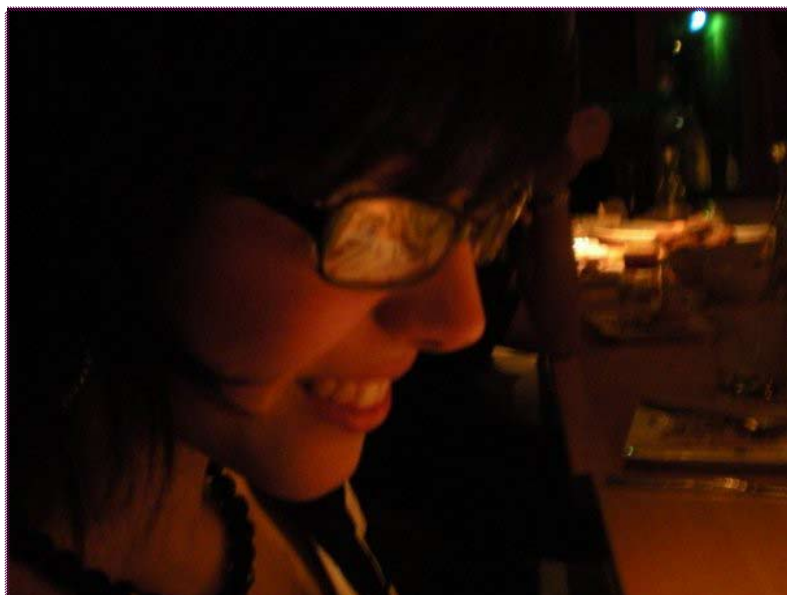
about fun and not about discipleship? Some have this view but others are more concerned about how to reach the generation that has run from the church, rather than dwelling on the reasons they aren't in the pew. SGM Radio recently talked to a Generation Y lady who is reaching her generation, Y to Y.

Belinda Stutzman is an accomplished vocalist with her Southern Gospel group, the Stutzman Family. At 19 years of age, she has been singing most of her life and has a desire to reach her generation for Jesus. This young lady is not content to blame Church programs or politics, or any music genre, for the lack of Y'ers in the audience. The only way to reach these young people, according to Belinda, is for

'I think people are hurting and depressed more than ever and many things that these young people go through are so serious... we need to be more open, to change to reach them.'
- artist Jimmy Dooley



continues>



Photos by Miho Nakamura

believers of the same generation to reach out to them in honesty, with the Truth.

"Our music does reach the Generation Y to some extent," Belinda says. "Actually, as of four or five years ago, I wanted to be in a rock band, to be honest with you. Then I went to Stamps-Baxter School of Music and I found kids my age who loved Southern Gospel Music. I realized I could be in this music and have friends and have people who I can communicate with, people who love the same thing I love. It was so encouraging. It changed who I am and what I do."

Belinda talks about how her music is accepted by the Why Generation in the church. "There is definitely a barrier. Being from the northern part of the country, Southern Gospel is unusual there anyway. So for my generation, when they see and hear my music, I don't often get a good reaction from them. I will get a socially polite, 'Hi, how are you', and that's about it."

"It is hard to reach those people," says Belinda. "I do what I can to talk to them and to communicate with them from my age and perspec-

tive because I know that I'm the one that needs to reach them. No one else really can. We have so many who try and they do a wonderful job but it is ultimately my generation's job to reach my own generation."

Belinda feels the Why Generation

is leaving the church because of the actions of other Christians. "So often we get into churches and we see that the church has lost its joy and lost its hope. To look at a church and see people so down, it's discouraging. It makes it hard to say, 'Look at what we have, we are so blessed' when we don't act that way. The young people are looking at it and saying, 'Wow, I really don't want to be like this for the rest of my life. I want to be happy, I want to find something satisfying'."

"It's a hard job at times, but it is such a blessing to see a church that has 'got it'. They understand how blessed we are," Belinda continues. "They have found the joy that so many of us are missing. Often I see in those churches that the Youth are involved and even if it's not their style of music they will be receptive to Southern Gospel. They realize it's about Jesus. They have that joy and the music ministers to them."

Belinda feels that the church needs to get back to its roots in order to bring back Generation Y. "The Church needs to find the joy that's missing. We are looking at the adults and we are modeling our

lives after what we see. If we see it and we don't like it, we are going to do what we can to make it better."

"But if we see that someone's got it right and someone knows what's going on, we are going to cling to that. We honestly are searching for the truth; we are searching for the reason for life and why we are here. If we see it, we are going to follow it with all of our being."

Belinda thoroughly believes in Y2Y, with her generation reaching their own for Jesus. Her heart for ministry to all ages is evident in her love for people. "My greatest goal is simply to please the Lord and to minister to as many people as I can," says Belinda. "Whether that is by being on a big stage with my name in lights and thousands of people in the audience, or not, that doesn't matter. So often I find that the one-on-one connection is so much better because you can reach someone and you can see their life, and see what they are going through. You can relate to them. Then you can help them. So I really don't care how the Lord lets me minister. As long as He lets me minister, I'll be quite happy."

Whether the Church and Southern Gospel sees the dropping away of the Y Generation, their response needs to be the same as with any other generation, culture, group or creed. Reaching out in honesty with the Truth, as Jesus did when He walked this earth, will bring the gospel to a lost and dying world, whatever their generation.

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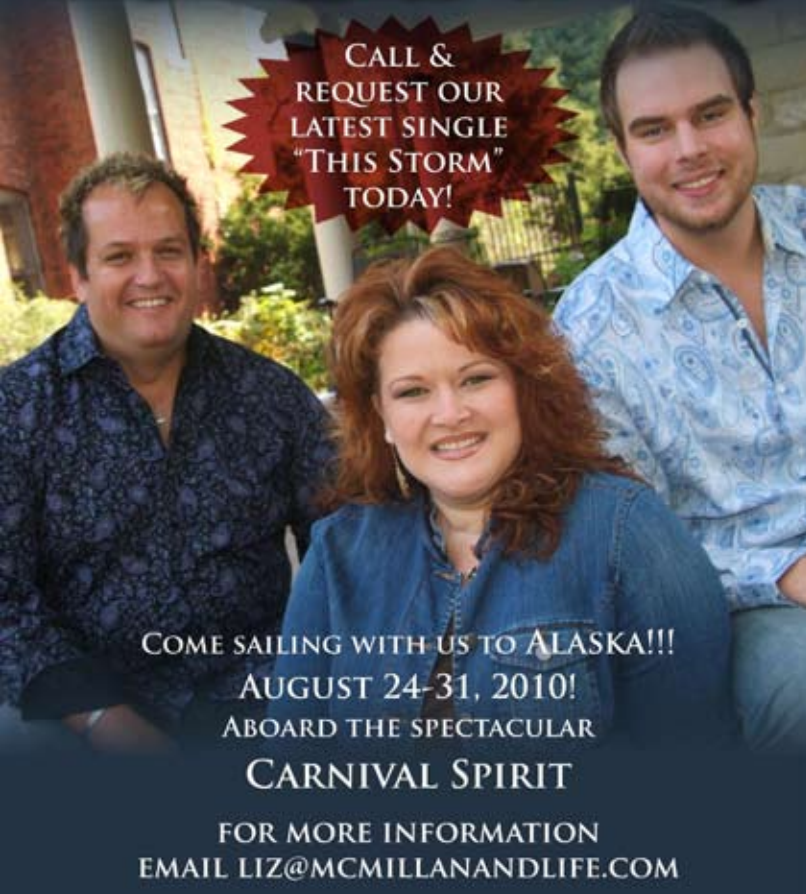
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Who's making new music...

CD Reviews by Chad Hayes

ANCHORMEN

Always a Road

www.theanchormen.com

The Anchormen is a group that has been around for a good many years. They've always been sort of a "revolving door" in terms of personnel, but much of that personnel has been amongst the best in the business- Steve Ladd, Jeff Chapman, Tony Jarman, Aaron McCune, etc. However, the past few years have been especially tough for the Anchormen in this area. The group is seeking to reestablish a solid foundation, and this album is the next step in that process. The current lineup includes Karl Rice (tenor), Keith Casstevens (lead), Michael Bartlett (baritone), and Paul Harkey (bass).

"Always A Road" is a somewhat progressive-sounding album with a country flair. The group brought in well-known producer Donna Beauvais to help with this album. Donna is one of the better producers in the industry, and this shows that the group is serious about wanting to be the best they can be and make their mark in this industry.

Now, the moment you've all been waiting for: THE SONGS!

The album starts off with a very progressive song called "Start With Me". This is a mid-tempo song that was also recorded by the Crist Family on their most recent album, "Declaration". I must admit to liking the opening of the song with each of the guys quoting a portion of Scripture before they actually begin singing. This is a nicely-arranged song that is done very well by the group. Song #2 is a mid-tempo number called "All In A Sunday's Work". Baritone Michael Bartlett gets the feature here, and he has a solid voice that provides a nice foundation for this song. I also like how this song builds from beginning to end. The tempo speeds back up again for the next song, "The Sweetest Sound I Know". This is another driving, progressive cut that, in my opinion, would do well at radio. The fourth song has a lighter touch and a slightly slower tempo. Tenor vocalist Karl Rice gets the feature here on "Never".

Rice has greatly improved over the past several years. Here he shows both sides of his voice- the lower, softer side as well as the higher, more powerful side. This, combined with some excellent songwriting, makes this a favorite of mine from this album.

The fifth song goes back to more of a country style. "Everything But Time" is a mid-to-up-tempo song that features bass vocalist Paul Harkey. Harkey has some smooth tones in his lower register. In fact, he reminds me a bit of Christian Davis. This is followed by a smoother, mid-tempo song called "Somebody Here". Song #7 is more orchestrated than most of the other songs on the album. "One Day I Will" is also the first truly slow-tempo song on the album. There's some nice, smooth singing on this song. Next up is another up-tempo song called "Almost Time To Fly". I first heard this song done by the group 3 For 1 on their "Shine Where You Live" album, and this arrangement is pretty much the same as theirs. While the Anchormen do a solid job here, it's not up to the standard that 3 For 1 set in my mind. However, I do have to mention that lead vocalist Keith Casstevens' vocals are very strong throughout this song.

"The Letter" is another slower song that features bass vocalist Paul Harkey in his higher register. It's apparent that Harkey has a big range with a smooth sound throughout. I've always said that it's nice to hear a bass who doesn't think that the lowest notes possible are the "end-all-be-all" of singing the part. The tempo then speeds back up a bit for the mid-tempo song, "Better Than Ever". While I like this song's chord progressions and arrangements, the blend wasn't quite as tight as on other parts of the album. It's a solid effort, but just shy of the standard of some of the other songs. Song #11 slows the tempo down again with a power ballad called "Grace Is There". This has a more traditional sound that most of the other songs on the

continues➤

album. Finally, the album ends with a mid-tempo song called "For The First Time".

In my opinion, this album is a big step in the right direction for the Anchormen. The first half of the album is admittedly much stronger than the second half, but I think a lot of that could be fixed with a re-ordering of the songs. Having at least one of the slower songs in the first half of the album would have helped to break things up a bit better. Also, there were a few spots throughout where the vocals weren't quite blended correctly. However, these are few and far between. This is the strongest lineup the Anchormen have had in years, and I think that their style change from more traditional to more progressive is clearly demonstrated here. I think it's a good style for them, and their sound will only get better the more that these guys sing together and "gel". Overall, I give this album a rating of 8 out of 10 microphones!

Favorites: "All In A Sunday's Work", "Never", "Everything But Time", and "The Letter"

More of Chad's CD reviews of your favorite artists can be read at SGMRadio.com

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