

#2 – “Glorious Day”

Band: Casting Crowns
Album: Until the Whole World Hears

#1 – “You Are More”

Band: Tenth Avenue North
Album: The Light Meets the Dark

So this is our last night together! We’ve come a long way through the top ten songs, and it’s been quite a journey, both musically and spiritually, for me. Each individual song, when I first looked at them, seemed so disconnected and unrelated that I thought it would take a miracle to make any connection from week to week. But, as I’ve told you along the way, I’ve been continuously amazed at how God has tied them together each week. We started with forgiveness. Chris August’s song, “7 x 70” might have seemed like a strange one to begin with but God must have had a purpose in the line-up. Several of you shared with me that you were struggling with forgiveness, just like Chris was. The next week we heard Mandisa’s song, “Stronger” and I shared Mandisa’s struggle with her “addiction to food” and her struggles with relying on IT to give her comfort during the tough times of her life. She learned to lean on God’s strength, love, forgiveness and protection. We saw her publicly forgive Simon Cowell for the rude comments about her weight, saying “If God can forgive me of all of my sins, I can surely forgive you for those hurtful words.” As she grew in her faith and her trust in God’s guidance, she began to fully realize that the difficulties she was experiencing were making her stronger, and that’s the message she shared in her song.

Week 3 had us taking a closer look at “Beautiful” by MercyMe. We started the discussion by talking about how the band got started. They received God’s call as they led the worship music on a mountaintop in Switzerland. Their goal was to hit it big as a Christian rock band, but God began to show them what he really wanted them to do: be a band that led worship. Trusting God’s guidance, that’s what they set out to do. It was clear that they struggled with their overnight success and the pressure to give in to what the world wanted them to do. Remember how the “suits” wanted Bart to stick to writing songs that weren’t “overtly Christian.” But Bart knew it wasn’t about the worldly gain and he wanted his music only to point to God. “Beautiful” was a song written to their children, their little girls, which said we all are “made for so much more than all of this.” Brandon Heath had those same struggles. He wrote our #6 song, “Your Love.” He, too, found himself facing the pressure to succeed...to do

what the suits wanted him to do. But he forged ahead and did the unthinkable – he created an album that focused on sin! “Your Love” was a song from that album that expressed the idea that it doesn’t matter how much money or fame or success we have. When it comes down to it, all we need is God’s love. And so this song, with its first-person point of view, forces us to make that same powerful statement each time we sing it: “Your love, your love, all I ever needed is your love.”

Chris Tomlin knew a thing or two about the power of words. His song, “I Will Follow” was inspired by the life of Peter, who sometimes talked BIG, but then his actions didn’t support his words. Chris challenged us with the chorus (“Whom you love, I’ll love. How you serve, I’ll serve. If this life I lose, I will follow”) to really listen to the words we sing, the words we pray, the promises we make to God. We need to do more than just talk. We need to DO something. Which led us beautifully into song #5, “I Refuse.” The singer/songwriter, Josh Wilson, wrote this song because he saw himself doing the same things Peter had done. He found himself talking and praying about how God was going to move people to help in the Nashville flood, but then quickly realized that God wanted HIM to be moved to do something. Or as he put it, to refuse to do nothing.

Song #4 was also created from a biblical perspective, but this time it was based on the life of Paul. “Children of God” by Third Day focused on the earth-shattering, life-changing moment when Saul realized that he’d been adopted as a child of God. His old life, his past sins, the debt he owed to God because of the horrible life that he’d led before...they’d been erased as if they’d never happened. When God looked at him, he didn’t see any of it. He saw his child. Third Day’s lead singer, Mac Powell, says we all need to be looking at our lives with God’s eyes. We need to change our perspective...to live life with our eyes wide open...to see things (the big things and the small things) as God would have us see them. Francesca Battistelli had the same idea when she and her co-writers sat down to write “This Is the Stuff,” our #3 song. Francesca knew that we all have STUFF that we’re dealing with that turn our focus away from God. But, through her song, she reminds us that God can use that stuff, those annoyances, those times when nothing seems to be going right, to “refine our character and make us more like him.”

So that's where we left off last week – with this idea of changing our perspective. When we change our perspective, God changes us.

And that brings us to song #2, “Glorious Day” by Casting Crowns. The band's lead singer, Mark Hall, writes nearly all of the band's songs. In order to find the story behind “Glorious Day” we're going to have to dig into the story behind Mark Hall first. His life, and his change of perspective, are what made the song possible.

Mark Hall's story is unlike the other personal stories we've heard in past weeks. He's not a child of a broken home like Chris August was. In fact, he says he had wonderful parents whom he wishes every kid could have. He didn't grow up un-churched like Brandon Heath did. Rather, he was raised in the church and grew up singing all of the good old Baptist hymns which he still loves to this day. Mark's story is unique because of his perspective. We've been focusing on the perspective with which we view our lives, but Mark's emphasis isn't on how he VIEWS things. It's on how he HEARS things. I've been doing a lot of reading lately....reading several books written by Mark. When Todd and I went out to Kansas a few weeks back to attend the worship leader's conference, we actually got to see Casting Crowns in person. In the concert, Mark Hall, the lead singer, spoke so simply and beautifully about his journey of faith. I knew that the books that they were selling in the lobby after the concert would be invaluable to me for this song study. I quickly laid down the cash for the books and began to devour them, hoping to find the story behind our #2 song. Much to my chagrin, I realized that the story wasn't in the books. But as I read, and re-read Mark's words, I began to realize that HIS story was really the story behind ALL of his music. And that's what I want to share with you today.

This is Mark's personal testimony, taken directly from his book, “Lifestories: Finding God's Voice of Truth Through Everyday Life.” I strongly encourage you all to get this book. It has really changed me and I think it will probably be equally as powerful for you.

Mark begins this chapter by quoting scripture, 2 Corinthians 12:9.

“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

(Those of you reading on-line, please note that due to copyright issues, I have not included Mark's testimony within this script. I encourage you all to purchase a copy of the book.)

C Bb F
The waves are calling out my name and they laugh at me
C Bb F
reminding me of all the times i've tried before and failed
C Bb Bb C Dm
the waves they keep on telling me time and time again
 Bbsus C
"boy you'll never win, you'll never win"

VIDEO: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J6ZbJBrtvs4>

So Mark decided to change his perspective on what he was HEARING...to listen to the voice of truth. The first song he ever wrote, entitled "Fear," years later became one of his biggest hits, "Voice Of Truth." If he had listened to any other voice that day that the song began, he might not have ended going on to become a youth pastor. Today, some 15 or so years later, he is still a youth pastor. In fact, every member of Casting Crowns is either a youth pastor or youth leader. That's how the band came to be. This group of friends and co-workers got together to write and record music that they felt their "kids" needed to hear. They recorded Mark's music themselves and then gave them out to their youth groups. It just happened that just the right person heard their CDs and they got signed to a recording deal. But this is what I think is quite interesting...the band only tours from Thursday to Saturday. Very rarely do they ever play anywhere on Sunday to Wednesday. Want to know why? Because their youth groups meet on Sundays and Wednesdays. So they turn down gigs that might be incredibly lucrative and career-building, because their TRUE careers are back at home with those kids! They are youth pastors who just happen to make music on the side. So cool.

So "Glorious Day" is a song that came about because Mark felt it was a song that his youth group needed to hear. But Mark didn't write it. "Glorious Day" actually began life in 1908 at the pen of an evangelist by the name of Wilbur Chapman. Wilbur wrote a poem called "One Day" which he passed on to a musician-friend of his, Charles Marsh, who set the poem to music. It was published in 1911. I'd like to play a bit of it for you now.

Now, the next step in the story happens almost 97 years later. But the step wasn't taken by Mark Hall. The next part of the story involves a worship pastor by the name of Michael Bleecker. This is what he says about his part of the "Glorious Day" story:

"Easter was approaching and I had nothing to sing. As a worship pastor, that can be very disheartening. Easter is the time you pull out all the big guns with a life-sized papier-mache tomb and angels flying in from the ceiling on zip lines. I sat at my desk planning how I would be able to take off my harness, white robe and gold-encrusted pipe cleaner halo and go right into leading worship, but to no avail. If I couldn't do the zip line, no one could, so I did what any God-fearing worship pastor would do... I googled 'Easter worship songs.' I browsed Google trying to find the right song when my eye caught the word 'hymnal.' I walked over to my stack of hymnals and pulled out the 1939 copy of THE HYMNS OF PRAISE: NUMBERS ONE AND TWO COMBINED from a church in Kenosha, Wisconsin (I don't know how it got here). I flipped through the yellow pages of the hymnal and found One Day. As I carefully pulled back page 172, I read: 'Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me; Buried, He carried my sins far away; Rising, He justified freely forever: One day He's coming: O glorious day!' 'This is it,' I thought. 'This is what I want our church to sing on Easter.' I pulled out my guitar and as I read through it, the Lord gave me a melody, a few chords and the desire to get these words out to our people."

So he re-wrote the song, setting the same words to a different tune, so that it might be given a fresh voice (a new perspective, shall we say☺) to a new group of disciples. I'd like to play you a little bit his version for you now.

VIDEO: Michael bleecker version

And now, in part three of the story, enters Mark Hall. Remember how, when I first started talking about his life, I mentioned that Mark grew up with the old Baptist hymns. "One Day" was one of those hymns that had been foundational in his life. And he, like Michael Bleecker, knew that those words have just as much power now as they did back when he first heard it. But the tune didn't really speak to a younger generation. The copyright of the song is shared by Mark Hall AND Michael Bleecker, so it's obvious to me that Mark must have hear Michael's

version of it before he wrote his version. There are clear similarities in the melody of the verse, but the choruses and the framework of the two versions are much different. Regardless of who wrote what, both Mark and Michael agree that this beautiful poem reminded those who first heard it, and continue to remind us one hundred years later, that Jesus lived for us. Jesus died for us. Jesus rose again for us. And Jesus is coming back again, one glorious day, for us.

VIDEO: [Casting Crowns version](#)

So Mark Hall, sitting in that chapel years ago, chose to listen to a different voice. A voice of truth. And that choice made all the difference in his life. Our last song, our #1 song, “You Are More,” is also about listening to the voice of truth.

It’s a simple story, really. The song was written by Mike Donehey, the lead singer for a relatively new band called Tenth Avenue North. The song was written in reaction to a “voice” that Mike heard while driving down the road. This is the story behind the song in Mike’s own words:

“I was driving in my car a while back, windows down, enjoying the breeze splashing on my face when I heard a line something like this come through the stereo speakers, “the choices that we make, make us who we are.” And I started chuckling to myself, thinking, “oh how the world has got it wrong. If only they knew the truth,” But lo! When I looked down at the radio dial, I was faced with the sad reality that I was in fact, listening to a local “Christian” station. I didn’t really even know what to do. Laugh? Cry? Get angry? And what made matters worse, is that when I started asking people if they’d heard the song, and what they thought of it, they would respond, “Oh yes!” Isn’t that beautiful?” And of course, my answer was far from harmonious. “NO! No it is not beautiful! It is completely undermining redemption! It’s a direct assault on the gospel! No! No! No!”

And so I kept digging. I kept asking. I kept inquiring.

Come to find out, that song is not the beginning or the end of this ideology. There is a myriad of songs, books, movies, sermons, and devotionals all bearing the name “Christian” that are teaching this misleading ideal. I just couldn’t believe it. I mean, I know the church has her

problems. After all, she's filled with sinners, and so I'm never really that surprised by her infidelity, but I couldn't comprehend how so many people could be teaching this doctrine from prominent places of power. "Who I am is the sum of my choices?" Are you kidding me??!! Come on people!!! You can't really believe that can you? Your choices make you who you are? Really? So you chose your hair color? You chose your parents? Your taste buds? Your birthplace? Natural talents? I.Q?

I can't think of a more arrogant statement than, "I am the sum of my choices." Cause you know, the only people that are gonna say that are successful people. You're never gonna find somebody at a recovery program teaching this. People who have seen the depths of their depravity know better. And they know better than to forsake the grace of God.

But the rich and successful? Oh they can forget. Because hey, if I've made great choices than that only helps my pride out, and helps me look down on all the sinners that can't get their act together like I did. Pick yourself up. Do better for God!

Funny, because the message of the gospel is that God was better for you.

Funnier still, because you can't even live for God until you learn how to live because of God.

If you think you can do anything without him you end up sounding quite self-righteous.

Like a pharisee. Like the people that got Jesus fired up.

Now here's the deal. I get what people are trying to say. I understand the intent. They're trying to help people understand that there are consequences to their choices. And I'm not disagreeing with that. Of course our choices have ramifications. If I shoot somebody, I'm going to jail. If I drink too much alcohol, I'll get drunk. If I believe the wrong doctrines, I turn into a pompous jerk. Yes. Choices have repercussions, and they have a lot to do with where you end up.

But here's the gospel: Where you end up is not who you are.

What you do is not who you are. If you are in Christ, who you are is what has been done for you. How else do you think God can call screw ups like us a "new creation?" It's because his choices for us make us who we are. I am a child of God, and it's not because I was good enough to be one, it's because He was good enough for me to be one.

Any Batman fans out there? Do you remember the scene in Batman Begins when Batman is standing by a window and Katie Holmes is looking at him and she asks him, "Who are you?" Do you remember what he says? With that icy blue stare he looks at her, and in that absurd gravely voice he bellows, "It's not who I am, it's what I do that defines me!" So sad...and so wrong. No Batman.

To quote Jars of Clay's Dan Haseltine, "not to undermine the consequence, but you are not what to do." You're not. You are what has been done for you. At least, if you are in Christ you are. And what's truly beautiful about this is that it levels the playing field. The successful and the pure are humbled out of their pride, because they realize that it is Christ who has made them right before God, not their choices. And it strengthens the failures and the weak, because no matter how many bad choices they've made, no matter how many times they go back to their vices, they can believe the gospel and get back up. The promiscuous girl can say, "my identity is not where I've been." The addict can put down his needle and say, "druggie is not my name. I am a child of God who happens to relapse." In other words, we learn to live out of a new reality...out of our new name. I don't need to become holy. I need to act like who I am...I am a child of God in spite of myself. I'm not struggling to be free, I am free to struggle. Or to quote John Paul II, "We are not made from the sum of our weakness...we are the sum of the Father's love for us."

And so, having said all that, I want to share [the song] that I wrote in response. It's called "You are More," and I hope you like it. But more than that, I pray you believe it.

VIDEO: [Tenth Ave. North](#)

Mark: The Scripture is Revelation 4 where it talks about the 24 elders around the throne, putting their crowns before Him. For me, as a believer, if you're not careful, little things will rise up in your life and become important. And it will create distance between you and God; and these little kingdoms don't have to be bad things, sometimes they can be good things. They just take our focus away, and we have to let these kingdoms fall and fall before Him and make sure that we are setting apart Christ as Lord in our lives.

“The Sacrifice of Praise: Stories Behind the Greatest Praise and Worship Songs of All Time” by Lindsay Terry

http://www.amazon.com/Sacrifice-Praise-Stories-Greatest-Worship/dp/0785297952/ref=sr_1_14?ie=UTF8&qid=1313403384&sr=8-14