

Grammy Winner Shares How God Set Him Free of Sexual Abuse

Abuse and abandonment aren't words you want to associate with childhood, but for Alex Campos, they were very much a part of growing up. Those two words also set the foundation for some of his worship songs.

At 40 years old, the singer from Bogotá, Colombia, has won three Latin Grammys for Best Spanish-language Christian Album. He was featured on Hillsong's *Global Project Español*, which won a Dove Award for Spanish Album of the Year in 2013.

This weekend, he'll take the stage at Hiram Bithorn Stadium in San Juan, Puerto Rico, to be part of the Festival de Esperanza (Festival of Hope) with Franklin Graham—an effort six years in the making.

"It's amazing to see the incredible impact of the Word of God and the music and preaching," said Campos, who was part of a Franklin Graham Festival in La Paz, Bolivia, four years ago. "We are talking about thousands of people who come to a place, who respond to an invitation [to accept Christ] and come thirsty. Every time we get an invitation [to perform at a Festival], we make room in our agenda and gladly accept because it is something that strengthens us as the church."

With no fewer than 7.6 million followers on Facebook, there's no telling how many people his music has reached. But growing up, he couldn't quite find the words, much less the strength, to praise God.

Campos was still a boy when his father left the family. Not long after that, he became a victim of sexual abuse.

He wrote about the healing process in his book, *Del Llanto a la Sonrisa* (*From Tears to Joy*), and recently talked to

the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association about it.

Healing happened, Campos said, "as I relinquished my own plans ... when I laid my [metaphorical] weapons aside, when I stopped complaining and murmuring, when I put a stop to all that and recognized ... that God is the only one who could help me, the one who can deliver me from the valley of the shadow of death. And when did I recognize it? When I began to focus and praise God.

"When you go through difficulties in your life, you do not know how to praise," he continued. "You do not have a song in the heart, let alone in your mouth. But when you toss your weapons and you come to the cross and prostrate yourself and you say to God, 'Take control, take the reins,' that's when things start to happen and you are able to overcome those difficult situations."

As a kid seeing his parents separate and coping with the family's financial struggles, he remembers his grandparents stepping in. His grandparents helped raise him and his brothers when their dad left and their mom had to work.

"One day, our grandparents told us, 'You need to come to church with us,'" he said. A couple of years later, he surrendered his heart and life to Jesus Christ.

"At the age of 12, I remember I had a very powerful encounter with the Lord during a time of praise and worship. I wondered why people sing, why people raise their hands and why they express themselves like that. And in the midst of asking myself and God all of these questions, God came into my heart in a very special, very powerful way. He filled the void created by my father's abandonment so many years before."

Two years after that, at 14, he began playing the recorder for the church's worship band. At 17, he started sharing his own songs with a focus on reaching other youth.

"I wanted to captivate those teenagers and those people in the church who did not enjoy praising God, who did it because they had to," he said.

Over the past two decades, his mission hasn't changed.

"I've realized that God gave us the ability to reach out to people who are disconnected from God, who do not go to church, or if they do go to church, they don't have a heart connection with the Lord. We have an evangelistic tool to reach people with the Word, with music. Today, although my music remains Christian and Word-based, I focus more on those people who are far from God."

The same goes for this weekend's Festival of Hope in San Juan.

"In Puerto Rico, I hope to be part of the call of hope, the call of salvation, so that on that day, many people can come to know Jesus as their only Lord and Savior," he said.

To those who attend the Festival and may long for a life change, Campos wants them to understand that it's a process, even with Jesus in your life.

People will always face difficulties, he said, but when Jesus is part of the equation, there's someone new at the wheel to guide them.

With Jesus, he said, "God has taken control of our lives, and throughout this process we need to learn, to know His power, His supernatural ways. We do this by congregating, talking with others, praying for one another and above all seeking the face of the Lord on a daily basis."

As a husband and father of two, Campos has learned more about divine love over the years, something He'll share through his music in San Juan.

He likens God's love to the love expressed by his wife despite his flaws, or the desire he has to protect his children when

they face difficulties.

“Sometimes we have to go through things and God hurts for us, He cries with us because He loves us with inexplicable love. ... He, as our heavenly Father, loves us as children who have been rescued.” {eoa}

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