

‘Ministry Time’ a High Spot in Christian Group’s Concerts

SonicFlood now prays with its fans after a band member was miraculously healed of incurable disease

When Rick Heil’s autograph is requested, the lead singer of SonicFlood instinctively includes Psalm 103:3. The verse which says, “[God] heals all your diseases,” has truly become a “life verse” for Heil.

About three years ago, he was miraculously healed from Crohn’s disease, a life-threatening intestinal disorder that is considered incurable. “God is a healer, and He healed me,” Heil told Charisma. “So I chose to share that with everyone.”

At the group’s live performances, he often shares his story of faith-healing with concertgoers, and the four other members of the Nashville, contemporary worship band have what they call “ministry time.” A Christian rock group that one newspaper said creates “music that ushers people into the presence of God,” SonicFlood invites audience members to receive a touch from God through intercession.

Two-thirds of the way through their concerts, Heil and other band members, including drummer Brett Vargason, keyboardist David Alan, bass guitarist Thomas Michael and guitarist Todd Shay, come down from the stage to pray and lay hands on people.

“We tell them, ‘If you have any need, whether it’s physical, spiritual or mental, make your way forward,’” said Heil, who attends Belmont Church, a nondenominational charismatic

congregation. "It's the pinnacle of our set; it's what we're focusing on. A lot of times the people we play for are very surprised when we get off the stage and pray with them. They're like, 'We've never seen a band do that.' So it's really fun. It's my favorite time of the concert."

Vargason calls the ministry "life-changing."

"To be able to be used by the Lord is just a privilege," said Vargason, who along with Michael and Shay attend Grace Presbyterian Church. "It really puts what we do in perspective. I play the drums, but ultimately being in a band and all that really is not that big a deal. It's who we are in Christ that is the big deal. When we go out and pray for people, it shocks us back into that truth."

Shay enjoys the ministry time because "it's not a typical altar call."

"We don't count [conversion] numbers and try to categorize all the people into groups," Shay says. "It's just a time where we go to God as beggars saying, 'We need You here in this guy's life because he doesn't know You,' or, 'We need You in this girl's life because she's dying of cancer.' It's not about bragging on numbers. It's just a plea to God for these people."

Added bassist Michael: "I may be up there worrying about my groove, but there may be someone struggling with getting a divorce or a life-threatening sickness."

The band members, who all are in their 30s, have received testimonies from people they have ministered to, including a

young teen who was healed miraculously after Jason Ingram, a Christian artist who toured with SonicFlood last year, prayed for her.

“She had a tumor on her neck, and [Ingram] just went and slapped his hand down,” Heil said. “He didn’t know it was a tumor or anything. She went to the doctor the next day, but there wasn’t anything there. She called her mom saying, ‘I know the Lord has taken it away.’ It was God’s sovereignty to heal and bless that girl with health.”

Eric Tiansay