

Phil Wickham: Back to the Basics

Phil Wickham's newest album, *Heaven and Earth*, is a  reminder to the church of the simple blessings, promises and rewards of God. It's also the fruit of a personal journal that had the singer searching Scripture for the last year and a half to gain a deeper understanding of believers' future in heaven.

"I've always been excited about going to heaven, but the Lord is lighting a fire or fanning a flame inside me," Wickham told *The Buzz*. "The church gets a skewed version of heaven in their minds. We envision it as clouds and God with a big beard, and I think we forget that God promises life everlasting and things that we can't ever dream or start imagining. We're going to be who we were always created to be, we're going to be with who we were always created to be with, everything will be complete again. ... The more I think about it, the more I think of how that relates to what Jesus did for us on the cross."

Wickham's study created a hunger in him to know Jesus more and to truly treasure what will last for eternity. He hopes this album can remind believers not only of God's promises, but of all the reasons we can live for Him today.

"I need to be reminded on a daily basis that Jesus, the Son of God, in all His perfection, died on the cross for my sin," he says. "Because of that I can know forgiveness and peace—and not just in this life. God makes me a citizen of kingdom and enlists me in His army."

Wickham believes that remembering the simple things can turn hearts to worship. Even while worshiping, he says, our minds can often be in the wrong place or we're just singing words

because that's what you do when you go to church. "But when the heart is set on the things above and reminded about what the goodness of God is ... when that's coupled with faith, there is no way we cannot be compelled to worship."

Though Wickham encourages the church, he doesn't want to exclude the unchurched. "I hope that the universal need for relationship with God and what heaven means in light of that ... would connect with more than the church, but also hopefully light a fire in people that believe it but forget it."

One track that will specifically reach unbelievers is "Hold On," which was intentionally written without a mention of God or Jesus. The song reaches out to hurting people, those who have built their lives on things that are shakable—which, as Wickham explains, is everything except God.

"[The song] is calling out to those and saying there's hope, there's a love. The chorus is: 'Love is going to make it right / Just hold on / There's mercy in the morning light / When you're weak, love is strong / Hold on.'"

By placing the song toward the beginning of the album, Wickham hopes that as people continue to listen they will realize he is singing about the love of Jesus Christ and what's available through Him.

Wickham keeps Matthew 6:19-20 forefront in his mind: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal." Wickham believes Jesus is saying that we need to make our lives about doing what matters for eternity, "not just because that's what is good to do, but because that's where the joy is found."

We don't have to go to another country or send money to people in need, Wickham says; we just need to start loving people and being faithful to God. "I'm just excited to remind people not

only about the simple things that we need to remember and do, but also about the exciting thought that we will see God again face to face.”

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