

Phillips, Craig and Dean: 'Pastors Who Sing'

When you hear the names "Phillips, Craig and Dean," chances are, you think about music. "Revelation Song" may come to mind, or maybe the trio's latest hit, "Great, Great God"—currently the top song on Billboard's Christian Soft AC chart.

But before Randy Phillips, Shawn Craig and Dan Dean were an award-winning vocal group, they were pastors. In fact, all three men serve as senior pastors today, 22 years after *Phillips Craig and Dean* was born.

"We're pastors who sing," Randy Phillips said. "We never take our pastor's hat off."

Phillips, who leads a church in Austin, Texas, called up his friends Craig and Dean in 1991 with the idea of starting a Christian music group. Craig currently pastors a church in Dallas; Dean's church is in St. Louis.

Being pastors, husbands, fathers and musicians comes with a unique set of challenges, especially with the three men spread out over three different cities. But after two decades of navigating the ups and downs of their myriad roles, Phillips, Craig and Dean seem to have found a system that works.

From mid-September to the end of the year, the band has 13 events in 11 states. Meanwhile, their 22nd No. 1 song is playing on Christian radio across the country and around the world.

"It's been a great journey," Phillips said. "The Lord's been good to us."

Just don't try to see them in concert on a Saturday night.

They'll all be at home...getting ready for Sunday's sermon.

Breathe in Again

While many of Phillips, Craig and Dean's engagements are focused around music, the trio has a unique opportunity this September to teach and sing together in one place.

For a second year in a row, The Billy Graham Training Center at The Cove is offering a seminar with the three pastors, in conjunction with a worship set.

Sept. 12-13, Phillips, Craig and Dean will teach at the Asheville, N.C., mountain retreat before picking up their microphones for a nearly sold-out *Evening at The Cove* night of worship.

"Breathe in Again" is the name of the two-day seminar that will focus on helping believers "breathe in His goodness again."

"What we find as pastors and as singers is so many people have had the wind knocked out of them," Phillips said. "Abuse, divorce, listlessness, financial issues, loneliness, betrayal, health issues—so many things can knock the breath out of you."

Just as God breathed life into Adam, making him a living soul, Phillips, Craig and Dean hope to teach believers how to be truly alive and breathing, even when—especially when—life has left them deflated.

"How do you become inflated with His presence again, so you're not just existing, but living?" Phillips said.

Time to Get Real

The seminar is for anyone who needs to be refreshed with God's truth. In the process, the three pastors hope to teach participants to be real with other believers in their lives. They say too many Christians act like they "have it all together," and it's time to get real.

"We've made posers out of everyone," Phillips said. "You have to put on this Sunday face and then deal with your challenges privately. We've created a completely different culture where you hide your problems. But you're only as healthy as your secret sin, and you cannot be healed from what you will not acknowledge."

Phillips, Craig and Dean know that if they're going to ask others to be authentic, they have to live it out themselves.

"We're going to be giving a very raw and real presentation," Phillips said. "If people are coming to hear teachers who have done it all right, they're probably going to be somewhat disappointed, because we're on a journey."

Phillips says all three men have struggled with their marriages and their health.

Last year, Dean was diagnosed with cancer. He's now cancer-free, but the road has been long and difficult.

"We all face struggles," Phillips said. "Jesus said we will have them. But when these things come onto us, we can lean into His grace and find strength for the challenges that come to us."

Phillips says The Cove is the perfect place to talk about finding God in the midst of trouble.

"We always love coming to The Cove," Phillips said. "The setting is just so conducive to seeking the heart of God. The Cove allows you to catch your breath."

Whether it's through their teaching, their concerts or just hearing their song on the radio at the right moment, Phillips, Craig and Dean hope to be an encouragement to believers.

As "pastors who sing," God has positioned them to not only lift up the church, but to show Christians how to breathe in again.