

# Musician Learns Lessons in Patience and Faithfulness

**Q. Tell us about your musical background.**

**Ward:** I started playing music when I was pretty young, 10 years old. My dad played the guitar, and I wanted to be like my dad, so I asked him to teach me. I mainly played Bluegrass flat-pick guitar for the first few years, emulating the styles of players like Dan Crary and Tony Rice (still one of my favorite guitar players to this day). I also joined the school band in the fourth grade, playing clarinet up through junior high. Music became a regular part of my life and I loved it. I also picked up the banjo and mandolin in these early years. When I was a teenager I picked up an electric guitar for the first time and discovered a new sonic landscape to get lost in. I quickly fell in love with bands like Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, Live, Our Lady Peace, and other products of the 90s grunge and alt rock scene. I have played in rock bands over the years, the most recent being a band called Thin December, which disbanded a few years ago.

**Q. How has being the worship leader at your church shaped and challenged you as a musician?**

**Ward:** Being a worship leader has challenged me as a musician in a lot of ways. One of the biggest things for me was learning how to sing! I began as a guitar player primarily. I started playing guitar at Warehouse Christian Ministries in high school and remained an instrumental accompanist for a while. I only started singing because there was a need. I started singing in the college group, then began leading worship for a Sunday night service. The Sunday night service, called Forty2 (after Psalm 42), was where it became clear to

me that leading worship was a calling that God had placed on me. It was a gradual process that the Lord put me through to take me to where I am today. As the music director, I am continually challenged in new ways; working with other singers on their harmony or solo parts, working with musicians on their parts, song arrangements and instrumentation for the services. I am still learning a lot.

**Q. Can you share the background story of how your debut CD *Home* came about?**

**Ward:** When I came on staff at WCM as the music director 3-plus years ago, we decided to record a worship album. The idea was to record a worship record that was a representation of what I do as a worship leader on a regular basis at WCM. It would contain songs that I introduced to the congregation, songs we sing on a regular basis, a couple of hymns, and a few original tracks as well. The record is essentially the culmination of years of leading worship at WCM.

**Q. You wrote or co-wrote *Here Before You*, *In Your Hands*, and *Home*. What messages did you hope to convey through these songs and the CD as a whole?**

**Ward:** The original songs on the album were written a few years prior to recording. I was leading worship on Sunday nights for a service that really allowed us to dig deep musically. Also, we could be loud! We formed a rock worship band for that service and it was from this band that the songs emerged. All of them emphasize a very intimate worship experience with God, which was the guiding idea behind the Sunday night service. Psalm 42:1,2 says "As a deer pants for flowing streams, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" This deep yearning for God shaped my vision of worship and led us

to write these songs.

*Here Before You* is about a moment in time, broken before God, and wanting absolutely nothing else. *In Your Hands* is much the same, though a bit more expressive. The lyrics describe doubts, fears, and our innermost thoughts bare before the Lord. I love these kinds of songs because they are real and honest to me. I love the Psalms for this reason as well. So many of the Psalms are pure emotion, poured out before God. Psalm 55:4,5 says "my heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me." The emotion is so raw and honest. Then later, "But I call to God, and the Lord will save me." *Home* is another simple worship song expressing the idea of coming home to the Lord, of recognizing a time spent apart, or even just a slight drifting apart, and then suddenly coming back and realizing the overwhelming presence of God in your heart and soul. The story of the prodigal son has always been one of my favorites.

**Q. All artists imagine how their work will turn out. What did you envision for your first CD and how is it different from what was produced?**

**Ward:** The record took me a long time to make. I am a bit of a perfectionist and a bit obsessive so I spent a long time experimenting with parts trying to get everything to sound right. As a result, it sounded pretty much how I imagined. I am happy with it, although next time I go into the studio it will be different. I will probably make something that is simpler instrumentally and sonically, a bit more raw, and hopefully a lot faster!

**Q. What did you learn about yourself and about God through this musical project?**

**Ward:** I learned that my guitar playing had declined! As the worship leader, I have spent a lot of time singing and playing rhythm guitar, which does not allow for a lot of guitar playing. I knew I wanted to record all the guitars on the record and at some point during the process I realized that I needed to write all the guitar parts first, and practice them. It actually felt pretty good to do a bit of pure guitar playing. On a more serious note, I also learned more about the faithfulness of God. I have always been a very impatient person and being able to record these songs, some of which are a few years old, was a lesson to me about patience and faithfulness. God's timing is perfect.

**Q. Why is it important for you to share your faith through your musical talents?**

**Ward:** I think it is important for all of us to share our faith through whatever we do in life. We all have talents and skills. We all have social lives, people we can talk with and be examples to. Our ministries go with us wherever we are. I have been given some talent in music and so that is one of the ways I share my faith.

**Q. What is your concept of worship?**

**Ward:** This question is hard to answer in a short interview, but I will try to sum up my thoughts on it. I believe that worship is our response to all that God has done for us. I think it is something that we were all made to do and something that we all long for. We can worship God in a number of ways, but worshipping through song is the most powerful for me personally. I mentioned Psalm 42 earlier. That passage has always been at the heart of worship for me. The psalmist expresses a deep longing for communion with God that has always resonated with me. "Deep cries out to deep, in the roar

of your waterfalls, all your waves and breakers have swept over me..." Music is like an emotional language unto itself, one that can carry these sentiments, and that is why I love it.

**Q. What project(s) are you currently working on?**

**Ward:** Right now I am getting ready to produce a couple of projects, not my own music. I'm excited because it's something different for me. Instead of getting hung up on the one guitar line I had to play 20 times I get to sit back, let someone else play, and look at the bigger picture of the song and the project as a whole. As far as my own music, I'm writing songs right now, but they are quite a bit different from the music on *Home*. My next musical project will probably be very stripped down, folk/roots music. As much as I love big electric guitars and rock music, these other songs are emerging and I am excited!