

Worship Leader, Songwriter and Cancer Survivor Darlene Zschech Declares, 'Here I Am, Send Me!'

For Darlene Zschech—speaker, author, pastor and worship leader who has written over 100 anthems sung by 30 million worshippers around the world—the concept of hope is not a concept at all. Hope has hands that serve the poor. Hope trusts even when the diagnosis seems grim. Hope says “yes,” before the question is asked. As long as there is hope, there is life. And for this mentor of a whole new generation of worship leaders, as long as there is life, there is worship.

“Worship pushes back the noise of life,” explains Darlene, who pastors Hope Unlimited Church in New South Wales, Australia, along with her husband, Mark. “In that place, we hear Him speak, we’re made more like Him, we’re satisfied in His presence, given the fruits of the Spirit. Over the years, I’ve had this sense that maybe this is really about the Great Commission. Once He has our hearts, then He has our lives. ... Worship has more to do with what comes from our lives, not just our mouths.”

And much has come from this worship-filled life. Bringing hope and the love of Christ to the world has long been the calling for Darlene and Mark through their work within the Church and through relief agencies such as Hope:Global, an organization they founded to serve the poorest of the poor. The Zschechs believe that if our worship is to fulfill God’s purpose, we must be willing to say, “Here I am, send me.”

It is the answer and response that drives the entire Hope Unlimited congregation. And it is the overarching message for

Darlene's latest recording, *Here I Am Send Me*, a live album and her first project following a life changing cancer diagnosis in 2014.

"The first mention of worship in the Bible is in Genesis 22," Darlene says of the impetus behind the title track. "God calls Abraham, and Abraham says, 'Yes Lord,' which is translated in Hebrew as *hineni*, meaning 'Whatever it is you're asking, my answer is yes.' Even before the ask, before anything, my answer is yes."

It's a scary proposition, this unreserved yes. But having received the power of the Holy Spirit, His healing and grace, there is no other response for this mother, grandmother and spiritual mother to countless others.

Here I Am Send Me begins appropriately with a full-on declaration of the greatness of God, written with Martin Smith (Delirious?), in response to the most challenging season of her life: *You are great/Greater than the world has ever seen/Higher than the heavens over me.*

"When I was at my sickest, Martin flew over from England to sit with us, sing songs over our church, and walk and talk with me and my husband, all the while speaking courage into us," Darlene says, her voice full of emotion recalling the dark days after her diagnosis of breast cancer that is now in remission. "It's week one of treatment, and you think you're going to die, and Martin said, 'Darls, I know you're going to want to write songs about this season. What do you want to say?' And I said, 'I want to say 'He is great!' That's where it started. ... In the midst of the fire, it doesn't change who our God is."

From there, she says, the album goes on a journey, always declaring God's greatness, love and call, and our response with 10 more songs penned by Darlene, members of her church and guest writers including Paul Baloche and Jenn Johnson

(Bethel).

"You Will Be Praised," written with Baloché and Johnson on Darlene's first return to America after cancer treatment, unabashedly declares the power of the Holy Spirit living among us that makes fearlessness possible in every season and circumstance of life. It is, in many ways, Darlene's testimony.

*Though I walk through darkest valleys / There's no fear for
You are with me / You have held me through the fire / Jesus
You are here with me. ... Through every storm You will remain /
In death and in life I'll not be afraid / In joy or in pain
You will be praised.*

"I'm 51, and I never thought I'd be doing this at my age. There's such a freshness in me. In our culture, youth is almost worshipped. But there's something to be said when you've watched the faithfulness of God again and again and again. There's something to be said of the trust that grows over time."

"Beloved" a modern hymn of surrender co-written by Darlene with Leeland Mooring and Casey Moore, takes its cues from "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" penned by 17th-century hymn writer Isaac Watts. "Leeland had put it on his album, and it was beautiful. I wanted to record it but strip it back," says Darlene who recalls a sweet moment during the recording where the church began singing spontaneously as the team ended the song. "You hear the people start to respond. ... It's a really holy moment."

The album is full of such moments. But perhaps more than any of the aforementioned songs, "Here I Am Send Me" and "Go" encapsulate the heart and passion of this worship pioneer and her unequivocal yes.

*Here I am send me / Send me to the nations / Send me to my
neighbors / Send me with Your love.*

“Go,” a song of commissioning closes the album. “It can’t be any straighter,” Darlene says with a laugh. “In Ephesians, we get that sense of being commissioned into the world to share His love. I write about tribes, lands and neighborhoods. ... When you get in His presence, when you allow Him into the tough places, you rise knowing you must go and share it. His love is what is missing in the world.”

Here we come now Your church / We will go to all the world / Every tribe every land / As Your feet and loving hands / To the rich to the poor / Grace is flowing for us all / Nothing missing nothing broken / He makes all things new / From the ash from the fire / There is hope there is new life. ... Tell the world lift Him high.

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