

# *Christian Community Magazine*

*America's Christian  
Lifestyle Magazine*

**Getting to  
Know  
Filmmaker  
Tina Batten**

**Authors on the  
Rise:  
Nikki Alexander  
'What The Devil  
Meant for Bad,  
God Used for  
My Good'**

*Christian Community Magazine*

*November 2016*



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one fight.

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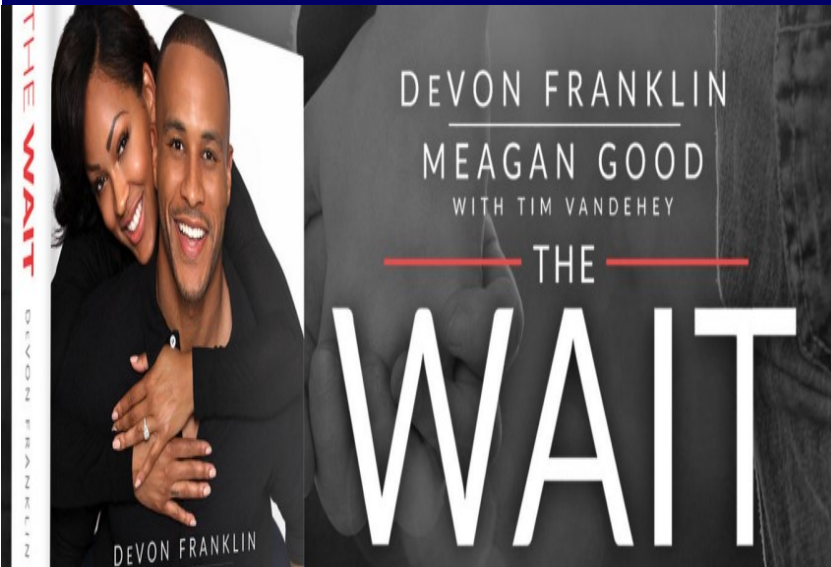
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## Contents

Authors.....	Pg. 4
Al Roker.....	Pg. 5
Cover Story.....	Pg. 7
CCM in the News.....	Pg. 13
Making an Impact.....	Pg 17



## Authors & Artists Magazine

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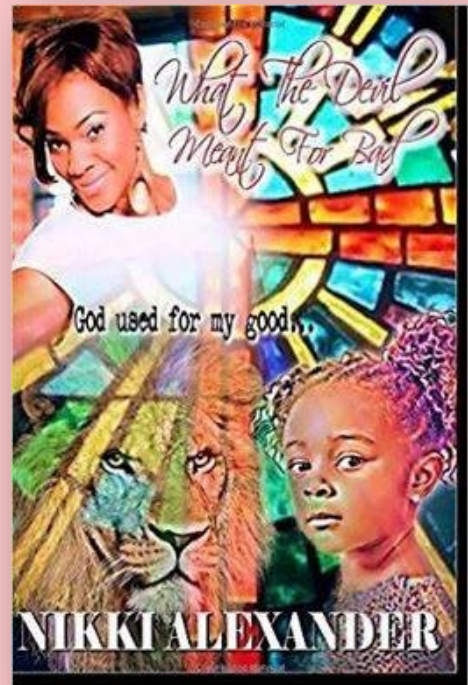
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# ***What the Devil Meant for Bad God Used For My Good***



**NIKKI ALEXANDER**

## ***Authors on the Rise***

*What The Devil Meant for Bad, God Used for my Good*

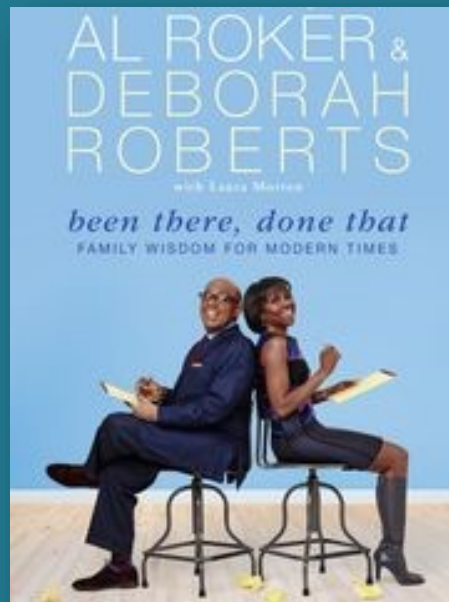


Nikki Alexander, spares no emotional expense in her first book release, *What The Devil Meant for Bad, God Used for My Good*. Because she was able to step out of the dark and into God's Light, she's on a mission to share her breath-taking moments of her personal path of pain, faith, and triumph in order to help others.

Growing up in the inner city, Nikki became a graduate of Lincoln High School in the southern sector of Dallas. In the telecommunications industry for 14 years, Nikki is currently a Finance Specialist at a leading US mobility company.

Her gruesome life experiences and triumphs in her tell-all autobiography define the trials and tribulations that she endured and overcame. Her source of motivation and encouragement to other survivors of mental, physical, and emotional abuse is very transparent.

Visit Nikki Alexander at: [www.NikkiAlex.net](http://www.NikkiAlex.net)



## Al Roker & Deborah Roberts write about their marriage

NEW YORK – She’s a news correspondent for ABC’s *20/20* and *Good Morning America*. He hangs out the weather shingle for NBC’s *Today* show.

She describes herself as a “bit of a control freak.” He’s more laid back. She suffers from “Mom guilt.” As a parent, he’s “generally fairly laissez faire but somewhat old school.”

Deborah Roberts and Al Roker may have different styles – she is chatty and analytical, he likes to go for the pithy zinger – but they’ve just celebrated 20 years of marriage. And now they’re sharing what they’ve learned along the way in their new book, *Been There, Done That: Family Wisdom for Modern Times* (New American Library).

The couple volley back and forth good-naturedly, a la Hepburn and Tracy, joking about whether they’ve read the chapters the other wrote (they alternate voices in the book). Friends who’ve witnessed their “spirited debates” suggested they either write it all down or “have a reality show,” but “we’re not going to do that,” Roberts says.



# Communication...





So in the anecdote-filled *Been There*, they talk about growing up in large families with strong parents (Roberts went to a segregated school in Georgia until the fourth grade; Roker is from Queens, N.Y.); their careers and raising their kids. And they discuss the help they've received over the years from couples' therapy.

"It should be required for every couple," says Roberts, 55. "If nothing else, it's like having a referee or an impartial kind of judge," says Roker, 61. And they believe that communication – "talk, talk, and more talk," says Roberts, advice from his mother – is key to a happy marriage. "Especially when Deborah talks and tells me how I should feel," Roker quips. "It's so much easier. I go, 'Yes, absolutely.'"

Roberts says they first started seeing a counselor "because we were combining a family." Roker has a daughter, Courtney, 28, from his first marriage (she's part of the *Today* show's food team). Roker and Roberts are parents to Leila, 17, an aspiring singer and 11th grader, and Nick, 13. They write about Nick's learning disabilities, but also what a hard worker he is (he has a black belt in tae kwon do).

"One of the things that's really wonderful about him," says Roker, "is in a sense you kind of learn about yourself through him. You learn about patience, you learn about love, you learn about acceptance."



"And determination," says Roberts.

Like all modern parents, they deal with issues such as helicopter parenting (they try not to practice it) and overreliance on technology (gadgets are not allowed at the dinner table).

As a couple, "we've made some big mistakes, we've made some big discoveries," Roberts says. They might have "high-profile television lives," but she thinks anyone

can relate to their book. "If we just offer a little bit of inspiration and a little bit of fun, I think we've done what we wanted to do."

Roker pipes up: "It's a good bathroom book."

Roberts: "Don't say that, I hate that."



## Filmmaker Tina Batten



*This month Tina Batten sat down with us to discuss her career as a playwright, filmmaker, actress and more!*

**When was the first time you discovered your love of theater?**

Honestly, I believe I've always loved theater, movies and just about anything creative and performing arts. I come from a performing arts family. Just about everyone has some sort of creative talent. My mother was a dancer, her mother was a dancer in Puerto Rico, I used to be a dancer, my son teaches hip hop now and so on. One of my fondest memories is when I was very young (perhaps four years old) I recall sitting on the floor at the local dance studio in Philadelphia, surrounded by mirrors, watching my mom's dance class rehearse. Till this day, I recall the song and some of the steps to her jazz routine. I find it amazing how young you can be to still be able to recall these very personal fragmented memories. Theater and Creative performing arts have always provided an outlet for me to express myself in the most organic and purest way possible.

**What drives you to write the films and plays you've written?**

I must give credit to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I am truly guided and prompted to write the type of stories I write by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Most definitely without a doubt, I can say this is where my drive to write stage plays and now films come from.

I love to use the analogy of a pregnant woman. When I'm pregnant with this unbelievable drive and desire to write these fascinating stories, it starts in my belly from conception. There are times when I feel overwhelming excitement; I feel the movement in my tummy. Sometimes I can't sleep because instead of sleeping I should be up writing dialogue to the voices in my head. (Laughing) There are times when I'm so excited about the unknown or what's to come that I start thoroughly cleaning the house. Like that pregnant woman who knows she is about to deliver that baby. She knows once that baby comes, there won't be much time allowed in the schedule to clean the house like that again for a while. This is so true, that's why I love using this analogy to explain what drives me to write.

For me, inspiration comes from dreams, everyday life, personal experiences and even some "what if" possibilities.

**What is the story behind 'Walking in the Spirit'?**

This film is so special to me. Not only was it my first film project, but I dedicated it to my son who I lost in April 2012 (after Trevon Martin). Because of the Right to Carry law in that state; a civilian decided to take the law in his own hands and prematurely ended the life of my baby boy.







**(Continued)** 2012 was quite the year for me to say the least. I wasn't sure if I was going to move forward with the project or not. Everything came to a sudden halt and remained quiet for a little while. Then, in July of that year, after much prayer and tears, I felt the need to continue with my work on the project. I worked and cried, cried and work. It was the toughest time in my life; not only for me, but for my family. I still work and cry till this day.

Moving forward, I like to say *Walking in the Spirit* is a short film with a big message. The reason being is that every viewer after watching this film, tend to leave with obtaining something a little different from the film.

This project originally started out as a one-act stage play entitled 'Walking After the Spirit.' It was late 2011 that I started working with a talented writer also from New York (Kenneth Burgess) who was affiliated with the production company (EverFilms Production but have since merged to L.A. Film Group) and we developed the script adaptation on this project. I continue to travel with this project as well as with the others. You can always find my films and stage productions available for purchase on my website: [www.SisterBatten.com](http://www.SisterBatten.com), makes for a great gift all year long. To experience live Film screening and Q&A conducted after screenings are extremely powerful to say the least.

In every decision one makes in life there will always be some sort of consequence either good or bad. This film takes you on an emotional journey where one of these scenarios is actually played out right before the viewers eyes. The difference is that in real life, there are no do-overs. You don't get the chance to take back yesterday. When you walk in the spirit and are true to yourself, you are covered by the LORD.



## Tell us about your process of writing a script and shooting a film.

Once I'm pregnant with the desire to write, I remove all clutter from my life, from my mind, so I'm able to flow with creative thoughts. I enter this quiet place of meditation so I can 'hear.' Then, I write. I become consumed with the story. I will live, eat, drink and sleep the storyline of the script. This process can take several weeks of writing, reworking many drafts of the script until it's what I believe to be complete. I visualize every step of the way during this process. I see the story played out visually in my mind. I literally feel everything the characters are experiencing. The highs and lows of life are all played out in my mind. It can become extremely emotionally draining and exhausting at times. But at the end, the product translates all that roller coaster like emotions from my mind, to script then straight into the seat of the viewer.

Once I feel I have the best possible version of the script finalized, I then contact the production team hired to shoot the film project. I'm officially in the preproduction stage process of filmmaking that involves carefully planned steps of visualization of film. From storyboarding, to developing budget, seek ideal film location; create production schedule, casting, rehearsals and the more leading up to the actual day of shooting film. Then after that process is complete, post-production here we come which involves working with film editor, edit sound and music, graphic visual effects are then added digitally ending with mixing everything to lock in final cut of film. While all of that is going on, I'll be involved with graphic design of artwork for film, posters, DVD cover, etc. What seems as the last steps to some means the beginning of the journey to me with distribution, marketing and promotions of film including press releases and interviews.

It is quite the task to say the least. It takes a village. God hired me and I sure do love my job!





# JONATHAN CAIN

WHAT GOD WANTS TO HEAR



***Look, let's face it, life is messy and unpredictable. Most of us are doing the best we can to make it through each and every day.***

***- Tina Batten***

What do you hope your audience will take away from these projects?

My motto is: to bring messages of hope, encouragement, and inspiration from the street (that's where I'm from), to the stage (that's where the projects are birthed), and now to film!

The Lord has me writing stories about the here and now. Dealing with subject matters that may not be popular or appropriate to discuss from the Sunday morning pulpit setting, I consider the stage and screen as my pulpit to address life issues.

It is my desire that audiences around the world are inspired after watching either a stage play or film. I hope to promote conversation about what was just viewed on the stage or screen. I want the audience to believe that there is hope! Especially what everything that is going on in the world today, it may seem hopeless right now. But no matter what the current life situation looks like right now, do hold on for a brighter day and do believe that trouble don't last always!

Look, let's face it, life is messy and unpredictable. Most of us are doing the best we can to make it through each and every day. But if you can dream of a better day, you will then start to believe in a better day, you will receive that better day.

HOPE and Inspiration can give you the strength to overcome the pitfalls of life. So you be encouraged, pray, remain hopeful and believe for a brighter better day! Believe and you will Receive!

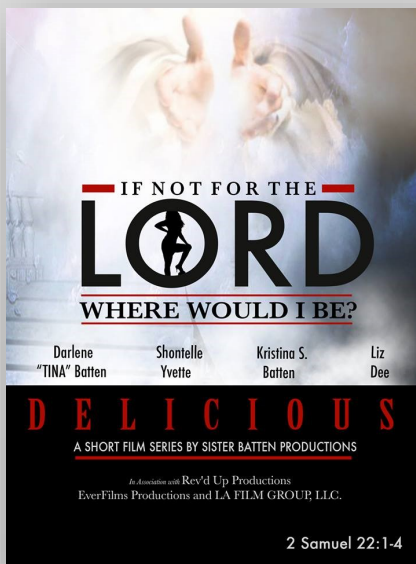


**Y**ou've been very involved in the community. Tell us how this has influenced your writing.

Life and my faith inspire my writing. Friends, family and loved ones encourage me to write. My work in the community influences me to be the best "me" I can be. In return, influencing me to be the best writer I can be. In doing so, it both stretches and challenges me to continually come up with new material to share within the community and with my audience, and those who constantly support my efforts. I love reaching out to the community with new projects, screenings, and speaking engagements.







**Y**our film "If Not For The Lord" is a special story. Tell us about this project.

Delicious episode is the first of four episodes that will be included in the film series entitled: 'If Not for The Lord, Where Would I Be?' It was written from a place of love and concern for the younger generations. I wrote and directed this film to give inspiration to those forgotten dreams with the message in mind that it's never too late to make a change in your life no matter what the age. For those readers who haven't seen or purchased the film yet, here is the synopsis:

*Deelia Williamson better known to the girls at the club as Delicious is a frustrated forty-year-old exotic dancer with a Christian background and upbringing. Far from her humble beginnings, her life has taken her on the journey filled with fast money, danger, manipulation and false promises. It will take strength for Delicious to walk away from her current employment needs and seek guidance from the LORD to SAVE her SOUL!*

I wrote the film from a "could have been me prospective." As a dancer living in New York, having the body, dance skill and just a beautiful look, if I would have answered, "yes" when in reality I answered, "no" there was a great possibility this film would have been written as a documentary as opposed to a fiction story. Delicious and I could have had similar stories today.

Taking that time to reflect on ones' life is crucial to continued growth, reaching those desired accolades and taking the dust off hidden dreams that lay dormant because of life's circumstances. In reflection, it is my hope that viewers will realize they don't have to stay chained to their past, past mistakes and to embrace the possibilities of the future.

You have produced very professional films. How have you recruited actors for your projects?

Thank you so much for the compliment. I work so hard on each project. I must say it truly takes a village of gifted and talented people who are extremely good at what they do. Can't take the credit alone; I'm so honored to work with this talented bunch on each film and stage production.

Normally open cast calls, word of mouth, friends of friends who fit the character break out sheet are ways I cast talent for projects. Honestly, I'm always looking for people because you just never know when the LORD will give me something. Sometimes, I will write specifically for that person, too. You never know. Many times, I have worked with people who have a desire to become actors but did not have any or just a little bit of acting experience. By the end of the production viewers believe those less experienced actors were seasoned actors the way they committed to the roles in which they portrayed. I call them my babies. Those babies have gone on to do some great work in ministry. It's such a joy! The Lord has gifted me with the ability to reach down deep, get actors to open and help guide them to breathe life into the characters I write.





***You tour your plays and films to schools, churches and organizations. How does this process work?***

Honestly, whenever there is an open door, I'm willing to walk through it ;) Myself and my team try hard to reach out to all types of organizations to see if what I do will fit in with their upcoming events. Because the films are shorts, (right now), easy enough to fit into a wide variety of events such as: conferences, bible studies, crime awareness group study, movie night for the community, concerts, and so on and so forth just to name a few. I enjoy surprising people and including say for instance my film project as a unique way to demonstrate worldly issues in a very interesting visual arts type of way. It promotes conversation and dialogue. Why not try something different. People like to experience different things instead of the same status quo. You know. I say, contact me and my team and let's talk.

***You also produce other film projects and videos.***

***What is the process for a prospective client?***

I'm always interested in collaborations. Prospective clients should first have a good idea of what they want to do and have a budget in place. That helps move things forward quickly. Then send inquiry through my website and provide information regarding project. Once inquiry is received by me, I will follow up with prospective client and we can fill out project budget questionnaire together for best understanding on how we can be a mutual benefit to each other. Scheduling is so important because my schedule will most of the time be planned normally throughout the following year. Timing is everything. Again, I say, let's talk about it.



***How would our audience connect with you?***

I'm very easy to find. One can find me via social network (FB, Twitter, YouTube Channel) or website [www.SisterBatten.com](http://www.SisterBatten.com). But the best way to connect with Sister Batten is if I'm in your city and you get the chance to attend a Sister Batten Production, do try to drop on by. I always try to get around and meet and greet all who attend my events. I'm a hands-on type of girl. I'm also a hugger. (smiling) Many of my stage and film projects are online for sale as well you will find on my website. Proceeds go towards making the next film project. I love connecting with people.



# CCM

## *In The News*

### The Pastors, Preachers And



Out for a walk, I am trying to clear my head, the news about killing of Black citizens by the police tearing at my heart. I pass signs in neighbors' lawns raising a silent, and it seems to me, mute protest: "Falcon Heights: The Nation Is Watching. #justice4philando #wecandobetter." Rage fills my mind as I think: the nation is watching it happen again. Terence Crutcher in Tulsa. Keith Scott in Charlotte. Tyre King in Columbus. We are not doing better.

Back at home, I flip on some music. Telefone, a brilliant hip hop album by the 25-year-old Chicago artist Noname, starts to play. Sinking into a chair, I listen as she raps on Casket Pretty, "All of my niggas is casket pretty/Ain't no one safe in this happy city/I hope you make it home/I hope to God that my tele' don't ring." [READ MORE](#)

### Evangelical Pastor Explains What He Sees As The Root Of



*Evangelical pastor Carl Lentz* is taking white Americans to task for getting "defensive" when it comes to addressing racism.

In a recent conversation with Oprah Winfrey on SuperSoul Sunday, the television star asked Lentz what he sees as the "root of racism."

The pastor responded, simply: "Ignorance."

"Ignorance is a lack of information, which creates insecurity; insecurity creates defensiveness, and defensiveness creates attack," Lentz, the lead pastor of Hillsong Church NYC, told Oprah. "It frustrates me that people want to act like this isn't a conversation. White people can be so defensive about this subject."

Less than 15 percent of white Americans say they "strongly support" the Black Lives Matter movement, according to a Pew Research Center survey conducted earlier this year. That's just under the percentage of those who say they "strongly oppose" it. [READ MORE](#)

Joel Edgerton  
as Richard Loving

Ruth Negga  
as Mildred Loving

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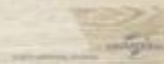
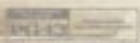
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# Making an Impact

## Fred Hammond Reveals His Inspiration for 52-City 'Festival of Praise' Gospel Music Tour



*"When Beyoncé came to town for \$200 a ticket minimum, no one had to hear her say, 'hey everybody, I want you to come to my concert.' They just said she's coming to town and people went and got their tickets."*

Gospel musicians aren't selling out arenas in the same way acts like Beyoncé would, but that isn't stopping Fred Hammond from doing all he can to try.

On the heels of releasing his latest album, *Worship Journal Live*, the veteran gospel music singer-songwriter and producer has rounded up some of the biggest voices in the industry for the third installment of his Festival of Praise tour. On the tour currently sweeping the nation, Karen Clark Sheard, Regina Belle and new face Casey J have joined Hammond and familiar faces Hezekiah Walker and Israel Houghton to spread the message of God through song.

"It's a great cast to work with. Last year we had a great time, the year before that Donnie McClurkin and I had a great time," said Hammond. "But each year we keep getting blessed with great people to work with. I love it, it's just a good eclectic mix and understands what it takes."

While audiences watching the powerhouse musicians worship God together on stage might believe the performances came together effortlessly, Hammond told us that forming a gospel tour takes a great deal of faith.

"Gospel music has taken a turn and not in the flourishing direction. It's taken a turn kind of headed toward a drought," he told CCM. "When you put a 52 city tour together, you have some moments where promoters are a little discouraged from doing things with gospel music because you can't get the sales. It makes sense on paper, you think you can get it done, and then you don't get support from the audience or from the buying public."

These types of difficulties have resulted in Hammond and his team having to make tough decisions about which cities to keep on the tour and which cities might not be feasible to visit.

For gospel musicians like Hammond, it can be risky to rely solely on interviews with no real guarantee for audiences to support his ministry on tour.

Instead of getting discouraged by the challenges that can come with promoting his own reality show, Hammond has thought outside of the box by directing his own reality television show online. The musician could have waited until a television network saw the value in his show, "That's My Reality," but he decided to get his own equipment and direct his own program that showcases behind-the-scenes moments preparing for the Festival of Praise tour.

"It was a good marketing tool for the tour to see what's going on. I don't have time to wait for people to pick me up," he said. "Just because they say no, that doesn't mean I don't have to do it. I can buy my own equipment, I direct my own stuff, I make it funny and I put it online. This is in the age of social media. You don't have to wait on a network."

For mainstream stars like Beyoncé, promotional tactics for touring seem to be less difficult. Hammond believes one reason this happens is because the secular music industry has more audience interaction than many gospel music shows.



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"When Beyoncé came to town for \$200 a ticket minimum, no one had to hear her say, 'hey everybody, I want you to come to my concert.' They just said she's coming to town and people went and got their tickets," he said. "There is an art that the world captures that the Body does not capture, especially in entertainment. What the secular industry does ... the audience is as fun as what you see on the stage."

The veteran gospel musician went on to describe how both women and men dress up in their best outfits, looking to mingle with one another at mainstream music concerts. However, many Christian music shows don't provide the same experience.

"At a gospel concert you come, you sit down, you watch what's going on stage. There's really no interaction," he said. "There's people saying, 'hey, bye and then they leave.'"

However, Hammond is looking to change that with his Festival of Praise tour.

"We try to figure out how can we create this interaction, because if not we won't have anything left," Hammond said. "You must make the stage as impactful as possible. That's what the Festival of Praise is, that's what the record is about. It's to make the stage impactful to almost shock you at times."



# Festival of Praise Tour

The powerhouse voice said he wants people to be shocked with things that are said by the musicians on tour and songs that they perform. According to the veteran who has been a huge part of the industry's evolution, the regularly scheduled program of just singing to an audience is no longer enough.

"People are tired of a song. They need more than a song," he said. "You have to bundle something together and make it exciting. Unless you figure out how to do that, you're going to miss it. Festival of Praise is doing that."

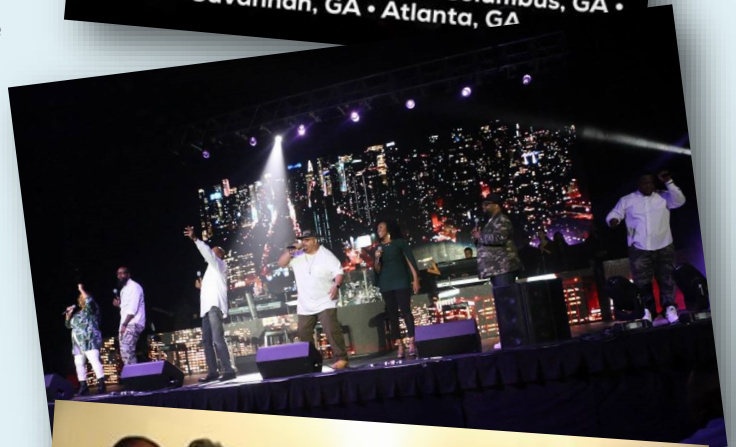
While some people believe they can get the same experience when these artists visit churches to worship throughout the year, Hammond has worked hard to elevate his tour experience.

"This is the one you want to bring the person that skipped church, the person who says, 'I don't know if I need the Lord,'" he told CP. "This is the one you want to bring people to."

For Hammond, it's important to be transparent in his messages both on and off the stage so that he can bring inspiration to those in need.

"That's what people are needing, this is our message. If we talk about how great we are, how good, what we have is to sell and buy this, where's the beauty in that," he said. "The Bible shows the good, the bad, the ugly the horrible the great, the victorious, and I think that's what we kind of have to do as well."

For more information about the Festival of Praise tour, please visit [Festival of Praise](http://FestivalofPraise.com).





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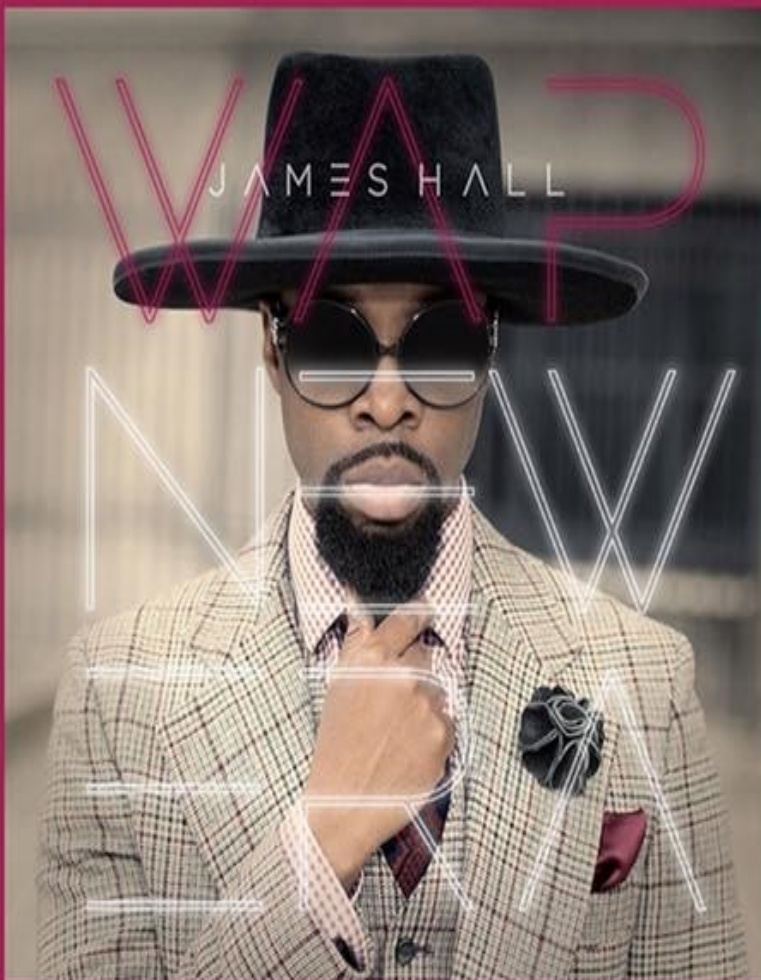


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A man in a blue suit is looking out a large window with a city skyline in the background. The text 'I Still Believe' is overlaid on the image.

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