

CASTING CROWNS

COME TO THE WELL

In the hustle and bustle of everyday life, it is often hard to stay focused on the things that are truly important, but sometimes all it takes is a song to remind us.

Over the past eight years, Atlanta based **Casting Crowns** has consistently delivered music that points believers back to what truly matters, and the band does so yet again on *Come to the Well*. Casting Crowns continues to deliver passionate, thought-provoking music, yet these songs are among the most intensely personal offerings the group has ever shared.

“As a believer, all of your life has to stem from what you draw from,” says Casting Crowns frontman and principal songwriter **Mark Hall**. “If you’re drawing from a marriage, you’re in trouble because that person wasn’t created to complete you. If you are trying to draw from a career, you’re in trouble. If you are trying to draw from your strengths, strengths come and go. All these things are really holes, not wells. Jesus is the well.”

Remembering that simple, but powerful, truth has served Hall and his bandmates (Megan Garrett, Melodee DeVevo, Hector Cervantes, Chris Huffman, Juan DeVevo and Brian Scoggin) well, particularly over the last few years as they’ve juggled faith, family, music and ministry. Even as Casting Crowns has become Christian music’s most successful act, Hall and his fellow band members have continued working at their home churches. Hall has remained a youth pastor at Eagles Landing Baptist Church as the band’s music ministry has gained global acclaim.

On its fifth studio album, Hall once again takes some of the messages he’s shared with students and parents at Eagles Landing and pours them into songs. “Teaching through the story of the woman at the well with my teenagers and my families is where it all came from,” Hall says of the inspiration for the new album.

“Your friends aren’t the well. They aren’t always going to do the right thing or be there for you. You draw from Jesus. You pour into your friends. Your scholarship can’t be the well. If your knee goes out, your well is dry. You need to draw from Jesus, pour into that. It became such a theme for everything that I have been teaching. Your walk with Jesus is where it all starts. It’s where it all comes from. That is where it started with the idea of Jesus being the well vs. other things. I knew before any other songs were written that this album had to be called ‘Come to the Well’ because that is the central theme of everything we’re going to talk about in the next two years.”

In addition to the new album, Hall has also authored a new book titled, “The Well: Why Are So Many Still Thirsty?” “It’s the story of the woman at the well and when she first meets Jesus,” Hall explains.

“Jesus says, ‘If you knew who you were talking to, you would ask me and I’d give you living water.’ She’s like ‘what kind of water is this that you’re speaking of?’ In other words, I’ve got my water that I’m talking about. You’ve got your water you’re talking about.

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We're talking about two different things, and he says to her, 'well if you drink the water I have you'll never thirst again.'"

Like Casting Crown's previous albums, *Come to the Well* is filled with songs that both challenge and encourage believers in their walk. The lead single, "**Courageous**," is showcased in the Sherwood Pictures film of the same title. The powerful lyric exhorts men to lead bold, uncompromising lives for the Lord. "About four or five years ago, I read a book called 'Raising A Modern Day Knight' by Robert Lewis and it's all about manhood," says Hall.

"When I look around I see people who are passionate about the things that don't matter and passive about the things that matter most. We're like followers instead of leaders. Somewhere along the line the warriors have become watchers. I started challenging guys in my youth group and now I've got high school guys who are discipling the middle school guys once a week because they are realizing there needs to be more to me than just weight lifting."

"Jesus, Friend of Sinners" urges open-hearted compassion while "Already There" is a potent treatise on God's faithfulness. "Spirit Wind" is one of the first songs Hall ever wrote, and has long been one of his father's favorites. The song has a bluegrass flavor unlike any thing Casting Crowns has ever done. On the other end of the musical spectrum, "My Own Worst Enemy" is an all out rocker about not falling back into past behavior.

Come to the Well was produced by Mark A. Miller, who has produced the band since they signed with his Beach Street Records imprint in 2003. "He is so awesome to work with," says Hall. "We just start putting it together and he's really easy going. There's never any pressure."

Hall, who has won two "Songwriter of the Year" GMA Dove Awards, collaborated with some old friends in writing for the new record and also made some new ones. He and Steven Curtis Chapman penned "So Far to Find You" about Mark's adopted daughter Hope.

He co-wrote "Angel" with writer/producer Bernie Herms and Matthew West. The song is a beautiful tribute to Hall's wife of 21 years, Melanie. Hall co-wrote several songs, including the title track, with Matthew West. "When I write a song, I story board it," Hall says, explaining his creative process. "I like to put the chorus over here and put things I want to say over here and over here. Matthew West has always been a good buddy of mine so I just called him up and I said 'Dude, I am in the middle of this and everything in the world is going on at Church and I have nine songs that are only half done, will you sit down with me and help me get them out?' So that was when we started writing them out. It went really well."

Hall also wrote for the first time with Tom Douglas, an award-winning country songwriter who has penned numerous hits, including Miranda Lambert's "The House That Built Me," Tim McGraw's "Grown Men Don't Cry," and Lady Antebellum's "I Run to You." Hall was working on "Just Another Birthday" and was looking to get another writer's input. Miller offered to introduce him to Douglas. "He said 'Tom lives across the street from me so why don't you get with him,'" Hall says.

"We sat down and I pulled my story boards out. To me that song is a movie I am watching. It's a vision. So I sat down with him and said here is what I am seeing: She is sixteen and this is what is going on. I wrote the story for him and said we need this and this and it was knit it together into something great. He's so good. It was really fun working with him."

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Hall enjoys the collaborative process. “I like writing with others. It kind of gets you out of your comfort zone,” he notes. “Everyone has certain patterns. It is always cool to be in the middle of an idea and ask someone ‘what about this?’ It takes you off to another place.”

Though Hall is the band’s lead vocalist and primary songwriter, he’s the first to shine a spotlight on the talents of his bandmates and urges fans to check out “Face Down,” a song on the new album penned by Hector Cervantes. Both Megan Garrett and Melodee DeVevo have beautifully expressive voices and Megan shines on “Jesus, Friend of Sinners” and in taking the lead on the poignant “Just Another Birthday.”

“This one to me stands out more than any record we’ve done as far as the things that need to be communicated,” Hall says of the messages they share through the songs on ***Come to the Well***. “Nothing teaches better than transparency. I started seeing early on that people need to see that you’re real. If they know that, ‘hey, this guy is a dork like me. He’s bumping his head on life too, and God loves him, maybe I’m okay.’”

Since its launch in 2003 the band has garnered **14 GMA Dove Awards, three GRAMMY Awards** and an **American Music Award**. In addition, the band has seen **three RIAA Platinum Albums** (*Casting Crowns, Lifesong, Altar and The Door*), **two RIAA Platinum DVDs** (*Live From Atlanta and Lifesong Live*), **two RIAA Gold Albums** (*Until the Whole World Hears, Peace on Earth*) and **two Gold DVDs** (*Altar and The Door Live and Until The Whole World Hears Live*). Casting Crowns has sold more than **8.2 million albums** to date (according to Nielsen SoundScan) and has been named *Billboard* magazine’s top-selling Christian act for the past four years.

The band recently celebrated its first **RIAA certified Gold single**, “Who Am I,” from its 2003 self-titled debut. The song, selling more than 500,000 copies, is one of only 12 Christian tracks ever to secure Gold status.

Casting Crowns has always worked its tour schedule around church responsibilities and has still managed to touch audiences around the world with its live performances. It’s 2009-2011 “Until The Whole World Hears” world tour placed the band in front nearly **1 million fans** in more than **175 cities** around the world including performances for **U. S. troops in Kuwait and Qatar**. The band also **performed twice in North Korea** in partnership with Global Resource Services.

For more information on **Casting Crowns** and ***Come To The Well***, visit www.castingcrowns.com.

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