



Discover 7 things God is waiting to do
in your life, and the key that unlocks them.
- Rusty George

when you, then God

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to do for your life*

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Q+A: Darlene Zschech, the ‘Mama Bear’ of Worship Music

The former Hillsong leader talks about the industry 20 years after ‘Shout to the Lord’
Interview by Morgan Lee

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If you’ve sung along to Hillsong Music on the radio, at a conference, or at church, you partly have Darlene Zschech to thank.

During her decade-plus tenure as the worship pastor at Hillsong Church in Sydney, she wrote, produced, and sang more than 80 worship songs on more than 20 albums released by Hillsong as the ministry continued to rise in global popularity during the 1990s and early 2000s. Her legacy helped launch Hillsong Music into the global force it’s become today, with more than 50 million people singing its songs in church every Sunday.

But the Aussie singer behind praise and worship staples like “Shout to the Lord” and “Mighty to Save” doesn’t like being called a “worship artist.”

“If I ever see it about myself I make sure it’s changed,” said Zschech, who now pastors Hope Unlimited Church in New South Wales, Australia, with her husband, Mark. “I’m not a worship artist; I’m a worshiper. Yes, I’m a musician, but that comes first.”

Her music career has been closely tied to her faith. Zschech joined a national singing television show at the age of 10, performing until she was 15—the year she became a Christian. “I love the power of music and the way it opens up people’s hearts,” she said. “It’s the most powerful communicative tool that we have and defies so many other boundaries.”

Zschech spoke with CT assistant editor Morgan Lee about leading worship in jeans, handling fame, and her new book, *Worship Changes Everything: Experiencing God’s Presence in Every Moment* (Bethany House).

How has worship music changed over the decades?

It’s become more intergenerational, gathering generations together rather than segregating them. But I’ve also seen people mistake worship for God and really treat it as a bit of a commodity. It is disturbing. Worshiping God is not just a different musical genre. It is people’s prayers and people’s fights, people’s faith and people’s journeys. It’s a very sacred space. I get quite vehement about these things. I feel like a bit of a mama bear in this space.

How do you balance being a worship artist with commercial interests?

When the success started coming, I said, “Oh Lord, this is terrible.” I walked into a space that hadn’t been negotiated by many others. It really started with “Shout to the Lord,” when people started sending me money. I thought, “What should I do here?” Early on, I had to set up my parameters for how this money would be used. I had a board to lead my ministry, and together they make financial decisions.

When it comes to worship, own it. If you want to be a rock star, go be a really good one. If you are in the realm of worship, own it and be really good. There’s a responsibility that comes in this space. If you’re doing it purely for money, don’t call it worship. Call it something else.

Money flows into your life in lots of ways, and you don’t want to find yourselves joining a worship team so you can get a deal. It’s just dangerous territory. I’ve sat on the other side of it, with countless worship leaders who have gone down that path and then it broke down very quick. I’ve had to counsel people back to sincerity. I don’t think anyone means to go there. Get great people around you who are going

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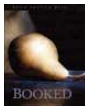
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