

Made-in-SA 'Sampson' movie not to be missed – Movie Review

By Andrea D Combs, [Africa Christian Action](#)



"...for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines." Samson 13:5

It's a story many of us grew up hearing. It's the story of a man with unusually long hair, set apart, chosen by God, and given the gift of extraordinary strength. He was a Nazirite who had to live by a different set of rules: never to drink any wine, touch a dead body, or shave his head. We all know him by the name of Samson, and his story has just been brought to the screen unlike ever before.

Pure Flix (producer of *God's Not Dead*) has just released the movie *Samson*, which gives us a unique glimpse into one of the

most legendary narratives of the Bible, found in Judges 13-16. The film is filled with exciting drama and plenty of action sequences.

The story begins with the Hebrews under the tyrannical rule of the Philistines. Samson is the champion, divinely chosen by God to deliver the people of Israel from their oppressors. Armed with herculean strength, Samson is keenly aware of his calling, and yet he is reluctant to accept the life God has for him. His brother, Caleb, continually encourages and reminds him of his purpose in an attempt to keep him focused on his life's mission. His physical proclivities do land him in trouble time and time again with the Philistines, however.

King Balek and his psychopathic son, Rallah, demand inflated tributes from the Hebrews, diminishing their personal provisions nearly to the point of starvation. Anyone who attempts to fight back is promptly put in his, or her, place.

Samson meets and falls for a Philistine woman named Taren. Determined to make her his wife, Samson decides to go against his parents' emphatic wishes to marry a Hebrew woman. Persuaded by his implicit mistress, Delilah, Rallah chooses to give Samson his blessing to marry Taren so that he may have control over his Hebrew nemesis. During the wedding feast, Samson and Rallah enter into a duel of riddles, which ultimately stirs Rallah to threaten Samson's new bride. Samson is led to kill 30 Philistines in an effort to protect his wife, but Rallah reacts by killing Taren and thus breaks Samson's heart.

The hostility between Samson and his Philistine foe only escalates from there. Rallah murders Samson's father, Monoah, just before attempting to behead Samson. Filled with rage, the resilient Hebrew breaks free and kills 1 000 Philistine soldiers with the jawbone of a donkey as his weapon. The story only gets more intense when Delilah later seduces Samson to reveal the secret to his otherworldly strength.

We all know how the real life story ends, but the movie's interpretation is pretty incredible and unlike any you would have seen before.

After having the privilege of previewing this impressive film, one cannot help but go back to Judges 13-16 to reread the story of Samson. As one might have come to expect in the portrayal of a biblical epic, creative liberties were taken in the writing of this story.

Most notably, the Samson depicted in this film is far more likeable than the one depicted in the Bible. The Samson in the Bible appears generally unrepentant and arrogant, spending much of his life ignoring God's clear call and, instead, chooses to live recklessly. He would visit brothels, shamelessly spending the night with women he didn't know. One of the only prayers recorded in the story of Samson involves him asking God to give him strength that he might have vengeance for a wrong done to himself – not to God.

The man in this film, by contrast, has moments of sincere humility where he goes to God in prayer, pleading Him for strength that he may give God the glory. He is tricked into going into a brothel but is incensed when he realises the nature of the inn he's been led to. He doesn't spend the night with prostitutes. He is also ultimately repentant and realises that he's only ever seen things through his own eyes, rather than through God's. It seems the film made their version of Samson into more of the hero we wish he could have been. This may be justified by how Samson is included in the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11:32-34.

On the note of character development, Delilah is not represented as the conniving, heartless woman we read in the book of Judges. Instead, she's seen as a woman of character and conviction. You find yourself almost liking her and believing she truly loves and cares for Samson.

A key protagonist in this film is Prince Rallah, the Philistine Commander. While his character is fictitious, he serves a very important role in personifying the oppression of the Philistines over the Hebrew people.

The Bible makes it clear that Samson's mother was barren and unable to have children, which made the prophecy and birth of Samson an absolute miracle. It seems a bit of a stretch to include a brother in the story, and yet Caleb does serve as a moral compass for Samson throughout the film. As there are very few details surrounding the story of Samson, one cannot blame the writers for wanting to fill in the gaps.

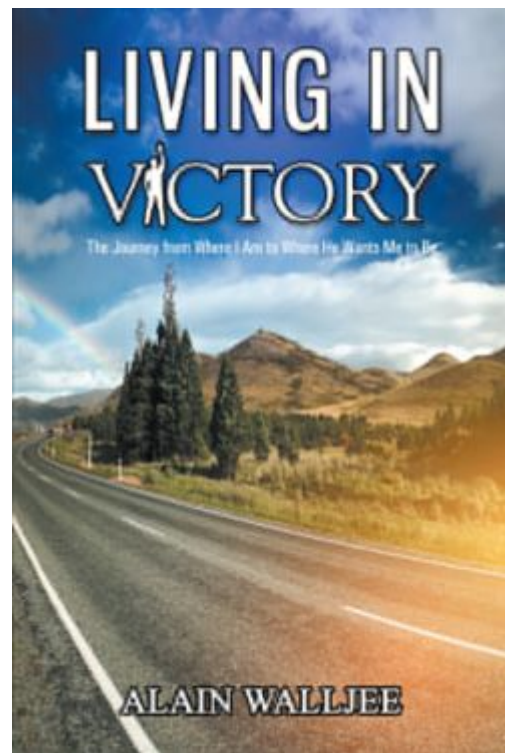
If you're debating whether or not to see the new Samson movie, let me help you make your decision. This is a film you do not want to miss. *Samson* was produced locally with a cast that includes more than 30 South African actors. Despite a few faux beards, the cast played their roles brilliantly and made us believe they were exactly who they portrayed. You'll be transported back into biblical times and feel as if you're actually there. *Samson* offers a strong Christian worldview that clearly presents the God of Israel as the "Living God." One note of warning would be toward the violence in the movie. They definitely dial it back for the big screen, but caution is advised for younger members of the family.

Samson is in cinemas country-wide from today, June 8. For more information, visit – www.samsonmovie.co.za

New book: Alain Waljee –

Living in Victory

Port Elizabeth pastor Alain Waljee strongly believes that by following biblical principles, Christians can live in victory – a theme he explores in his new book *Living in Victory*.



The book begins by looking at where many Christians currently stand – frustrated because their respective realities don't seem to be consistent with the promises of the Word of God – and goes on to show them the way to victorious living, according to a press release by the publicists.

“It is my strong conviction that a Christian's physical and material circumstances have to change as a result of the presence of God inside of us individually, and in our homes and families,” says Waljee.

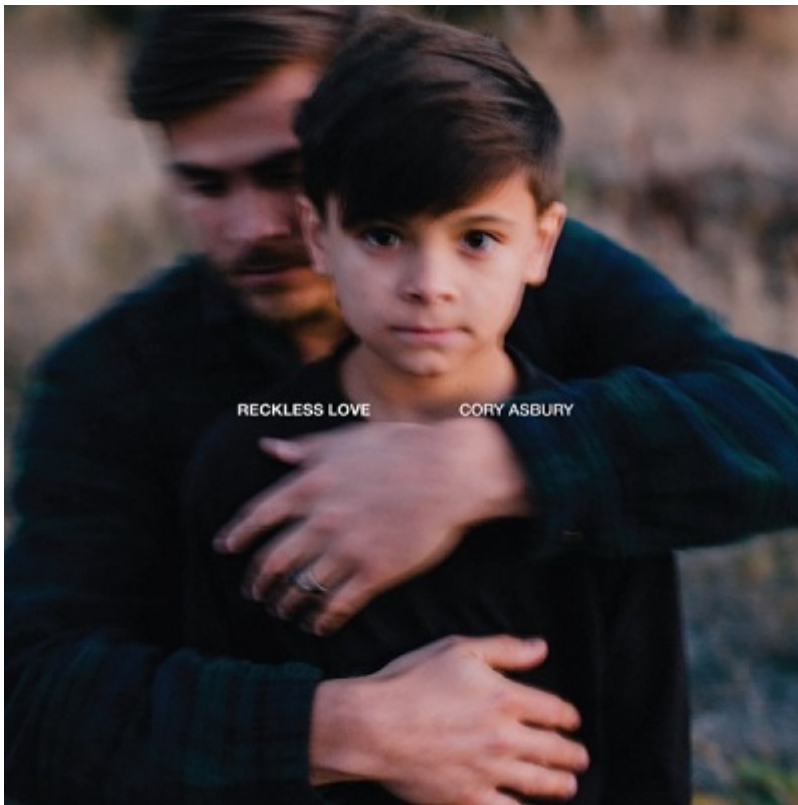
“Evidence of God's presence will be seen in how attractive our lives begin to appear. This is the true test of the testimony of the Christian.”

Living in Victory: The Journey from Where I Am to Where He Wants Me to Be doesn't promise a quick-fix solution, nor does it offer false expectation of instant change. It does present a biblical view of transformation in the life of the Christian from a place of frustration to living in victory, says the

press release.

The book can be ordered at http://sbprabooks.com/Alain_Waljee

Cory Asbury – Reckless Love: Review



Music review by Luchae Williams

American Christian singer and songwriter, Cory Asbury, released his second solo studio album in January 2018. Titled **Reckless Love**, the album is the worship leader's first full-length release with new label, Bethel Music.

The critically-acclaimed title song was released by Bethel Music in October 2017, quickly growing in popularity. The track was already a top-selling Christian song on iTunes,

prior to the album's release date, and has been featured on set lists and in churches around the world, including Darlene Zschech's HopeUC church.

The song also struck a chord with famous Christian crooner, Michael W Smith, who has recorded it for his forthcoming live worship album. *Reckless Love* debuted at No 1 on Billboard's Christian Albums chart in the United States, marking the singer's first appearance on the highly sought-after chart.

The track, ***Reckless Love***, is everything you would expect to find in a popular worship song: poetic, emotive lyric that transports the listener to a place of reverence and worship, and a catchy melody line and hook that will stick with you.

Reminiscent of Chris Tomlin's *Good Good Father*, the song paints a picture of a father yearning after his children. Some may not agree with the use of the word "reckless" in the song, but Asbury explains: "When I use the phrase, 'the reckless love of God', I'm not saying that God Himself is reckless. I am, however, saying that the way He loves, is in many regards, quite so. What I mean is this: He is utterly unconcerned with the consequences of His actions with regards to His own safety, comfort, and well-being. His love isn't crafty or slick. It's not cunning or shrewd. In fact, all things considered, it's quite childlike, and might I even suggest, sometimes downright ridiculous.

"His love bankrupted heaven for you. His love doesn't consider Himself first. His love isn't selfish or self-serving. He doesn't wonder what He'll gain or lose by putting Himself out there. He simply gives Himself away on the off-chance that one of us might look back at Him and offer ourselves in return."

From boyhood to manhood

Asbury describes the album as one that documents his journey from boyhood to manhood to child of God. Sharing on the Bethel Music Instagram page, he says: "On the journey from boyhood to

manhood there were a million cracks in the road. But somehow the grace of God swooped in with wings otherworldly and carried me safely over each one. And finally, those mighty wings set me down in a broad place. Now I'm a father to my own little boy. And somehow, in so becoming, I'm a little child again. Fully free and fully alive in my Father's eyes. The brokenness didn't break me.

"No, we rewrote the story in crimson ink. And I dance again like a little boy. Nothing between us. Innocent and free just like You always wanted. And I realize I've always been the dream of Your heart. A son."

The opening song is preceded by the soulful ***Water and Dust***, complete with an acoustic flavour and almost ethereal effects. This song showcases the singer's smooth vocal perfectly, as he sings "Gently Your voice like a calming embrace calls me from out of the noise/You whisper to me, 'Child, forget not your dreams' as we lie awake in the dark/just don't lose heart."

Most of the songs on the album carry the same sentiment. They are both gentle and powerful, creating a moment of intimacy for the listener to reflect on the beauty and majesty of God. You'll find this on songs such as ***You Won't Let Go*** and ***Endless Love***.

Passion song, ***Death Where Is Your Sting***, has a powerful Easter theme, speaking about the work of Christ on the cross. My favorite part is the bridge, where Asbury's resounding vocal declares: "No weapon formed against us will prosper/The gates of hell won't stand/Your Church will rise from glory to glory/in the name of Jesus!"

The more upbeat songs on the album include the acoustic driven ***Garments*** and the catchy ***Only Takes a Moment*** – a mid tempo praise song with a soulful edge.

Album closer, ***Endless Alleluia***, does such a great job at beautifully completing the journey. The song features Asbury's

soulfully sweet vocal and a breathtakingly beautiful soundtrack complete with strings and just the right amount of effects. The song's chorus says: "Let our voices rise/All creation cries/Singing out an endless alleluia/From this moment on/Join with Heaven's song/Singing out an endless alleluia!"

Cory Asbury fans will be pleased with such a phenomenal offering. Asbury literally wears his heart on his sleeve on this beautifully-penned album, with songs that point the listener back to God. If you're not familiar with Asbury, his worship or his musicianship, give this one a go, you will not regret it.

EP record launch for vocal star Nolene Spinks



Nolene Spinks.

17-year-old Port Elizabeth singer, Nolene Spinks, will launch her much-awaited EP record, *Glow* at Word of Faith Christian

Centre on Sunday June 3 at 7pm. Entrance to the event is free.

Glow comprises five tracks, three of them having been written by Nolene.

The winner of Fresh Factor Live 2017, Nolene's vocal ability stood out among hundreds of contestants from Port Elizabeth. The competition was judged by Bevin Samuels, 2016 South African Idols finalist, Alison Gooch, the worship leader of Burn PE and Manny Eagle, the Music and Creative Arts director of Word of Faith Christian Centre.

Among Nolene's prizes was a free recording of her EP record, which included a photo shoot and assistance with setting up her brand.

"During the making of this EP, I picked up the guitar I got when I was four years old and really used it for the first time." Spinks said.

From the age of six, Nolene knew that she wanted to be singer and had already recorded her first song. However, she would face rejection and bullying from her classmates, before changing schools, and finding the courage to take part in singing competitions both locally and abroad.

A new learner at her primary school, Nolene found that friendship groups and connections had already been made, and that she wasn't accepted. Her reading-stutter had become a source mockery, and she was being bullied by her new classmates. Soon, she lost all interest in school.

"By the end of my 4th Grade, I took part in an Eisteddfod and was singing 'Hero' by Mariah Carrey. But when I reached the high note, my voice disappeared. That was the beginning of a six month period of not being allowed to speak unless I was in speech therapy. My diagnoses: vocal nodes."

Now, three years later, Nolene has switched schools and has a

group of friends who laugh, cry, eat and pray together.

Pastor Phiri's show 'The Journey' finds new home on Moja Love channel



Pastor Enoch Phiri interviews Benjamin Dube during a past screening of 'The Journey'. (PHOTO: Youtube screenshot).

The Journey, a show in which televangelist and Restoration Ministries founder Pastor Enoch Phiri interviews South African celebrities about their walk with God and how they overcame obstacles while pursuing their goals, has found a new home on Moja Love TV.

The black-owned TV station – on DSTV channel 157 – which was launched on February 14 this year, focuses on the theme of love.

The show, which won a Crown Gospel award in the Best Tv Show category last year, informs and inspires ordinary South Africans that despite their current negative situation, they would make it if they remain true to themselves and to their creator, says Phiri's publicist in a media release.

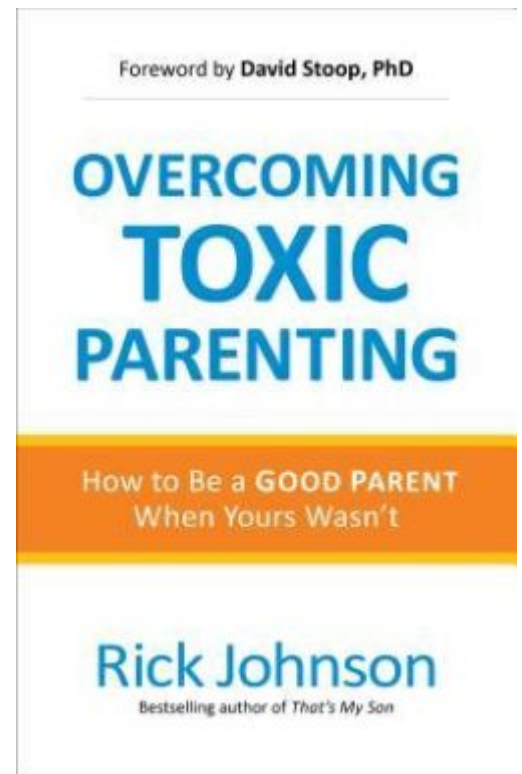
On the show, Phiri speaks to actors, radio and TV personalities, sports personalities, academicians, politicians, and other personalities who have made it to the top against all odds.

Phiri says: " Stories told by high-profile personalities inspire us as a community that if they overcame those obstacles they faced, we too can overcome them through Christ who strengthens us."

The Journey screens on Mondays at 6.30 pm, on Wednesdays at 7.30 pm and on Thursdays at 5pm.

Rick Johnson – Overcoming Toxic Parenting: Book Review

Book Review by Debbie Hemmens



This is another book that I would love to rename, because while it deals very aptly with content relating to the title, there is so much more in it that it kind of needs a title plus a title. I get the privilege of passing on this exciting review of *Overcoming Toxic Parenting* so that maybe you will pick it up, read it and benefit like I did.

Johnson does a brilliant job of explaining how abuse perpetuates abuse as our brain pathways have been set in certain ways if we grew up in an abusive setting. He goes on to say how amazing our brains are that we can create new brain pathways and therefore, new life patterns and we get to be overcomers of abuse and live brilliant lives. We need to be made aware of all this and we get to choose the ending instead of just muddling along in life, feeling sorry for ourselves and doing nothing to change.

Chapters 1 through 5 give great insight into the world of someone who has suffered abuse, with great steps to healing and overcoming. The section on forgiveness is profound and powerful. Carrying around all that bitterness and pain is destructive to us on so many levels. Forgiveness is the choice

of strength, not weakness. Then in chapters 6 through 10 Johnson launches into some of the best and healthy parenting advice I have yet to come across. It is good and helpful guidance and this is the part of the book that is lost by the title – every parent should read this section. It is encouraging and inspiring.

When I first started reading this book, this is a Facebook post that I wrote thinking specifically about the South African context, but would apply anywhere in the world – I could rename this book ‘overcoming toxic governments – how to be a good, healthy, thriving citizen when your government has been toxic, oppressive and abusive.’ It’s all the same principles about taking ownership of your own life, no matter what the past dished out to you.

I love how it points to dealing with your past, action steps to healing and then new strategies for a better future going forward – all this can happen personally without changing the toxic parents/government. Then there will be strength to tackle what needs to change in systems and society. We need whole people, each and every citizen, who are dealing with their stuff. We need those action steps and new strategies for restoration to happen. I see this as a huge part of the process in looking to the future. I know that too many people are still living in toxic environments and that needs to change, but it is a both/and scenario because emotional and psychological healing is vital.

I gained so much from *Overcoming Toxic Parenting* and would wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone who identifies with all I have mentioned above which pretty much puts it as a book for everyone. You will be blessed as you read and digest.

'Jesus Culture' back in South Africa



Local worshippers are in for a treat in June, when global youth movement, Jesus Culture, hits South African shores to host a series of worship nights across the country.

The popular worship collective, well known for hits such as *Your Love Never Fails* and *How He Loves*, will be gracing venues across Pretoria, Johannesburg and Cape Town to host worship and ministry nights featuring Kim Walker-Smith, Chris McClarney and Jesus Culture founder, Banning Liebscher.

Sadly, Durban and Port Elizabeth has been dropped from the band's tour Itinerary but two more dates have been added to the Pretoria and Cape Town stops, after tickets for those venues were sold out.

Speaking in a promotional video clip, Walker-Smith and Liebscher shared their enthusiasm for the ministry trip. "It's going to be an incredible time. We're excited!" said Liebscher.

Liebscher, a powerful speaker and teacher in his own right, will lead the teaching segments of the worship nights. He served on staff at Bethel Church in Redding, California for 18 years, founding the Jesus Culture ministry during that time. In 2014, along with his family and the Jesus Culture team, he relocated to Sacramento where they started a church, Jesus

Culture Sacramento. His vision is to see people encounter God, be empowered in community and engaged in revival and transformation.

A firm favorite, on the upcoming tour, is Jesus Culture worship leader, Kim Walker-Smith, who will be leading worship along with Jesus Culture Music newbie, Chris McClarney. Crooner, McClarney, made waves in 2015 with his first Jesus Culture Music release titled *Everything and Nothing Less* and has been hailed as a singer and songwriter to watch out for.

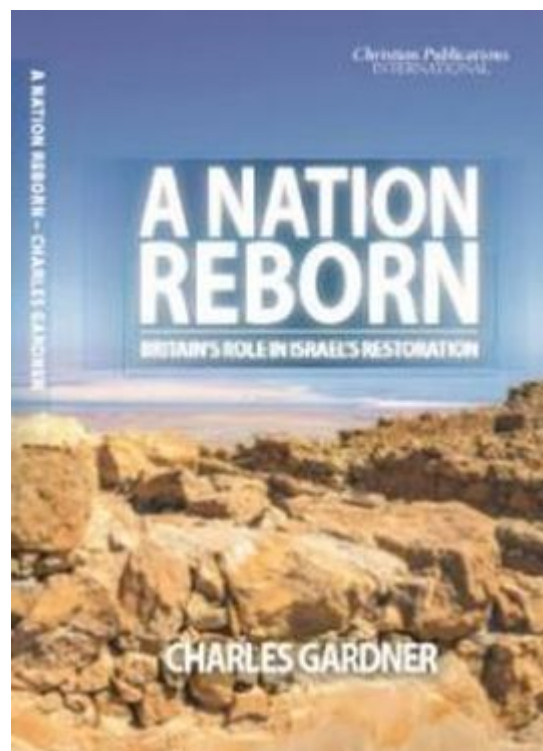
Tickets for the June 4 worship night at the Moreletapark Gemeente Auditorium in Pretoria and the June 8 worship night at the GrandWest Grand Arena in Cape Town, are still available.

Tickets for the June 5 Pretoria worship night, the June 7 Johannesburg event and the June 9 Cape Town event have been sold out.

Ticket prices range between R250 and R350 and can be purchased on www.itickets.co.za

Preview: New book focuses on Britain's role in rebirth of Israel

Britain's role – both positive and negative – in the miraculous rebirth of modern Israel, is the focus of *A Nation Reborn*, a timely new book, by Cape Town-born, British-based journalist and author Charles Gardner.



Released as the resurrected nation celebrates its 70th anniversary amidst the threat of war, the book squarely addresses what has become a political “hot potato” without flinching from controversy, arguing strongly for Israel's legitimacy in the face of rising anti-Semitism, say the publishers, Christian Publishers International.

Easy to read and understand, the narrative flows seamlessly through 28 inspirational chapters from background to the Balfour Declaration to powerful testimonies of Jews and Arabs who have found both reconciliation and peace through the Jewish Messiah, Jesus Christ.

With a 44-year career in journalism behind him, Charles, who is a frequent contributor to Gateway News, writes passionately and fluently as he tackles, from a political and biblical perspective, a subject hardly ever out of the news.

As Israel takes centre stage in world affairs, this is a must-read for all who want to understand what her restoration means in the light of God's eternal Word, say the publishers.

Describing the book as “magnificent”, fellow journalist Christopher Proudlove comments: “It is a most important work which deserves to be widely read and is top of my list for anyone wanting to know about Israel.”

A Nation Reborn is available from www.christian-publications-int.com, <http://www.amazon.co.uk>, and www.amazon.com.

Time to book your seats at the 2018 Global Leadership Summit



It's time for leaders in every sphere in South Africa to start booking places for themselves and their teams at the ever-inspiring, annual

Global Leadership Summit which will be taking place in October and November at 20 locations in 15 cities and towns.

Over a period of more than two decades the GLS has impacted millions of leaders around the globe with its world-class, two-day leadership training events that bring a unique blend of vision, inspiration and practical skills you can immediately apply.



From the top, Danny Meyer, Angela Ahrends, and Strive Masiyiwa.

As usual, the lineup of speakers includes influential and innovative business, culture and ministry leaders from around the world, to bring the best practices in leadership,

integrating Christian values and principle-based decision making through big screen presentations.

The 2018 faculty includes Angela Ahrendts, senior vice president of retail at Apple; Strive Masiwa, Zimbabwean telecommunications group head based in London and one of the “world’s 50 greatest leaders” according to Fortune magazine; Danny Meyera, a New York restaurateur named to Time Magazine’s 2015 edition of *100 Most Influential People*; Rasmus Ankersen, a best-selling author and entrepreneur; Dr Nthabiseng Legoete, a Johannesburg medical practitioner, founder and CEO of Quali Health and social entrepreneur who is motivated by her faith and family story to make quality primary healthcare affordable to the world; and some big-name leaders like TD Jakes and John C Maxwell. The full list of speakers can be viewed here: <https://willowcreeksa.co.za/gls2018/>

For a limited time GLS tickets are available at reduced prices – R570 for individuals (regular price R690) and at a group rate of R530 per person for groups of 10 or more people. You can register now at this link: <https://www.willowsaonline.co.za/>

GLS 2018 Dates & Venues

5 – 6 October 2018

Johannesburg – Mosaïek Teatro
East London – Christian Centre

12 – 13 October 2018

Durban Amanzimtoti – Sweetwaters Church
Vanderbijlpark – River of Life Family Church
Somerset West – New Generation Church
Richards Bay – Outlook Church

18 – 19 October 2018

Cape Town – Venue TBC

19 – 20 October 2018

Durban Kloof – Kloof Harvest Church

Durban Ballito – Linc Church

Port Elizabeth – Harvest Christian Church

Rustenburg – Agapé Gemeente

26 – 27 October 2018

Durban Westville – Westville Baptist Church

Bloemfontein – Doxa Deo

Knysna – Knysna Vineyard

Pietermaritzburg – All Saints United Church

Cape Town – AFM Friend of God

Klerksdorp – Oase Gemeente

27 October 2018

Kimberley – Taberna Dei Diamantstad

2 – 3 November 2018

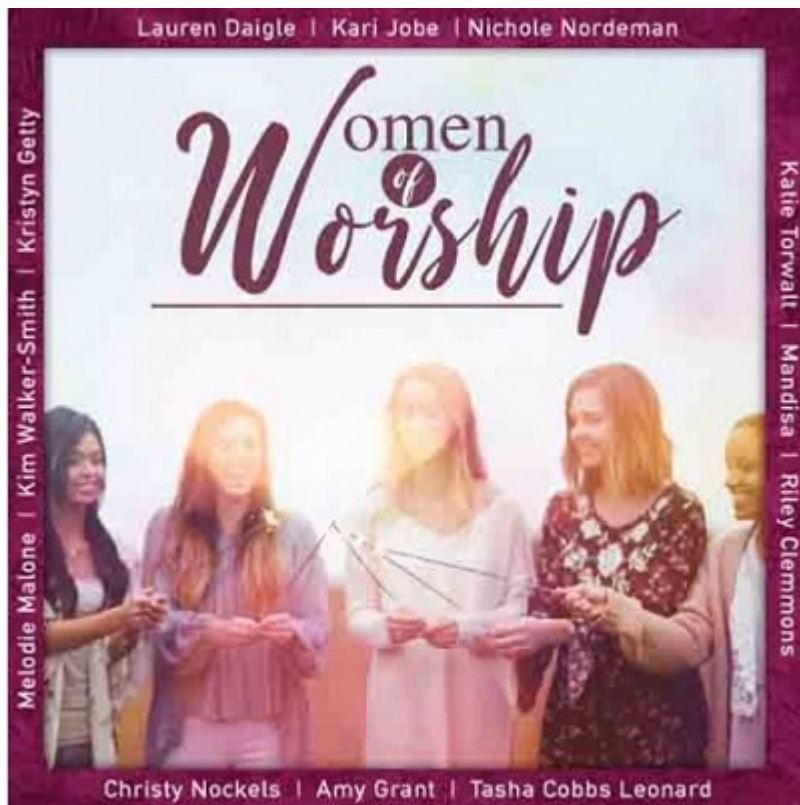
Witbank – New Life Church

Graaff-Reinet – The Botanics

9 – 10 November 2018

Pretoria – Hatfield Christian Church

Women of Worship compilation: Review



Music Review by Luchae

Williams

With Mother's Day quickly approaching, I love intentional gift giving. The 2018 **Women of Worship** compilation album, for example, would make for a great spoil! With songs that both inspire you and challenge you to leave your cares at the feet of Jesus, listeners are encouraged to experience the rest and peace that only the presence of God can bring.

The collection features 14 powerhouse tracks from some of today's most popular female worship leaders such as Natalie Grant, Tasha Cobbs Leonard and Kim Walker Smith. I appreciate that every singer featured is renowned for both her gifting and the presence of God that she carries.

Passion Conference stalwart Christy Nockels opens with her catchy anthem, **Marvelous Light** from her album *Life Light Up*.

The vibey praise song is preceded by worship music darling Kari Jobe's midtempo track from her *Majestic* album, titled **Keeper of My Heart**. Jobe is featured twice on this compilation and I quite enjoyed her worship track, **Speak To Me**, too. The

song changes the atmosphere and draws your attention to Holy Spirit, sharpening your ear as you intentionally build up your faith to hear from Him.

Other popular worship artists featured are Mandisa with her dance track, **Overcomer** and Dove award winner Lauren Daigle, with her catchy pop jam, **Trust in You**.

If deep worship is more your thing, you'll be excited to learn that vocal power house Tasha Cobbs Leonard's **Fill Me Up (Live)** is also featured on the album. Leonard released this version on her 2015 album *One Place Live*, and it has since grown in popularity.

Amy Grant's **Carry You** is also featured, as well as two tracks from the soulful Nichole Nordeman. Nordeman's **Slow Down** is the perfect Mother's Day theme song. The track is an ode to her children, and paints the picture of a mother watching her babies grow up.

An exciting addition to the compilation is up-and-coming artist Riley Clemmon's debut hit single, **Broken Prayers**. With a pop element, rich vocal and clever lyric, the song speaks about our God of redemption, who sees the beauty in our scars: "When I'm hurt, at my worst/You meet me there/Cause you see the beauty/In my broken prayers."

All in all, I would rate the *Women of Worship* compilation a thoughtful and poignant addition to any Mother's Day spoil. With chart-topping songs that feature powerful messages and beautiful reflections of worship, I give it a thumbs up!