

MEREDITH ANDREWS

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Meredith Andrews and her husband Jacob Sooter had been thinking and praying about a move to Nashville for some time. Decision made and boxes packed, the couple found themselves not only entering the state of Tennessee, but a state of turmoil and brokenness as well. Their road to new opportunities and experiences quickly became fractured paths through low valleys, where a new level of trust in each other and a gracious God would eventually be discovered. It is from the difficult season Meredith has recently journeyed through that birthed new songs found on her album, *Deeper*.

Even before the boxes were completely unpacked, more things quickly stacked up. "The transition from Chicago to Nashville was more than challenging," Meredith admits. "At that time I was pregnant with my third child. That compounded with stress and over commitment left us overwhelmed. Jacob and I found ourselves in a dark place in our marriage. We had some really hard days and a lot of questions. There were moments when I wanted out and he did too."

In the midst of heartache, Meredith leaned on her community for help. But it was her friend and mentor Susie Larson who would speak truth and promises into her life long before the path of refinement even began.

"Susie spoke into my life about a year before I moved to Nashville. She said, 'Meredith, I've been praying for you and I feel like the Lord is telling me that you're about to walk into the hardest season of your marriage. God is going to take you to these underground places and there you will find him to be the perfect Father and more faithful than you've ever known him to be. You're going to know his presence like you've never known it before. He's going to take Jacob on a journey as well, and when the two of you come out on the other side, you're going to be more unified than you've ever been.'"

God's promise to Meredith began to come alive during those bleak days, allowing her to cling to hope when hope seemed, at times, to elude her.

And slowly, that hope grew.

"Marriage is exposing. When you're that close to someone, your ugly is going to come out." Meredith continues, "That's really intentional. I believe the Lord does that because He's whittling away and refining us. Once you understand how to consider the other person and his or her heart, the Lord will take care of your heart too. My life isn't what it was a year ago,

and I'm thankful."

Married now for six years, working together on a record in the midst of intense brokenness may seem, at best, overwhelming and daunting, but for this couple, it provided a welcome path towards healing. Jacob co-produced the album with Jason Ingram, Paul Mabury and Seth Mosley, and he co-wrote many of the songs with Meredith and others in their artistic community.

"I had to write from that vulnerable place because it was all I had," shares Meredith. "I feel like it's in the darkest seasons that God gets our attention and breaks it all down and says 'Let's get to the bare bones. Do you believe I am who I say I am? Do you trust me enough that even though you can't see the light at the end of the tunnel, I have a plan for your good?' You can say you believe in God but if you haven't walked through trials and hardships that actually put your faith to the test then it remains shallow. God wants our belief to be at the core of our being, confident in what we know because we've watched His faithfulness in the hardest of times."

From the opening anthem of "Sunrise" to the soul-mending song "Jesus Sees", the theme of believing God and trusting his promises is woven throughout the album, carrying with it the glimmering thread of expectation, even amidst dire circumstances.

"I'm praying that God will use this album to bring freedom," she says. "I envision people hearing these songs for the first time in their rooms and being overwhelmed by the presence of God and by the healing and hope found there, because the only place we're going to find true restoration is in the presence of God. Releasing our fear, surrendering and saying, 'God I trust You. At the core of my being I trust You. Even though it goes against everything I feel and see and what everyone around me tells me, I trust You. Because You are trustworthy.'"

The road is a little less tumultuous these days, and as Meredith is seeing the promises spoken by Susie about her marriage and the faithfulness of God come to pass, she is concentrating more than ever on connecting with fellow journeyers accepting the same invitation to surrender to God and go deeper.

"I don't want to worry about the numbers," says Meredith. "I want to be focused on 'Am I being faithful? Am I leaning in? Am I speaking truth and offering hope to people who are listening? I want to be a mouthpiece. I want God to use my story and use my songs to meet them in the hard place they're at right now. That's the goal. God has told me 'Take care of the depth and I'll take care of the breadth.' So that's what I'm focused on."

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