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FOR THE FATHERLESS



For the Fatherless is more than just a worship duo, it's a ministry with a purpose. Formed by husband and wife Brian and Christa Yakaboski in 2012, the duo has a distinct sound--joyful and sincere, made of powerful vocals and hooky melodies. The two blend seamlessly, both with their voices and their testimonies, as they pursue their passion of ministering to those who have lost their earthly fathers.

Christa and Brian grew up in different places with different stories. Christa lost her father to a brain tumor when she was 7. Miles away, Brian had been abandoned by his father. Christa's father was a worship leader and a musician, filling their house with music until he passed away. Brian never knew his biological father but was adopted at age three by his mother's husband, who loved Brian like his own. Despite the love both Christa and Brian were shown through other family members, a similar sense of emptiness lingered in both their hearts.

As Christa grew, she wrestled in different ways with the absence of her father. Though the drastic change brought confusion and anger as a young child, walking through middle and high school, having fully grasped the situation, was even more difficult. "I was now old enough to understand that my Dad was not coming back ever," says Christa. She had sung in church since she was tiny, but it was then she began to be more heavily involved with music and discovered it to be her passion. "I started to struggle with knowing that my dad was a musician, but he would never be around to hear me sing or enjoy music with me." Despite the heartache associated with music in her life, Christa knew she wanted to pursue it as a career, and her soulful voice earned her a slot in Belmont University's selective vocal program in 2007.

Brian grew up well-loved by his adoptive father, but still felt abandoned, knowing his biological father had left him for drugs and alcohol. He held music close to his chest, writing songs but never sharing them, and instead participating in choirs he didn't enjoy. But writing his first song as a freshman in high school had unlocked a realm of self-expression he knew he would never be able to turn off. So Brian continued to take steps to make it his career, which meant auditioning and making the cut for the Belmont vocal program as

well. Eventually he realized he would have to start sharing the experience if he wanted to, you know, eat. "I really kind of had a selfish attitude about it for a long time," says Brian. "I held on really tightly to my songs and didn't really want to sing them with other people. The first change in all that was realizing I'd go broke and starve if I didn't sing songs people wanted me to sing and let people sing songs I had written for their own projects."

On top of that epiphany, Brian had then met Christa at Belmont and felt a change in his heart, learning that he could share his songs with her and even enjoy having her sing them more than singing them himself. The couple continued to share their stories and their music with one another over the coming years through their dating relationship and engagement, until one day in 2012 Brian showed up on Christa's doorstep with an idea. "We knew we wanted to get married and knew the difficulty of just one of us being out on the road, so we were trying to figure out how we could do something together," says Christa. "Brian just came to my house one day and said, 'what if we started a ministry called For the Fatherless?'"

The ministry was a perfect melding of Brian and Christa's individual stories and would aim to speak to so many others who knew what it felt like to grow up without a father. "We both dealt with the loss of our earthly fathers in really different ways," says Christa. "So we know the feeling of growing up fatherless. It's something that needs to be addressed in the church. We all share the same Father who loves us more than we can understand, regardless of our experiences with our earthly fathers."

Brian and Christa Yakaboski were married in April of 2013, which adds another unique level of depth to their music and ministry. The two now not only share a mission, but a last name as well (which alone is a testament to the extent of Christa's love for Brian). On stage, the couple's chemistry is evident, as their voices blend together to create a powerful message for their audience. "The ministry starts on stage for us," says Brian. "Some days, Christa will sing something, and I can tell by the tone in her voice she believes it. It inspires me to believe more in what God is doing through our music. Their worshipful anthems are written, Brian says, for "love-hungry" people--to bring them peace and make God's love feel more real and tangible like an earthly Father's, but perfect and unfailing.

Since the start of the ministry, Christa and Brian have seen fruit in the lives of others as well as their own. Brian even took the time to find and meet his biological father, who did not reciprocate the interest in meeting his son. "It was the most worthless I've ever felt in my whole life," Brian says. "My head was spinning, but I was able to look him in the eye and tell him I forgave him. I traded an open-ended story of shame and confusion for an open-ended story of forgiveness. I want to help other people do the same by following Jesus and his example of unconditional, open-ended forgiveness."

The duo has since continued to grow and pour into their ministry and even their family, adopting a hyperactive puppy named Hazel in May 2013. They live in Nashville, Tennessee and play live on a regular basis. For the Fatherless are recording eight songs for their debut album, which is set to release in the spring of 2014.

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