

Christy Nockels helps listeners reflect on Jesus as God with us

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ATLANTA—With the release of her debut Christmas album, *The Thrill of Hope*, three-time Dove Award-winning recording artist Christy Nockels desires to help listeners reflect on Emmanuel—“God with us”—with anticipation, expectancy and joy.

“I want people to experience Jesus through these songs,” Nockels said. “I’ve really been thinking about the different moments when people might listen to these songs, and that really helped to inspire me when I was writing and recording the songs.

“As I was writing, I was picturing a mom with her girls baking cookies in the kitchen and listening to music. I wanted these songs to be filled with deep and meaningful truths about Jesus that could seep into our hearts when we are doing things like wrapping presents or decorating around the house.

“What I always desire to do as a songwriter and as a musician is to merge deep, meaningful truths with beautiful lyrics. Hopefully, it’s a beautiful gift to people this season to be able to enjoy these songs, along with the deep truths about the hope that Jesus really is here with us now. I want people to experience the life that Jesus offers in the here and now—that he is with us. He is Emmanuel. That’s my heart for this album.”

In addition to including several Christmas classics, the album features original songs inspired by Nockels’ favorite Christmas memories and traditions with her family.

“My favorite Christmas carol is “Silent Night,” and we actually put it on the

record with a new chorus,” Nockels said. “I think it’s a beautiful thing when you see a community come together, and singing that on Christmas Eve just says ‘Christmas’ to me. It’s so sweet.”

Beauty in the darkest seasons

One new song, “Amaryllis,” holds special significance to Nockels, reminding her of hope and healing in her own life.



During her December concerts, Dove Award-winning recording artist Christy Nockels wants to remind audiences about the importance of slowing down to savor every moment on the season. “The song was inspired by a gift that I received from my sister-in-law,” Nockels explained. “If you’ll notice on the cover, there’s an amaryllis botanical. A few years ago, my sister-in-law gave me this ceramic pot and a beautiful letter. In that particular time in my life, it was a really hard season. We were approaching a real winter, but in my soul, it was winter as well. I think we can all go through seasons of the soul, and it was a dark season for me personally. I was going through some loss with some things.

“During those times, God prunes us. He gives and takes away. I was

experiencing trusting him with some things that I didn't understand and some things that were hurtful to me. My sister-in-law knew what I was struggling with, and she had the wisdom to write me this letter. I was able to make my sister-in-law a co-writer on the record, because I pulled actual lines from her letter and turned it into a song.

"The whole gist on the song is that an amaryllis bulb grows in the winter. They don't grow in the spring, so there's already this beautiful symbolism. I did some research and found out that some people actually put an amaryllis bulb in the darkest corner of their basement where there's no light, because that's how they store the most energy.

"The beauty of it is that sometimes the darkest seasons of our lives are when Jesus is still saying: 'I'm with you. You can grow in winter even still.'

"As I watched that bulb come out of that white ceramic pot after my birthday and through the Christmas season, I started thinking about Jesus and how he came when conditions were poor and how he was unexpected and how he surprised the night. He broke through a silence that the world had never known and a winter of the soul of the world. He brought with him this life that he offers us today. The song refers to how we can break through the hardest of seasons and surprise the night just like our Savior did."

During her December concerts, Nockels hopes to remind audiences about the importance of slowing down to savor every moment on the season.

"Usually on Christmas Eve, we are doing a service at church. So, the day before, we make all kinds of food and also make a 'Happy Birthday Jesus' cake," Nockels said. "That's a special family tradition that my mom started. I'm really looking forward to just being with our kids and just being in a room together with the purpose of remembering Jesus. That's what I'm most looking forward to this Christmas—gathering with family and friends

and worshipping Jesus together.”

Tour includes Sugar Land and Arlington

Nockels plans to kick off the new year by leading worship for a women’s ministry tour, “The Broken and Free,” featuring speakers Ann Voskamp, author of *The Broken Way* and *One Thousand Gifts*, along with Rebekah Lyons, author of *You Are Free* and *Freefall to Fly*. The tour will appear at Sugar Land Baptist Church in Sugar Land Feb. 26 and Lamar Baptist Church in Arlington Feb. 28.



Christy Nockels “In whatever season of life someone’s in, it’s so amazing for people to sing praises to God while conveying their thoughts and prayers to him,” Nockels said. “My desire through leading worship and songwriting is to help people communicate intimately with the living God and to leave a legacy of proclaiming Jesus’ fame to this generation.

“Writing songs that people are using to worship God is not only a privilege, but also a huge responsibility. I always want to make sure the songs are based on the word of God. I really desire to put songs with biblical truths in people’s homes, cars and their hearts and minds—that’s something that I

feel like God has called me to do. I've always said, 'With the right song in their mouth, people can change the world.'"