

Sherwin Gardner: Forget the Format Gospel

Sherwin Gardner was born and reared in a little village, Brandeville in Trinidad and Tobago. His testimony is birthed from his mother's decision to defy all odds by the doctor and still carry him.

Before he was born his mother fell ill, so the doctors had her take a drink that would reveal what her issues were. The doctors discovered that she was 20 weeks pregnant with him. Despite advice from her doctors to abort, she chose to hold on to his life and let God handle the rest. Since then, God not only favored Gardner's mother, but the rest of the world with such talent. As he contemplated this testimony, he wrote what became the single on his album called "Because of You," both glorifying God for sustaining his life, and thanking his mother for being faithful to keep his life.

Shifting the Stage

Gardner now resides in Antigua and Barbuda and serves as the media and worship director for the St. John Pentecostal of Antigua and Barbuda with Pastor Steve Matthews. His church ministry supports his media ministry. "I've developed that throughout the years," he acknowledges, "and being a part of church ministry helps with stage presence."

Gardner began working on that stage presence in 1994 as a five year-old. When he was a teen he performed reggae and soca gospel. In 2002, he signed with Lion of Zion Entertainment, a premier record label in gospel reggae and traveled the island circuit. This provided him the opportunity to produce 15 albums until his current new album "Greater." His "Greater" project mixes American and Caribbean influences, with the biggest influence coming from a sense of spiritual leading. "It was a time to shift and I heeded the voice of God."

"Hope of Nations" and "Because of You", his favorite cuts, speak life into every circumstance.

Gardner travels between New York and Trinidad working on his new album the "Right Now Experience," and he is pulling from his musical inspirations such as Kirk Franklin, Fred Hammond, and Byron Cage. "I wanted to understand their pattern of success and their appreciation in the gospel music industry."

Frustrated with Gospel Format

Gardner said he is focused on relationships and the sound from heaven to God's people. Whereas some can get frustrated with the music industry, he believes it is because sometimes there is so much music that sounds the same. He questions whether it is really from God or just a format.

"I try my best not to follow those formulas," he said. "First you really have to keep working, to maintain a standard and quality. You have to live what you sing. The world is so social and easy to shift, [but] you have to make sure you live Christ."

While he is writing and producing for others such as "We Will Not Be Shaken" for Bethel Music, and "Hope of Nations" by Gates Praise, Gardner adheres to one, solid principle. "[R]emember the times we are living in. We need to have a strong relationship with Christ. We don't know when He's coming back, but must live every day for him."