

could be just because of who you are and what you say,” he says. “[That doesn’t mean it] necessarily has to do with the Lord or not. So if people are going to lose respect for me or my music for something, I would like it to be for the name of Jesus. It’s not that I want that to happen, but if it’s going to happen, it might as well be for something good.”

Lang says he prayed about the direction to take the album and feels the approach is one of a personal testimony instead of an evangelistic message. “It was hard because I didn’t want to come out preaching, and I didn’t want to come out necessarily strict because it’s my first of those records that will include my faith in the Lord,” he says. “I just prayed about it: *How close should I take this, God?* ... It’s a mix. Some are direct, some aren’t. But musically, lyrics aside, I think it’s a natural progression for me.”

Lang knows that a few years ago, he would have probably shared those dissenting opinions if an artist he liked created an album like this. He says even though his parents occasionally took him to church, he grew up to hate Christianity, thanks to a series of experiences that left him with a bitter taste for the people who professed the faith. “People who professed one thing and lived another way sort of gave me an excuse to rebel against it,” he says. “I grew up most of my life despising Christianity and not wanting anything to do with Jesus.

“It’s hypocritical of me to call them hypocrites, but [laughs] I thought, *well, if this is what people do and this is acceptable to their God, I don’t want their God.*”

Lang says it wasn’t until he was older that he began to see and understand that good people are messed up, and that faith is about a personal walk with God—irregardless of how others live. “I just never really understood when I was younger that I could have a relationship with God myself,” he says. “It seemed to be something that was too big for me to attain.”

But attain it, he has. Lang has plugged into a church in Los Angeles where he and his wife, Haylie, live. He has spent the past several years sorting out multiple “mindsets” and belief systems he encountered throughout his life and is settling in on truth. “It has been such an awesome adventure finding that first church of Acts sort of original apostolic experience and really capturing those first foundational sort of things instead of what I had always grown up in—believing it because somebody told me,” Lang says. “I’ve sort of been ... just taught things that were extra-biblical.”

Although Lang is still touring and recording albums, his lifestyle has radically changed from the early days of his career. Hitting the road at 15 years old and touring with the Rolling Stones, Aerosmith and Sting took a toll on Lang. He experimented with drugs and alcohol and even dabbled in what he calls “witchcraft.” Life in the fast lane was a far cry from the childhood he spent on a farm outside of Fargo, N.D. “I was definitely more in an adult atmosphere growing up than probably a lot of other kids my age at that time,” Lang says.

By the time Lang was 17, he was smoking two packs of cigarettes a day and was an alcoholic. Marijuana and other drugs including cocaine, ecstasy and hallucinogens became the norm. Although his life was spiraling out of control, he wanted nothing to do with God.

Lang met his future wife, Haylie Johnson, who was an actress on *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman*, when he was only 16 and became close friends

with her family. When Haylie’s father, Cliff, was sent to a hospice about to succumb to Hepatitis C and cancer, Lang went to visit him the night he would pass away. That night Lang had a supernatural experience with God (sans hallucinogens).

In the book *How Do You Know He’s Real?* (Destiny Image), Lang tells author Amy Hammond Hagberg about his conversion experience.

While I was walking out in the hallway of my friend’s apartment building, I was suddenly hit in the stomach by the most incredible force. It spread from there and filled my whole body. I had this soundness of mind and this extraordinary peace that I just couldn’t explain. It was an incredible feeling.

After a few minutes I started rationalizing—it was probably just some sort of primal instinct that comes out to help cope with the death of a loved one. In my mind, I tried to find a natural explanation for it. I certainly never thought it might have something to do with God.

* * *

When the morgue was coming to remove Cliff’s body, I thought it would be best if Haylie didn’t see that. So I took her to the back yard. We talked about what had been going on that night and our memories of her dad. All of a sudden, I got hit in the stomach again with that tremendous force. It was almost like I had to throw up—I couldn’t

keep it down any longer. Bursting out of my mouth came the word “Jesus!” right in the middle of our conversation. The power of God hit me so hard that I started shaking in my chair. It was like somebody grabbed my shoulders and shook me forcefully back and forth. It didn’t hurt, but it was violent.

Yet at the same time I felt total peace. He didn’t say, “Hey, this is Jesus” or anything, but I knew it was Him. I heard Him say to me, “You don’t have to have this if you don’t want it.” I was completely and utterly amazed, and I definitely wanted it. I wanted it more than anything I’d ever wanted in my whole life. I kept shaking and shaking until I fell to the ground. I gave my life to Christ right there at that moment.

After this encounter, Lang could no longer deny God’s presence in his life. “All the sermons in the world could not have convinced me of that,” he says in *How Do You Know He’s Real?*

In addition, Lang says he was instantly delivered of all his addictions and has been clean ever since. Lang had also suffered from dyslexia his entire life and was healed. “The first book I ever really read was the Bible—what a great place to start,” he says. “I’ve witnessed so many wonders and miracles, and God just proves Himself to me constantly. There’s nothing that could convince me otherwise. Jesus is the living God.”

Critics can’t argue with that. *r*

CARA DAVIS is the editor of *Radiant* magazine.

Excerpt taken from *How Do You Know He’s Real: God Unplugged* by Amy Hammond Hagberg (www.hesreal.com). Used by permission.

“IF PEOPLE ARE GOING TO LOSE RESPECT FOR ME OR MY MUSIC FOR SOMETHING, I WOULD LIKE IT TO BE FOR THE NAME OF JESUS.”

