Randy Frazee:

You're listening to the Bible Roots Podcast with Pastor Randy Frazee. If you're a church leader looking for creative ideas to help your church engage more deeply with the Bible, this podcast is for you. And now for today's episode.

Randy Frazee:

Hello. Welcome everybody to episode 10 of the Bible Roots podcast. I'm Randy Frazee and I get to be the host of this wonderful new show. This is a podcast devoted to the topic of Bible engagement. Why? Because Bible engagement is the number one catalyst for spiritual growth with no close second. I'd encourage you to go back to episode one where we lay out this grand discovery. And if you are a pastor or responsible for spiritually leading people, whether through a small group or your family or even one-on-one coaching or discipleship, this podcast is for you. Now, today my guest is my good friend Mark Hall of Casting Crowns. He is the lead singer as well as an awesome songwriter. And I'm going to allow you to go to Wikipedia or Google, to Google him because if we talked about all the awards that they have received, it would take up the rest of the show for sure.

Randy Frazee:

Mark is also a youth pastor and I think, and he'll clarify this, he's been a youth pastor for a very long time. Now I'm going to say maybe 30 years or so, maybe 25, something like that, he'll let us know. And if you put these two things together. Mark's love for Jesus and God's word, and these two things together. And you have a recipe for a rich conversation, about the power of music and how effectively to engage our students today and the word of God beyond the book into a relationship with Jesus. Is anybody interested in what Mark has to say? I know that I am. So let's welcome Mark to the podcast. Mark, man thank you for making the time in your busy schedule for this.

Mark Hall:

Hey Randy, man, thanks so much. It's good to see you.

Randy Frazee:

Good to see you too. Now I know you are out on a tour, the Healer Tour. Tell me a little bit about that.

Mark Hall:

Well, the album just came out, what, maybe a month ago, and we've been on the road for a few weeks with, We Are Messengers and Jonathan Trailer been mainly I guess we've been everywhere. We've been everywhere from Miami to Connecticut. So I don't know who lays these things out. Apparently they don't own a globe, but we're all over the place. But it's been great. It's been so good to be out there with people again 'cause it was a little different for a while in the touring world.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah, yeah, it really was. Now we go back to the days when I first met you personally. Actually the very first time I met you, we were doing an event and we were kind of getting ready to sort of push out the story album and I met you guys for the very first time. But we hung out together during a thing called The Story Tour, which was three years in a row, 2012, 13 and 14. And we got to pull this thing together, a thing that I wrote called The Story and then Nicole Nordeman and Bernie Herms put music to it and you guys traveled with it.

Randy Frazee:

Were on the album and all put together by our good and late friend, Norm Miller, who was the only one I think could have gotten you to do that for three years in a row and pick up your busy schedule for sure. But at intermission, I think it was the last year intermission, you and I shared the intermission with pastors and you were talking about your youth resources and then in that you got a better idea what the story was and you decided to do the story at the church that you serve in the Atlanta area. What really captured you about the story? Why did you decide that this was for you?

Mark Hall:

It was big for me because the disconnect has always been there, especially for teenagers. When you read scripture, there are these high up in the air thoughts and then there are these people that seem like they were thousands of years ago and had no problems like we have today in this totally different world. And the connection between the lower story like this, what's going on the earth and this is what God's doing and how he's using it was such a connector because we actually, after that first tour, we did the story curriculum in our church for our students and we walked through the Bible and you could see how it all comes together. And that's missing for people is how do you bring it all together? There's a thread that goes through and Jesus is the thread. And to me, and that was a big deal, big, big deal.

Randy Frazee:

And it's 31 weeks, so it's a pretty big commitment. I was super shocked when you said, hey, we're going to do it. But it really helped me to see that even students are super interested in. And the other thing I think you you were saying is that one of the things you learn when you read the Old Testament and see the bigger story is that there was a bunch of messed up people in the Bible.

Mark Hall:

Yeah. I say that, I said every concert, because we always have the husbands, the men that come to our concerts. I'm not going to say there aren't men Crowns fans, but I'm going to say a lot of them are there because they love their wife, right? So I'm always thinking about those guys, the entire time I'm talking, I'm always talking to them, the entire night.

Mark Hall:

And one of the things that I always make sure to say.

Randy Frazee:

Really?

Mark Hall:

Yeah, I don't know what it is it, I just noticed it about myself as I'm always finding the guys that look like this might be the first time I'm hearing this. And every time I talk between the songs, I'm talking to that guy. And one of the things I always try to say is I'm going to try to cut down the walls that might be between like, all that guy he's got it all together. Well I'm going to let you know that's not true. And then the Bible is, doesn't apply to me. I'm going to let you know that's not true. And so one of the things I say every night is one of the coolest things about the Bible is that God filled it up with people way worse than us. And just to show how awesome it was, that ought to give you hope about anything.

Randy Frazee:

I love that. I love that. I remember when you launched the story, you invited me or I may have invited myself to come and help you guys launch it and I got to stay in the lower level of your house, which is the house I think you're still in based on Instagram. And I got where you do all your recording, which is kind of a cool little thing. And you came to me and said, hey Randy, I just got the first cut of The Thrive album and it was a DVD with like a marker, handwritten with the marker that said Thrive, handwritten on there. And you said, hey, don't you get in my muscle car with me and we'll go driving and listen to it.

Randy Frazee:

I'm like, how cool is this man? So we're driving in your muscle car, we're driving down the road and you start to sing. I'm like, this is the first time I'm hearing the songs, but I'm kind of picking it up. And then I start singing along with you and I'm thinking, how cool is this? I'm singing with Mark Hall on his new album and I thought, for sure you're going to invite me to the band for sure, but you never did. Hey, but I wanted to ask you, what was your vision behind this album Thrive, and why did you call it Thrive?

Mark Hall:

Well, normally when I'm writing songs, I don't set out with a theme for the record. Usually I'm just writing songs. And then I look back and I see the theme through the record and the biggest mental picture of the record was that story that I'd always tell the kids about the tree and how those big oak trees have just as many roots as they do limbs and just [inaudible 00:07:34] as strong as it looks on the surface and in the air. It's the roots that are actually keeping it there when the storms hit. And if you don't have roots in what you believe and roots in no one who God is, when life hits you, it's going to knock you right over. So that was the mental picture we took to the world. So all the songs come from what I'm teaching, right? So they turn into songs and I'm like, this is a picture I think everybody needs to see.

Randy Frazee:

I think. And that's why of all the stuff you picked out for this particular podcast, there was a real distinct discipleship component to this. So Mark, there's a lot of pastors that listen to this podcast and who write sermons and talks, and I think people would be super interested in the process by which you write a song and then how you weave God's truths into the song.

Mark Hall:

It wasn't until years into crowns that people started asking me, what's your process? Because I could tell you I don't really have a process. I mean, I'm one of your, probably one of the more disorganized, I'm a light bulb thinker. Every good idea I start with is never a plan. It's always wouldn't it be cool? And I'm just out here. So I think that for me, I've noticed the tension between my feelings and the truth. Feelings are always louder than truth. They're always louder. And that's usually what I hear first. This is what I feel, this is what I'm afraid of. This is the giant in my way, this is what's going on. So it seems like a lot of my songs start in the dark and then they have to work their way to the light because of God's word, not work their way to light. They have to be brought into the light. So...

Randy Frazee:

Yeah.

Mark Hall:

Really it's the journey we all have, that crisis of belief where this is what I'm dealing with and we live in an age where your feelings are valid, but that doesn't make your feelings true. We've got to do that. So what I'll start with is any song you can think of, I mean literally all of us like east to west, okay?

Randy Frazee:

Okay.

Mark Hall:

Or voice to truth or just be held or praising the storm, it's like, here's what I'm feeling. Feels like you're about done with me. I feel like you're mad at me and you're going to drop me east to west. Voice of truth is I'm dyslexic, I have ADD, I'm not good enough to do this. There's no way I can do this. Praise you in the storm, I'm in a dark season, this is too much of me. I thought you were going to be there, you didn't show up like I thought you were. These are my feelings. So if I want to, I can just live there and just be miserable. But what I've got to do is not, I'm not going to fool myself with one of those. It's going to be great one day thoughts, right? What I've got to do is I've got to let God tell me the truth about my feelings.

Mark Hall:

That's the connection. So here's my feelings. What does God say? God tell me the truth about this. So what you hear in my songs as you hear, this is my problem, this is what truth is. Then it's like, okay, I know the truth but I'm not walking in it yet. So here's this moment where....

Randy Frazee:

Tension.

Mark Hall:

Yeah. You can know the truth, you can have a light and not be walking in it. And I've done that a lot and you actually get excited about it. I know the answer now, yay. I'm going to tweet this and Instagram meme this. And I haven't taken the first step in truth yet. So then becomes the process of, all right, I've got to step into with east to west is knowing that Psalm 103, he's cast my sin as far as the east is from the west. He's not forgiving me because I'm good, He's forgiving me cause he's good, right?

Randy Frazee:

Yeah.

Mark Hall:

So I got to step into that. So a lot of these songs start with feelings, then you got to walk in truth.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah. I love that. And I think that actually might be a good formula if you could call it that, for even preparing a sermon. I think that we might connect better if we sort use that same process. Hey, let's talk about two songs in Thrive in terms of the background, because I remember you and I talking about this. The first one is waiting for the night to fall because that's a very unusual song. Give us a little bit of the process and how you brought in God's truth into that one.

Mark Hall:

The old term for that song would be a side B. Nobody knows what a side B is anymore a deep cut in the record. But I was walking through some dark waters with one of my guys, one of my college guys and he was dealing with some addictions and we were just talking real about it and it just came out. I just said, man, the way addiction works is it's very patient, it's very patient.

Mark Hall:

You want to live for Jesus, go ahead, I'll be right here. And it just waits. And I said, and I'm a right brain thinker type. So when I think of a point I'm going to make, I don't know. I see it, right? And I just said, it's like an old man just living in the back of your woods, just sitting on the porch, knees going, it's okay, you can throw me out here. I'll just be right here when you're tired again and I'll be ready. And so it's a sobering thought and the hard part for a Christian writer is if we don't wrap it up in a bow at the end, we just don't love Jesus. So we've got to get all this fixed by the end of the song or we're sold out in the world. So sorry, that was probably just stayed in my head.

Mark Hall:

But what I'm talking about is the fact that you've got to let God tell you the truth about it. So you hear it in the bridge about how the sword that you could slay him with is just sitting dusty on the shelf. All the answers are right there, but you're sitting over here and you're going to get tired sooner or later. You're going to have a bad day sooner or later. And that's what addiction's waiting for and that it's really a warning kind of a song. And it's my favorite song, one of my favorite songs I've ever written. But yeah, it doesn't exactly have that...

Randy Frazee:

Yeah, I know, I know.

Mark Hall:

Doesn't have that exactly positive encouraging kind of feel to it, so...

Randy Frazee:

It's one of the reasons I wanted to call it out because I know it's a little bit deeper in the album and it's not that sort of feel good song like scars in heaven, which I watched the video before we got onto this and I was crying like a baby, God that song is so amazing. But it does, it gives you that feel good. This is a sort a discipleship type song in your face that's got a lot of people down. And I just thought you just did a beautiful job of teaching truth and creating these word pictures, which is amazing. And how about broken together? That's another one where I know there's a story behind that one as well.

Mark Hall:

Yeah. I had two different friends, real close friends that were going through major breakups in their marriage and I remember talking to one of the guys and at the time he was living in the office he had in his office at work because he made his choices and he reaped the whirlwind, right? And it was all coming down on him and he was repentant and he got right with Jesus. But as often happens, you've made your peace because you've been walking through this for years, but your partner, this is a Mark track, right? So I remember him saying to me, he said, Mark said if we're going to get through this, we're going to have to let go the picture we have in our head of who we were when this started.

Mark Hall:

We're not those people anymore. We've got this picture of us when we walk down the aisle. He said, and we're not them, we can never go back to that now. So you got to let God take us from here. And he said, we're just so broken. And that idea of letting God take you where you are is the very picture of what being saved is. He doesn't undo the mistakes you made that's the struggle with sin is I'm forgiven in heaven, but there's still scars here, right? And those are hard to work through. And it's even harder in marriage because there's two people that are hurt and they're both going through their highs and lows at different times and it hits like waves. So it was just one of those moments of this is where we are, how can God take us from here?

Randy Frazee:

Yeah. And it's a beautiful picture. I mean we can do sermons on marriage, but that beautiful picture of let's be broken together is, I don't think it's even just for marriages where there's been a major sort of falling, I think it's the true of [inaudible 00:16:34], but we've had ups and downs in our journey together and we're not that pristine couple down the aisle and the ideas like hey, we could throw each other out and go be broken and start all over again. But why don't we do this beautiful thing of accepting our brokenness? Which is a beautiful thing in a relationship though. Hey, I want to talk about the power of music to engage people in God's word. I wrote down some things here, modern research is proving this like never before. They're calling music the secret language of the heart. When we sing it as the potential to release this sort of bonding hormone, which is known as oxytocin, which is referred to as the cuddle hormone.

Randy Frazee:

Which is why mom and dad might sing a lullaby to a baby at night because it's something that releases that oxytocin within a baby. And not only are the parents cuddling the baby, but actually when they're singing it actually releases this chemical in them that makes them feel as though they're being cuddled. So And it made me think of the song Just Be Held. And I've just seen how crazy popular that song is, I think where people are connecting with it. Do you agree with this, that music as opposed to just preaching or teaching has an additional advantage the way God designed it?

Mark Hall:

Man, I tell you what, I don't know if I'm seeing this the same way, but that's a very sobering and terrifying thing to hear, for a Christian songwriter because what we're saying is music can give you a hug. And we've all been in moments where music has created this moment, no matter what the words are saying. That's the scary thing. I was in a journey concert when the keyboard guy did this thing. I was a senior in high school and I was like, I think I just asked somebody into my heart that was just amazing. I don't know what just happened because it's so warm and it connects with you. If anything that should just poke a songwriter in the middle of the head and say, you better be careful what you are teaching with your songs. Because as you said with sermons, there aren't a lot of guys, there aren't a lot of people walking around humming sermons.

Mark Hall:

They're humming your songs and they're putting together their theology from worship songs. And I don't want to go too far dark with you, but just because somebody wrote a worship song doesn't mean it's all from the Bible. And so there are a lot of songs out there that have... and a lot of movements out there that have created people who worship worship. And they worship that feeling they're getting in that room. And to me there's a difference between music and worship because worship is actually talking to a person, right? Worship is prayer, prayer is a conversation, conversation is with a person. So if you decide I'm going to go two miles down the road to that church because a worship is better, that's a scary thing to say because you're saying apparently you can't talk to God at this church. You can talk to him at that church. So you're in a whole big thing for me.

Randy Frazee:

Hi, this is Randy Frazee, host of the Bible Roots podcast, which is brought to you by my friends at Harper Christian Resources. Harper Christian Resources equips you to understand the scriptures cultivates spiritual growth and disciple your people with Bible study resources from today's most trusted voices.

Mark Hall:

I think the scriptural basis of worship music is in a very scary place because artistically we're tired of the same old worship songs. Right? How many times have you said, okay, we know it's the same thing you say every song, it looks like there's a dice with phrases on it and they just roll them and it's okay, there they are, it's the same things we say every song. So out of one side of the mouth, the church says that. So you've got writers that are like, okay, let me try to say it in a new way. And then they use some new word, sloppy wet kiss came out the song and everybody's like, what are you saying? What is that?

Mark Hall:

And so the artistic guy's going, I was trying to say something new. So yeah, I get the fact that it's tough to say the same things in a new way, but at the same time, when you start getting out of the realm of what is biblical, we're creating people that think if they just love Jesus, all their problems are going to go away. And then man, teachers are a little more strictly than others when we face God. So we got to be careful what we're teaching people to sing in these chemical releasing moments they're having.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah. See I think that's a really important for a podcast on Bible engagement is that music's got this additional advantage. It's the music that releases the oxytocin, not the words themselves. And if the melody is right, I'm thinking of the song Hallelujah by Cohen. We talked about how the fourth and the fifth, and you get this back in the Old Testament when David, the ability to play the lyre in such a way that relieved Saul of his depression and his anxiety. So there was no lyrics to it. So you've got this sort of hormone that's coming around things I appreciate about you Mark, and of all the people I could have interviewed for this podcast, I know how the truth is really important to you and what a obligation you have. What a responsibility you have to take this sort of cuddle hormone and make sure that the truth is dropped in the middle of it, which I think is pretty cool.

Mark Hall:

Yeah dude. I mean the irony is the song that you mentioned, Hallelujah. What that song's actually about is not quite about worship. I want to read into it.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah, it's exactly right. Yeah...

Mark Hall:

They'll go into Don't Stop Believing in Church. I'm like, that's the song about a one night stand. Do we get, is anybody listening to any of these words? Yeah, Yeah.

Randy Frazee:

Well they've created a lot of additional verses to it, people have added onto it to make it feel a little bit more religious.

Mark Hall:

We're going to redeem it, We're going to redeem it.

Randy Frazee:

We're going to redeem it. Yeah, that's it. It's a Samson and Delilah, is basically the basic gist of this song. And I'm like, when I got so caught up in the melody of it, and matter of fact, I did a funeral for somebody about a year and a half ago and he wanted this song played at his funeral. I'm like, oh you know this, but the melody draws you in. Hey, let's shift gears for just a little bit. Let's shift gears for a little bit on youth Pastor, because you've been doing that for how many years now, Mark?

Mark Hall:

Oh I don't know, maybe 25 or so.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah...

Mark Hall:

You start to get old you stop counting 'cause you don't have to set up [inaudible 00:24:02] it's been a few.

Randy Frazee:

Why so you... so give us the reason why, I mean, you continue to be a youth pastor in the midst of really a super successful writing and touring career. Why do you that? You could easily get a pass for saying, hey, God's blessed me to do this touring thing. And I remember Norm Miller saying, and I think it's still true, you got Casting Crowns has the largest audiences on the planet in Christian space. So you could easily go like, hey because when I toured with you, you would work your schedule so you'll be back at your church on Sunday. Which is just mind boggling to me. Why do you do both?

Mark Hall:

There are pastors out there that need to be traveling and need to go and do that full time, it wasn't for me. I knew that for me, looking back, if I wasn't in the church, I wouldn't be writing songs because you could just sing the same old songs and it'd be great. But when you are in a church, you don't get up and preach, that really cool sermon you preached four weeks ago. You're like, no, yeah that was really cute but let's keep moving. And to me it's the accountability of movement and growth and talking about real life. You can't be up in the clouds, I'm right down here, I'm dealing with this. So I don't think every singer needs to be a pastor. But I think for me it's been together. It's worked together really well.

Randy Frazee:

I think the same thing is true for me. You just had a light bulb go on because I ride and I could give up being a pastor on a daily basis and every now and again I wake up on a Monday and go like, man, I got to start over at zero again. And they've already heard all my sermons. Yeah, I've got to come up with something fresh. But I do believe that that constant sense of bringing something fresh to a local body is also stimulated by ongoing writing because I'm just forced to be in that space of ministering to some local people. Hey, let me ask you about students. What have you seen change in students? And you've had the benefit of walking with students 25 years ago and today. What has changed with students? What's your biggest encouragement? What's your biggest discouragement you're seeing going on.

Mark Hall:

For students? I don't think anything has changed in their hearts. I think we have the same need, they have the same needs we had when we were teenagers. What has changed is the absolute swarm of information coming at them. The things that are validating the wrong things. That there are more voices in a kid's head than were ever in my head when I was a kid. So to see anything you weren't supposed to see or touch anything you weren't supposed to touch or experience, I mean you had to go to one friend's house whose parents were clueless to see something. You know what I'm saying? It was just different.

Mark Hall:

So now the entire world is in your pocket and the parents, the technology's too fast for parents to keep up with. What are they seeing? What is happening? So that's the scary thing is that there's so much coming at a kid right now. I think the discouraging part is the fact that they're a little more jaded, a little more skeptical than ever before.

Randy Frazee:

Really.

Mark Hall:

Because the church, I think people in general are. I mean, when the shutdown happened, everybody lost their minds. Everybody went home, locked themselves in the house, got on their phones, their algorithms figured out, okay, this is what you like, let me give you 50 other reasons why you're right. And now since you don't have to look people in the face to talk to them and you can just stand back here on your phone and hurl your talks, it's going to be great. So everybody lost their mind. We're beating and mic dropping our memes and our posts. And what we did is we put just hurdle upon hurdle, upon hurdle, upon hurdle between people and Jesus. So now people don't necessarily have a problem with Jesus. It's the Jesus people.

Mark Hall:

The church looks angrier than it's ever looked because of the stuff we post and we just, we're hurling rocks. So that has created a, I don't think you guys are all this love that you're talking about, because you're not saying anything. I haven't heard love out of the church in I don't know how long. So I think that that makes people a little more skeptical.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah. I think you're right. And students are picking that up I think a little bit faster.

Mark Hall:

Yeah. Way faster.

Randy Frazee:

And the down and the downside is for us, there's a couple things I think of is one is whenever someone, a Christian posts something, we're all brought into that reputation. And we have to be super careful when as a believer, when you claim to be a believer, when you post something, you're posting it for all of us, whether you like it or not. And number two, I think for students that have all this information coming at them and you have them sometimes maybe once a week and trying to overcome, counteract the volume by which it's coming at them. It seems like a losing battle at times, doesn't it Mark?

Mark Hall:

It seems like it because a life that's living in the flesh, when they're confronted with the truth, they've got to figure out a way to discount you, right? So if I can tell myself, yeah, you don't know me, you don't know my name, you didn't grow up like I did. We need reasons to go, oh, you can't tell me that you haven't earned that, right? So what is going to make the difference is people loving and earning the right through loving people to tell them the truth. So for me, you got to earn that. You're not going to walk up to me and give me advice. I'm like, I don't know you dude, but once you know me, you love me, you can talk to me. So I think that's going to make a difference. I think the thinning out that's happened in church on the surface looks bad. But I think what it has done is it's just thinned the herd a little bit to where if you're here, you really want to be here.

Randy Frazee:

Yep.

Mark Hall:

If all it took, if all it took was a year to get you out of the groove, I don't know what the groove was.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah, yeah.

Mark Hall:

Right. So I think, I'm not saying if you're not coming back to church, you're awful. But I'm saying it's hard to walk away from the person of Jesus. It's easy to walk away from a building. So I think with the people that are here, I think there's a focusing that's happening. I think people are realizing, it's never going to cost you anything to be saved in America. And now it's starting to stand out a little bit more now. So I think that's going to be a good thing.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah. I've been experiencing the same thing, the thinning out and as the people came back, there's just like a separating the wheat from the chaff, if you will, a little bit. And the people that are super serious, they're leaning in, they're ready to take the next steps. And it just seems like a better foundation. And you see it in the pattern of Jesus. Whenever the crowds got too big, he gave a sort of challenging message, You're going to have to eat my flesh and drink my blood. Okay, that took care of a bunch of people. Hey Jesus, I just want you to heal me and make me feel good. Feed me a McDonald's Big Mac, but I don't need any of this eat my [inaudible 00:31:51]. And so I think that's happened to us for sure. Hey, are you still offering... are you still offering resources to pastors? Is that something you're still doing, Mark?

Mark Hall:

I am. Thrive Ministry resources where it's just the things that I teach, the series that I come up with here, or weekend retreats that we do or camps, we put them all up on the site, then we can just put it up at the bottom down there. But that's where we give our stuff to youth pastors.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah. I so appreciate you doing that. What's the URL for that Mark?

Mark Hall:

Yeah, we'll have to cut for a moment because on the top of my head, cannot remember what it is.

Randy Frazee:

Oh, you know what? We'll just put it in the show notes. Yeah, they'll put it in the show notes that, so you have to go to the show notes to get access to...

Mark Hall:

It's one of those things that's like Thrive Ministry Resources or Thrive Resource Ministry. The whole dyslexic thing is killing me right now.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah, yeah. But people can just Google that. Hey, this is a great segue and this is kind of what I wanted to wrap up with is because you're very open, particularly in your book life stories, you're very open about your ADD and dyslexia. So you just had maybe a little bit of experience with that. I know when we were on the story tour, my son who is in commercial real estate right now had a little bit of time off from his schooling and he ran your slides for you and you told him, dude, you got to get those slides up and they got to be in the same place. And my son, my son's like, I'm a commercial real estate finance major. He was so freaked out. But I want you to talk about that and how you have found a way to engage God's word in the midst of dealing with this dyslexia, ADD. Because there's a lot of people who struggle with sort of these learning challenges and how have you overcome it?

Mark Hall:

I think the first way was realizing that you could actually say it out loud when I was a kid, nobody meant to communicate this. But you just kind of got the feeling that everybody has everything together. Everybody is just, that was back in the day where you dressed your best, you sat still and you just, everybody was perfect.

Mark Hall:

And I just thought, man, I am the only train wreck here. So I learned to hide and I didn't want anybody to know. So I would make sure I didn't have my Bible, I'd lose it. So they wouldn't make me read out loud. I just hid with everybody else. And as a young youth pastor, we went to a youth conference and Dave Edwards was the speaker. He still speaks, he just spoke at camp, [inaudible 00:34:26] me about a couple years ago. And he's telling the story and in the middle of it he goes, oh by the way, I had a lot of dyslexia as a kid and I was like, in my young mind, I'm like, you can't say that to all these people. Oh like, nobody's going to listen to you now. They're all going to know you're not smart. I mean that's how I saw it.

Mark Hall:

I was like, how do you just do this? And here he was encouraging people through his weakness. And I was still very young in reading scripture because the Bible freaked me out. I didn't know how to find stuff. And here I was a youth pastor, so I was just starting Bible college. I had like eight kids at this little church. And then I see second Corinthians 12 and that's where Paul's talking about this thorn in the flesh that he had. He never says what it was, he just said, It was something that held me back so much it caused me to pray over and over and over, God please take this away. And that's the first time I ever read with my eyes in scripture, somebody is saying, God, will you heal me from this? And he says, no, I love you but we're going to walk through this together.

Mark Hall:

And I thought nobody is saying this. Everybody else is saying, just saying Jesus' name like a magic word at the end of something. And I'm like, I want to go punch every one of those guys right in the head. And so I'm reading this 'cause I'm like, people were saying you didn't have enough faith. And I was like, this is Paul who has more faith than Paul. So walking, I just had all these mental like, all these little constructs that I'd come up with about God, were breaking down by a scripture. That's the thing about scripture, it'll mess up all your beliefs, right? So I had to start realizing, man, okay, so then God knew I had dyslexia. This isn't a surprise. So that means he apparently isn't that freaked out by this. And that's what when I first started realizing God doesn't need us. And I've said that for years, but it's still amazing that I didn't know that one time. Like God doesn't need us, God wants us, right?

Mark Hall:

He's not going, I need that kid on my team because he's tall and I need her on my team because she sings good. God doesn't think that way. God thinks that guy's got nothing going for him. I'm going to do something in him. I'm going to tell my story through that guy because he doesn't have it all together. He's not confident in himself and he's going to have to rely on me the whole time. Those are the kind of people I can speak through, right? The disciples, no coach in America would've picked that team bro.

Randy Frazee:

I know.

Mark Hall:

Right. They had nothing to offer. Nothing to offer. They're walking in with their life advice. When you pull the net, you got to use your legs see. That's what they've got to offer.

Randy Frazee:

I'd love for you to [inaudible 00:37:33] back into that again. Because you were talking about the disciple. Their [inaudible 00:37:39] was like when you pull up a net, you got to use your legs kind of thing, so...

Mark Hall:

Yeah, I don't know where that came from, I just came up.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah, so just jump back in. Yeah, jump back in there. That's what I'm trying...

Mark Hall:

One of the things I try to remind people is that the disciples were not rock stars. There wasn't a theologian in the bunch. I mean they had... no coach in America would've picked that team, right? Out on their best day [inaudible 00:38:00] going to tell the world? When you're pulling in the nets, you got to lift with your legs, see and then watch out 'cause if that corner goes, the fish are all going to pour out, right? So that's their advice to the world. And God says that's the one, those are the guys are going to start the church.

Mark Hall:

And so all I could see for that first several years was that I had the wrong idea. I had the wrong idea about who God loves and why he loves. I had the wrong idea of who he uses and who got to 'cause I was still picking rock stars in my own church, like man, if God ever did anything big in our city, that guy Doug, he's awesome man, everybody listens to him. I always people picked out and I always, in my head, I was the kid in the back that I love God and I believe all these promises about him [inaudible 00:38:58] just, I believe it for other people. I think that would be the guy he'll use and that'll be the girl. I just never saw it for me until I actually started reading scripture myself. And that's what changed everything.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah, that's fantastic Mark. Because I think when a person [inaudible 00:39:17] God and dependency upon him. But when we win, which we will because it's his will, then everyone will say, now this is pointing everybody to God's glory, which is a really wonderful formula. I think what happens in the celebrity side of things when everyone says, man, that guy looks, Doug, he looks like he should be a winner. He could do this with or without Jesus kind of thing. I think really something's based in the church. And so you started entering into God's word with that sort of perspective and it sort of opened everything up for you. So did you just open the word and start reading it? Is that kind of your deal or do you journal or what do you do?

Mark Hall:

Oh, what do I do now?

Randy Frazee:

Yeah.

Mark Hall:

I try to go a book at a time so I don't get off [inaudible 00:39:58]. Pretty soon I'll start thinking I can do all things through Christ who strengthen me means I can win a football game, a little out of, you keep getting a little out of... yeah. So I think it's always good to just go to the book of the Bible you're going to read, find out who was writing, who's he talking to, what was going on during that time, knowing that stuff, you changed everything. Like a good study Bible that'll just tell you, here's what was happening, here's when it happens. That helps a ton. Then you start reading verse by verse and realize, hey, that really cool, that really cool idea that God, I can do all things to Christ is not about my football game. This is actually a totally different situation and it helps a lot.

Randy Frazee:

I agree with you. I'm a big NIV study Bible guy and just reading the introductory stuff, the notes and all of that, just taking your time and it'll lead you to different places and links. And sometimes when you're teaching, you're writing a song, people are like, how did you find that? I'm like, It's just right there. If you just take your time and on all these bells. I did a sermon this last Sunday on Jesus' statement, I'm the light of the world, and I just started going to every place where the scripture talked about light and it got into the scientific thing with time dilatation of what we've learned today. And it was just blowing everybody's mind, mine included, about the extent of what Jesus, when Jesus says he's the light of the world. So, that's pretty cool. Hey man, hey Mark, thanks for your time. Where can people find you on social? I follow you on everything on social media. So where do they find you?

Mark Hall:

I'm on, I think I'm on most is Instagram. I think my mind only holds onto one thing. So I just got the login to the Casting Crowns Instagram, so watch out. But so Casting Crowns official, mine is Mark Hall CC and that's where I just put my own stuff. We have a YouTube channel, and on the YouTube channel I put a lot of Divo thoughts, just thoughts on scripture, you can find us there. Yeah.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah, it's really cool. I love following you, Mark. You're one of the funniest guys I know. And I think being a youth pastor has really helped you. And I wish we had more time to talk about all your sort of marvel memorabilia in some, maybe weekend at closing, you can pick up your computer and walk around a little bit. And that caused people to watch the video of this. And then you're also, right after the story tour, you're the first one who introduced me to the Helium Light app. You remember that? You and your son were singing some sort of song and you did it in the Helium deal. And I have used that a million times. You're the first one, I'm like, what is this man? And I touch you like dude, what is this thing?

Mark Hall:

That is so funny.

Randy Frazee:

Yeah, I have introduced it to pastors all over the country.

Mark Hall:

Yeah. I'm definitely pretty cutting edge, pretty cutting...

Randy Frazee:

Well, I would encourage people to follow you on Instagram just to release a little bit of dopamine and endorphins, get their laughter through the day so they can make it through the day. And also check out the resources that you provide the Divos to learn, how you engage God's word and certainly to continue to listen to your music maybe in a fresh way now as people pick up, why in the world does this Mark's music and Casting Crown's music. Why does it move us the way it does? And I think we covered a little bit of that today. So man, thanks for taking the time to be a part of this. I really do appreciate it. Mark, you were the only guy that I wanted to really talk about this subject with. You're the guy.

Mark Hall:

Man. I appreciate that bro. Appreciate your friendship over the years and speaking it into my family through the stuff that you make, so, we love you bro.

Randy Frazee:

Let's go on tour. Yeah, I love you too, man. We'll go on tour together one day.

Mark Hall:

We need to do that.

Randy Frazee:

Let's do that. We should do that. God bless my friend.

Mark Hall:

[inaudible 00:43:53]

Randy Frazee:

Thanks for listening to the Bible Roots podcast. We hope you were encouraged and energized by our discussion today. If you enjoyed this episode, we'd love for you to leave a review. This small gesture will help more church leaders discover our conversations around Bible engagement. And don't forget, like and subscribe to our podcast so you'll never miss a new episode. Now, may your faith be strengthened through God's word today and every day.