

SION ALFORD

Sion Alford's life seemed well mapped out. With a doctorate degree in pharmacy and a comfortable job as a pharmacist, he was riding smooth and steady in a boat few people would have ventured to rock. But God, not surprisingly, had plans of His own.

The result of that divine planning, and the fairly amazing path it blazed in Sion's life, is his unique and powerful teaching, songwriting and worship leading ministry. With a multitude of musical influences shaping his own identity—from rock, pop, R&B to classic hymns—Sion indeed brings fresh fire and a unique and exciting vision to praise and worship music. As director of music at High Point Church in Arlington, Texas, Sion has forged a dynamic ministry that is now poised to spread across a nation that is hungry not only for a new sound, but a new awakening.

Sion grew up in Chipley, Florida, 40 miles north of Panama City. Unlike many singers that knew almost from birth that they are called to be musicians, Sion's encounters with music as a youngster were hardly extraordinary.

"I had done the typical kid thing," he recalls. "My parents made me take piano lessons until the teacher quit—probably because of me—after two months. I played saxophone in the junior high school band, and was in the high school glee club. But I really had a strong desire somewhere down in me to do music. But those desires didn't surface until I found Him."

Though he'd been raised in the church, Sion's heart first became seriously inclined toward the Lord and Christian music in the early '80s at a concert by Christian music luminaries Mylon LeFevre and Russ Taff. A Whiteheart tape he acquired soon after turned Sion away from secular top 40 and rock that he'd grown up on, and he searched out all the contemporary Christian music he could get his hands on.

"That music was the hook and line that drew me to the Lord," states Sion. "Music isn't the Gospel, but it was definitely the vehicle that took me to Jesus. And to this day, I've never forgotten that. I knew at that time that's what I wanted to do."

Sion's confirmation of his own musical gifts came when he was 19, after his second year of college. He was attending a youth rally with his wife-to-be, Shannon, when the pastor called upon the congregation to pray for its hearts' desire. Sion prayed for the ability to play and sing music, and was flabbergasted when the church's pianist—a total stranger—called him forward and told him that he would one day indeed be sharing and encouraging others with music.

"That experience really freaked me out," says Sion, "but not so much because of what he was saying, but rather the goodness of God to do that for me as well as the responsibility I knew that would entail."

Almost miraculously, Sion went home and began playing piano. Entirely self-taught, he learned by watching other players then going home and recreating what he'd observed. Within six months Sion was playing piano with his church youth band. From 1985 to '88, Sion wrote his first songs in collaboration with other band members, all the while continuing his college studies.



"My heart wanted to go full-time in music, but I felt God telling me to stay with my education," recalls Sion, "but I can see that that period of time was really my seminary. I had reached a real comfort zone in my life and my walk back in Chipley, and uprooting myself and moving to the University of Florida in Gainesville left me pretty empty. I got to know God in a major way during those years."

Sion and Shannon married in 1992, when two weeks later an offer came to Sion to serve as a volunteer assistant to Clint Brown, the music director at nationally-known Pastor Rod Parsley's World Harvest Church in Columbus, Ohio. Sion spent a year at World Harvest, receiving not only a profound education from Brown, but, more importantly, finding identity and confidence as a worship leader in his own right.

When Brown relocated to Orlando, Florida, to begin his own church, Faith World Center of Orlando, Sion and Shannon followed, though Sion soon began feeling a call to lead his own music ministry. Soon after, a church in Panama City called, needing a music director. A quick round of interviews led Sion into the role that he filled for over nine years: writing songs and leading praise and worship at Living Word Fellowship.

"Then the Lord spoke," says Sion, "It was time to leave a place that I felt was going to be home forever. My family was there, my friends were all there...but God said it was time to leave. Like Abraham, He didn't tell us where to go. He just told us to go." In the spring of 2003, Sion and Shannon packed their bags and began a journey that lasted almost a year to the day. Through this journey, Sion and Shannon wrote and recorded their most powerful project to date, "I Will Follow."

In January of 2004, Sion and Shannon moved to Arlington, Texas, and joined hearts with a dynamic, life-changing church called High Point Church under the direction and vision of Pastors Gary and April Simons. For two years Sion and Shannon served as music pastors and saw phenomenal growth within the church and music ministry. "It was a great experience," says Sion, "we were honored to serve in a mega-church that had a mega-vision. We made so many lasting relationships and we learned so much about leading worship."

In the winter of 2005, Sion, Shannon, and producer Mitch Waddell formed 247Worship Ministries to help spread the message of true worship around the world. After nearly 15 years of full-time, on staff music ministry within the local church, Sion, Shannon and the 247Worship Music team now travel around the globe teaching, equipping, and training leaders through concerts, conferences, seminars and church services.

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