

BACKSEAT WRITER QUESTIONS:

1. Who/What has most influenced your musical roots (past and/or present)?

I'm a big fan of the song. And I will pretty much shamelessly enjoy a song in whatever genre it happens to find it.

When I was very young (age 7 or 8 I think), the first question I would ask a girl I took a shine to would be 'so what's your favorite song right now?' If her answer was anything like 'I just listen to whatever's on the radio', she was out of the running!! That being said my favorite songs right now include 'The Brotherhood of Men' by The Innocence Mission, and 'White Winter Hymnal' by The Fleet Foxes.

B. You were a Rhodes Scholar! How has education transformed you?

Well I guess the most profound way that education has shaped me has been in the way I think. Not necessarily *what I think* about a particular subject - although studying politics and philosophy and theology did change that. But more *'how I think'* things through - how I order my thoughts, how I

shape an argument, how i construct an opinion. The one thing that studying politics in South Africa taught me was that it was okay to put my emotions to one side while I sifted through the facts. If emotions drive research too hard they can blind you to the truths staring you in the face. I think on any subject it's useful to suspend judgement before finishing the research. But of course this doesn't come naturally, and most people will be researching a topic to substantiate their opinion. All of us do this, no matter how hard we try not to. Emotion can make us interested and persistent. But unless it's checked it can also make us irresponsible with the facts.

iii. You've relocated to Malibu—what spurred the move?

A worship team from Malibu visited Cape Town a year before I left South Africa for England. During their brief ministry trip I became fast friends with quite a few people from the team. I stopped in on California on my way to Oxford and then spent the next 10 years thinking about it!! After Jude and I became ill with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome spending time in Malibu, surrounded by friends, and good weather felt like a wise decision. We certainly do love it.

d. Both you and your wife struggle with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. How has this disease changed your perspective as a Christ-follower, songwriter,

musician, and leader?

Enduring an illness where healing is prayed for but not immediately (or even ever) received can be a surprisingly good faith builder. It's a strange thing, but God promises that He is near to those who are broken-hearted. And we have found that to be true. The first two things we found the illness did was incapacitate us (we couldn't do what we were used to doing) and then isolate us (being around people tired us - and still tires us). It broke us and challenged who we imagined we were. Suddenly we weren't the people who could suck it up and handle all the challenging situations we were facing. I quickly went from being a pastor, to being the guy who couldn't make it through a whole service because it was too taxing for me. I went from being the guy who led worship to being the guy who had to sit down or walk out during the worship because it was too loud, or too intense or mostly just too long for me. It was as if the ways or traditions that the community I was a part of and had enjoyed so much, were suddenly exclusive. My body couldn't handle them. And although I knew better there were moments when I wondered if it was even possible to be a 'christian' like this. And so for a long time we attempted to do church in the way we were accustomed, each time leaving church depressed and out of sorts because we invariably couldn't last. It was at least a year before we found our way to HTB's family service. It was very different from what we were used to. The kids remained in the

service for worship and the entire thing was geared towards people with short attentions spans.... we were home!! Of course, despite appearances, this is as valid a version of communal worship as anything we had been to before - or indeed, anything that garners the attention of the adult world. God is as present in these slightly more clumsy versions of community as he is in any seamless, well produced contemporary or ancient service. In fact, these services have become a metaphor for our entire (spiritual) lives! Our lives have a slightly, disjointed, at times awkward, almost always clumsy slant to them, but in the midst of it all our Father is present, revealing himself to us, comforting and strengthening us, and even at times, using us! The late Mike Yaconelli wrote a book called Messy Spirituality of which I'm very fond. This is where we live!

Life is messy, but God is not deterred! He is near to the broken hearted.