

## Iron Bell Music Continues Day to Day after Sophomore Album "Glory to Glory" Release

It is one in the afternoon on a farm on the outskirts of Louisville, Kentucky. The entrance to the property is marked with an orange cone, a large mailbox, and a gravel road. If you drive around a long, wide curve, you've just missed the drive. For many driving by, it is just another piece of land on the way home from work, but for some, the barn at the end of the road is a place that changes lives. Slightly hidden behind the trees lining the driveway, on the left of the gravel path, a sign not visible to passersby reads, "Iron Bell Ministries."

Just a few years ago, the farm was simply an out-of-the-way spot of peace for Louisville-residents to get an hour or two with God in the middle of their busy lives. Since the founding of Iron Bell Ministries in 2009, the ministry house is quiet and homey on Wednesday mornings for prayer and worship, and loud and lively once a month on Friday nights for a communal worship night. With no church affiliation, societal obligation, denomination rule, or faith tradition outside of the Bible, Iron Bell Ministries attracts a crowd of young adults, community elders, and people from all types of churches, cultural backgrounds, and walks of life. The uniting factor—faith in Jesus and belief that the Bible is the inerrant story of God and His people.

By 2016, the monthly worship nights became a routine part of the month, a way for the guys meeting to play music together at a place called the Iron Bell to lead others in worship and to play the songs they were writing together. While writing music with the band and [burdened with a testimony](#) of finding Jesus amidst a 5-year long crystal meth addiction, Iron Bell worship director Stephen McWhirter sat down to write God That Saves. The song grew organically from both his testimony and from writing music on the side with the other band members including front men Joel Gardis and Josh Glauber. They started to sing the song at worship nights and attendees connected with it, so the song did its job—or so they thought. Meanwhile, someone else in the world ran across a video of McWhirter singing God That Saves—a producer in the music industry. That moment changed everything for Iron Bell.

"The band wasn't like let's put a band together—we were just meeting at this place called the Iron Bell, and [God] started burdening us with these songs as we were praying," McWhirter said. "Long story short, someone in the industry saw the video for God That Saves and asked to pitch a record deal on our behalf. Literally the Lord was like, 'I'm gonna make this happen, and y'all aren't even prepared for it.' We definitely got flung into it. We were worshipping in a barn in Louisville, Kentucky, and the industry came looking for us."

Fast-forward to November 2018 and Iron Bell music is celebrating not only a successful 100 days on tour, but a record deal with Essential Worship, [two studio albums in two years](#), and a still-circulating radio single of God That Saves. Yet, despite the success, at one in the afternoon on a sunny Friday in November, McWhirter and bassist Jerry Barker show up early along with the rest of the band to prepare to worship with their community at the Iron Bell.

“We still try to do what we do. We adore the Lord, we spend time praying and ministering and staying loose and open handed. We don’t make it too program driven. We’re really just going for it with the Lord and seeing what He wants to do.” The only difference McWhirter says is “the amount of exposure we’ve gotten—we have people traveling five and six hours to come to the worship nights. We had a couple fly out from California last month after hearing about our worship nights. But it’s still people coming seeking the Lord.”

After a full rehearsal with the entire band and tech crew, the staff, band, and crew come together to share a meal with founders Gregg and Shelley Dedrick and pray over the night. The band will be playing songs from their freshman and sophomore albums as well as a few Christmas songs. The majority of the set list is from *Glory to Glory*, which was released on October 19, 2018.

McWhirter noted that although they tried to protect their “vibe” on the new record, “we tried to really partner with the Lord, try to listen well to what He wanted me to sing about. Then when I got into a room with writers, we looked for common themes that the Lord was giving us all. That’s what we’ve done on the last record and this record, [but], the first one is a bit more in your situation, while this record is more hopeful in God overarching who He is and what He wants to do with you. It’s even more hopeful, I feel like.”

Iron Bell’s music has always been written with the intention of reflecting their ministry of, “Intimacy, Purpose, Partnership. The music is really the intimacy part of knowing God. The journey of intimacy with the Lord to finding out your purpose in the Lord to being able to live that out with Him. We just allow the Lord to love on people and help them intimately connect in a way that they realize He’s real. There’s something transformational like that for people. It’s discipleship.”

As the band prepares to step on stage, they are always speechless, no matter how many people show up. However, the barn is always packed and typically overflowing to standing room only "seating" since the albums have been out. Yet these days, the crowded barn is still the smallest crowd the band will worship with throughout the year. “We’ve had some moments on stages in front of 20,000 people leading worship and giving my testimony and seeing people give their lives to Christ because of that is really crazy. I think the Lord has a lot more for us than we ever imagined.”

The worship night lasts about two hours and includes a short message by Gerdis as well as a prayer from Shelley Dedrick. Attendees stick around afterward to talk to the band, receive prayer, and visit with friends before heading home.

Although not much has changed with the day to day, McWhirter knows that a lot has changed for the band. With hearing your songs on the radio and playing for crowds in the tens of thousands comes added pressure to do more and be more. "We try to steward it well. The great joke is, 'tell God your plans so He can laugh' because His plans are bigger. It’s tempting in this industry to follow others, but we want to listen to God. I can’t definitively say this or that [for our future] because we still want to get into the secret place, do what he tells us, and live into the

fullness of life for those who listen well and do what God says in faith. If we stop doing that now, God would never honor it.

"Throughout the gospel, Jesus comes back to everlasting life in the Gospel of John. In John 17:3 it says 'I pray they have eternal life' and He says eternal life is to know God. [Jesus's] biggest thing is we know Him, and we hope that's what happens with the music we create and that people get past misconceptions that people believe about God."

Iron Bell Music will be hosting a special New Year's Eve worship night at the barn Monday, December 31 as well as a Night of Worship in Versailles, Kentucky, Friday, January 11. To view all tour dates, visit [ironbellmusic.com/tour](http://ironbellmusic.com/tour) and to receive more information about upcoming equipping events or prayer mornings, visit [ironbellministries.org](http://ironbellministries.org).