

## **Introducing Alabaster Grace:**

“It’s not rocket science.” That’s what people say when they’re talking about something that is easy or not very important.

But for Brad Perry, an actual real-life rocket scientist from NASA, and his wife Joanie Perry, God’s call on their lives to share Christ through music is the most important thing.

Long before this pair of licensed ministers met and started their musical ministry as Alabaster Grace, Brad and Joanie each learned to cling to God’s promises.

Especially dear to them is Romans 8:28—“We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose (NRSV).”

“We feel like we have lived Romans 8:28,” says Joanie. “Both of us have been through some very hard times in our lives, but every time we have been in a difficult situation, the Lord has worked everything out for our good.”

The duo, whose radio singles (“Heal Our Land” and the brand new “Word of God”) are currently playing on Christian radio stations across the country, could be the poster children for second chances, starting over, and all things working together for good.

Perhaps, then, it’s only fitting that Alabaster Grace was named after their collective desire to, as Joanie says, “give God our best and complete worship because of the priceless gift of grace that He freely gives to us.”

Indeed, Brad and Joanie have each, separately and together, walked through tumultuous times in their lives and miraculous moments of rebirth. But ever since they met in 2012 and began ministering through music within their home state of Virginia, and then married in 2015, the things that God has been teaching them along the way have been poured into a steady stream of concerts, leading worship, and sharing sermons and inspirational presentations in churches, retreats, conferences and coffeehouses.

Joanie was born into a family of churchgoers, but she experienced, among other things, a homelife that included divorced parents and difficult circumstances. In her 20s, she drifted away from her relationship with the Lord and stopped attending church. A few close friends and fellow believers gently and gradually helped lead her back, and she left behind the disillusionment of her past and rededicated herself as a mother, music teacher, singer, and librarian.

But while her parents eventually reconciled, Joanie’s first marriage ended after her then husband, who never really accepted her newly fired-up faith, decided he was no longer in love with her. Nonetheless, she found love again after meeting Brad through the online dating service, Christian Mingle.

“Sometimes God will do miracles beyond what you would even think or imagine, just as the Bible says,” Joanie muses. “When Brad came along, God gave me a second chance to share my life with someone who truly loves me, cherishes me, and accepts me for who I am. It’s more than I would have ever asked for. And, as an added bonus, the Lord has allowed us to be partners in our music ministry.”

Though Brad's faith-centered upbringing with supportive parents was quite different from what Joanie had experienced, he was faced with a major blow at a mere five years old when his mother was diagnosed with cancer, which would resurface and claim her life much later down the road.

Nonetheless, Brad has fond memories of his childhood, including getting introduced to the guitar as a kid and then becoming as passionate as possible about space travel (so much so that he and his dad spent two years building a full-scale model of the Apollo Command Module in their basement for Brad to simulate an actual Apollo mission in real time). Besides drawing local and national headlines for pulling off such an extraordinary pursuit, this paved the way for Brad's stint in the United States Air Force as a pilot, and his extensive career with NASA that included training Space Shuttle crews, helping to design the International Space Station, and numerous other projects including aeronautics and crew systems operations, as well as robotic planetary and astrophysics missions. As a result of his dedicated work and accomplishments, Brad received two of NASA's highest honors along the way—the Exceptional Service Medal and the Outstanding Leadership Medal.

But while everything was rosy on the work front, Brad's personal life was messy. His first marriage suffered the same fate as Joanie's. Later, after retiring from NASA, he battled prostate cancer, which thankfully, he has since beaten. But in spite of circumstances that have sometimes seemed like a roller coaster ride, Brad has found peace through acceptance and has grown exponentially during every step of God's perfect process.

"Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden, life has been a challenge for all of us on earth. Bad things happen to good people. But if we look to God through the good and the bad of what we experience in our everyday lives, He brings more out of it than we could ever imagine," Brad observes. "When we look to God to redirect us and we keep Him first in our lives, He can make an amazing success out of what looks like anything from failure to mediocre existence at best. His plan always exceeds what we can plan and imagine ourselves. It all happens according to His perfect time schedule, which on our part requires perseverance and many other things we have to grow through."

"I can see Romans 8:28 working in our marriage," Brad continues. "I can see that verse working in our music. I can see that verse working in everybody that looks to the Lord to bring the good out of their lives. Even if we're in a good spot, He takes us to a better spot because we're focused on Him."

That unflinching focus has always found its way into every aspect of Alabaster Grace's ministry, especially lately, leading to a floodgate of creativity during the pandemic. Primary lyricist Joanie, a longtime fan of Sandi Patty, Twila Paris and Paul Wilbur, describes receiving a steady flow of inspiration that arrives like "downloads" during moments of prayer and reflection, while guitarist Brad seamlessly improvises instrumentations born of his classical training, bits of blues and jazz, and influences from like-minded players such as Eric Clapton, Carlos Santana, and Phil Keaggy. Having such a wide range of musical muses results in a variety of genres that are currently being explored in the studio with multiple Dove Award-winning producer Chris Bevins (Salvador, Jaci Velasquez, Mark Schultz, and Phillips, Craig & Dean), which come to life for audiences of multiple generations.

One of the most recent songs to come from this collaborative team is the contemporary pop/inspirational flavorings of the group's lead single, "Heal Our Land," which combines Joanie's angelic delivery, Brad's smooth guitar, and Chris' crystal-clear production.

"It's based on Second Chronicles 7:14, and it's basically a prayer for our country to return to God and to biblical principles," explains Brad. "You can look almost anywhere today, compare it to even a few years

ago and see how certain things are going further away from God instead of closer to God. We think it's a very appropriate prayer for our country at this time."

Then there's the recently released "Word of God," with its gorgeous vocals, rich acoustic flavors and world-infused rhythms.

"Based on the first chapter of the Gospel of John, 'Word of God' acknowledges God as Creator of the universe and everything in it," notes Brad. "God sent His Son to be the Light in the darkness so that we might be called children of the One True God. This song employs a Middle Eastern-style chord progression that connects the listeners to the Holy Land, where Christ served and died for our sins. But the story doesn't end there, as Christ was resurrected as our Redeemer and King."

Regardless of the musical style or topic of each individual song, Alabaster Grace hopes to be a beacon of light to music lovers, pointing them to Jesus, no matter if it's an audience of one, ten, a hundred or a thousand, meeting them exactly where they are on their journey.

"It doesn't matter how old we are. We're never too old to serve the Lord," says Joanie. "Every single thing that we've gone through has been for a reason, so that when we minister, we're able to relate to people and encourage them. We don't have to be in despair. We don't have to be hopeless. We can be joyful. It's really about surrendering to the Lord and letting Him flow through us."

"The majority of all these songs come to me during my quiet time in His presence, just feeling His love, mercy and grace," Joanie continues. "My heart's desire, and I know it's Brad's, too, is that when people hear the music, they can experience the same kind of feelings that I get when I'm with the Lord. We all need to know how much He loves us, and by sharing this music, it's my prayer that it would overflow into what people are hearing."

"And we want to be obedient servants," adds Brad. "It's not about us. It's about drawing others closer to the heart of God through song and worship, and offering everyone hope and encouragement. With our song lyrics being Scripture-based, we pray that people will search out and read their Bible after hearing the music. We just want to be good and faithful servants with the talents and the gifts God has given us."

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