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## MUSIC: CHRISTIAN CITY YOUTH - DYING TO THEMSELVES

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DAVID ADAMS

**Nikki Fletcher never wanted to be a worship leader.**

Now lead singer and one of key songwriters with Sydney-based band Christian City Youth, the twenty-something says her experience of growing up in a family where her parents were both pastors at a Christian City Church in the Sydney suburb of Chatswood had led to her deciding that was the one thing she definitely - definitely - didn't want to do.

"My parents were in ministry and I saw all the unglamorous side of ministry - the hard work and all that sort of stuff - and I just really desperately didn't want to be part of it," she says.

"It sounds funny but I think a lot of pastor's kids are like that. But then when I started worship leading, I just knew it was the call of God on my life and knew that that's what I was supposed to be doing.

"There's been times where I've definitely tried to leave and get out of it and not do it, but God just keeps on opening doors and keeps laying on my heart that this is what I'm meant to be doing."

Christian City Youth (formerly known as CCC Youth) have just released their sixth album - *No Longer I* (a title reflected in the CD cover's torn images) - and are currently touring east coast cities before heading to New Zealand in July.

The album - recorded at the Sydney-based Grove studio previously owned by INXS and now owned by Darlene and Mark Zschech - is the third album Fletcher has been a part of.

She says the band's sound, not to mention its line-up, has changed significantly over the years.

"The whole crew of musos, singers and songwriters has changed so obviously the sound and the message is going to change with that," she says.

"It's definitely evolved. I think we've got a very distinct sound now and a very strong message that's coming through this album."

Fletcher says that while the music fits into the category of praise and worship, these days there is a "real rock/pop edge to it".

Song-writing on the albums is something of a collaborative process for the members of Christian City Youth. For Fletcher, it usually starts with a personal revelation from God or an experience she's going through.

"What I usually do is just sit down and worship God or I just sit down on my couch, start playing my guitar, start playing a few chords, and whatever comes out, comes out. It's not really a calculated thing for me."

Holding that thought, she says the title of the latest album *No Longer I* reflects the band's common experience.

"We've all gone through stuff in our lives in the last few months and few years where we've just had to totally let stuff die within us and just chase God with all our heart and let everything go. So the message *No Longer I* - it's not about us, hey it's just about loving God and serving people and loving people."

The idea of dying to self, Fletcher notes, is a daily experience.

"It's something that you have to do everyday. It's a lifetime thing - I mean we're never perfect. You just have to keep on keep on coming back to Jesus every day and letting our own lives go."



A NEW GENERATION: Christian City Youth with Nikki Fletcher (centre).

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**- Nikki Fletcher on the new album, 'No Longer I'**

Fletcher, who works as a worship leader within the youth department at Oxford Falls when not touring with the band (other members also work part-time jobs or are attending college), says the band's purpose is primarily to serve their church and to support the Christian City Church leadership and their vision.

"Our whole priority is our services and the young people that come into our youth and discipling them and raising them up. Our way of serving is just being part of the worship team and writing songs and doing the music and that. Beyond that everything else is a bonus - our heart really is to build our church."

Another of the band's members - Dan Korocz, the singer of the latest album's title track *No Longer I* - joined them around two years ago.

"I love music, I love God, I love worship, I love people and I love serving at church," he says when asked what drives him to be in the band. "And I think it's the call of God on my life as well."

The twenty-year-old says he identified that call while just "hanging out with Jesus".

"I think it's just something that you just eventually feel inside of you and something that you know. Always when you first hear the call, you're asking 'Is this God or is this just me?' but I think over time, God just reveals it to you more and more and you can feel it becoming stronger and stronger."

Korocz says he finds the greatest challenge of being in the band is "keeping your heart right" but adds that he believes that being in a band - being part of a group - helps to do that.

"We're all just best mates and we all just look out for each other," he says. "If any of us have got an issue or we need a friend or someone to talk to, we can always go to someone."

Fletcher, who lists Oprah Winfrey as one of people she'd most like to be, describes the opportunity to minister to Christians at large as "totally awesome".

"But it comes back to a place of being faithful with what God has given us - and that's the church that we serve in every week. But that obviously goes out beyond those walls."

While she really enjoys the singing and songwriting - "that's my dream in life, I love that", Fletcher says it can be tough when the band faces criticism. But she adds that it's her love for God that keeps her going.

"I just literally want to serve Him everyday and I don't want to waste anything that He's given me. I don't want to waste one moment or one day just doing my own thing. I want my life to count in the end and I want to know that when I eventually go to be with Jesus that He's proud of me and that I've done my very best with everything He's given me. That just keeps me going every day. If I feel like quitting - which you do, you have your days - that's kind of irrelevant to the big picture compared to the fact that you're serving God every single day."

Asked where she sees herself 10 years from now, Fletcher - who has been married for around three years to husband Jonathan - says she sees herself with a family and serving her church.

"And I see myself travelling the world and writing songs and singing them. That's about it."

For more information visit [www.ccc.org.au](http://www.ccc.org.au).



*NO LONGER I: Christian City Youth's latest release is the sixth for the group.*

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***- Dan Korocz on the call of God***