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Jonathan McReynolds Grammy Nomination: Closer Live in Chicago Nominated for Best Gospel Album

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"The raw emotion, spiritual depth, and musical innovation"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Two-time Grammy winner Jonathan McReynolds earned his 10th career Grammy nomination on 16 November 2026, when the nominees for the 69th Grammy Awards were announced. His live album Closer (Live in Chicago) is nominated for Best Gospel Album, one of five projects in the category. The winners will be announced at the ceremony on 7 February 2027 at the Crypto.Com Arena in Los Angeles.

Picture the room in Chicago. A hometown crowd, a singer who grew up in the city, and a live recording that caught the sound of a room full of people singing along. That is the record the Recording Academy has now put on its shortlist.

Ten nominations is a number that says something plain about McReynolds: he has been doing this long enough, and well enough, that the industry keeps coming back to his work. He has already won twice. This time, the nomination comes for an album recorded live, in his own city, with nothing polished away.

McReynolds is not a newcomer chasing a first nod. He is a Chicago native who has built one of the most trusted catalogues in modern gospel, song by song, over more than a decade. Closer is the latest chapter, and the Academy noticed.

Jonathan McReynolds Closer Live In Chicago: What The Album Captures

Closer (Live in Chicago) is a 13-track project recorded live in McReynolds' hometown of Chicago. The announcement described it as capturing "the raw emotion, spiritual depth, and musical innovation" that have made him one of the most trusted voices in inspirational music. It is available now wherever music is sold and streamed.

The track list opens with "Echo" and "About Your Love", and includes "Emoji" featuring Jordan G. Welch and "Still" featuring Jamal Roberts. A live gospel record is a record of a room, not just a singer. The applause, the voices joining in, the moments when the band drops back and the crowd carries the song - all of it is part of the album.

The project is described as his most personal and spiritually centered to date. That is a strong claim for an artist with six studio albums behind him, but the live format backs it up: you can hear the man, not just the production.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

READ THE FULL STORY

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