

Worry Free Finances

John Siebeling (Baker Books)

The lead pastor of The Life Church in Memphis, Tenn., gives three simple steps to eliminate stress and worry from managing your finances. (Hint: It doesn't include making more money.)

Ready to Fly

Jamie Grace (Gotee Records)

Grammy nominee and Dove Award-winner Jamie Grace follows last summer's hit single "Hold Me" with her new album *Ready to Fly*.

The Secret Power of Covenant

Kerry Kirkwood (Destiny Image)

For far too many Christians, the benefits of God's covenant relationship with His people is never realized—and yet it is available today. *The Secret Power of Covenant* helps you change the way you pray, unlock your covenant inheritance and release God's supernatural restoration in your life now.

Birthing the Miraculous

Heidi Baker (Charisma House)

Heidi Baker weaves true stories from her life and ministry with the Bible story of Mary's pregnancy to show readers how to carry the promises of God in their own lives and become catalysts for God's glory here on earth.

This Thanksgiving, Reflect the Lord's Bountiful Love

I opened the front door and came face to face with a rather large gift basket wrapped in clear cellophane with a gigantic velvet orange and brown bow. It was so big that it blocked the face of the deliveryman.

The sight of such a gift was too wonderful for words! As a young married couple, Terry and I were going through hard times, with little money for extras, much less the basics! The arrival of this surprise basket of goodies was not only timely, but a miracle!

Just who was behind this?

Terry and I carefully grabbed the gift basket from the deliveryman and raced to the dining room table to dig in. We tore away the cellophane and bright velvet ribbon to discover, to our amazement, treasures galore!

We uncovered each piece—first there was a canned ham, then a fancy tin of imported sardines (with mustard accompanying it, both of them tied together in a festive plaid ribbon). Out

came two giant links of brown sausage, followed by chunks of rich yellow cheddar and two imported cheeses, and fresh apples, pears, oranges, three boxes of crackers, two tins of cookies, Belgium chocolates, hot cocoa mix in an exotic tin, even a red bag of ground coffee, tea bags and hard candies! In special boxes were two coffee mugs trimmed in blue, two soft cream-colored cloth napkins and a small teapot that matched the mugs. What a feast!

To our surprise, the card read: "May the good Lord bless you abundantly this Thanksgiving. Love, Pearl and William."

Pearl and William? Love? Pearl was an older lady who worked in the gifts department of the large bookstore where Terry worked. Terry, in fact, hardly saw Pearl except when her retired husband, William, stopped by every other week to take her to lunch. The only thing Terry knew about them, in fact, was that they were Christians.

My eye went to the phrase "May the good Lord bless you abundantly this Thanksgiving." It was in that moment when it became obvious to me that the Lord *truly* loved us—loved us enough to have two nearly strangers give something so precious to us in our time of great need.

Isn't that just like the Lord to love us so much and to use others to show His love? God's Word reveals this powerful truth in 1 John 4:7-8: "God is love," and in James 1:17, where it states: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above." His Word also shows *how* He gives to us: "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Eph. 3:20).

It further reveals to us that we are "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Cor. 5:20). As ambassadors for Christ, shouldn't you and I be called, especially in this Thanksgiving season, to show His love through our generous giving to others? As your sister in

the Lord, I invite you to join me in doing it Jesus' way—exceedingly abundantly.

This Thanksgiving perhaps you can give a warmer smile of encouragement from your heart, more of your time to a friend or family member, or give your time as a volunteer at a local soup kitchen, or give your time as a volunteer through your church to a hospital, prison or women's shelter. Be open to giving a bountiful gift basket to someone, reflecting the Lord's bountiful love for her! Invite someone who has nowhere to go to your home this Thanksgiving. Who knows how much they might need that.

The seeds given to others in this Thanksgiving season can reap a powerful harvest, not only in our own lives, but also in the lives of others as they come face to face with the loving Lord of the harvest.

PRAYER POWER FOR THE WEEK OF 11/25/2013

This week thank the Lord for His bountiful love and ask Him to show you how to best reflect it during this season. Ask Him to use you to share His love by reaching out to others in need. Pray that the body of Christ would unite in purpose to preach the gospel and extend His kingdom around the world. Get together with others to bless those who have suffered losses through crime, natural disasters, loss of income and loved ones. Pray that revival would spread in churches and communities across the nation. Lift up our president and those in leadership with him. Continue to pray for Israel and the persecuted church, as well as for our military and their families during this Thanksgiving season. I John 4:7; Matt. 25:34-40.

The Black Nativity

(Fox Searchlight)

Hitting theaters Nov. 27, *The Black Nativity* is a retelling of the classic Nativity story that originally appeared as an off-Broadway play in the 1960s. This contemporary adaptation of popular poet Langston Hughes' work draws a star-studded array of black actors to the silver screen.

The Black Nativity follows Langston, a Baltimore teen (Jacob Latimore, *Vanishing on 7th Street*) raised by his single mother (Jennifer Hudson) and sent by her to New York to spend Christmas with his strict grandparents (Forest Whitaker and Angela Bassett), who are pastors.

Frustrated by the unyielding rules imposed on him by his grandparents, Langston tries to return home and along the way discovers the true meaning of family, faith and healing.

T.D. Jakes, senior pastor of the Potter's House in Dallas, serves as a producer on the faith-based film and says it was made with the whole family in mind.

"Americans are looking for wholesome entertainment that reflects the values they practice and teach their children every day," Jakes says. "We're filling that void."

As an added bonus, *The Black Nativity's* includes powerful singing sure to put anyone in the Christmas mood.

Christmas: Joy to the World

Various Centricity Music artists (Centricity Music)

There's nothing like a good Christmas collaboration. Centricity Music artists Jason Gray, Andrew Peterson, Jonny Diaz, Unspoken and Downhere and new artists Lauren Daigle and Carrollton have created *Christmas: Joy to the World*.

This is the third Christmas multi-artist album the label has released, with the other two debuting in 2007 and 2010.

Three singles from the album have already been released on the radio: Unspoken's "Feliz Navidad," "Light of the World" by Lauren Daigle and "Asleep in the Hay" by Jonny Diaz.

"Christmas is such an emotional time for Christians," says Steve Ford, vice president of marketing at Centricity Music. "It is a time of joy and reflection, love and thanks. [The album] covers the gamut of feelings, and that is reflected in the music on our Christmas release."

The album includes three previously released songs: Downhere's Christmas classic "How Many Kings," Jason Gray's "Joy to the World" and Andrew Peterson's "Long, Long Ago," which was featured on *Bethlehem Skyline Vol. 2.*, Centricity's second Christmas album. New artists Daigle and Carrollton will release full-length albums in 2014.

Hope for All the World

Phillips, Craig and Dean (Fair Trade Services)

Phillips, Craig and Dean's second Christmas release, *Hope for*

All the World, combines both original songs and classics for a timeless Christmas recording.

“The Christmas season trumpets one amazing message through the vocal chords of a tiny baby: hope,” says Randy Phillips.

“Hope for the hurting, hope for the alienated, hope for the empty, hope for the discouraged, hope for the purposelessness. Because of Christmas and the main character in the straw, we can be reconciled to God, freed from guilt and full of purpose.”

Hope for All the World features 11 songs, including the group’s take on traditional carols like “O Come All Ye Faithful,” “Do You Hear What I Hear?” “God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen/We Three Kings,” “The First Noel,” and “Jingle Bells.” Also on the CD are brand-new tracks “For All the World,” “A Night of Hope” and “God Bless Us,” among others.

The album’s single, “Born Is The King (It’s Christmas),” released in November.

Christmas

Julie Meyer (Forerunner Music)

International House of Prayer worship leader Julie Meyer releases her first holiday album, *Christmas*, which includes nine Christmas favorites and three modern holiday songs written by Meyer.

Spotlighting artists such as David Brymer on “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” and labelmates Jaye Thomas and The Cry on “Little Drummer Boy,” who bring a cappella vocals to the album, a children’s choir on “The First Noel” including young people

from IHOP-KC afford the album a special highlight.

“This Christmas album is a joyful collaboration with my family, my children and my friends, all of whom are amazing and skillful musicians in their own right,” Meyer says.

“It is driven by acoustic guitar threads as each song brings a memory of Christmas past and future. It is keys; it is strings; it is a little bluegrass. Yet it all flows together flawlessly because of the great storyline of Christmas.”

Christmas Worship

Paul Baloché (Integrity Music)

Three-time Dove Award-winner Paul Baloché releases his first Christmas album with the intent to provide a collection of holiday songs that resource the church.

The album, produced by Baloché and others, features worship leaders such as Aaron Shust, All Sons & Daughters, Kathryn Scott and Rita Baloché. The tracks include traditional carols blended with modern worship choruses that make congregational singing seamless.

Baloché was inspired toward this approach after working with local pastors and hearing their need to create a special worship environment at their churches during the busiest time of year.

“We all love the content of Christmas carols, but often they don’t facilitate a vertical expression of worship toward the Lord,” Baloché says. “So the idea of this album was to take classic Christmas carols that we all enjoy singing and combine them with modern worship choruses to encourage worship all

throughout the Christmas season.”

To blend well-loved Christmas songs with modern worship tunes, acclaimed writers such as Jason Ingram, Lincoln Brewster, Graham Kendrick, Glenn Packiam and Scott joined Baloché in the challenge of reworking songs written by some of the greats—Charles Wesley, Isaac Watts, George Frideric Handel and John Francis Wade. The results are flawless and the album is sure to be enjoyed by many for years to come.