

Sight & Sound

BOOKS

A 'Messy' Christian Life

Messy Spirituality: God's Annoying Love For Imperfect People

*By Michael Yaconelli, Zondervan,
141 pages, hardcover, \$.*

For all the Christians who feel like they don't pray enough, study the Scriptures enough, share their faith enough or aren't spiritual enough, author Michael Yaconelli has good news. The owner and co-founder of Youth Specialties and a lay pastor, Yaconelli, in his latest book, *Messy Spirituality*, encourages and affirms Christians who still do not fully have their acts together.

In other words, this is for all of us.

Messy Spirituality helps to bring the church—and even God—out of the ivory tower and back into the incarnational streets of early first century Israel, where Christ touched, loved and rejoiced with imperfect people. It offers a new doorway to those people of faith disillusioned over their perceived incompetence and blemishes. He tells readers that the kind of spirituality Jesus honored in the Gospels is for imperfect people who allow God to turn their messes into His masterpieces.

As Yaconelli exclaims, "Spirituality is not about being fixed;

it is about God's being present in the mess of our unfixedness." He writes, "What landed Jesus on the cross was the preposterous idea that common, ordinary, broken, screwed-up people could be godly!" Unbiblical behavior, Yaconelli asserts, is not to be condemned by Christians but redeemed.

Yaconelli does a commendable job of offering anecdotes and illustrations from his own journey and from the lives of others—stories of shame and brokenness often exacerbated by the response of well-meaning, if often legalistic, Christians and church leaders. His text offers freedom to those feeling the weight of needing to look and act a certain way in order to be accepted by the body of Christ, and gives each Christian permission to let down his or her guard and dare to live by grace.

"The essence of messy spirituality," Yaconelli writes, "is the refusal to pretend, to lie, or allow others to believe we are something we are not." This is counter cultural, even—perhaps especially—in the context of the church. The battle that authentic Christians wage for permission to be real is similar to the hard-fought victory secured by Jesus against the religious power elite, and we are called to be equally as steadfast as we abide in Him.

John M. De Marco

Islam and Peace

Islam and Terrorism

*By Mark A. Gabriel, Ph.D., Charisma House,
234 pages, paperback, \$.*

Is the radical Muslim terrorist movement an anomaly in an

otherwise peaceful religion? Author Mark Gabriel, Ph.D., once a professor of Islamic history in Cairo, Egypt, and a former Muslim, wants the West to know the true answer: a resounding no. His book *Islam and Terrorism* is a personal testimony, history lesson, Quran study and political exposition all in one.

He speaks as one with authority: one who has thoroughly studied the Quran, has lived in a predominantly Islamic culture and has been an eyewitness to many terrorist activities. Most important he speaks as one who has been persecuted for his conversion to Christianity.

He writes that while many moderate Muslims disapprove of the radical mission of jihad and prefer to view it as a personal struggle against immorality, Gabriel contends that one cannot accurately interpret the Quran in this way. He writes that in these cases Islam has been "Christianized" or influenced by the surrounding Christian culture.

He also insists that the modern terrorists reflect the true nature of Islam as practiced by Muhammad himself. Having made this clear, the author pleads with the Christian reader to have compassion on the Muslim who is in bondage to a false religion of hatred, repression and murder. Most Muslims have a twisted view of Christianity and are in great need of hearing the true gospel. He shares several effective tips for reaching out to Muslims and introducing them to the true Jesus. He also offers suggestions for discipling former Muslims.

This book is an invaluable tool for understanding the spiritual and physical battles going on in our world today. It is a must-read for those who want to respond correctly to the threat of jihad.

Deborah L. Delk

Avoiding Seduction

When Godly People Do Ungodly Things

*By Beth Moore, Broadman & Holman,
320 pages, hardcover, \$.*

Who is the prime target of Satan's anger? A person of godly influence, suggests Beth Moore in her latest release, *When Godly People Do Ungodly Things*. Moore sheds light on the enemy's campaign to seduce God's chosen and shows readers how to fortify their lives to become seduction-proof.

In *When Godly People Do Ungodly Things*, Moore helps readers understand how people who are wholeheartedly devoted to God can be seduced by the powers of darkness. She explains that Satan has a twofold objective: to exact revenge on God by wreaking havoc on His children and to immobilize the believer's ability to overcome the enemy. Moore offers 16 characteristics of godly believers who have been seduced to do ungodly things, including experiencing periods of spiritual numbness and being caught off guard and mentally bombarded. She also gives a scripturally based answer to why God would allow His chosen to be caught in a web of seduction.

Moore shows readers that they are not alone by offering her own and others' experiences, and revealing specific ways to seduce-proof one's life. *When Godly People Do Ungodly Things* provides a road map to restoration and wholeness in Christ and gives biblical steps for maintaining a clear conscience.

Jessica Mastrapa

MUSIC

Worship to Take Listeners 'Deeper'

A Deeper Faith

By John Tesh, Garden City Music.

A Deeper Faith isn't your everyday John Tesh album. For a start, the entertainment news-anchor-turned-pianist is singing, which only makes one wonder why he hasn't tried it before. His strong tenor voice is joined by a worship team on songs such as the opening "Open the Eyes of My Heart" and the gospel funk rendition of "You're Worthy of My Praise," featuring Nicole C. Mullen. Tesh seems at home on this release as he aims to duplicate the worship that he leads each Sunday at his Messianic church, Beth Ariel in California.

Tesh's tenor seems hidden on most numbers by the symphony of voices, but his presence is clearly felt during his audible recitations of Scripture. It's not until the fourth track, "God Is My Rock," that Tesh's voice is actually identifiable.

The majority of the 17 tracks are upbeat with rock, funk and gospel-R&B elements with the exceptions of a few songs such as the ballad "I Am Not Alone," with vocals by Natalie Grant, and a children's song titled "Anjus Wav-Um." Popular praise and worship songs such as "Trading My Sorrows," "Heart of Worship" and "Shout to the Lord" also are included.

Of course it wouldn't be a John Tesh album without a solo piano piece, and listeners will be more than satisfied with the title track, a catchy tune that seems to summarize the

album's light-hearted spirit. Bringing listeners back to reality at the end of the CD is a prayer by President Bush asking for peace for America following the events of Sept. 11. It seems fitting that during that time Tesh was putting the final touches on this CD of hope and inspiration.

Rhonda Sholar

More of Jesus

More, More, More

By Joann Rosario, F. Hammond

Music/Verity Records.

Joann Rosario presents a collection of songs that will minister to the hearts of listeners as well as to the heart of God on her debut release *More, More, More*. Rosario emerges as the first solo artist to release a project on Fred Hammond's new label, F. Hammond Music, but she is no newcomer to the gospel music scene. She has been a featured vocalist with Fred Hammond's ensemble Radical for Christ for several years, and her title track was featured on Hammond's *In Case You Missed It and Then Some*, released last year.

A preacher's kid from Chicago, Rosario blends her Latin roots with gospel influences to create a unique and youthful sound. Rosario co-wrote nine of the 13 songs. *More, More, More* includes such energetic tracks as "Serve You Only," the Latin-flavored "Your Consuming Fire" and the happy "Since You Came My Way." The album also includes soulful ballads, such as the heartfelt "Think of Me," "If It's Not You" and the moving "Follow Me / Sígueme," which is sung partly in Spanish and is backed by beautiful Spanish guitar.

One of the standout tracks is the stirring “As We Overcame,” written by Hammond and Yolanda Adams. Rosario ministers with conviction the message that in God there is power to be victorious. More, More, More expresses Rosario’s diversity and shares a simple testimony of God’s goodness.

Twanna Powell Crenshaw

‘Thriving’ on Jesus

Thrive

By Newsboys, Sparrow Records.

For a while, there was a bit of uncertainty about where the Newsboys were heading. Their crazy experimental album, Love Liberty Disco, left some fans wondering where this multimillion-album-selling band was going to end up. Fortunately, the group rebounded with their “best of” compilation album, Shine: The Hits. With their new album, Thrive, the Newsboys are coming back to their roots: pop-rock sounds combined with brilliantly clever lyrics, edgy guitars and a punchy beat.

Despite widespread success, there is no compromise in the quality of the lyrics. Songs continue to be overtly Christian and engage numerous references to pop culture. Some of the cuts carry a synthetic 1980s flavor while others take a more modern twist.

The title cut, “Thrive,” is a tender cry for redemption and healing. The God-centered, worshipful “It Is You” will likely seep into church service as a congregational favorite. “Cornelius” carries an anthem-like quality that is reminiscent of Newsboys-famed wahoo “Breakfast” song. “Million Pieces” is

an absolute standout. Producer Steve Taylor's talents run rampant on this recording.

Listeners, longtime fans and the band will "thrive" on this release. It's one you don't want to miss.

Margaret Feinberg

AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT

Building Wealth That Will Last an Eternity

Though the author of a book on finances, Robert Katz is hoping to help people get their focus off of money. "I'm trying to free people up by getting their financial house in order, so they can do what God's really called them to do," says Katz, a certified public accountant and investment adviser based in New Orleans. "And I don't think it's to accumulate a whole bunch of wealth here on earth."

Having appeared on Benny Hinn's This Is Your Day and The 700 Club talking about his book Money Came by the House the Other Day (InSync Press), Katz says his message is resonating among many believers. He teaches simple financial organization techniques, including information on tithing, investing, insurance needs and home purchasing.

Not one to condemn the prosperity message, Katz doesn't promote it either. He says evangelist Oral Roberts, who wrote the forward to Katz's book, did a great service to the body of Christ by teaching people that God didn't call Christians to be impoverished. But subsequent generations have taken "a

truism and stretched it to its extreme, to where God never intended it to be.”

Katz says financial prosperity includes having all your needs met and experiencing peace. Maintaining that material wealth is good, Katz encourages Christians to be wise stewards on earth while storing up treasure in heaven. He fears that those who don't will become “paupers in paradise” because they misplaced their priorities, causing them to experience “a different, eternal tragedy.”

Adrienne S. Gaines