

Sight & Sound

BOOKS

Learning to Forgive Completely

Total Forgiveness

By R.T. Kendall, Charisma House,

185 pages, paperback, \$

Christians rely on the Bible for the definitive Word on forgiveness, but they will want to study R.T. Kendall's book *Total Forgiveness* to fasten that Word in their hearts.

Veteran pastor of Westminster Chapel in London, Kendall writes about the healing that can come only from forgiving as God forgives—totally. He comments in depth on the Joseph story, the Sermon on the Mount and Jesus' appearance to His disciples after the resurrection. In each case total forgiveness centers on keeping no record of wrongs and, more, desiring blessing for those who caused pain.

Kendall marks the steps to total forgiveness and the attitudes present when one has truly forgiven. He writes that when Christians forgive totally, they allow the Holy Spirit to flow freely through them in a way impossible without having released the bitterness.

He repeats several times that mercy is not getting what we deserve (justice), and grace is getting what we don't deserve

(total forgiveness). When we understand the mercy and grace God has extended to us in keeping no record of our sins, we can open our hearts to extend that same love to others.

Christians need total forgiveness to experience full fellowship with God and others. Kendall writes as a trustworthy companion on the road to genuine peace, showing readers how to experience a life in which the Holy Spirit dwells in them ungrieved and is free to be “utterly Himself.”

Pamela Robinson

Standing in the Gap

Watch and Pray

*Compiled by Don S. Otis,
Chosen Books, 144 pages,
paperback, \$*

Largely in response to the tragic events of September 11, 2001, editor Don S. Otis has compiled *Watch and Pray*, a collection of essays and sermons that answer important questions raised since the terrorist attack. Why did God allow this to happen? What is He saying to us through it all? And how are we to respond now? Among the book's 13 contributors are Bill Bright, David Wilkerson, Henry T. Blackaby, Myles Munroe and Jack W. Hayford.

The title would suggest that this is a book that spells out how to watch and pray, yet the need to pray is only one of the book's themes. *Watch and Pray* makes readers examine the way we view God and, perhaps, adjusts our vision. The way Christians look at the whole situation impacts how we live our lives in the face of these events, as well as how we pray for

ourselves, our country and the world. The need for personal and national repentance is a recurrent theme.

A few of these leaders seem to be hearing somewhat conflicting messages. It is as if Otis knows that each individual must seek the Lord in prayer for his or her own answers and response. He offers this book as helpful confirmation, rather than definitive answers, to those who are already seeking God. Overall the book will inspire readers to renew their commitment to seek God's kingdom first through prayer.

Deborah L. Delk

Culture Wars

A Season for Justice

*By David French, Broadman & Holman,
215 pages, paperback, \$*

David French, the attorney who represented InterVarsity Christian Fellowship in a highly publicized dispute at Tufts University, has written a fascinating account of the culture wars. But he goes further, suggesting a proper response to anti-Christian bigotry.

The Lexington, Kentucky, lawyer says the solution is in leveling the playing field in public arenas. He encourages Christians to become advocates for freedom to create an environment in which the gospel can flourish.

Through detailed accounts of legal skirmishes and debates with liberal advocates, he gives readers a penetrating view of what evangelicals face. His litany of cases where ultraliberal voices enforce their views of morality is depressing at times.

Yet he documents how the cause of Christ fares better on school campuses in this era of social oppression than when it held favored status. He also argues that Christians should be more concerned with respecting others' rights and forming relationships with unbelievers than with stridently supporting their cause.

Still, he doesn't think Christians should be apathetic, and includes information about religious rights on public school and university campuses.

Bringing much-needed balance to an emotionally charged subject, this book is fitting for educators, homeschoolers and church groups.

Ken Walker

MUSIC

'Incredible' Release

Incredible

*By Mary Mary, Columbia Records
(Integrity Music).*

When Mary Mary stepped onto the scene two years ago, they proved gospel music could be cool and hip. Their song "Shackles" became an international hit and had unchurched people listening to gospel music. To follow up their platinum-selling debut, Thankful, Grammy-winning sister act Erica Campbell and Tina Campbell have released a versatile sophomore project, Incredible.

The release features Mary Mary's blend of faith-filled lyricism and hard-hitting rhythms. Kicking off with the title track, a funky praise jam, the release continues with such energetic tracks as "God Bless" and "He Said."

In an effort to reach a broad audience, Mary Mary tailors the songs to minister on spiritual and emotional levels by addressing such topics as self-esteem on "Little Girl" and faith on "Hold On." The duo also shines vocally on such ballads as "I Try" and "This Love," which features vocals by Fred Hammond.

Mary Mary also offers creative remakes to such classics as James Cleveland's "God Has Smiled On Me," Walter Hawkins' "Thank You" (featuring the vocals of the late James Moore) and Stevie Wonder's "You Will Know." The album closes out on a high note with the spirited groove "Happy" to leave listeners with a positive message at the end of their "incredible" musical journey.

Twanna Powell Crenshaw

Women of Worship

Girls of Grace

By Point of Grace, Word.

After one gold and five platinum albums, Point of Grace is embarking on a new course with their album, Girls of Grace. The recording is a collection of worship songs from the group and features a variety of other popular female Christian artists including Jaci Velasquez, Nichole Nordeman, Rachael Lampa, Joy Williams and FFH's Jennifer Deibler.

A devotional and journal with the same name complement the album, which is packed with classic and contemporary worship songs. The products are being released in connection to new two-day conferences for teens kicking off October 4-5 in Florida.

In addition to the tried-and-true Christian artists, the album features teenage girls from the Tennessee Choral Academy along with a group of girls from Mercy Ministries of America, which offer tender background vocals for the recording. Songs include classics such as "Breath of God" and "You Are My All in All," as well as "Every Move I Make" and "Live to Worship." Youth will be attracted to this worship recording.

Margaret Feinberg

A Family's Praise

Pour Out Your Holy Spirit

The Singletons, FHammond Music/Verity.

The second offering from gospel great Fred Hammond's label, FHammond Music, is the debut of the Singletons. The group—consisting of three sisters, two nephews and three nieces—enters the gospel music scene with their project Pour Out Your Holy Spirit.

The title cut, featured on Hammond's compilation In Case You Missed Then Some, is a festive groove complete with strong vocals from this Lansing, Michigan, family. Hammond's influence is apparent throughout this release, but his signature is most noticeable on cuts such as the funky, rock-tinged track "Bring Him In," and on the calypso-influenced "Hallelujah."

The group is obviously called to minister through worship and praise. The pensive “All of My Days” and the melodic “Hope Now in Him” move the project into a worship mode. Yet praisers will enjoy such songs as the upbeat “Fight On” and the dance mix “Wait.” The group also includes songs of encouragement such as “A Season of Change” and “Hold On.”

Family singing groups usually have the ability to harmonize impeccably, and the Singletons are no exception. But it's not just the sound of the project that is pristine. It's a rarity to see a family of young people in their 20s and 30s offering genuine praise to God. It's nice to see and makes for an impressive debut.&Andrea R. Williams

VIDEOS

Jenkins Duo Brings Novel to Life

Hometown Legend

By Warner Home Video,

VHS: \$; DVD: \$

Father and son Jerry B. and Dallas Jenkins of Jenkins Entertainment team up to bring to life their first feature film. Based on the novel by Jerry B. Jenkins, *Hometown Legend* follows the tradition of such sports classics as *Hoosiers*, *Rudy* and *Remember the Titans*.

The film tells a charming story based in the fictional town of Athens, Alabama. The county has decided to shut down the school, and the small town is looking for a big miracle. They hope it will come from Buster Schuler, Athens' legendary high school football coach who comes out of retirement for the

school's final season, hoping to resurrect the floundering team's spirit.

The story also follows Elvis Jackson's determined pursuit of a football scholarship—his only ticket to college—and the constant conflict he and his teammates have with their tough-guy coach, who resists change.

The film is carried by a star-studded cast including Lacey Chabert (Party of Five); Nick Cornish (The Practice); Terry O'Quinn (Alias, The Cutting Edge); and Kirk B.R. Woller (Minority Report, A.I.). The soundtrack features original music by Jars of Clay lead singer and songwriter Dan Haseltine, and Joe Hogue, a multi-Grammy- and Emmy-award-winning composer and producer.

It has all the quality of a major motion picture, yet Hometown Legend does not present an overt gospel message. The story explores deep character qualities such as courage, faith and perseverance. Although it only hints at the depth and charm of the novel, Hometown Legend still offers good, clean entertainment that is suitable for the whole family.

Leigh DeVore

NEWS

Big Idea Brings Jonah to Theaters

It's no secret that Big Idea founder Phil Vischer models his company after Walt Disney. He shares Disney's vision to use quality storytelling to influence global values, a goal he has been working toward through his VeggieTales characters since 1994. Now Big Idea is taking another step in realizing that

vision as it prepares to bring Jonah—a VeggieTales Movie to more than 1,000 theaters nationwide October 4.

With new talent from artists and producers from such renowned studios as Disney and DreamWorks, Big Idea has packed even more quality and charm into Jonah—a VeggieTales Movie. There is a slight twist to the typical lessons gleaned from Jonah's life, adding to the scope of the movie's message. Most of the favorite VeggieTales characters, including the Pirates Who Don't Do Anything, return to help tell the story of a man who didn't obey God. The film also features an original soundtrack that includes performances by Christian artists the Newsboys and Anointed.

Not only is this a great film for longtime VeggieTales fans, it also offers an opportunity to introduce other children to the vegetable cast, and more importantly, to biblical principles.

Big Idea teamed with Artisan Entertainment's Family Home Entertainment (FHE) division, which has distributed several faith-based films including The Miracle Maker—The Story of Jesus, Greatest Heroes of the Bible and Hallmark Entertainment's In the Beginning.

Kris Fuhr, Big Idea's vice president of theatrical marketing, believes the company has risen on the secular industry's radar screen and will continue to be noticed. "[Jonah] will be one of the biggest movie stories of the year. Not necessarily for box for the audience enthusiasm and for the production quality of the film," Fuhr said. "God's got a plan. He knows. Hang on tight."

Leigh DeVore

AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT

While We Are Sleeping

Most people spend a third of their day sleeping, says prophetic minister John Paul Jackson, and he believes Christians are missing out on important conversations during those sleepy times by not understanding the significance of their dreams. That's why he developed the Moments With God dream journal—to encourage believers to record their dreams.

“God speaks to us in many ways, but if we neglect means in which He speaks, we miss things He wants to speak to us,” Jackson says.

Opening with a brief teaching on dream interpretation, the book is mostly filled with blank pages for journaling. Jackson says Christians may find recurring themes that offer clues for interpretation.

The book also is available in mainstream bookstores because Jackson says New Age followers and non-Christians are responding positively to “prophetic evangelism.” He has taken teams into bookstores and to events such as the Olympics to interpret dreams, with hundreds coming to Christ. “The natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit, so it takes someone from the Lord to interpret for them,” he says.

Jackson says Christians will dream more in the future, resulting in greater need for understanding. “One-third of your day is spent dreaming,” he says. “By the time you're 60, you'll have slept 20 years. How much could God have spoken to

you in 20 years?"

Adrienne S. Gaines