

Vibes

Strengthen Yourself in the Lord

**By Bill Johnson, Destiny Image,
softcover, 174 pages, \$.**

We know that God has good thoughts and plans for all His children. But let's face it; the devil and the flesh will try to thwart those plans and provide an unexpected end and dash our hopes. In *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*, pastor and author Bill Johnson reminds us to fight for God's plans and teaches us how to be strong and courageous through the storms that will come in this life. Johnson begins the process of changing wrong thinking by proving that the reality of the cross of Christ is stronger than the "inferior reality of our physical circumstances." He goes on to establish the "superior reality" that the kingdom of God represents. The author traces this conclusion from the Scripture "For as a man thinks in his heart, so is he." When on occasion we feel as if we cannot take one more pounding, that is when we need to find strength and rise to face our situations. Johnson illustrates that as we spend time with God we will be victorious.

J. James Estrada

BOOKS

Why Good People Mess Up

**By John Loren Sandford, Charisma House,
softcover, 224 pages, \$.**

In the wake of public moral failings of prominent Christian leaders, many are asking, "Why do Christian leaders fall?" Why

Good People Mess Up tackles the difficult question head-on. John Loren Sanford identifies the various causes of moral failings—personal, historical, theological and spiritual—and sets about offering practical ways to counter these pernicious influences through staying grounded in the Word, nourishing your marital sex life, learning to identify “defiling passions” and maintaining accountability. The emphasis is on sexual failings, but this isn’t your usual, simplistic “don’t look, don’t touch” treatment of the subject. Sanford digs deep beneath the problems that lead to illicit behaviors, offering an intriguing description of “spiritual adultery,” which he defines as when “we grant to another person other than our spouse that position of comfort and refreshment that belongs first and sometimes only to our spouse.” He names it as an inevitable prelude to physical adultery. This is a must-read for anyone confused by the failures of Christian leaders or for those who simply want to stem the tide of destructive temptations in their own lives.

Drew Dyck

Women in the Church of God in Christ

By Anthea D. Butler, The University of North Carolina Press, softcover, 224 pages, \$.

In her new book, Anthea D. Butler introduces the reader to three giants among the great women pioneers in the Church of God in Christ (COGIC): Elizabeth Robinson, Lillian Brooks Coffey, and Arenia C. Mallory. These women along with others built ministries, schools, missions and congregations across the United States and in the Caribbean as well as in Africa. Mallory, she notes, in her expansion of the COGIC Christian academy in Mississippi to a Christian liberal arts college, became the second black woman to serve as the president of an undergraduate institution in the United States. At the heart of Butler’s thesis is that early in their history COGIC women

expanded holiness doctrine to include sanctifying the world. The entry of COGIC women into the civic arena led to their working with prominent American women such as Eleanor Roosevelt, Ethel Waters and Mary McLeod Bethune. During the 1930s, COGIC women joined Bethune in organizing the National Council of Negro Women. They also partnered with black sororities such as Alpha Kappa Alpha in teacher training and health care projects in Mississippi, and helped craft the denomination's civic witness. Butler has achieved a great goal in this book by shedding light on the ministry of women during the first six decades of the 20th century.

David Daniels III

Save Me From Myself

By Brian "Head" Welch, HarperOne,
hardcover, 240 pages, \$.

Books on atheism have become New York Times best-sellers lately, as multiple humanists deride the very idea of a God. Then along comes someone like Brian "Head" Welch, former lead guitarist of the nu metal band Korn. Welch not only knows there is a God, he also describes his experiences with Him with a gut-level honesty that will shock traditionalists. But this book isn't aimed at church audiences. It's for those trapped in the drug-alcohol-and-sexual-perversion world in which Welch once lived. Because of its sometimes-coarse language and vivid descriptions of rock star bacchanalia, you aren't likely to find it in many Christian bookstores. Yet it's worth giving it to someone struggling with the things the world promises will bring fulfillment. For those who aren't turned off by the idea of encountering this ugly environment, the book includes a chapter about Welch's Spirit-filled experience and a solid endorsement of speaking in tongues.

Ken Walker

Read an excerpt from Save Me From Myself at

MUSIC

A Deeper Level

By Israel and New Breed, Integrity Gospel.

It appears that Israel Houghton has no signs of slowing down these days. Along with preparing to go on tour and promoting his new book, he has released his fifth album, A Deeper Level (also the book title). A Deeper Level, recorded live, opens with the heartfelt call to worship "So Come," which begins with a beautiful violin solo that meshes well with Houghton's vocals. Several praise tracks are likely to be replicated in Sunday services, including "Say So" and "Surely Surely." Some of contemporary Christian music's best are featured on various tracks: Chris Tomlin on "I Know Who I Am," Hillsong's Darlene Zschech on "Deeper Prayer" and rap artist T-Bone on the reggae-flavored "With Long Life." No Israel and New Breed project would be complete without some standout worship tracks such as "If Not for Your Grace," "Deeper" and the encouraging bonus cut "You Are Not Forgotten," featuring fellow Grammy winner Jonny Lang. A Deeper Level is by far the most versatile, heartfelt and socially conscious album Israel and New Breed have done. They continue to redefine their sound, refusing to be categorized by normal standards and creating "kingdom music" to reach the world.

Twanna Powell-Green

All for Love

By Lenny LeBlanc, Integrity Music.

Recorded live at Faith Church in Florence, Ala., Lenny LeBlanc's new project, All for Love, centers on the hope of revival. Just out from the veteran worship singer-songwriter known for songs such as "Above All," "There Is None Like You"

and “We All Bow Down,” the album is acoustic-based soft pop, with electric guitars creating emphasis on the opening anthem, “Ascend,” and the soaring “Breathe on Me.” On “The Rain,” LeBlanc expresses his expectation with pop-rock sounds, relaying his hope for revival. The same passion is present in the proclamation “Make Way for the King,” which focuses on the Second Coming. Other highlights include “Portrait of My King” and “Glory to Your Name,” a song of allegiance and dedication. LeBlanc is a marquee name in worship circles, and listeners will want to check out his newest collection. All for Love offers a soft, pop-worship experience and a new collection of songs easily incorporated into local church settings.

Dewayne Hamby

Paga’

By Kelly Willard, Autumn Records.

In 2004 Kelly Willard’s marriage failed, her parents died and her teenage daughter, Haylie, committed suicide. Out of such deep pain comes Paga’, Willard’s first studio album in 11 years. This album—a throwback to Willard’s Maranatha! Music days, when she was a featured soloist—is a meditative, egoless collection. Willard wrote most of the songs on the album, and all of them illustrate her journey. In “Charity,” Willard sings, “I am nothing / Jesus, reduce me to love.” In “‘Til I Desire Only You,” she sings, “Strip away all the substitutes.” One can’t help but assume that for Willard, these are not just songs, but “intercessions”—and Paga’, a Hebrew word, means exactly that. Although this album treads no new ground musically, Willard’s emotional sincerity makes it, at times, an exhilarating, worshipful experience. Overall, fans of ’70s and ’80s Maranatha! Music will enjoy this album, though uninitiated listeners might have too many musical hurdles to overcome. However, that Willard even put this album out in light of her recent tragedies is amazing and a true testament

to her faith in God.

Cameron Conant

Christmas Songs

By Jars of Clay, Gray Matters

When an artist has been quietly making near genius music for more than a decade, it's easy to start taking said artist for granted. Such is the case with Jars of Clay, who remind us of just how much they bring to the table with their first full-length Christmas album simply titled Christmas Songs. Some of the gems on this 14-track collection include a tasteful remake of Paul McCartney's "Wonderful Christmastime," an early '80s Euro-pop translation of "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen." Another sure-fire hit is "Hibernation Day," a classic-pop number that displays the band's full range of influence. For those burned out on holiday music, this early Christmas gift comes highly recommended for repeat (but never redundant) listening.

Chad Bonham

Fiction

SUSPENSE

Vanished

By Kathryn Mackel, Realms,
softcover, 304 pages, \$.

A bombing in working-class Barcester, Mass., cuts the residents off from the rest of the world. Police sergeant Jason Logan tries to keep order and wonders why help isn't arriving. Soon it's clear this situation is even more sinister

than anyone can imagine. It's as if the town has vanished. Their fight for survival has just begun.

ROMANCE

Bluebonnet Belle

By Lori Copeland, Steeple Hill,
softcover, 384 pages, \$.

It's the late 1800s and April Truitt has good reason to distrust doctors—her mother died during an operation. Newcomer Dr. Gray Fuller admires April's concern for her townspeople, but he can't fully appreciate her herbal alternative approach. Can these two see beyond their differences and learn to work together?

CONTEMPORARY

After the Leaves Fall

By Nicole Baart, Tyndale House Publishers,
softcover, 350 pages, \$.

Julia DeSmit knows loss. First her mother leaves when she is just a young girl. Her father dies when she's a teenager. And she loses her first love. It seems college would be a great place to start over. But one wrong decision changes everything. Returning to her grandmother's farm discouraged, Julia learns that change comes in unexpected ways.

NEW ON DVD

THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF HA'S

Big Idea, \$.

Only Big Idea could combine elements of the Wizard of Oz and the prodigal son parable and make it work. Darby (Junior Asparagus) wants to go to the Land of Ha's. When his dad says no, Darby takes off on his own. On the way he meets three strangers and he invites them along. Although they have lots of fun, everyone begins to miss home. But Darby wonders how his father could forgive him. Children will enjoy this familiar Bible story with a new, fun twist.

INCREDIBLE CREATURES THAT DEFY EVOLUTION

Exploration Films, \$.

Jobe Martin believed in evolution. When some Christian dentistry students at Baylor College said he should prove the theory, he began researching animals, ultimately realizing that only a Creator could have designed them. This documentary, a limited three-disc DVD set available at , offers examples of God's amazing creation and is appropriate for all ages.

A WOWIEBOZOWEE CHRISTMAS

Exclaim Entertainment, \$.

Boz the Green Bear Next Door and his neighbors are getting ready for Christmas. Join the fun with sing-along carols and hear the nativity story. Boz and friends show that the best gifts come from the heart. Bonus features include "Christmas Around the World," which explores how people in Africa, China, Germany, France, Mexico and Sweden celebrate Christmas.