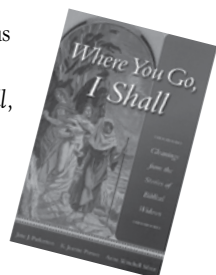


## Books and Resources

### **Where You Go, I Shall: Gleanings from the Stories of Biblical Widows** by Jane J. Parkerton, K. Jeanne Person and Anne Winchell Silver

Cowley Publications (Cambridge, 2005). ISBN: 1-56101-237-8, 129 pp.

In a market of numerous books on widowhood and grief, *Where You Go, I Shall*, is a refreshing, valuable resource for helping professionals and for those who are experiencing the loss of a spouse.



The authors use the metaphor of “gleaning” from the Book of Ruth to illustrate the wisdom and insights available in the stories of widows in the scripture. The inspiration for the book originated in a church-sponsored grief support group for widows shared by the three authors who led and participated in the group. The authors include an Episcopal minister, a widow without children whose husband died after a lengthy illness, and a widow with children whose husband died years earlier from a sudden heart attack.

*Where You Go, I Shall* speaks to the companionship of grief. The authors address the alienation and loneliness that accompanies losing one’s spouse by sharing insights from scripture. Each chapter draws from a different widow’s story and provides a reflection, prayer and meditation recommendations. Each author then responds to the story with her own insights and applications. This format provides the reader with a clear connection between the biblical experiences of grief and the experiences of women today who are dealing with loss.

The authors confront realistically the complexities and emotions of widowhood through the stories of Abigail, Naomi, Tamar and others. With thoughtful exposition and compelling descriptions, the reader engages with these women’s powerlessness and anger, but also with their strength, resilience and charity. We encounter anew the strength

in being able to tell one’s story and sense the nods of understanding and care from others.

I especially appreciated Anne’s reflections on 16 possible answers to the question: “How are you?” This is one of the most challenging questions posed to the bereaved. The socially anticipated answer is “fine,” but most who ask the question do not genuinely consider the absurdity of the question. How should one be when one’s husband has just died? Anne’s 16 answers give those who are grieving a variety of responses from which to choose while validating that the question itself provokes pain.

The reader will be intrigued by the story of Tamar and the lengths to which this widow went in order to survive and will be awed by the widow whose mite stirred Jesus to comment on her giving out of her need. As compelling as the biblical stories, however, is the way the authors connect these stories with our stories. We meet women in the church today who, facing grief, must also find a way to survive and give and live and love. The commentary on grief found in books of theory comes alive in these pages in the use of metaphor and parable. It isn’t a long book, but it is a rich read.

These three women have the gift of combining their work into a total that is more than the sum of its parts. There is a synergy in their ability to name feelings and experiences for which many of us have no words. As I read, I found my heart and spirit nodding a silent and grateful “yes.”

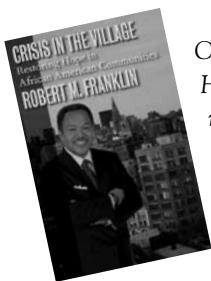
*Helen Harris is a licensed clinical social worker with more than 25 years practice experience in the area of grief and loss.*

*She has taught advanced practice and courses in loss and grief in the School of Social Work at Baylor University for the past 10 years. She has written in the area of loss and bereavement, specifically disenfranchised grief and the church.*



**Crisis in the Village: Restoring Hope to African American Communities by Robert M. Franklin**

Fortress (Minneapolis, 2007). ISBN-10: 0-8006-3887-5, 280 pp.



Robert M. Franklin wrote *Crisis in the Village: Restoring Hope in African American Communities* as a call to strategic action to renew the African American “village.” Franklin is the Distinguished Professor of Social Ethics at Emory University.

He is a scholar-preacher and insightful educator. He previously has served at the University of Chicago, Harvard Divinity School, Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, and the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta.

Although there is no lack of books available that examine the issues facing African American communities, Franklin says these books fail to outline a clear plan of renewal. In this book he invites “anchor institutions,” which he identifies as families, churches and schools, to move beyond examination and begin taking steps to bring renewal to the village.

Franklin first examines the African American family, which he believes is in a “crisis of commitment.” After examining the crisis, he calls for leaders and communities to begin answering the question: “How can African Americans, working in partnership with allies, renew a culture of commitment that fosters healthy relationships, dating, marriage, and parenting?”

The author then turns to the African American church, which he believes has lost some of the credibility in the community it achieved during the Civil Rights Movement. Franklin critiques the “prosperity movement,” calling it “the single greatest threat to the historical legacy and core values of the contemporary black church tradition.” He also calls African American clergy to move beyond talking and begin taking action to bring renewal to the village. Franklin outlines a plan for African American churches to take the lead and work collaboratively with other denominations in restoring the village’s educational excellence (Methodists), helping people who have been incarcerated rejoin society with integrity and support (Baptists), and developing the potential of youth (Pentecostals).

Next, Franklin addresses the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), challenging them to do a better job of developing the character of their students, to be more accountable to the village, and to have a positive impact on the educational, economic, and cultural conditions of their surrounding communities.

Franklin concludes by proposing a six-step plan of action. One, the village needs to convene a conversation about the future of anchor institutions and the village’s expectations of these institutions. Two, organizations should collaborate to create partnerships to begin working on village renewal. Three, a comprehensive, strategic action plan for village renewal with timelines and a plan for accountability needs to be developed. Four, village youth should hold leaders accountable by making weekly inquiries about the status of renewal programs. Five, the philanthropic sector should unite to fund village renewal projects. Six, successes should be documented and celebrated.

The book issues a clear call to people and organizations to become involved with the renewal process. It presents concrete, tangible methods to improve families, churches and HBCUs – a plan that counters the paralysis that so often precludes initiative and action. The issues facing the village are extensive and require everyone strategically working together to bring renewal. The lingering question remains: “Who will accept the call?”

*Walker Moore is a community organizer at Waco Community Development. He received his MSW from Baylor University and is working on his MDiv at George W. Truett Theological Seminary. He is married to Tasha, MSW 2007.*



**The Danger of Raising Nice Kids: Preparing Our Children to Change Their World by Timothy Smith**

InterVarsity Press (Downers Grove, 2006). ISBN-10: 0-8308-3375-7, 202 pp.

With all of the time constraints, stress and pressures that families are facing, sometimes parents lose sight of the end goal. Children from “good Christian families” who seem to have it all together actually may not be prepared for real life. Every parent knows well the stories of children who have flaked out on life in their late teens and early 20s leaving parents and other family members in their

wake confused, frustrated and wondering “what went wrong?”

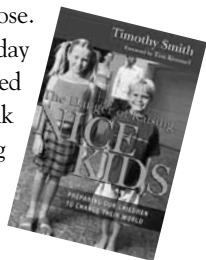
Smith, who is a Gallup Research Fellow, exposes the deficits that arise from parenting without discernment and purpose.

He suggests that parents today are in survival mode—too tired and without the time to think about purposeful parenting that prepares our children for a secular society. We have children who are nice and polite, he contends, yet they lack essential character development. He cites nine forgotten qualities that most parents neglect to instill in their children: vision, authenticity, listening, empathy, compassion, discernment, boundaries, contentment and passionate love.

Smith uses stories from his experience as a minister and family coach to illustrate many of his points and shows how his practical solutions can impact children positively. His approach is warm, yet convicting, practical and theological. He challenges parents to be more intentional about their parenting by focusing on family mission and purpose and provides useful examples on how to do this. His suggestions on parenting effectiveness are preventative and focus on birth through mid-teen years. The main question he wants parents to ask themselves is, “Is my child a change-agent in this world and does he/she have vision?”

*The Danger of Raising Nice Kids* has practical tools and suggestions for age-appropriate consequences and helps parents distinguish between discipline and discipleship. Smith suggests that our homes should be less like a retreat from the world and more of a boot camp that prepares our children for the pressures of an increasingly secular society. This book will be helpful for any parent but may be most useful for parents who still have children in the home. With his examples and practical communication techniques, any parent can make changes and better prepare their children for life.

*Tiffani Harris is a graduate of George W. Truett Theological Seminary and a member of Calvary Baptist Church, Waco, Texas. She and her husband, Brent, have three children, ages 7, 6 and 3.*



## FOCUS

### When families are not safe

Domestic violence is increasing across the nation. Whether the violence is physical, emotional, sexual or verbal, the damage it causes often has life-changing consequences. In this section, we suggest two books for your consideration and a brief Q&A with David Davis, executive director of the Advocacy Center in Waco, Texas. We pray this is information to be helpful in your church ministry.

#### **A Conspiracy of Love: Living Through & Beyond Childhood Sexual Abuse** by Wendy Read

Northstone Publishing, Houghton Boston Printers (Saskatchewan, Canada). ISBN-1-896836-77-1, 188 pp.

Many adults who were sexually abused as children carry with them a legacy of fear, distrust, shame and guilt. They often feel alienated not only from themselves but sometimes from a God whose teachings and scriptures have been used punitively against them.

Wendy Read, a minister in the United Church of Canada and a child who was abused by her father and her priest, reclaims

the scriptures' purpose of healing and hope, offering them with fresh insight to those whose innocence and trust have been severely damaged.

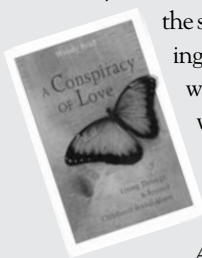
In her foreword to *A Conspiracy of Love*, the

Rev. Dr. Marie M. Fortune writes:

“The Bible is a resource which should not be denied to those who have lived through sexual abuse. But neither should it be used to hit them over the head. . . . Rather the Bible is God’s ongoing gift to people of faith, given to be a source of help, support, and understanding in the midst of life’s traumas.”

Read cites familiar passages, many used regularly in lectionary-based worship, and responds to each by writing her own personal psalms of anger and confusion, trust and faith.

The book is divided into four sections fo-



cusing on truth, community, life, and grace with several scriptures, reflections, poems and discussion questions within each section.

Revisiting these scriptures through the lens of one who was sexually abused as a child compels the reader to become vulnerable to the pain and betrayal inherent in this reprehensible act. Too, we see familiar and comforting verses very differently. In Read's reflection on the Lord's Prayer, she conveys the confusion that plagues and haunts those who have been abused as they seek a relationship with God: "If we can, we cope with the discrepancy by maintaining two separate meanings for the word father, one for in our prayers in church, and the other for in our beds at home. But what if we can't?" (p. 75)

She writes "there is nowhere to go where the memories are not" (p. 33), yet this book is a resource of renewal, and she is one who chooses to follow the Spirit because "in spite of everything – we cling to the promise of abundant life" (p. 33).

As much as anything, Read confirms that those seeking healing and wholeness need community, and she calls the church to offer respite and safety to those it historically has ignored. "We need to be less alone in our struggle and in our suffering. We need a community that cares enough – even if it doesn't understand completely – to invite us in" (p. 50). This challenge is especially difficult with our knowledge that many times the sexual abuse of childhood occurs in places of worship or at the hands of representatives of a religious group. Nevertheless, the church is called to tend to all wounds, not just socially acceptable ones.

For the church that has not yet addressed this issue, Read's book is an excellent starting point. Its format lends itself to small group discussion.

The process of healing from childhood sexual abuse is never completely finished, yet Read asks that people of faith walk alongside those who are experiencing this profound suf-

fering so that their conspiracy of silence and fear can be replaced with a conspiracy of love.

– Reviewed by Vicki M. Kabat



**VISIT ONLINE:**

***FaithTrust Institute, a nonprofit organization for the prevention of sexual and domestic violence – [www.faithtrustinstitute.org](http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org)***

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### **Flawed Families of the Bible: How God's Grace Works Through Imperfect Relationships by David E. Garland and Diana R. Garland**

Brazos Press (Grand Rapids, 2007). ISBN: 1-58743-155-6, 230 pp.

Gang rape, murder, slavery, adultery, child abuse – these are topics we expect to find on the evening news, not in the hallowed pages of our Bible. In their book, *Flawed Families*, the Garlands tackle the stories of the Bible that make most of us cringe because they seem to portray really messed up people and a God who is capricious and removed from the atrocities being played out in the name of religion. The insightful, straightforward way that the authors delve into these stories, such as the rape of Dinah, enables the reader to view stories of pain, struggle, and despair in a new light. In reading this book, I found my understanding these biblical accounts and God's role in these sordid tales to be dramatically changed.

David Garland is dean of George W. Truett Theological Seminary and the William M. Hinson Professor of Christian Scriptures. Diana Garland is dean of Baylor School of Social Work and a noted scholar on family dynamics. Both have authored many books. With their combined exper-

