



»»» **From her days of singing in a college band,** to meeting her father for the first time at a family funeral, and serving others on mission trips to Guatemala and Africa, Stephanie Smith has learned a lot about life. Those life-changing moments helped Smith craft songs for her debut project, *Not Afraid*, releasing this month on Gotee Records (EMI CMG).

"I was a freshman in college, got in a band, and was consumed by pride and the fame of it all. I had a pretty hard fall. I was questioning music and why I wanted to do it. In many ways, I was running from the person that I saw that I had become," says Smith. "My sophomore year, I had the opportunity to go to Guatemala. God used that season in my life to humble me. I believe that if somebody is struggling with pride or self-centeredness, a sure cure is to serve, because it's not about you anymore."

She sings with that same conviction on "First Words," a song about meeting her father. "It was the freshman year of my high school career/Things had barely gotten underway/Before my innocence would be betrayed/Starting with a phone call a family member died/And at the funeral I looked into your eyes/For the first time, this was a dream of mine/But you didn't know me, you didn't know my name."

As Smith spoke with *CBA Retailers+Resources*, the pop-rocker explained how God has continued to direct her steps by giving her a number of different opportunities, including playing at AgapeFest, meeting TobyMac, and signing a record deal with Gotee.

"God tried to get my attention so many times, and finally, in a big way he just had to say, 'No. This is about me, not you,'" Smith says. "After my college band fell apart, I walked away from music. Two years later, I felt the Lord say to me, 'Your only responsibility is to stand on stage, and keep your eyes on me when you are on that stage.' And as people look at me, they will look where I'm looking. So, the only thing I have to do is keep my eyes on Him. That's the only reason to be on a stage."

Smith admits she has a passion for reaching the youth culture, and she's using what she has learned to make a difference. She's actively involved with the Pure Freedom conferences ([www.purefreedom.org](http://www.purefreedom.org)) and the Secret Keeper Girl Tours, founded by top-selling youth author Dannah Gresh (*And the Bride Wore White/Moody*). Smith is also a spokesperson for Soles4Souls, an organization that has distributed more than three million pairs of shoes to those in need since 2005. But, that's not all. Smith has written a book, *Crossroads: The Teenage Girl's Guide to Emotional Wounds*, which Zondervan will release in June (review in next month's *CBA Retailers+Resources*). Help reach youth with Jesus' love by cross-merchandising Smith's book and CD.

—Ginny McCabe

Send Music news to Carrie Erickson >>> [cerickson@cbaonline.org](mailto:cerickson@cbaonline.org)



### Worth Fighting For

Warren Barfield / Essential  
(Provident-Integrity)

UPC: CD: 083061086428

Style: Pop Rock

Warren Barfield meets himself in the middle on his third studio album. His self-titled debut album displayed Steven Curtis Chapman-like acoustic pop, while

his sophomore effort, *Reach*, explored the full range of his vocal talent, showing an edgier bluesy soulful side.

A bevy of producers including Charlie Peacock (Switchfoot, Nichole Nordeman); Mark Miller (Casting Crowns); and Jason Ingram and Rusty Varenkamp (Bebo Norman, Rush of Fools) bring Barfield back to a smoother pop sound on this 11-track project.

Lyrically, "Love Is Not a Fight" is an album highlight,

reflecting the album's title, love is worth fighting for: "Love is not a place/To come and go as we please/It's a house we enter in and then commit to never leave/So lock the door behind you/Throw away the key/We'll work it out together/Let it bring us to our knees."

The song has been aptly placed in upcoming film, *Fireproof*, the new movie about a struggling marriage from *Facing the Giants'* creators, in theaters this fall.



### The Invitation

Meredith Andrews / Word/Curb/  
WB (Word)

UPC: CD: 080688741020

Style: Pop/Modern Worship

Heralded by *Billboard Magazine* as one of 2008's "Faces to Watch," Meredith Andrews' debut project, *The Invitation*, showcases powerful worshipful vocals accentuated by poppy

piano melodies. Produced by Jason Ingram and Rusty Varenkamp, the project features 11 songs either written or co-written by Andrews.

The inspiration behind the title is to encourage listeners by sharing that "God is extending an invitation to you, to you personally, calling you by name," says Andrews.

The project features the soaring ballad and first radio single, "You're Not Alone," already making a strong impact at radio. An extensive marketing campaign will accompany *The*

*Invitation's* release, including appearances at the Create Worship Leader Conference and the Saddleback Worship Conference.

As worship leader at Chicago's 12,000-member Harvest Bible Church, Andrews has already performed in front of tens of thousands across the country. She's shared the stage with artists such as Jeremy Camp and Building 429, and is set to tour with Aaron Shust and Brandon Heath on the 30-city "Whispered and Shouted" tour.