

EXCERPT

IVP Books

**Welcoming Justice**  
God's Movement Toward Beloved Community  
Expanded Edition

November 20, 2018 | \$17, 144 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-3479-2

## Love is the Final Fight

Our country claims to “hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Chief among these rights is life, but these days we are asking a lot of questions about life: What are lives really worth? And whose lives matter? On some days it seems that we, as a people, are practicing genocide. Black people are killing each other one by one with handguns. White folks are going into schools and theaters and concerts and killing white folks en masse. We are on a suicide mission. We have run out of human dignity.

But I think there is hope. And I think that hope is waiting for us right where it’s always been—in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I am hopeful because all reconciliation begins with the recognition of brokenness, and we see the evidence of our brokenness laid bare in our news and communities every day.

I am hopeful because I sense the presence and empowerment of the Holy Spirit in the movements of young people who are striving to follow the Great Commission into the world, preaching the gospel to every ethnic group. They are taking to heart Paul’s words in Galatians when he speaks of our oneness: “There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (3:28 CEB).

I am hopeful because we are living in a Pentecostal moment, when God is ready to pour out the Holy Spirit on all people, to empower those who are willing to be a part of something courageous, something that’s worth giving our lives for. Paul said, “I die daily” (1 Corinthians 15:31 NASB) because he knew you have to live every day like you’re willing to die for what is right.

A program alone won’t solve our problems. New laws and more humane public policy will not solve our problems. We need what we already have: “good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people” (Luke 2:10 KJV).

We have grace, justification, and full redemption, and because of those gifts of God in Christ Jesus, we can find in ourselves the forgiveness, love, and welcome that we need to offer each other. Jesus told his friends that people would know they were his disciples if they loved one another (John 13:35). Our love is our witness. *Love is the final fight.*

—Taken from the afterword by John M. Perkins



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## Marsh and Perkins Expand on Timely Message

**Dr. Marsh, you and Dr. Perkins use the term "beloved community" often in your book. Where does the term come from? What does it mean?**

**Charles Marsh:** The term "beloved community" comes from Martin Luther King, Jr., from the final days of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and an amazing but little known speech he gave on nonviolence and social change. The United States Supreme Court had just a few weeks earlier given the black protesters a victory in their boycott of segregated buses, and on a joyful evening in December of 1956, King paused to reflect on the meaning of the sacrifices and convictions that had carried them through the year. King said that while a boycott had been necessary to challenge unjust laws, it did not represent the goal of the movement. "The end is reconciliation," he said, "the end is redemption, the end is the creation of the beloved community."

That line just pounded me the first time I read it. For King, the beloved community was tied to the Christian doctrine of the kingdom of God, and King believed that the movement was about making the kingdom a reality on earth.

The beloved community gave the civil rights movement its unifying spiritual vision. But after 1964, the movement drifted away from the black church, and the vision splintered and fell into the hands of identity groups whose missions were no larger than concern for their own flourishing. Without a vision, the people perish, Proverbs says. In a real way, race relations in this country remain frozen in this historical moment.

**Why is the creation of "beloved community" still important today, fifty years after Dr. King's death?**

**Marsh:** Fifty years after Dr. King's assassination, the theological vision of redemption, reconciliation, and the creation of beloved community has never been more important, or more urgent. And at a time when the language of faith is so often trivialized and politicized in the public square, we need people who help us see authentic discipleship and who show us the joy of costly grace. This is why I wanted to tell the story of John and Vera Mae Perkins and their remarkable life and witness.

**Why does the church need to be involved in social justice? Or, why does social justice need the church?**

**Marsh:** Most of my students who have left the faith have left not because they read Kant's critique of the ontological and cosmological arguments for the existence of God, but because they have listened to Christians in hope of hearing beautiful songs and what they have heard instead has been shrill and ugly. But the church does have beautiful songs to sing, and singing songs of justice and mercy is an especially powerful way to proclaim the truth of the gospel.



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**What do you see as the problems of the community and why are authentic relationships so important for fixing these issues?**

**John M. Perkins:** I think the greatest problem we are facing is individualism. And it is not being challenged in our churches; it's being accommodated. When we make ourselves the center of our concern we become greedy and addictive. It also makes it easy for us to be exploited by the media. The church has accommodated itself to this individualism. Authentic relationships are Christ's body present in the community. The driving force should be not just me as an individual but that I am bringing my best to the body of Christ, the church.

**For both of you, what can the church do to help build "beloved community"?**

**Marsh:** The church must set the gospel eventually free from propaganda, deception, and partisan exploitation. Discipleship to Christ cannot be reduced to principles, values, and talking points, nor is it a matter of being fair and balanced. It's about living passionately into the truth of the gospel. The church must proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and teach fallible men and women to live into the new citizenship of the body of Christ.

**Perkins:** The church needs to come back to the purpose of the gospel. We're trying to fix things without going back to the basic truth. Beloved community is going to look like people loving each other and living in some form of common relationship, much like the early Christians and how they acted in extraordinary ways toward each other. The church needs some very strong recasting of our theological vision in society.

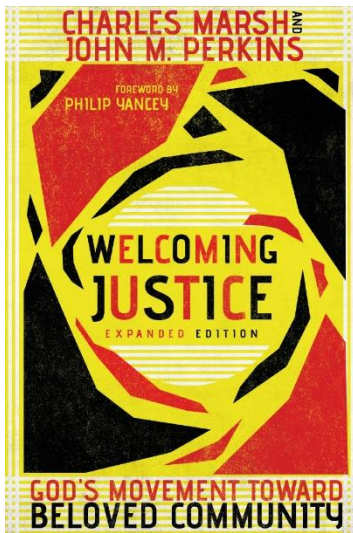


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## “The Perfect Marriage of Social Justice and Scholarly Reflection”

*“For years, John Perkins and Charles Marsh have been two of our most important figures in the discussion—and pursuit—of reconciliation. Now, from their passion for justice, their love of the gospel, and their friendship with one another, comes this gem, which may be the most important book either of them has written yet.”*

—Lauren F. Winner, author of *Wearing God*

*“Growing up in a Korean American immigrant church context, I did not hear the name John Perkins all that often. Since those early years, I have made a concerted effort to learn as much as possible about the work of one of the most important American Christian voices of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This book provides important insights into the life, testimony, theology and ministry of John Perkins. It is both a work of inspiration and a work of history (reflecting the leanings of the dual authors) that must be read by any student or practitioner of social justice ministry. The book provides novices, faithful servants, and even the weary laborers the inspiration to persevere in God's kingdom work. John Perkins and Charles Marsh provide for us a view of compassion, mercy, and justice ministry that needs to be heeded in the context of a new evangelicalism in North America.”*

—Soong-Chan Rah, Milton B. Engebretson Associate Professor of Church Growth and Evangelism, North Park Theological Seminary, author of *Prophetic Lament*

*“Welcoming Justice represents the perfect marriage of social justice and scholarly reflection. Far too often, those endeavors are not connected, leaving either effort impoverished. Everyone interested in thoughtful and just social change will find this book richly rewarding.”*

—Susan M. Glisson, executive director, The William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation, University of Mississippi

*“The blood that runs through the veins of our nation is a muddy river; its waters are deep with honor and shame, joy and pain, compassion and exploitation. Charles Marsh and John Perkins are incredible navigators in the murky waters of race and reconciliation. To see the past, present, and future of ‘the dream’ of the beloved community through the eyes of Perkins and Marsh is to see a resurrection of hope. These are two men who live out the ideas they speak about with eloquence and beauty. If words are the scaffolding we build our lives on, this book lays a true and elegant foundation.”*

—Jon Foreman, songwriter, musician, and cofounder of the alternative rock bands Switchfoot and Fiction Family

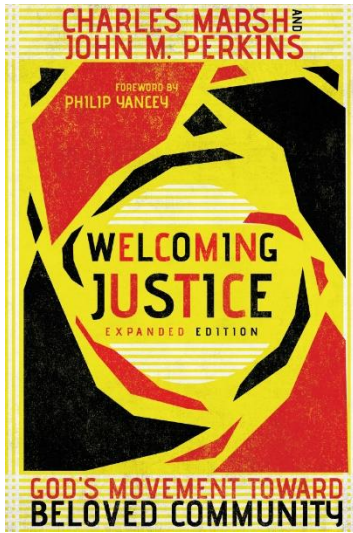


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*"For decades John Perkins's footsteps have been leading people out of captivity, like Moses. And Charles Marsh has been tracking those footsteps with the eye of a historian, showing us that this liberation journey is an ancient one, and it ain't over yet . . . It did not end with Moses or with Dr. King, nor will it end with John Perkins. In Welcoming Justice, Perkins and Marsh have created a perfect harmony, a freedom song that will echo with hope through the streets of injustice and the halls of academia, inviting everyone who hears to take a step out of the empire in which we live and to move one step closer to the Promised Land, the beloved community of God."*

—Shane Claiborne, author, activist, and recovering sinner

*"Together, Perkins and Marsh are attempting to restore the vision, both conceptually and practically, showing how theology can indeed be lived out in a multicultural society despite its deeply stained past. I know of no better time to attempt such a project, and no team better equipped to accomplish it."*

—from the foreword by Philip Yancey

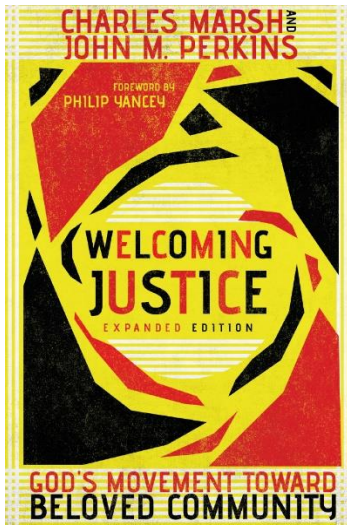


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## John Perkins and Charles Marsh, *Welcoming Justice*



**John Perkins**, the son of a sharecropper, grew up in Mississippi amid dire poverty and rampant racism. Though he had fled to California after his older brother was murdered by a town marshal, he returned after his conversion to Christ in 1960 to share the gospel with his community. His leadership of civil rights demonstrations earned him repeated harassment, beatings, and imprisonment. However, in recent years Perkins has received recognition for his work with seven honorary doctorates from Wheaton College, Gordon College, Huntington College, Geneva College, Spring Arbor College, North Park College, and Belhaven College. He continues to speak and teach around the world on issues of racial reconciliation, leadership, and community development.

Perkins is the founder of Voice of Calvary Ministries in Mendenhall, Mississippi; Harambee Ministries in Pasadena, California; and the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA). His books include *Let Justice Roll Down, With Justice for All*, *A Quiet Revolution*, and *Linking Arms, Linking Lives*.

Follow him on Twitter: @JohnMPerkins.



**Charles Marsh** (PhD, University of Virginia) is director of the Project on Lived Theology and professor of religious and theological studies at the University of Virginia. He is the author of several books, including *God's Long Summer*, *The Last Days*, and *The Beloved Community*.



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