On April 4, 1968, James Earl Ray shot and killed Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis, Tenn. Though he died a violent death, King led a movement of nonviolence to draw national attention to the evils of racism. Many books have been written about the movement, King, and his assassination, but none are as thoroughly researched and detailed, day by day, even minute by minute, as this excellent account by accomplished investigative author Hampton Sides. (Doubleday)

In Feast or Fallow
by Sandra McCracken
reviewed by Allison Backous

Sandra McCracken’s latest album, In Feast or Fallow, redefines the hymnbook. More than a catchy rewrite of traditional songs, McCracken has combined old hymns with her own. She has created an album whose lyrics are achingly beautiful psalms of despair and hope. Her title song, like all the others, catches in your throat: “When my soul is downcast, and my voice has no song/For mercy, for comfort, I wait on the Lord.” Nuanced and true, this is a must-have album. (Towhee Records)

After You Believe:
Why Christian Character Matters
by N. T. Wright
reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In a profound yet clearly understandable manner, N. T. Wright’s challenging book answers two basic questions: “What am I here for now? What happens after you believe?” Beginning with the foundation of God’s saving grace, Wright shows that “God’s future is arriving in the present, in the person and work of Jesus, and you can practice, right now, the habits of life which will find their goal in that coming future.” (HarperOne)

Hannah’s Child
by Stanley Hauerwas
reviewed by Brian Bork

Stanley Hauerwas says we can’t understand the “what” of Christianity without knowing the “how” of being a Christian. In his humble and adventurous account, we learn how Hauerwas is a Christian, and how that has shaped his character in and out of the academy. It’s a life of influential scholarship, provocative ideas, and warm friendships—a shining example of what it looks like to live truthfully into the great story God has laid before us all. (Eerdmans)

New Tracks, Night Falling
by Jeanne Murray Walker
reviewed by Allison Backous

For Jeanne Murray Walker, poetry is puzzling but necessary. In good poems, she says, “you can hear a human voice talking to you.” New Tracks, Night Falling is full of Walker’s voice, picking a path that leads the reader to mystery. Walker traces her responses to 9/11, readings from Genesis, and near-collisions on the highway in order to confront her confusion with the world. She searches out tracks that lead her, and us, to “places that are holy.” (Eerdmans)