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## Cleaning House

By Anthony DeBarros

To tell the story of singer Lisa Beville's return to Christian music, it helps to start with the reason she went away.

It began in 1996, on Mother's Day. Far from home, in a California hotel room, she came face-to-face with a gut-wrenching question: "What am I doing here?"

"It was," she says, "a major, major turning point." It's hard to imagine Beville wrestling with such a question at that point in her career. Her third album, the poppy *Love of Heaven*, had been selling well. Radio was all over her songs, with four reaching No. 1 on Christian charts that year. And here she was, in the midst of a well-received headlining concert tour. No, this was not the time to question success.

Except, back home, things were not so good. The news she had just received on the phone from her husband, Jeff, was so disturbing that in coming months Beville would lay all her so-called success aside, return home to "clean house" and see her career effectively turn off.

Indeed, only a divine prompting in 1999 would lead her back to her career (which resumed this spring with the release of her fourth album, *Lisa Beville*). Recorded simply, and featuring Beville's songwriting gifts on eight tracks, it comes from a person with an entirely different set of priorities.

But that's getting ahead of the story.

It's better to start with Mother's Day 1996 at the moment Lisa Beville learned her son had been missing.

"The tour had been scheduled so that I missed my birthday, my husband's birthday, my kids' birthdays, my anniversary (for some reason, it couldn't be helped)," Beville explains. "So, it was Mother's Day, and my kids had stashed some cards in my backpack, and they'd said, 'Wait until Mother's Day to open them and call us.' So I did. I called home, and Jeff's voice was real overwhelmed and panicked.

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