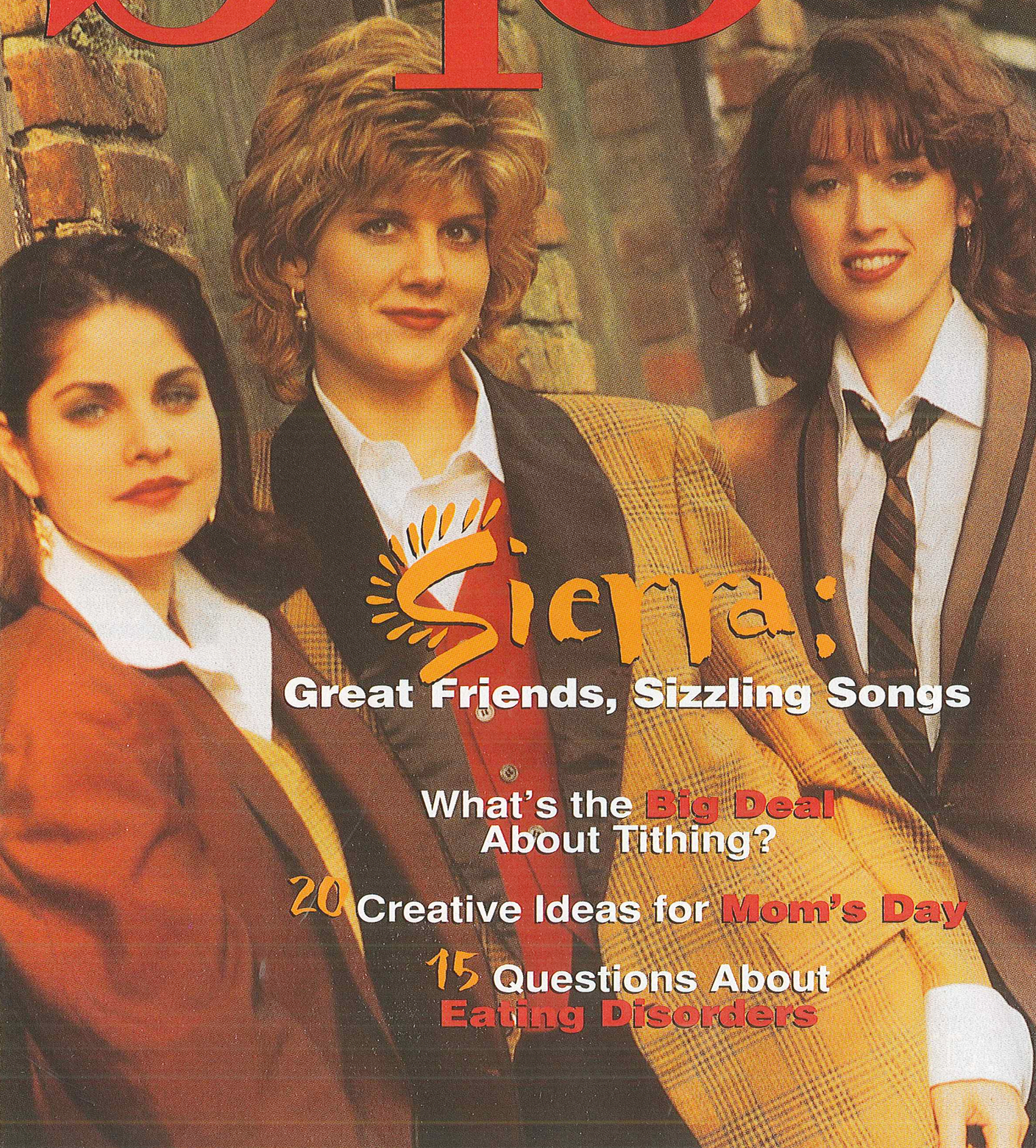


\$1.50

may '96

bio™



Sierra:

Great Friends, Sizzling Songs

What's the **Big Deal**
About Tithing?

20 Creative Ideas for **Mom's Day**

15 Questions About
Eating Disorders



What qualities make a good friendship? Loyalty, honesty, a love of fun and fellowship, faith in Christ—these are probably some of the answers you'd give. What about the quality of endurance, or, better put, working through a period of friction? Enduring tough times can strengthen a friendship like nothing else. And Sierra, a smash-hit trio from Christian music land, can vouch for that.

Deborah Schnelle, Jennifer Hendrix and Wendi Foy Green, three women who blend their voices in music, have also blended different backgrounds and struggles into a tight relationship that's closer than many sisters'. But it wasn't easy.

Family Ties

"Jennifer and I have extremely opposite personalities," Wendi says. "Deb and I, on the other hand, are very similar. We've even come from three-daughter families. [In fact, Wendi's sisters are named Jennifer and Deborah!] Jennifer has one brother—no sisters. So when we formed Sierra, Deb and I melded right into the three-girl way of relating, like jumping into a conversation with whatever's on your mind. Jennifer was shocked!"

"I'm a very quiet person," Jennifer says. "I don't talk over people, and Deb and Wendi expected me to jump into a conversation. They would be talking, and their voices would get louder and louder. Finally, after starting to speak about 50 times, I'd think, *Forget it!* and just leave."

Wendi continues. "Jennifer and I had the farthest to come in getting the balance we needed to work together, much less enjoy each other. In the midst of these initial struggles, we moved to Nashville. And Jennifer ended up needing a place to live. Ironically, she moved in with my husband and me. It was such a godsend, though, because living together forced us to relate.

"We now realize that God created a wonderful balance between the three of us. Deborah is very detail-oriented and organized, Jennifer's the laid-back, passive one, and I'm a leader by nature. We've arrived at a place where we're comfortable with our natural roles."

Background Check

Deborah and Wendi met nearly 10 years ago in Texas. Deborah's boyfriend, Rex, was friends with Wendi's boyfriend, Brian. The guys introduced the girls to each other, and they clicked instantaneously. Later, Deborah and Rex married and moved to Nashville, and Wendi and Brian married and moved to Houston. But the girls kept in touch through Christmas cards and an occasional phone call. They even discussed the possibility of singing together in the distant future.

Brian was a record producer in Houston. While working on a record for Jennifer, he noted that her voice would blend well with others'. In the meantime, Wendi had never given up the dream of forming a group. She asked if Brian knew anyone who might be good in a trio. He immediately thought of Jennifer. And the rest, as they say, is history. ➤

Sierra:

A smash trio has overcome differences and helped one member conquer anorexia.

by Susan Maffett



RUSS HARRINGTON

Better Than Sisters



Deborah Schnelle, Jennifer Hendrix and Wendi Foy Green are Sierra.



Sierra is now releasing its second album, *Devotion*. As she did on the group's self-titled debut album, Wendi co-wrote many of the songs. She penned many of her lyrics based on circumstances in Deborah's and Jennifer's lives. "I watch other people's situations," Wendi says, "especially what Jennifer and Deborah are going through, and write about those things. That way, we can really share things that we've experienced ourselves. It makes us much more real for an audience."

Tough Love

"Tearing Down the Temple," one of the songs Wendi wrote for the first album, was created with Deborah in mind.

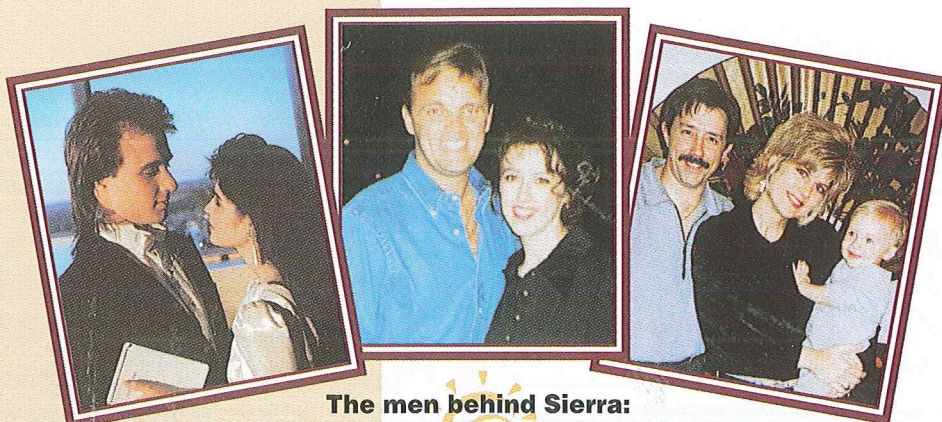
Every time I looked into the mirror on the wall, I began to make a list of every tiny flaw.

I cried, 'Mirror, mirror on the wall, change the shape I see.'

But every time that I went back, I saw the same old me.

Deborah is a recovering anorexic, and she depends on Wendi and Jennifer for more than just fun—they are serious accountability partners. The music industry's emphasis on perfection, combined with the stress of performances, has the potential to send Deborah reeling. Jennifer and Wendi help her keep things in perspective, and she can count on them to keep an eye on her eating habits.

"My anorexia first developed out of a need for affection from my father. It was not in reaction to a mirror, but rather



**The men behind Sierra:
Deborah's husband, Rex; Jennifer's husband, Scott;
Wendi's husband, Brian, and their son, Cooper.**

from a desire to be perfect in my dad's eyes. I wanted to *control* what he thought about me. I went from 100 pounds to 75 pounds in a couple of months. I was never hospitalized, though. This was back in the early '80s, before anorexia was really talked about. It wasn't until I read a biography about an anorexic that I recognized the symptoms. I gained the weight back, but I didn't deal with the issues behind the disease . . . until three years ago, when we became immersed in the music business."

An Old Enemy Returns

After Wendi and Jennifer moved to Nashville, work on a demo project began immediately. As the stress increased, Deborah's weight started to drop.

"Studio life is brutal," Deborah says. "Every line has to be perfect, and when you've sung one line 50 times and still don't have it right, you become incredibly worn down. My need for perfection and control came alive again, and I began to slip back into those old, self-destructive patterns. That's when Wendi took matters into her own hands.

"Look, Deb," she told me, "you need to get some counseling. You can't minister to girls dealing with these issues unless you have a grip on your own. If I call a counselor, will you see her?"

And Deborah agreed to go. "It was Wendi's intervention that gave me the courage," Deborah says. "It's so scary to admit that you've lost control, much less that you never even had any to begin with!"

No Cure

"An anorexic's issues will never be over," Deborah says. "It's a thorn in the flesh for the rest of her life. Recovery happens, but she will always struggle. The issue has to be laid at God's feet every morning. That's where mercy and relief are found. Anorexia keeps *me* coming to the throne like nothing else ever has. My struggles and desire to recover have strengthened our ministry, too."

Deborah tells her audiences that a person's identity in Christ is more important than any earthly image. She's also the first to admit how hard that is to remember. "In this business, I'm constantly being told that a hair is out of place, that my lipstick isn't right or that I need more blush. I have to constantly tell myself that on the day Jesus returns, none of this is going to matter. What's important is that I'm going to spend eternity with Him!"

Wanna write to Sierra? Send your letter to:

c/o Wolgemuth & Hyatt
8012 Brooks Chapel Rd. Suite 243
Brentwood, TN 37027

And if you don't already own a copy of Sierra's newest release, flip to page 17 and request yours today!

For Help With Eating Disorders

- Talk with your parents, pastor or school counselor.
- If you want a referral for help in your local area or want more information on eating disorders, contact Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders, Box 7, Highland Park, IL 60035. Phone: 708-831-3438
- Request the following items from Focus on the Family using the envelope inside this magazine: *Escaping Anorexia and Bulimia* (free booklet), *Eating Right: A Guide to Family Nutrition* (free booklet), "Eating Disorders" (\$7 two-part cassette series), "When Food Is an Enemy" (\$7 cassette).
- Consider getting the following books from your local bookstore: *Chaotic Eating* by Helen Bray-Garretson and Kaye V. Cook (Zondervan), *Starving for Attention* by Cherry Boone O'Neill (Dell Books), *Free to Be Thin* by Marie Chapian (Bethany House Publishers).

Sierra's Contest

In the November 1995 issue of *Brio*, we announced a contest with Sierra. The winner, Jessica Leidy from Edgewood, N.M., was flown to Nashville, where she spent the day with Sierra. The four of them were pampered at a spa, each receiving a facial, manicure, pedicure and makeup. Jessica also won \$150 for a shopping spree.

"Sierra was really nice," Jessica says. "It was great to sit down over dinner and hear about how they got started and where they're headed in the music business. I bought clothes for a winter youth retreat with the shopping money I received."



How to Battle It Out—the Right Way!

Getting past a disagreement can strengthen you and your friendship! Wendi, Jennifer and Deborah share advice about working through the tough times.

Jennifer: If someone has hurt your feelings, you need to clear the air. The first thing you might *want* to say is, "You had no right!" But that will only make things worse. Think through your words, pray and *then* speak.

Being vulnerable is scary, but it's also necessary. I've learned if you *don't* speak, and hold things in, you can become bitter. And bitterness kills you. It changes your whole outlook on life. So it's vital that you learn to speak your mind.

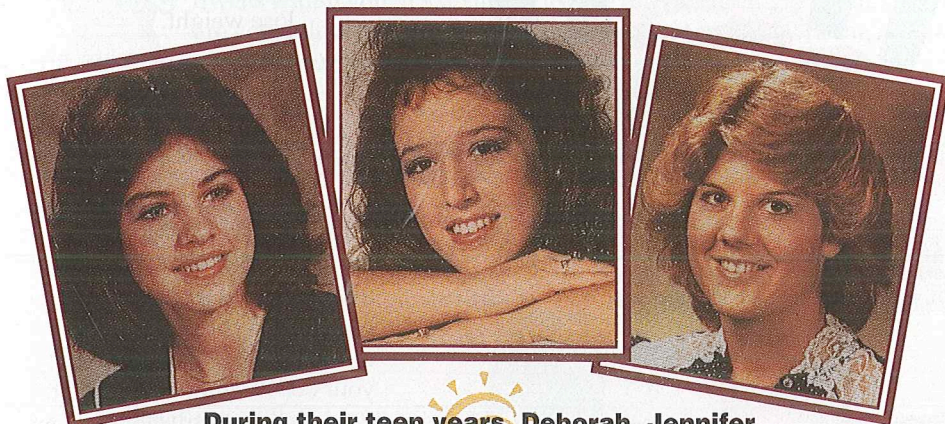
Wendi: It's important, when working through any difficult situation with best friends or sisters, to cling to the truth of unconditional love. You might get mad at each other, but then you have to let go of the bad feelings. And forgive quickly. Be willing to take that first step.

Also, don't try to "fix" a situation or a person. You can't force anything. All you can do is support, love and give advice only when asked. An exception to that would be a case like Deborah's, when I saw her weight dropping. It's definitely okay to speak up then, but you have to

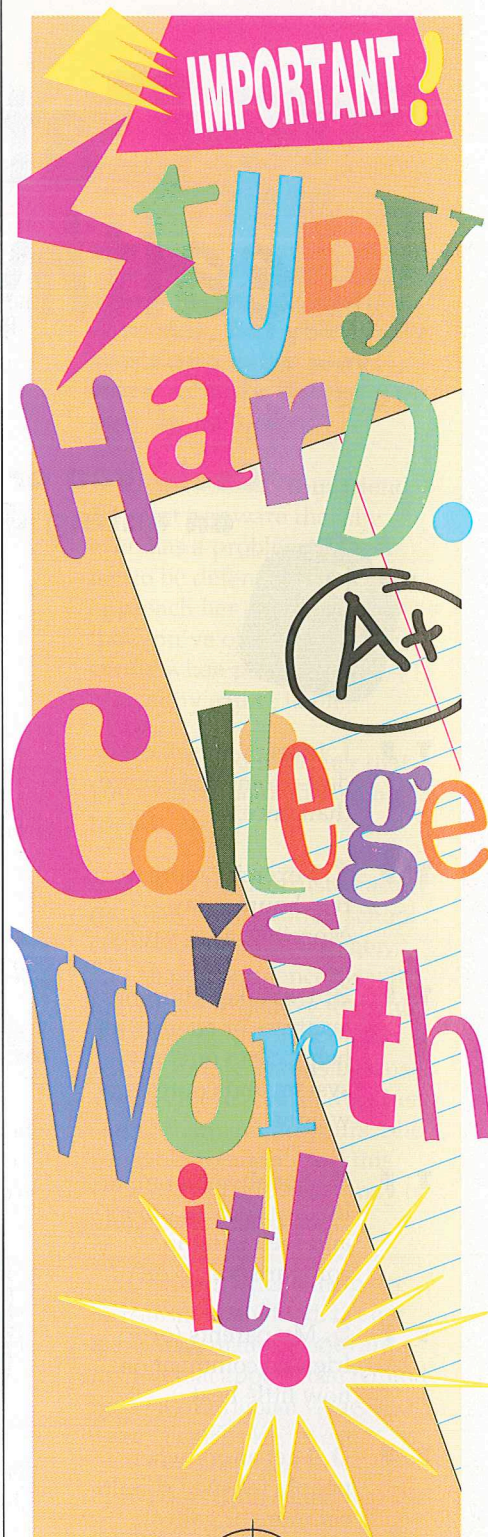
back your words up. Be prepared to offer concrete help—not just talk. I had to make that call to a counselor for Deborah. Any amount of encouragement for *her* to pick up the phone wouldn't have worked.

Deborah: Patience is essential to working through any argument, no matter how frustrated you get with the other people involved. There are times when I reach my limit, either with a discussion I'm involved in, or listening to an argument between others. I can't handle the confrontation, and I want to leave! But to force myself to sit there and work through something definitely pays off in the end.

It's also important to have short accountability. One of our pastors started us on weekly accountability sessions. We ask each other, "Is there anything we need to talk about? How are you really doing?" We discuss what we've thought and felt during the previous week—not stuff like being bummed about a bad-hair day, but *real* concerns. It's so important to air things out before they build up. *



During their teen years, Deborah, Jennifer and Wendi had big dreams of making it in the music business.



ASBURY
COLLEGE

Established 1890

UNIQUELY CHRISTIAN.

For more information call 1•800•888•1818
or write to our Admissions Office,
1 Macklem Dr., Wilmore, KY 40390.