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## Editors' Notes

Stuart Love  
slope@pepperdine.edu

D'Esta Love  
dlove@pepperdine.edu

Lynn Anderson

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LYNN ANDERSON AND D'ESTA LOVE

*Christianity Today* once named Miraslov Wolfe of Yale University as one of the five great theologians of the 90s. Shortly thereafter Lynn Anderson found himself with Wolfe on a five-hour drive across Croatia and seized on the opportunity to pick Wolfe's magnificent brain. Wolfe, however, seemed evasive. Finally, he admitted, "Actually, I have no interest in discussing theology, apart from *ministry*." Then he added, "And I have no interest in *ministry* separated from *theology*." This rings true to the guest editors of this issue of *Leaven*.

One feels a similar bent among these contributors who wrote on their favorite texts for ministry. In reading their articles two subliminal themes bled through:

First is that *scripture shapes authentic ministry*. Popular notions of ministry seem somewhat overtaken by pragmatism (what "works") and utilitarianism (what people find "useful"). And some feel more heavily informed by manuals on management and marketing, than by scripture. The way our contributing writers ground their practice of ministry firmly in scripture is immensely reassuring.

Second, *ministry also helps shape an authentic theology*. Each writer in this issue, whether overtly or subliminally, reveals how the agonies and mysteries of real time ministry have reframed his or her understanding and/or use of scripture.

As the guest editors, we hope that your ministry will be enriched by both of these themes – and that your "hearts will be strangely warmed."

"Favorite Texts for Ministry" is devoted to the personal and theological reflections of men and women from a variety of backgrounds and experiences in ministry. Each has selected a favorite text and shared from the personal reservoir of their life and work the ways in which it has shaped their ministry. We are pleased that there was no duplication in the selection of scriptures and that the spectrum carries us from the book of Job to 1 John. With this realization we have ordered the issue according to the passages as they unfold from the pages of the Old Testament through the New Testament. We feel certain that this will be an inspiring and moving journey of faith for our readers.

Our writers write out of the circumstances of life and ministry, sharing stories, experiences, and lessons learned as they share with us a favorite text. **Alfred Darryl Jumper** begins the issue with a reflection on Job 42:10 that speaks to the power to move through the challenges of personal loss and conflict in relationships that resides in God's instruction to Job that he pray for his friends. Such prayers take the focus off "me" and hold out the promise of reconciliation and blessing. **Mark Manassee** draws from his experience in pastoral care as a hospital chaplain and his own journey of suffering and loss. He shares the strength he found in Psalm 46 as he looked to God as a refuge for his soul. **Jeannie and Mike Cagle** find encouragement for ministry from Psalm 63. Walk with them as they move through low places in ministry to a place where they are able to sing, "Lord, your love is better than life." From the book of Amos, **Charisa Hunter-Crump** finds a model for prophetic ministry. She claims the challenge for prophetic preaching and embraces the courage to "disturb the calm waters of our easy answers." With equal courage **Katie Hays** shares a personal lament that takes her into the lament of Habakkuk as he stands on the ramparts and seeks an answer from God. She invites us to join all who keep vigils on lonely ramparts.

We shift to the New Testament with two articles that draw implications for ministry from the gospels. **D'Esta Love** turns to Mark 10 and finds in the healing story on the Jericho Road a model for ministry. It is captured in Jesus' question to the blind man, "What can I do for you?" **Jerry A. Taylor** allows the programmatic passage for Jesus' ministry in Luke 4 to remind us that the Holy Spirit empowers us to speak good news to the poor and to stand in solidarity with those who are crushed by injustice as we proclaim that the year of Jubilee has come. **Roger McMurry**, who has served 45 years in ministry, made a vow as a young man based on his favorite text: Acts 20.24. He writes of his journey to remain faithful to his calling and to fulfill what he received from the Lord in vocational ministry as a minister/cabinetmaker. **Eric Timothy Guild**, a missionary working in rural Africa, observes how death as an ever-present reality in the tribal culture of Tanzania has taught him lessons about dying that inform his teaching of Romans 6.3-4. **Candace Wood** shares with us how Paul's prayer (Eph 3.14-21) equips us for a ministry that is not distracted by the world that would shape us and our ministries into its likeness. She helps us keep Christ at the center of all we do in his name. **Russell F. Blowers** reflects on 45 years of ministry and identifies with Paul (2 Tim 4.6-8) who sees in the not-so-distant future a crown of glory. Russell draws strength from Paul's integrity and his passion to keep fighting the good fight and to finish the course. **Carolyn and Lynn Anderson** share the power of 1 Peter 4.11 as a resource for perseverance in ministry as it compels them to draw upon the strength that God provides. **Jim and Carolyn Hawkins**, out of their joint experiences in counseling and Christian ministry, draw from 1 John 3.14-16 as they share insights into the power of love to open hearts and transform lives. Finally, **Lee Magness** has written a responsive reading for worship drawn from the entirety of Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

We hope this issue will be a blessing to you as you enter into the personal journeys of our writers and that you will be inspired by their reflections on their favorite texts for ministry. As we look toward the future, the next two issues of *Leaven* will be devoted to "Nationalism and the American Church" and "Ministry in John's Gospel."

