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Editors' Notes

Stuart Love
slope@pepperdine.edu

D'Esta Love
dlove@pepperdine.edu

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Editors' Notes

D'ESTA LOVE AND STUART LOVE

Where do we begin our study of the Bible? The book of Genesis is *the beginning* because it provides a foundation for all that follows in Scripture. Often, we have read Genesis because of its great stories, but it is also important to note its religious message and key themes that help us understand its purpose, which is to narrate God's dealings with humankind and in particular to tell of and to interpret Israel's special role in God's historical activity. The writing covers the times from the creation to Israel's sojourn in Egypt. The turning point is the call of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) in that what precedes this pivotal text demonstrates the persistent wickedness of human life and what follows—the stories of the patriarchs and matriarchs in Genesis 12-50—connects their lives to the shaping of the special identity of Israel.

In other words, Genesis begins with a broad focus on the world at the outset and transitions to a focus on 12 sons born to Jacob. In Abraham, God separated one family line and chose one person, promising that he and his people would have a significant historical destiny and that he would be instrumental in bringing God's blessing upon all the families of humankind. Even though the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and others belong to a world unlike our own, these great characters wrestled with the same human issues that we do, and the decisions they made have had concrete consequences reaching to our lives today. Therefore, the "plot" of Genesis features major decisions that key individuals made. And to that end, it is imperative that *Leaven* devotes an issue to the book of Genesis based primarily on sermons and speeches given at the Pepperdine Lectures of 2003.

Rick Marrs opens with his keynote address titled, "Embracing the Call of God," and challenges us by posing a problem—the very text that is central to our faith, Genesis 12:1-4, also "unapologetically rejects the American dream." **Paul Watson** reminds us that the first story describing God's covenant with Abraham (Gen 15:1-6) concerning land and posterity is really a story about how families live—make decisions, work through crises, and celebrate achievements. **John York** explores the story of Abraham sacrificing his only son (Gen 22:1-19) as in many ways "the culmination of Abraham's faith pilgrimage."

The *Leaven* Symposium featured a diversity of responses to reading Genesis through the perspective of ministry. **Charme Robarts** opens with a study of Abraham and Sarah as our partners in disciple-making; **R. Christopher Heard** creatively leads us to consider Genesis in a ministry to children through the eyes of an Old Testament scholar who is the father of a five-year-old-son; **Shelley G. Neilson** pursues the theme of blessing in the life of Abraham and in our lives as Christians belonging to communities of faith; and **Christopher Rollston** reminds us in his study of the sons of the god(s) and the daughters of men (Gen 6:1-4) that it is important to understand the world behind the text as we interpret Scripture.

Finally, **Mark W. Hamilton** provides an outstanding reading guide to the book of Genesis, and **Lee Magness** supplies us with a wonderful liturgical piece, a Christmas litany titled, "Thy Kingdom Come."

We commend this issue of *Leaven* to our readers! And we invite you to be looking for our final issue of the year, edited by David Fleer on the theme of preaching! Next year we hope to open with an issue on Canon and Ministry edited by Mark Matson, followed by Faith in the Marketplace edited by James Street, followed by the Holy Spirit and Ministry edited by Thomas Olbricht, and finally an issue taken from the Pepperdine Lectures, which will be devoted to the study of the pastoral letters, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.

