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Editors' Notes

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Editors' Notes

Stuart and D'Esta Love

Then Satan answered the Lord, "Does Job fear God for nothing?" (1:9)

"If I have withheld anything that the poor desired,
or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail,
or have eaten my morsel alone, and the orphan has not eaten from it—
for from my youth I reared the orphan like a father,
and from my mother's womb I guided the widow—
if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing,
or a poor person without covering,
whose loins have not blessed me, and who was not warmed with the fleece of my sheep;
if I have raised my hand against the orphan,
because I saw I had supporters at the gate;
then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder,
and let my arm be broken from its socket.
For I was in terror of calamity from God, and I could not have faced his majesty. (31:16–23)

"I heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you;
therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes" (42:5–6)

This issue of *Leaven* is devoted to the book of Job and is largely an outgrowth of the 1996 Pepperdine Lectures. Your editors recall attending a number of the lectures and classes in which gifted, intelligent men and women struggled to come to terms with the mighty sweep of the writing's questions and seemingly competing answers. How difficult—impossible—it is "to get our arms around" this story of a righteous man whose motives for being righteous are tested through numerous personal tragedies and sufferings. Perhaps our struggle begins with Job's name. It may mean "where is the (divine father)?" or it may mean "hated/persecuted one," or it may combine both meanings to pose something of the writing's dilemmas.

Where else in the Bible does God ask so many questions as he does with Job, in the end? It is no wonder that scholars believe the central theme of Job is stated in the form of a question: Does anyone serve God for nothing? (1:9). Don't we take for granted the principle of retribution—we reap what we sow, despite occasional exceptions? Job's tragic experience stretches our belief to the limit and, in so doing, confronts us with a more profound question: Can our trust in God survive every eventuality?

Now, we come to grips with questions and issues related to ministry. How do we serve our brothers and sisters in the midst of suffering? One message our writers stress is that we may be more like Job's friends than we think. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar journey from their homes to offer comfort to Job in his adversity. Their advice, largely rooted in a theology of retribution, is finally reduced to silence. Don't we say to ourselves, "Why can't Job's friends be friends and be still?!" And yet, do we not blurt out "truths" that don't fit the face of tragedy and the wrestling of faith? How often have we offered advice and explanations instead of presence and tears? There is a ministry of words. There is a ministry of deeds. But there is also a ministry of silence that bonds suffering hearts in something far more pure and loving.

We have never been so moved by our task as we edited the articles for this issue. Our hearts ached as we were drawn into the personal experiences of MIKE COPE and JOHN MARK HICKS. Such suffering! Such honesty! Such probing of faith before the transcendence of God! We commend to you the writers who made up the *Leaven* Symposium at the Pepperdine Lectures: Fran Carver, Mark Carver, Jan Hailey, and Tim Willis. FRAN CARVER sees Job's wife in a different light. What about ministry to a marriage partner who is suffering? MARK CARVER's practical wisdom, shaped by professional training and practice in the field of pastoral care, makes his article a must reading for ministers and elders. JAN HAILEY pursues the issue of justice as she reflects on observations rooted in a jail ministry in Abilene, Texas. TIM WILLIS clearly and practically explores the theme of righteousness.

Other writers bring added depth and balance to the issue. Three articles were theme lectures. RONNIE NORMAN provides a sermon. MARK FROST looks at Job's friends with powerful insights. BILL LOVE explores the topic of faith in light of the central question: Does Job serve God for noth-

ing? Regetably, an article by TIM WOODROOF could not be published in this issue due to a lack of space. We will print it in the near future. We thank Tim for his gracious consent and patience. Two articles are more scholarly in character. MICHAEL S. MOORE, in an adaptation of an article written for the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, explores "Job's Texts of Terror." CRAIG BOWMAN asks, "Is the Question Really the Answer?" as he examines Job's humble reply to God in one of the writing's difficult texts, Job 40:1-7. We commend these two pieces to all of our readers. MARK MATSON provides an excellent resource reading guide. The issue concludes with book reviews by ROBIN PERRIN, STEPHEN and JOYCE KRAMAR, and CLARENCE HIBBS.

Finally, let us close with some *Leaven* news. Our next issue is on the topic of preaching, edited by BILL LOVE. Other close-at-hand issues include "Christians Ethics," edited by KATHY PULLEY; "Ministry in Luke-Acts," edited by DAVE MATSON; "Worship," edited by PAUL WATSON; and "Ministry in Philippians," the 1997 theme of the Pepperdine Lectures. We are thrilled by the continued and increasing participation of Christians representing the richness of our restoration heritage. CHARLES E. COOK of Elizabethton, Tennessee, has consented to serve on our advisory board. Other contributors include MARK MATSON, author of the resource reading guide in this issue, who received his M. Div. from Emmanuel School of Religion and is an ordained minister in the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ; and H. EUGENE JOHNSON, who supplied the poems published in our last issue on "Children and the Church." We hold restoration history articles by JOHN OWSTON and CHARLES R. GRESHAM, which will be published in a future issue. And we must not forget the editing DAVE MATSON is doing on the Luke-Acts issue.

Continue to pray for our ministry. Do you know someone who should be reading *Leaven*—perhaps a gift subscription for some special occasion?