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Beach and Sanchez's "Love Letters from the Edge: Meditations for Those Struggling with Brokenness, Trauma, and the Pain of Life" (Book Review)

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Scripturally sound, encouraging, gentle, hopeful and loving, this book is not only for those women who have been “officially” diagnosed with PTSD, but for any woman who has been traumatized (physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually).

Written in an easy-to-read format, this is a resource that would not only be useful for a personal devotional, but could also be used in a small-group Bible study or as a ministry tool.

**Love Letters from the Edge: Meditations for Those Struggling with
Brokenness, Trauma, and the Pain of Life,**

by Shelley Beach and Wanda Sanchez. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications,
2014. 296 pp. \$15.99. ISBN 9780825443473

*Reviewed by Pamela Gore, Acquisitions Librarian,
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, MA*

Love Letters from the Edge is a book of Christian meditations designed to help sufferers of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) heal from the trauma of physical, emotional, and spiritual abuse through developing a closer relationship with God. The authors are speakers and bloggers who have written and spoken extensively on PTSD as both professionals and survivors of abuse. Together they founded PTSD Perspectives, an organization offering educational seminars for use in health care and other professions. They state clearly that they are not therapists and properly urge readers to seek counseling if necessary.

The meditations cover 12 weeks, with one meditation per day for the first five days of the week. These meditations are about three pages long, beginning with Scripture verses and a letter to God. Their response is then followed by questions for deeper thought. A brief prayer closes each entry. Each week ends with a Weekend Features section that includes a meditation plus journaling starter questions, art projects, and other activities. The focus topic changes weekly. Weeks are grouped into four sections: Heart Cries, Grieving and Growing, Hope and a Future, and Love and Assurance.

Seven appendices covering 40 pages define and discuss PTSD, list assessment tests and resources, and provide other tools and aids. Since many people associate PTSD solely with trauma experienced during military service, the appendices put PTSD in perspective.

The meditations do not shy away from describing heart-wrenching situations and expressing raw emotions, yet the tone is compassionate, nurturing, and understanding.

Love Letters from the Edge is similar to Sarah Young's popular meditation books *Jesus Calling* and *Dear Jesus*. However, it aims at a much narrower audience.

Love Letters from the Edge is appropriate for libraries serving Christian counseling, trauma treatment, and women's issues programs, and for those that collect Christian meditation books.

Making a Meal of It: Rethinking the Theology of the Lord's Supper,

by Ben Witherington III. Waco, TX: Baylor Press, 2007. 160 pp. \$29.96.

ISBN 9781602581906

*Reviewed by Jeremy McGinniss, Library Director,
Baptist Bible College and Seminary, Clarks Summit, PA*

Ben Witherington, who is no stranger to the shelves of libraries in theological higher education, offers in this slender volume a deep and expansive view of the practice of the Lord's Supper. The reader is brought through an engaging theological-historical exploration of the Lord's Supper with the goal of better understanding the practice in the present proceeding from the historical context. This book is particularly helpful towards growing an understanding of the history and heritage of the sacrament and seeing the broader context of the practice. Locating the Lord's Supper in the historical context of a meal allows Witherington to explore the historical practices as well as some of the early church's issues and controversies in order to draw some conclusions for what that means for current present practice. Witherington pursues the sacramental view which sees things whose meaning is only completely fulfilled if they promote the good of communion with God and with other people. It is through this view that the reader is encouraged to engage with the Lord's Supper "as an active sacrament ... of taking, eating, drinking" (p. 134). Witherington's historical and theological analyses are enhanced by personal reflection and insight which increase the accessibility and relatability of this book. The author offers specific suggestions, particularly in the last chapter, to help believers re-view the Lord's Supper. That is, by partaking in the meal one must recognize the connection with Christ and also with each other, understanding the idea of communion as not only vertical but also horizontal. The taking of communion is not an isolated or merely spiritual act. Rather it should proceed out from and as a reminder of existing relationships both corporately and to Christ as Savior. The reader is reminded that believers commune with each other as well as with God and thus need to be caring for those relationships regularly, not just once a week. This book is an excellent reminder and encouragement to engage in and practice the Lord's Supper as a way to "learn to be better dinner guests, waiting on one another, communing together with one eye on heaven and one on each other" (p. 142).