

Minister's Message – December 2005

Marriage in the Beginning and Now

On the sixth day of creation the Lord God made man in his own image. God put man in a beautiful garden often called paradise. There were lovely flowering trees and trees with all kinds of delicious fruit. It was just wonderful – except for one thing. Man was alone; he had no one to share his life with. None of the animals were found to be suitable companions.

So God did a wonderful thing. God made woman. He took her out of the man and then gave her back to him to be his companion in life and for life. God told man to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife – **one wife for life**. She was a helper comparable or 'opposite' to him (Genesis 2:20). The woman fulfilled man's need for a companion, for a helper, for a partner in life- and vice versa. Together they made a unit, they made a whole, and they made one – no longer two but 'one flesh'.

'Women – you can't live without them and you can't live with them' – so goes the saying of some disgruntled male! But there is a lot of truth in this saying – provided it is woman not women! God saw that man could not live without a companion and so he made woman, perfect for man in every way! So what went wrong? Why is it so difficult for a man and a woman to 'live happily ever after'? Read on and the very next chapter of the Bible will tell you why.

There was an intruder in the garden. Satan came along and the woman listened to him instead of God. She was tempted and she fell. She disobeyed God, she sinned against God. They tried to hide from God but he found them. Man blamed his wife, his wife blamed the serpent and God cast them all out of paradise, out of the garden he made for them. How tragic!

Just a story you say? Oh that you were right! But the reality is that today we are still outside the garden. Can you identify with man and woman before they sinned? Never had relationship problems, never been selfish, always act in perfect love? We live in a world of broken relationships, with the marriage relationship being especially vulnerable because it is the most intimate. It is a relationship ordained by God and therefore the special target of his enemies. Our selfishness, pride, and anger keep getting in the way of building a stronger relationship.

Love is a wonderful thing. 'Love will keep us together' – so go the words of a popular song. Perfect love can mend broken relationships. *Perfect love casts out fear* and *Love covers a multitude of sins* (I John 4:18, I Peter 4:8). Perfect love allows us to forgive, and not keep a record of wrongs. Perfect love is patient and kind, it is not proud or rude and it is not self-seeking. But where do we find this love?

What is love, and where do we find it? One thing is sure, you will not find it in Hollywood. It is just not love you see in most movies. You will not find it in the animal world, you will not find it in books, you will not find it in some celebrity, and you will not find it in your own heart. Perfect love is found only in Jesus Christ who *laid down his life for us* (I John 3:16). Jesus gave his life, not for those who love him but for those who rebel against him. Oh the depth and the richness of this perfect love of Christ. Wouldn't you like to know more about this amazing love?

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). Jesus said he will never turn away from you if you come to him. He said *the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out* (John 6:37). Cast out of the garden because of sin – come to Jesus and you will never be cast out!

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