

# MARRIAGE AND THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD

## Study Two

### MARRIAGE AND THE LOVE OF GOD

*Martin Bleby*

#### PREPARING FOR A WEDDING DAY

Many couples coming to marriage are heavily focussed on the day of the marriage ceremony, and the arrangements for the wedding. Enormous energy and cost can be expended on clothing and jewellery, invitations, flowers and decorations, cars or other forms of transport, photography and video, besides the ceremony venue, the wedding reception, and the honeymoon trip.<sup>1</sup> Important as it is to mark the occasion as special, such arrangements can go beyond that to indulge the couple, and especially the bride, as the centre of adoring attention. The glamour may be an attempt to mask or compensate for a certain underlying drabness or seaminess of life. The whole procedure may be little more than a complying with cultural or family expectations. Or it may be just an excuse for an expensive party.

All of this can overshadow what is at heart a simple yet wonderful happening: the public undertaking of a man and a woman to come together as husband and wife for the rest of their lives. Churches do well to encourage couples not to feel bound by customary expectations above and beyond this. Churches ministering with the poor have been known to facilitate simple, cheap and joyful communal weddings that avoid the prohibitive costs.

#### *Questions for discussion*

- *What preparations have been made, or can you recall, for your own wedding day, or for a wedding you have attended?*
- *How did these enhance or detract from the central significance of the occasion?*

#### PREPARING FOR MARRIED LIFE

Undue focus on the day of the wedding can also be a distraction from the larger ongoing issues of this lifelong relationship. Where the couple will live and work, what number of children they will have and when, and how they will relate with each other in the daily

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<sup>1</sup> 'On average, U.S. couples spend \$28,800 for their wedding. This does not include cost for a honeymoon, engagement ring, bridal consultant or wedding planner', source <<http://www.costofwedding.com/>> accessed 8th April 2008. In Australia, the average cost of a wedding, including the honeymoon, is \$28,700 in Australian dollars—an annual spending of \$3.5 billion (Angela Cuming, The Sun-Herald, October 31, 2004 <<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/10/30/1099028262537.html>> accessed 8th April 2008.

practical outworking of that, are issues of greater ongoing import than just what happens on the day of the wedding. Churches and other agencies provide helpful and necessary marriage preparation resources and courses to assist couples work together through many of these arrangements.

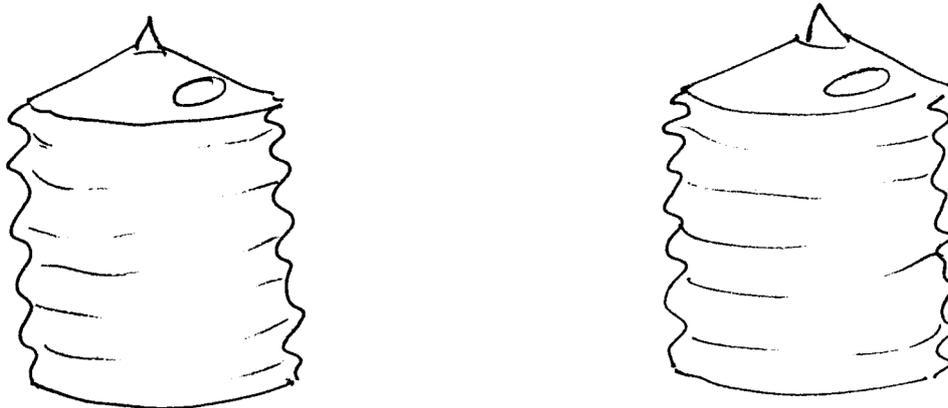
In particular, couples may be helped to think and talk with each other about their particular hopes and expectations for their married life together. It is good when the hopes and expectations of the husband and wife match each other, and can be shared. Sometimes these can be a bit idealistic, drawn more from stories in magazines and movies than from real life. For a marriage to continue, and even to grow and deepen, it will need something more substantial than the glamour and excitement of the initial romance.

In this study we take it a step further to look at these issues in the even wider setting of God's purpose for the whole of creation.

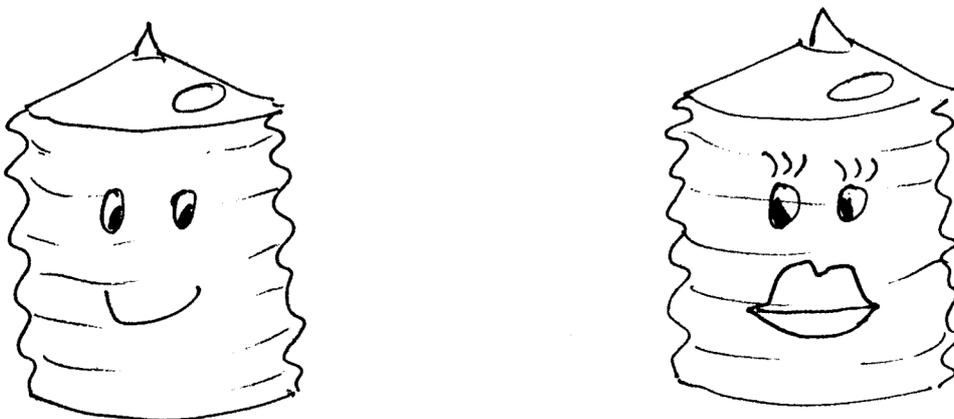
### ***Questions for discussion***

- *What have been the hopes and expectations for your own marriage, or a marriage that you have observed?*
- *How have these hopes and expectations been fulfilled, or disappointed?*

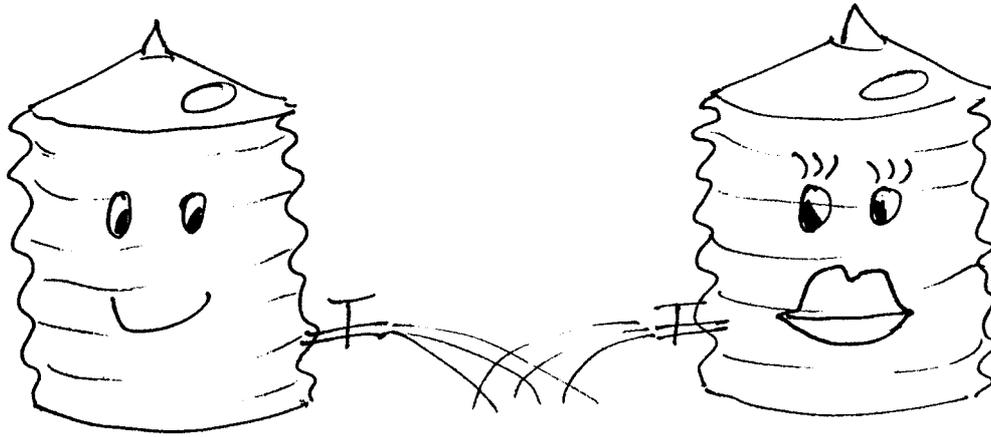
## **A STORY OF TWO WATER TANKS**



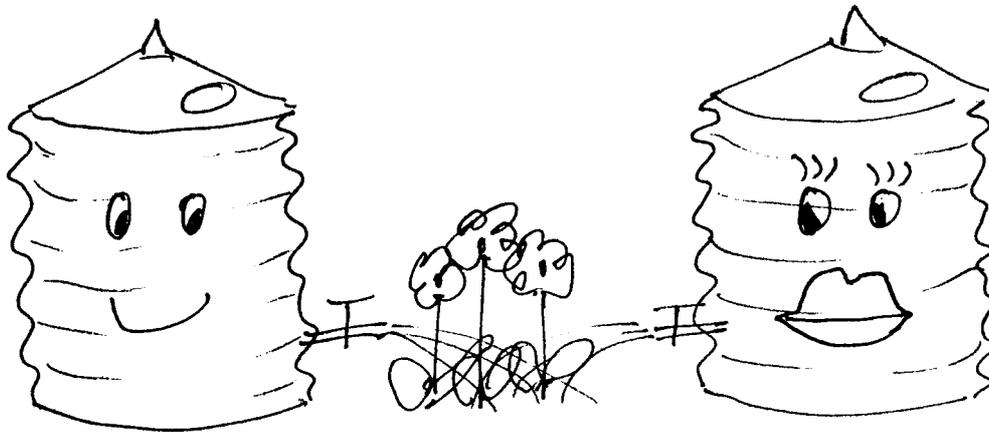
Once upon a time, there were two water tanks.



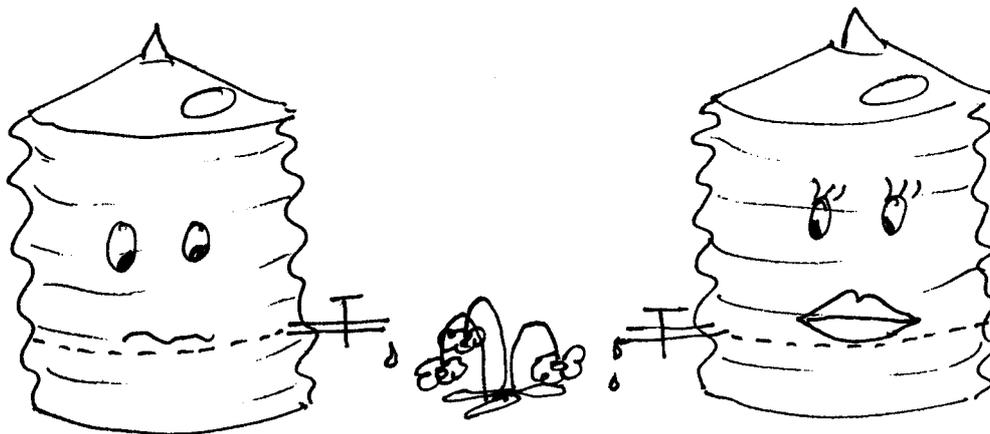
A man water tank, and a lady water tank. And they decided to get together to make a garden.



So they turned on their taps towards each other, and the water flowed freely . . .

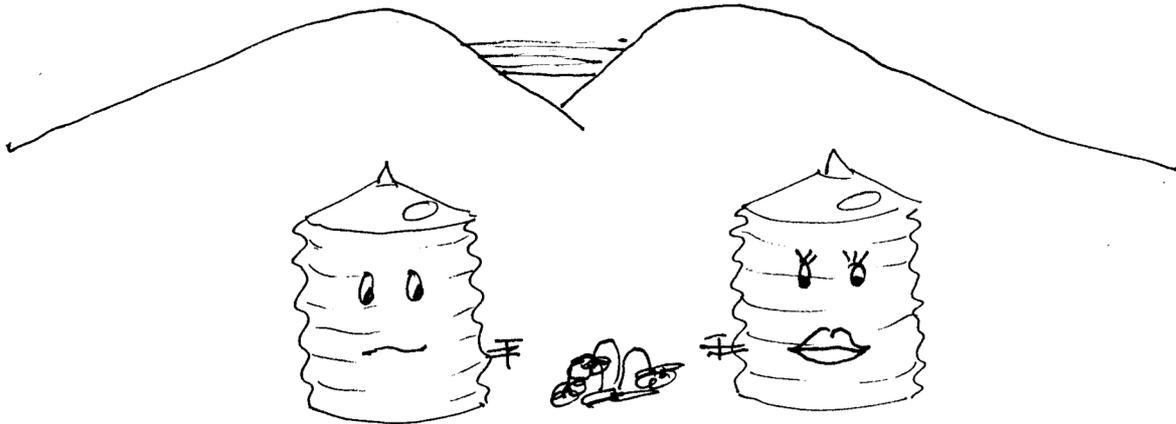


. . . and very soon a beautiful garden sprang up! And everything in the garden was lovely.

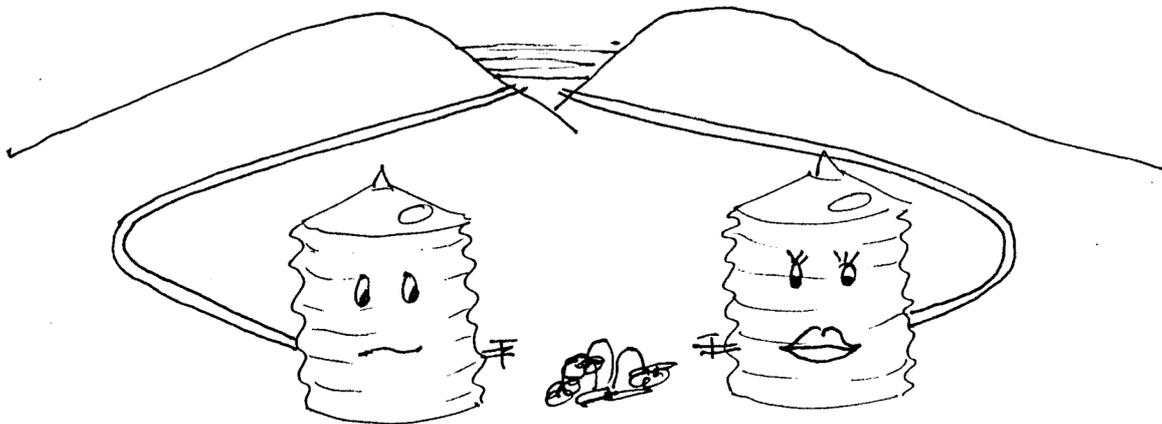


Sadly, after a while, the water level in each of the tanks became low, and the flow was reduced to a trickle. The garden began to look a bit dry and droopy, and there wasn't much hope of its recovery.

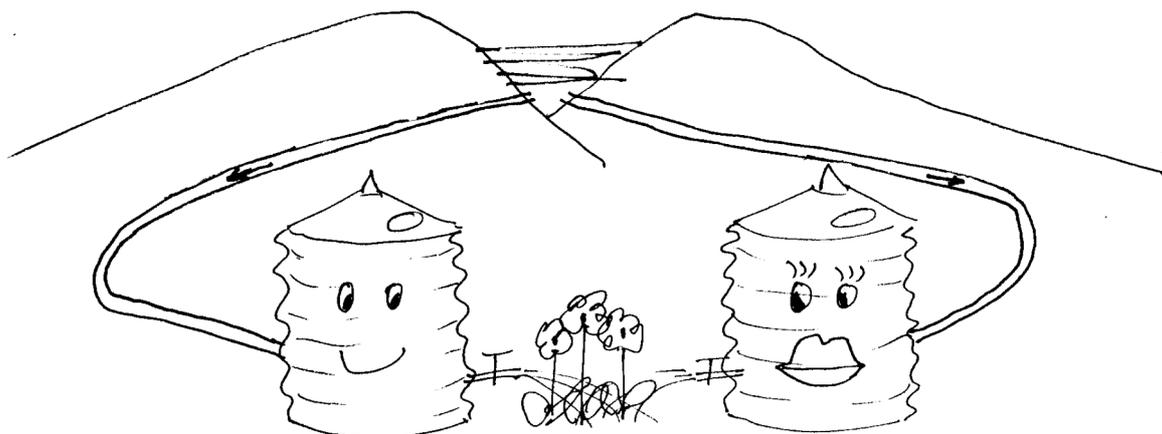
Fortunately, that was not the end of the story.



In the hills behind the water tanks, there was a great reservoir that was always full-to-overflowing with bright sparkling water.



So they got themselves linked up with the great reservoir that was always full-to-overflowing with bright sparkling water. Pipelines were laid to each water tank from the great reservoir.



As the water flowed through the pipelines from the great reservoir in a never-ending supply, the water tanks were able to keep their taps on towards each other full bore, knowing that they would never run out of water. In fact, the more they poured out towards each other, the more there was for them both.

So the water flowed freely. And everything in the garden was lovely.

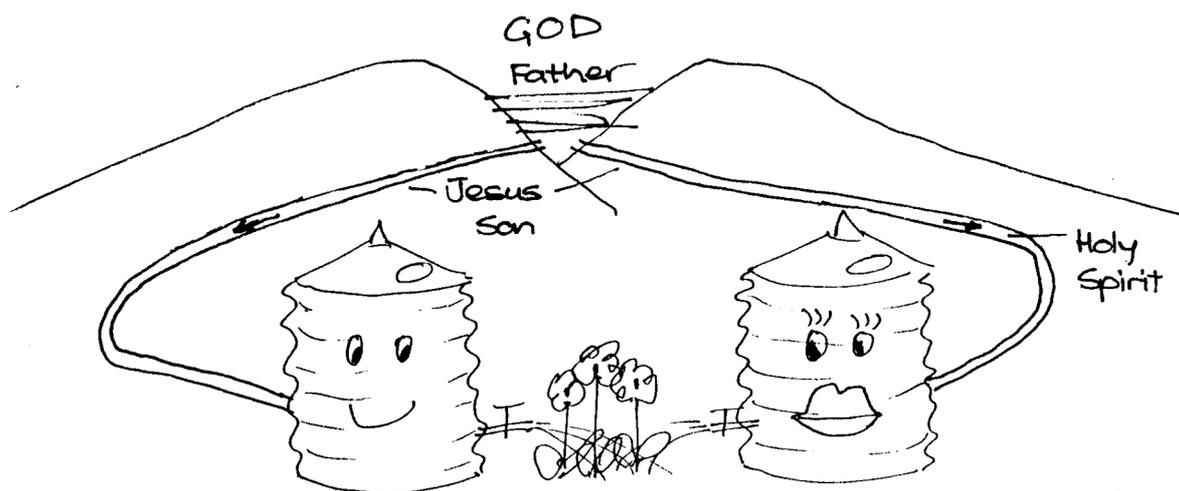
In case we haven't guessed already, this story is a parable about marriage. A man and a woman come together, pour out their love towards one another, and make a family. Their own resources of love, however, can quickly run out. They need to be constantly replenished with the true love from outside themselves, that never runs out.

Human beings were never designed to be self-sufficient. We are dependent every moment on what is outside ourselves: the air we breathe, the food we eat, the love of others. Our whole purpose and direction and way of life is not determined by ourselves:

... people's lives are not their own [literally *The way of persons is not in themselves*];  
it is not for them to direct their steps (Jeremiah 10:23, TNIV).

The Bible depicts God as breathing into us 'the breath of life' from the very beginning (Genesis 2:7), and says that God gives to all people 'life and breath and everything' (Acts 17:25, RSV). God is for us 'the fountain of living water' (Jeremiah 2:13)—we are dependent upon God at every moment for every breath we take and every move we make. How did we ever think that we could sustain something as demanding and wonderful as a marriage out of our 'own' unaided resources?

Hence 'the great reservoir that was always full-to-overflowing with bright sparkling water', and the pipelines connected to the water tanks, and the water flowing through them. No picture can ever rightly represent the dynamic and personal reality of God—certainly not anything as static and impersonal as a reservoir or pipelines (any more than human beings, made in the image of the living God, can be represented as fixed corrugated-iron water tanks!)—but we get the point. All of life is a gift, and is not from ourselves. We have been made, in our marriages as in everything else, to rely on God at all times for all things—to have faith in the one Jesus knew as 'Father'—to be linked with Him by the 'one mediator' Jesus Christ God's Son (1 Timothy 2:5), and so to have the love of God 'poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us' (Romans 5:5). Only in that way can 'rivers of living water' flow from us into the lives of others (John 7:37–39)—the way it was meant to be.



### Questions for discussion

- What has been your experience of running out of love?
- What has been your experience of being replenished?

## IN THE BEGINNING

Let us go back to the beginning, when God made everything and, in making us male and female, inaugurated marriage:

Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind [Heb. *adam*] in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’

So God created humankind [Heb. *adam*] in his image,  
in the image of God he created them [Heb. *him*];  
male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth’ (Genesis 1:26–28).

Rather than us going our own way, this gets us to think about what God wants us to do as human beings, in marriage and in life. We are to ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth’. This has been called ‘the creational mandate’. It covers pretty well every conceivable human activity.

‘Be fruitful and multiply’ doesn’t mean just have lots of children. It means to do this in a way that bears much fruit. What children end up doing and achieving in their lives is part of the fruit that their parents are producing. Every human activity that is involved in having and raising and caring and providing for and feeding and clothing and sheltering children and families, and keeping them in health and wellbeing, and teaching and training and taking them on to adult occupations, is included in this part of the mandate.

To ‘fill the earth and subdue it’ is to occupy the whole earth in an ordered and useful way. We practically can’t help doing that. We move onto patches of ground and turn them into homes and farms and gardens. Driving north-east of Coober Pedy on the Oodnadatta road in the hot dry centre of Australia, I crossed the ‘moon plain’—dry and dusty and stony as the surface of the moon—then came to a slight rise with a dry watercourse flowing round it, where there was the homestead of an old rundown cattle station. Some young brothers had moved in, and were taking charge of the place: renewing the fences and cattle yards, building machinery sheds, training their horses for stock work. Whether they knew it or not, they were fulfilling the creational mandate, even in that desolate region. It was as if it had been built into them. They later married wives and brought them to the homes they had prepared. Children were born, and started their schooling, and the families gathered with neighbours from near and far for gymkhanas and social events.

In a more settled agricultural area, a farmer took me round the bounds of his property, proudly showing me how he cared for the soil, and how well his crops were doing.

Nor is this activity restricted to what happens on the surface of the ground:

Miners put an end to darkness,  
and search out to the farthest bound  
the ore in gloom and deep darkness.  
They open shafts in a valley away from human habitation;  
they are forgotten by travelers,  
they sway suspended, remote from people.  
As for the earth, out of it comes bread;  
but underneath it is turned up as by fire.  
Its stones are the place of sapphires,  
and its dust contains gold (Job 28:3–6).

Why did God put opal under the ground at such a desert place as Coober Pedy? Perhaps because, without that incentive, no one would come to fill and subdue that particular part of the earth, as He had told us to do! And, when they did, they would be provided for. Even the wilderness areas we take in hand to preserve and care for, to help keep them in their pristine condition.

Then there are our dealings with the animal creatures, both domestic and wild: ‘have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth’. That dominion is real—we can be responsible for the extinction or survival of whole species of creatures. All living creatures have been given into our care, and much human activity is devoted to this exercise.

Much of the earth we fill with cities and business premises and transport corridors, so that all this vast range of activity and its commerce can be managed and facilitated. Even lawyers, accountants and bank managers, along with road workers and truck drivers, are helping to fulfill the creational mandate!

Whether we acknowledge it or not, all our lives we are engaged in carrying out what God gave the human race to do from the beginning:

I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with . . . I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God’s gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil (Ecclesiastes 3:10, 12–13).

Marriages and families are involved at the heart of all this business of living, and can be said to be essential to it. But we can still ask the question: Is that all there is to it—just getting on with the business of living? What is it all for? Is there more to it than that?

### ***Questions for discussion***

- *How does your occupation fit into the creational mandate?*
- *What place does marriage and family have in that?*

## **MARRIAGES AND FAMILIES IN THE BIBLE**

The Bible has a lot to say about getting on with the business of living. Much space is devoted to genealogies and family trees—who married who, and what children they had, over many generations. Attention is given to details of daily life—caring for animals, planting and harvesting crops, eating food, building houses, religious observances, and business dealings. Interest is taken in the movement of peoples, and the territories they occupied.

One such slice of life is found in the book of Ruth, dating from sometime before 1000 BC. Set in disordered and violent times, it is a story of tender care and love. Under pressure of famine, Naomi, with her husband and two sons, left the town of Bethlehem in the land of Israel and moved to the neighbouring country of Moab, where her husband died. Her two sons married Moabite women, and the sons also died, leaving Naomi, widowed herself, with two widowed daughters-in-law. Hearing that the famine in Israel was over, she decided to return home to Bethlehem. Ruth, one of the daughters-in-law, in a show of great affection and loyalty, insisted on coming with her:

Do not press me to leave you  
or to turn back from following you!  
Where you go, I will go;  
Where you lodge, I will lodge;

your people shall be my people,  
and your God my God.  
Where you die, I will die—  
there will I be buried.  
May the LORD do thus and so to me,  
and more as well,  
if even death parts me from you! (Ruth 1:16–17).

It so happened that Ruth was able to gather grain for food in the field of Boaz, a rich relative of Naomi's husband, where Boaz saw to it that she was protected and provided for. Naomi encouraged Ruth to continue there. We pick up the story in chapter three:

Some time later Naomi said to Ruth, 'I must find a husband for you, so that you will have a home of your own. Remember that this man Boaz, whose women you have been working with, is our relative. Now listen. This evening he will be threshing the barley. So wash yourself, put on some perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go where he is threshing, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. Be sure to notice where he lies down, and after he falls asleep, go and lift the covers and lie down at his feet. He will tell you what to do.'

Naomi clearly has some plan in mind!

Ruth answered, 'I will do everything you say.'

So Ruth went to the threshing-place and did just what her mother-in-law had told her. When Boaz had finished eating and drinking, he was in a good mood. He went to the pile of barley and lay down to sleep. Ruth slipped over quietly, lifted the covers and lay down at his feet. During the night he woke up suddenly, turned over, and was surprised to find a woman lying at his feet.

As young hot-blooded theological college students reading this story, we thought, 'Yeah, right—they didn't touch each other all night—as if!' But that is how it was:

'Who are you?' he asked.

'It's Ruth, sir,' she answered. 'Because you are a close relative, you are responsible for taking care of me. So please marry me.'

Even today, it is generally the custom for the man to propose to the woman, but here it is the other way round. And we say that women in the Bible are put down!

Boaz, as an older man, was deeply touched by this:

'The Lord bless you,' he said. 'You are showing even greater family loyalty in what you are doing now than in what you did for your mother-in-law. You might have gone looking for a young man, either rich or poor, but you haven't. Now don't worry, Ruth. I will do everything you ask; as everyone in town knows, you are a fine woman. It is true that I am a close relative and am responsible for you, but there is a man who is a closer relative than I am. Stay here the rest of the night, and in the morning we will find out whether or not he will take responsibility for you. If so, well and good; if not, then I swear by the living GOD that I will take the responsibility. Now lie down and stay here till morning.'

Again, nothing untoward happened between them. Boaz's deep respect for Ruth, and care for her good reputation, is evident:

So she lay there at his feet, but she got up before it was light enough for her to be seen, because Boaz did not want anyone to know that she had been there. Boaz said to her, 'Take off your cloak and spread it out here.' She did, and he poured out nearly twenty kilograms of barley and helped her lift it to her shoulder. Then she returned to the town with it. When she arrived home, her mother-in-law asked her, 'How did you get along, daughter?'

Ruth told her everything that Boaz had done for her. She added, 'He told me I must not come back to you empty-handed, so he gave me all this barley.'

Naomi said to her, ‘Now be patient, Ruth, until you see how this all turns out. Boaz will not rest today until he settles the matter’ (Ruth 3:1–18, GNB).

Boaz negotiated with the nearer relative, and took Ruth to be his wife, and they had a son called Obed, Naomi’s first grandchild.

On the face of it, a simple story of love and marriage and family in the midst of the business of living. Right at the end of the story, however, we find that there is more to it than just that. Obed, we are told, became the father of Jesse, and Jesse, as was well known, was the father of David, Israel’s greatest king. That possibly explains how the book of Ruth came to be included in the Bible: David no doubt made sure that this story of his great-great-grandmother was not forgotten!

The Holy Spirit of God had an even larger reason for including it in the Bible. Who do we know that was born into David’s family, in Bethlehem, one thousand years later? Jesus, who turned out to be the Son of God, through whom God saved the world and brought us back to Himself! Matthew, right at the beginning of his account of the life of Jesus, set out Jesus’ family tree, where Ruth holds an honoured place among Jesus’ forbears (Matthew 1:5). Suddenly we see that the ordinary business of living depicted in this story—of marrying and having families, and all that goes with that—is part of a much larger purpose of God.

### ***Question for discussion***

- *Have you ever had a sense of your ordinary life being part of a larger purpose?*

## **IS THERE MORE TO LIFE?**

A believer asked a young man what he expected in life.

He answered: ‘First I want to matriculate and go to a university’.

**And then?**

Then I want to get a well-paid job, buy a nice house, relax and enjoy myself.

**And then?**

Then I want to marry and have some nice children.

**And then?**

Then I want to make a career and to be something.

**And then?**

Then I will be old and become a pensioner.

**And then?**

Yes—I’ll die in the end (he said, hesitating).

**And then?**

I don’t usually think about it.<sup>2</sup>

This may not be everyone’s chosen career path, but we get the picture. Enjoying life and getting on with the business of living is all very well, but death raises a big question mark over it all. Is that all there is? Is there more to it than that?

If there is a larger purpose that we are a part of, and we have a careless disregard for it, we could be missing the bus, or worse. Jesus spoke to his disciples about the end of the world:

The days are coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it. They will say to you, ‘Look there!’ or ‘Look here!’ Do not go, do not set off in pursuit. For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. But first he must endure much suffering and be rejected by this generation. Just as it was in the days of

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Anders Åkerlund & Michael Proctor, *Go, Know, Live: A presentation of the Christian faith for young people*, SCM Press, London, 1970, p. 40.

Noah, so too it will be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking, and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed all of them. Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot: they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on the day that Lot left Sodom, it rained fire and sulfur from heaven and destroyed all of them—it will be like that on the day that the Son of Man is revealed (Luke 17:22–30; referring to Genesis 6:1–7:24; 19:1–29).

Jesus was saying that, in the end, we will be face to face with him. For all our getting on with the business of living, the question will be asked: What part have you played in the larger purpose for which Jesus has come?

We would do well to know what that larger purpose is, and how to be a part of it.

### ***Questions for discussion***

- *‘I don’t usually think about it.’ What is it that keeps us from wanting to think about these larger questions of life? What are we afraid of?*
- *If Jesus is there at the end, how well do we know him now?*

## **THE FAMILY OF GOD**

We return to God’s creation of us, and what that tells us about the larger purpose that we are here for:

Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind [Heb. *adam*] in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’

So God created humankind [Heb. *adam*] in his image,  
in the image of God he created them [Heb. *him*];  
male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth’ (Genesis 1:26–28).

This time we look particularly at how we human beings have been made ‘in the image of God’. That means that we are not God, but we are like God—we reflect somehow the way God is. Later it says that ‘Adam’—the human person—already in the ‘likeness’ and ‘image’ of God, ‘became the father of a son in his likeness, according to his image’ (Genesis 5:3). So being in someone’s image and likeness has to do with being related with that person as a son to a father. Children are related intimately to their parents, and take after them. We are related to God as children to our Father. That is how Jesus taught us to address God: ‘Pray then in this way: Our Father . . .’ (Matthew 6:9). We have been made to be related closely to God, and to take after Him. God says this is how it will be in the end with the ‘great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages’ (Revelation 7:9):

. . . I will be their God and they will be my children (Revelation 21:7).

Part of being in that image of God is being male and female:

. . . God created humankind [Heb. *adam*] in his image,  
in the image of God he created them [Heb. *him*];  
male and female he created them (Genesis 1:27).

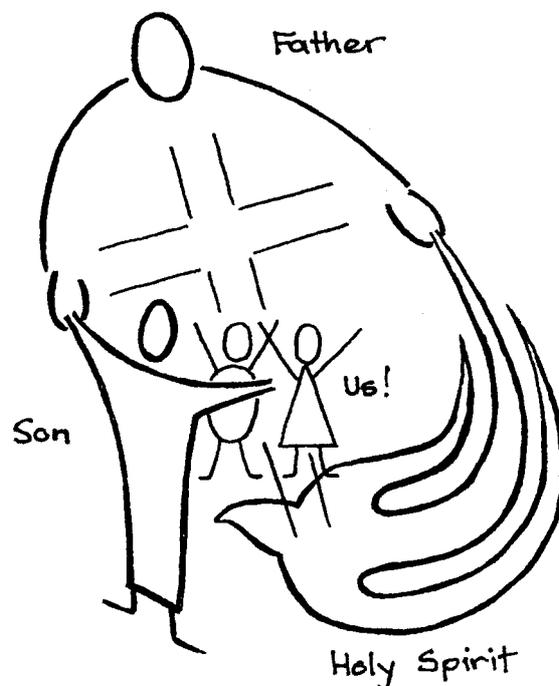
We are not all the same. We are different, but in ways that fit with one another. Men and women, in their complementary relationships with each other, reflect something of the way God is.

This may be reflected in the way God speaks about Himself when He makes us:

Let *us* make humankind [Heb. *adam*] in *our* image, according to *our* likeness (Genesis 1:26).

God does not say, ‘Let *me* make humankind in *my* image’—He refers to Himself as ‘us’ and ‘our’. There is an ‘us-ness’ about God—something relational in God Himself—that perhaps requires that we be different-and-relational, as male and female, to truly reflect something of the way God is. The New Testament makes the statement, ‘God is love’ (1 John 4:8, 16). God’s very nature is relational. We have been made to image God as relational ourselves, in our relationships with God and with each other.

We have already touched on this in the story of the water tanks. From the New Testament we now know God to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit—in full and intimate relationship with each other, and with us:



Once again, no picture or diagram can rightly represent the dynamic reality of the personal living God, but this may serve to illustrate something of what the Scriptures tell us. The God and Father of us all—above all, and through all, and in all—is the one from whom and for whom we exist. Jesus, the only Son of the Father, with the Father from before the beginning, the one through whom we have come to be and through whom we exist, has come from the Father, to be one with us in our human flesh, to enter into our judgement and take away our sins by bearing them in his death, to rise again, and return to the Father, taking us with him! The Holy Spirit of God, present from the beginning in the very act of creation, the one through whom Jesus was conceived, who came on Jesus at his baptism in the form of a dove, and on the followers of Jesus at Pentecost like tongues of fire, comes from the Father, points us to Jesus and brings us to belong to him, pours the love of God into our hearts, and brings us to know God as Father. At the heart of God is the mighty action of the cross, planned from before the beginning, by which the great love of God is made known to us, and to the whole

creation. All who belong to Christ have been baptised into this life and action of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup>

This opens up the full dimensions of God's original command:

... God created humankind [Heb. *adam*] in his image,  
in the image of God he created them [Heb. *him*];  
male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it' (Genesis 1:27–28).

The ones God was telling to 'fill the earth and subdue it' were those already in this relationship with God, enjoying His blessing. So when they moved out to fill the earth, what were they to fill it with? Not just with themselves, but with this relationship and blessing of God! Until, as another scripture says, 'the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea' (Habakkuk 2:14).

### ***Questions for discussion***

- *When God told us to fill the earth, what are we to fill it with?*
- *What have we filled it with instead (see Genesis 6:5, 11)?*

## **MARRIAGE AND THE GLORY OF GOD**

In making us male and female, not only was God making us to reflect something of how He is in Himself. In bringing the man and the woman together in marriage, God was also giving us a reflection of, and a participation in, the way we are related with Him, and of how in the end His people will be united with Christ—as a Bride with her Husband.

Every marriage, then, consciously or unconsciously, is to be part of that larger purpose of making God's glory known—of taking that relationship and blessing—to the ends of the earth. One of the Psalms appointed to be said or sung in some forms of the marriage service is Psalm 67:

Let God be gracious to us and bless us:  
and make his face to shine upon us,  
That your ways may be known on earth:  
your liberating power among all nations.  
Let the peoples praise you, O God:  
let all the peoples praise you.  
Let the nations be glad and sing:  
for you judge the peoples with integrity,  
and govern the nations upon earth.  
Let the peoples praise you, O God:  
let all the peoples praise you.  
Then the earth will yield its fruitfulness:  
and God, our God, will bless us.  
God shall bless us:  
and all the ends of the earth will fear him.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Scripture references include: Ephesians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 8:6; John 1:18; 17:5; 16:28; 1:14; Romans 8:3; John 12:31–33; 1:29; 1 Peter 2:24; Mark 16:6; Acts 2:24; John 17:24, 26; 1 Peter 3:18; Ephesians 2:18; Genesis 1:2; Matthew 1:20; 3:16; Acts 2:1–4; John 15:26; 1 Corinthians 12:3, 13; Romans 5:5; 8:15–16; 1 Peter 1:18–21; Revelation 13:8; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:9–10; Romans 8:19–21; Matthew 28:19. Sustained reflection on these scriptures will be richly rewarded.

<sup>4</sup> The Anglican Church of Australia, *A Prayer Book for Australia*, Broughton Books, Alexandria, 1995, p. 287.

On the face of it, this psalm would appear to have little to do specifically with marriage. But in the light of the larger purpose, it has everything to do with it. Every marriage, in one way or another, is to be part of the making known of God's nature and glory in all the earth—God's graciousness and liberating power, His just judgements and good governance, His blessing and fruitfulness. People should be able to look at a married couple and say: 'God must be a great God, if He can give two people like you a marriage as good as that!'

No marriage is confined just to the couple who have come together in marriage. Ripples go out from them to affect the lives of other people: their children, and friends, visitors to the home, and people in the wider community. Imagine that a husband and wife have had a fierce unresolved argument first thing in the morning. They go off to work grumpy and angry; maybe they drive dangerously, even cause an accident; and when they get to work they spread nothing but irritation and grief among their work colleagues. If, on the other hand, they are secure in each other's love, knowing the great grace of forgiveness and peace with each other in love and affection, what goes out from that home and relationship is more likely to be ripples of joy and good cheer. Psalm 67 speaks of this second scenario.

An opal-mining friend of mine, formerly opposed to the church and Christianity, but converted to Christ when he went to church and heard God speaking to him through the preaching, stood up at his daughter's wedding and said: 'The main reason you two are getting married, is so more people can know the love of God'. What a wonderful thing for a father to say to his daughter and new son-in-law!

***Question for discussion***

- *What have we known of bad or good ripples going out from a marriage?*