



FROM THE EDITOR

I was wondering the other day about how different our life experience would have been had we not been subjected to the consequences of sin. The Bible retells the story of man's transgression through disobedience and the subsequent closing of the garden. But what if it never happened?

For one thing we would still be frolicking naked in a lush garden, playing with lions and eagles, fed by God, walking with God, doing no work that would break a sweat and have all our children delivered pain-free. Sounds like paradise, doesn't it? Compare this idyllic picture with your every day life and the divide becomes a chasm that is impossible to span. A while back I watched the film "2012", and in it were some serious craters, fissures and tears in the crust of earth to remind me just how far these two worlds are separated from one another.

A striving after success drives the world we live in, and the culture of the day demands that we satisfy those needs. Most people go to work, not because they would love to go, but because they are driven there by fear. This fear finds its expression in relevant questions such as, "Will I have enough money to pay the bills?" and also in the more superficial, "I need a bigger car and better house." Fear of not being able to provide for our families will drive us to work, and once there, to succumb to the demands that "success" places on us.

This culture is supported and perpetuated by the media around us – newspapers, television, billboards, flyers and peer pressure. I think of it as a "Media Culture". For me it refers to the constant pressure it places on us to have bodies that look a certain way, dress an acceptably labelled way, relax in a comfortable way, move itself around in fashionable transport, and rest itself in a suitable home. Branding has literally become the gospel to marketers around the globe – a product without branding is dead in the water.

Branding in itself isn't really the problem, but the associations that are made with it are. Some associations are obvious and in-your-face, while others slip through more unobtrusively. Be it from bikini-clad ladies lounging on the bonnet of the latest model car or motorbike, to innocuous looking cartoon characters that really are demons in disguise. The dangers of our media-saturated culture are real and we should be aware of them and take precaution.

Our striving after success will drive us from guru to therapist and back again; it will force us into behaviour patterns not consistent with those in Eden; it will make us living contestants in a Fear Factor show called life.

The truth is that while the gate to Eden is shut, the road to peace and tranquillity is still available – we read encouragement after encouragement and find ourselves uplifted in the pages of a living Word. And so it is possible for us to exchange fear for faith, and Earth for Eden (in a manner of speaking). Let us test the things our culture holds up as normal and acceptable in the light of our conscience and faith, and let us keep that which builds up peace and discard the seeds that produce a harvest of dread.

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