

A Garden Walk

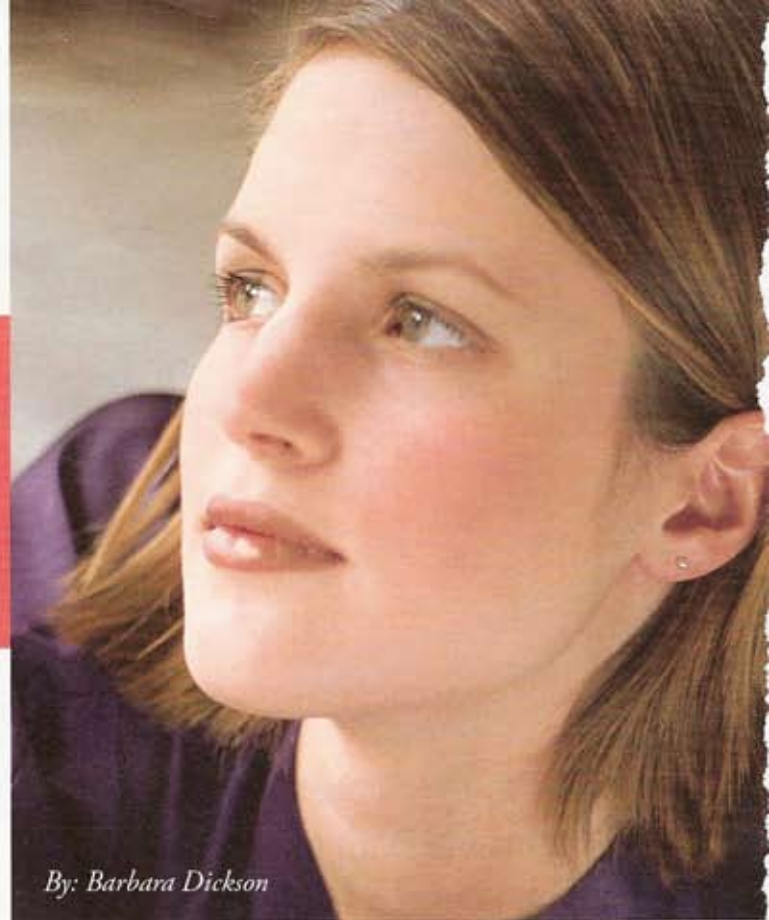
Bible Reading: Genesis 2:8-9a, 15, 18; Genesis 3:8

Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there He put the man He had formed.

The Lord God took the man and put Him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

The Lord God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as He was walking in the garden in the cool of the day.



By: Barbara Dickson

January ushers in a month of new beginnings, packed full of new or renewed promises of personal change and growth, new hope and fresh snow. But for some, January can also mark the beginning of just another year of sadness and loneliness. We glance back at Christmas, now unwrapped and faded. We look toward the long, cold winter that sprawls out before us. For many of us, the frigid months ahead seem endless and dismal, especially if we must face them alone.

Our world is filled with lonely people. A small child watches her schoolmates romp in the snow while no one invites her to join. A tired businessman tries to sleep in an airport, stranded in a blizzard away from his family. An elderly lady lies helpless in a nursing home listening to the clock counting off the little precious time she has left. Like January, with its long dark nights and cold bleak days, loneliness can gnaw at our hearts and drain our hope.

We cry out. How do we escape the icy grip of loneliness? How do we find solace when we feel so alone?

Perhaps a walk in the garden will help. Come and step aside from the clamour and tug of the world and quietly wander through the second chapter of Genesis, the Bible's book of beginnings. We find ourselves in Eden, surrounded by towering trees, fragrant flowers and soft grass. Birds sing from tree branches while animals lie in the shade. We catch a glimpse of Adam as he walks alone, drinking in the solitude and serenity that envelops him. Facing the world alone takes on new meaning when we think of Adam. God created him as the first human being. No other human existed on the face of the earth. Adam knew true aloneness. And yet, he wasn't alone. God walked in the garden with him, guiding him and communing with him.

The same holds true today. God promises that He will be with us always. He will never leave us. We are never alone. Whether by ourselves or in a crowd of people, God walks with us. Journeying alone in our own garden of life doesn't have to be scary anymore. God lights our way, even in our lives' darkest forests and heaviest shadows, for He is the Light of the World. Loneliness and emptiness can transform into solitude and hope, into a time of reflection with God in hushed stillness. God speaks to us, voiceless, but audible

to our heart as He wraps us in His presence. Silence and being alone becomes something beautiful. They become solitude.

But life is about balance. Seeing that Adam needed human companionship to balance his times of solitude, God created Eve. God wants human friendship for us too, in harmony with His own presence in our lives.

We can learn to balance our times of togetherness with times of solitude. A new year is a good time to start new habits. Let's plant a new habit in our life's garden by spending a few minutes in solitude each day. An invigorating silent walk around the block each evening is nice. Or sitting quietly in the gathering dusk by candlelight. Or taking a long hot bubble bath. It is during these times that God whispers: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

Let's stop to smell the roses and count the stars with God by our side. The winds of January will never blow as cold or lonely when we know that God walks with us. ☪

How to Find Solitude:

- Choose a specific place and time to be alone. Experiment until you find the perfect spot.
- Start modestly, perhaps setting aside 10 minutes.
- Take some cleansing breaths.
- Say a simple prayer such as "Here I am, Lord." Open your hands, anticipating a gift.
- Distractions will come. Let them pass, take a deep breath and repeat your prayer.
- You may not feel anything. Don't despair. God is calming your soul. Listen and be still.