



A MATTER OF FAITH

by Joel Lawler
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Friends of mine continue to make trips to Haiti. The earthquake destroyed much of the country. They are helping to rebuild it. The people who lived there had little to begin with and yet they were left with pretty much nothing after the earthquake. The meager existence that they were barely able to put together became that much more unattainable.

Earthquakes did not happen in the garden.

We were made to live in community with one another. We were made to not just coexist but to live life peacefully and in harmony with our neighbors.

We have fences and lock our doors. The alarm system business continues to be profitable even in a troubled economy. We arm ourselves in order to protect ourselves from those who might wish to do us harm. We can't trust people.

in Nashville. I was tearing out the drywall and pulling up the floors. The house had water that came up over four feet above the floor. Despite our efforts to help the homeowner save his house, the city has condemned it and will not issue a building permit for him to rebuild. His entire neighborhood has been condemned. A once quiet neighborhood nestled alongside the Cumberland River no longer exists. The rains came hard and the river overflowed its banks. Nashville and its surrounding communities are full of many stories like this.

Floods did not happen in our garden.

We were created to love and be loved.

We were made to live in a relationship with our creator. When he first made us, we would walk in the cool of the evening with him. We used to live in a beautiful garden. Fruits, vegetables, flowers, trees and plants that we cannot imagine. Our garden home was plush with the diversity of God's creativity.

We were given a choice and we chose to be our own god. We rejected our creator. He created love to be a conscious choice and we chose not to love him.

We no longer live in our tranquil garden.

We live in a world that is broken.

I was recently in a house




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These troubles that we face go against our design. We get angry. We get frustrated. It is painful not to be living the life we were made to live. We take out our frustration on the people closest to us. Communication breaks down. Those we are supposed to be fighting for we turn and fight. We hurt the people that we love and they hurt us.

It was not supposed to be this way and at the very core of our being we know this to be true.

We were naked and unashamed in the garden. There was no such thing as shame. There was no reason to hide. We were completely honest and open with each other. We lived in full disclosure. There were no secrets and there were no false motives. We lived intimately and openly. We trusted each other because there was absolutely no reason that we could even imagine not to.

Love is a choice. We chose not to love and the world that resulted is not the

one we were made to live in. It is a harsh, lonely world full of pain and devastation. Love is a choice. We can choose to love again. While we cannot rebuild our garden home, we can go back to the relationship that was

at the core of it and was the essential piece that we lost. We can restore our relationship with the one who made us. There is real hope and a potential for complete restoration. We can choose to love again.

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