

FORGIVENESS

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connection

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New Church Connection explores the connection between religion and life. Every issue features content that highlights the personal nature of spirituality, providing applicable ideas to support your journey with insights from the New Church (Swedenborgian) faith.

in this issue: **Forgiveness**

new church **connection**

WELCOME

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with a New
Christian spirituality
for everyday life

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Cover Photo by:
JASON BUSS

While reading over what the Old and New Testaments say about forgiveness in preparation for this issue, I was absolutely blown away by the beautiful and urgent descriptions of God's forgiveness. I've recently been pondering the notion that God does not forgive, for He is never angry. And yet, I can understand that there is a part of me that needs forgiveness, needs to ask for it, even though God never is angry with me (I love the notion that he cannot even frown at me!).

In this issue we begin to explore this topic of forgiveness. What does forgiveness look like in real life (see the Practice of Forgiveness p.10)? What is the deal with Jesus, the cross, the blood atonement and forgiveness (see p. 14)?

I believe that the concept you hold of God, and His attitude toward you has a big impact on the way you hold feelings of resentment, and anger in your heart towards others.

I hope and pray that I might learn a small portion of the heart of forgiveness I see described in the Bible, and that I might be a multiplier of God's loving presence on this earth. I hope that you will join me in this effort/journey.

I would love to hear your thoughts, responses, insights, and objections to what you read here.

Without judgment,



Bronwen Henry, *General Church Outreach*



But I tell you,
love your enemies
and pray for those who
persecute you, that you
may be children of your
Father in heaven.

—Matthew 5:44

Changing Lives

Raised in a family dedicated to New Church theology, *Kathryn* discovered she needed to reconnect with these roots through a community of support.

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Seeking Answers

Does God always forgive? *Rev. Phil Schnarr* answers tough questions about how the Lord forgives and how to handle our own shortcomings.

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When we feel intense pain caused by another, forgiving another can seem impossible. *Rev. Chuck Blair* breaks down the process of forgiveness into a manageable approach.

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What does the Bible say about forgiveness? Here's a 7 week study to explore with a group.

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What's Next?

Prayer

Living in Integrity
Angels and the Afterlife
Keeping Your Faith
Beauty of Aging

Submit your topic ideas online.

After a time of wandering, Kathryn finds herself coming home to the New Church and finding acceptance and community along the way.



By Kathryn Pruiett as told to Abigail Echols Smith

article photos by KATHRYN PRUIETT

One of my earliest memories is a bust of Swedenborg. People would point to it and say, "Katie, who's this?" and I would say "that's the SWEDENBORGIAN man." I was born when my father was a student at the Swedenborgian School of Religion in Newton, Massachusetts. I was literally raised in the church—and it has always been an integral part of my life.



As a kid everything was normal. The church was my family. When I was 4, we moved to Fryeburg, Maine. My father was ordained in the General Convention of the New Church. This community was small, but the church was large and very welcoming. I loved growing up there!
The summer before I started high school, we moved to St. Louis. It was a big change. I missed the closeness of the church I grew up in. St Louis had a friendly small congregation--but did

not have many young people my age. My high school was three times the size of Fryeburg, the town in which I grew up.

After high school I planned to go to Bryn Athyn College of the New Church in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania. But life happened. My mom was diagnosed with breast cancer when I was in high school, and it returned just before I was supposed to go to college. I ended up not going.

I got married and started a family. My mom always wanted to be a grandma, and it was about six weeks after my son was born in 1994 that my mom passed away. It was a difficult combination of intense emotions. I pretty much just lost everything. That was not the way that life was supposed to be. Here I

was, 20 years old, forced to find my way through life, and my mom wasn't there. It was hard. It was really, really hard. Although I was raised in the New Church and was taught about and read about life after death, I don't think anything could prepare me for that the loss.

Adding to the difficulty of my mom's death, it wasn't long before my father re-married. I had always felt sure that my mom and dad would be together forever. This wasn't how life was supposed to be. And while my step mom is a very wonderful person, she's not

my mom. I became angry with God—although I didn't believe I was at the time. I was confused, I was angry...I didn't understand what I was feeling. I pretty much lost contact with my father, and I lost contact with the church.

Life kept moving, and in 1999 I was happily pregnant with my daughter. Before my daughter was born, my husband got sick. We are still, twelve years later, trying to figure out what it is that is making him sick. He has ups and downs, but he can't work, and his illness has brought a lot of hard times and a lot of sadness.

I'm a take charge person who likes to do it all myself, and that's what I turn to more than anything at hard times—like when my mom died and my husband got sick. During those years I pushed a lot of things away and said "I'm going to do this on my own!" which is a

very lonely place. Eventually it was all too much and I realized that I needed God's help. It wasn't easy, but it has been very good in the long run. In many ways the church found me again through all of this.

It was a few years after my husband got sick (and about 10 years after my mom died) before I started seeking the church out again. I wanted my son and daughter to go to church; to learn right from wrong. My husband is Catholic and we are a few hours away from St.

Louis, so even though we had gone to a few local churches, we didn't have a church we called 'home'. I got to a point where I felt like I needed the New Church again, felt like I needed God again.

I have to give credit to my dad and his wife Diane. Although there was a long period of time I did not talk to my father, he was always there. He has always supported me. Diane has become a great friend, and a wonderful Grandma to my children. My father would often times just listen to me rambling and almost be happy when I would be confused—he knew I was searching, he knew I had to find my own way back.



I think the teachings of the New Church were always there in the back of my mind, and when it was the right time more of the teachings began to make sense for me. And with the internet, I was able to find many different resources. I have no idea how I found an online Journey group, it was quite on accident really. The online group helped bridge the connection between lots of different good people. I started feeling more comfortable with the New Church again.

Going through the online Journey group (we did the SHIFT workbook)

actually brought up a lot of this stuff that I didn't really realize I was going through at the time. But a lot of it I think really comes down to the difference between head and heart. I would always do the right thing--not necessarily for the right reasons, but because it was engrained in me from my childhood.

It was interesting in the online group because we had everybody from Colorado to the Netherlands represented. During our last meeting I was looking around the group at people from Pennsylvania (where I have lots of friends), Colorado (where half of my family is from), The Netherlands (where my grandfather was from), and even a family friend. And it felt like, this is my family.

Everything is coming full circle. I am connecting with this church and teachings all over again. I can feel the church in many many ways. It is my family—and always has been, I just needed to find my way back!

What Is Your Story?
 How has your life been impacted by living New Christian spirituality?
 Send us *your story*, or see pg. 12 for more ways to get involved.
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Sermons on Forgiveness

Visit newchurchconnection.org for links to the following audio sermons:

- “Forgiveness” by Ryan Sandstrom, Ivyland New Church, PA
- “How To Forgive” by Mac Frazier, Bryn Athyn Church, PA
- “Forgive” by Glenn Alden, Sunrise Chapel, AZ
- “And When You Hear, Forgive...” by Ethan McCardell, Sower's Chapel, PA

and more!

Layout in progress.



Join an Online Small Group!

Small group discussion provides a great way to work on your spiritual life and get support from others in the process. There is an easy way to participate by video if you are not nearby or unable to attend a group in person. For more information, to sign up to join a group, or volunteer to lead one, visit www.newchurch.org/activities/online-small-groups.

Life is full of QUESTIONS

photo by JASON BUSS

There is nothing we can do that God cannot forgive. But sometimes this seems impossible. Rev. Phil Schnarr answers some difficult questions about the Lord's forgiveness, as well as our own practice.

Rev. Phil Schnarr

Q IF GOD WILL ALWAYS FORGIVE US, WHY DO WE NEED TO EVEN ASK FOR HIS FORGIVENESS?

a God's inmost nature is Love and Mercy. His forgiveness is automatic. Our petitions for forgiveness can do nothing to change God's nature. The real question concerns human nature. Our humanity inclines us to all kinds of evil. When evils are active in us they block the Lord's constant in-flowing love (Secrets of Heaven 4997). By sincerely asking for forgiveness, our hearts are turned away from selfish thoughts and feelings and become more receptive of His forgiving love.

Q WHAT IS THE "UNFORGIVEABLE SIN?"

a In the Gospels Jesus says "whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come" (Matthew 12:32). Here the Lord is talking about hypocrites who sought personal power and wealth more than anything else yet made pretense of being pious, merciful and forgiving. This kind of hypocrisy conceals a distorted and completely selfish mindset. What makes it unforgiveable is not the sin itself but its effect of closing a person's mind to acceptance of Divine forgiveness.

Q WHAT IS THE NEW CHURCH PERSPECTIVE ON "ORIGINAL SIN."

a In New Church teachings, Adam's sin stands for the gradual fall of the entire human race from a purer, loving relationship with God. Today, that sin is still evident in human tendencies to selfishness, anger, enmity, revenge and injustice. Still, people have never lost their ability to choose between the good path which leads to heaven or the sinful one that will land them in hell. No one is condemned for sins they did not actually commit.

Learn your own "triggers" and avoid them if possible

Q HOW CAN I DEAL WITH MY FLAWS THAT KEEP GETTING ME INTO TROUBLE?

a "The Lord continually excuses, and continually forgives, for He continually feels compassion" (Secrets of Heaven 8573: 2). But destructive patterns repeat themselves. Lasting improvement requires genuine admission of fault, petitioning the Lord for help, and catching yourself before an evil desire becomes active in your thinking. Just as an addict avoids situations where his addiction is triggered, learn your own "triggers" and avoid them if possible. Be gentle with yourself, and continue to look to the Lord and pray

for help even if you fail repeatedly. He will continue to give you strength in this most important work.

Q IS FORGIVING ANOTHER JUST FORGETTING OR LETTING GO OF ANGER?

a I want to say no, because it sounds too simple. But it really is pretty straightforward, just not easy for most of us. Our innate bias is to favor self. To forgive people their trespasses against us takes character strengths that are years in the making and only fully developed when we have become angels. However, if we are doing our part to rectify our identified external character flaws, we can be confident that the Lord is simultaneously working behind the scenes to build our inner strength of will. Through active spiritual disciplines of prayer, meditation and inquiry in His Word, the letting go process gets easier and memories of past wrongs become weak and are eventually set aside.

SHARE YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT LIFE.
Email questions@newchurch.org.
Mention "New Church Connection".



Rev. Phil Schnarr is School Pastor at Bryn Athyn Church School. For more information visit www.brynathynchurchschool.org.

The Practice of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a practice, a behavior that one must cultivate. *Rev. Chuck Blair* explores the path of forgiveness with an approach readily available to everyone, and a reminder that we cannot do it alone.



by *Rev. Chuck Blair*

Brother, sister, mother, father, husband, wife, son, daughter, friend, colleague, neighbor....our relationships contain many people with the potential to hurt us, very often in small ongoing ways. Sometimes in trying to be good people, we brush these hurts aside, thinking "I am not a vindictive or overly sensitive person, these things shouldn't bother me." But they do. They do because our egos are like magnets, and resentments are attracted to them. What is the impact of holding onto

these resentments? Do we hold back in our lives? Do we argue with people? Do we gossip? What does the Bible teach about this?

Jesus taught the art of forgiveness. "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times" (Matthew 18:21-22.) Does this mean we are to forgive 539 times exactly? Yes. And more.

The writings of Emanuel Swedenborg explore depth in the biblical message and say that "By this [Matthew 18:21-22] He meant that they were to forgive as often as he sinned. Their forgiveness was to know no limits, that is, was to be eternal and timeless, which is holy" (Secrets of Heaven 433).

Patience with the Process

The Lord promises that forgiveness is possible. Even when hurt seems too great to repair, God tells us "I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 11:19). We experience a heart of stone when we are too angry, too selfish, or too frozen by the pain others have caused us. A heart of flesh, while it may be vulnerable, it is compassionate. A heart of flesh sees that while we are feeling pain, the other person may also be hurting for that pain they caused us. We can get so caught up in

ourselves that we do not even notice another is struggling from the offense. It is true that people need to be held accountable for their actions. But these people also need patience from us. As it was said: "Be patient with me" (Matthew 18:26). Practicing patience with another, holding onto the hope and vision for our relationship with them, is a true act of compassion. We need to invite the Lord into the journey and ask for the courage it takes for us to be patient with another and the understanding needed to see that they too are working through the pain that needs forgiveness.

Resentments and A Faulty Worldview

The idea that forgiveness means that sins are washed away is one of the reasons why we sometime shy away from forgiveness. We sometimes think that forgiveness means forgetting and that



The Lord is all-knowing and mercy itself—therefore there must be a way for knowing and forgiveness to exist together, a clear-headed forgiveness that forgets nothing and forgives all.

When you notice anger and resentments:

Name the wound.

Name the trigger.

Name the person.

Prayerfully let it go.

I will need to find a sticky note to use here.

Be patient with me.

—Matthew 18:26

Reflections For When You Find Yourself Unwilling to Forgive

Do I believe that forgiving requires something of the other person first?

Has this wrongdoing and resentment become part of my identity?

What are the pleasures of this anger and resentment?

Is there a part of me that wants to entertain the anger?

Is withholding forgiveness about my ego?

What would forgiveness look like?

Is this where I want to stay?

The key is that we have to invite the Lord into the process.

feels wrong. Sometimes we feel we need our resentments to educate us about the people in the world around us and guide us in the ways we should act towards them. We feel like we need our memory of past hurts so that we can maintain boundaries with people. But the Lord is all-knowing and mercy itself—therefore there must be a way for knowing and forgiveness to exist together, a clear-headed forgiveness that forgets nothing and forgives all. Here's one way of thinking about it: how might it feel to look at someone who has hurt us and not feel anger? Is this even possible? This is how the angels are described “those who have charity hardly notice the evil in another person, but instead notice all the goods and truths that are his; and on his evils and falsities they place a good interpretation. Of such a nature are all angels, it being something they have from the Lord, who bends everything evil into good” (Secrets of Heaven 1079).

Now this doesn't negate the fact that we do need to protect ourselves from people who make a habit of hurting us. The key is to invite the Lord in to the process. It is the Lord who will keep us separated from our resentments, if we let him. We must be rigorous and disciplined in our endeavors to forgive. We must get used to naming each hurt

and then putting it away and asking the Lord to keep the resentment from us. He is the only one with the power to do this. And it must be done 70 x 7 times, which means all the time, without limit.

The Power of Forgiveness

When we forgive others there is a freedom where we are no longer shackled by our own anger. It moves us from our selfish illusions to a beautiful reality. It is hard work. But letting go of the fantasies that we can change the past, that we can change others, or even that we are the ones who can change ourselves opens room for God to help us ward off the resentment we feel. Each time we forgive, it paves the way for the next time we need to forgive. Practicing the courage and patience, and letting the Lord into the process of becomes like exercising a muscle, it grows stronger and stronger. Together with Him we can come to a point where forgiveness is intuitive, a blessed way to live!

These ideas are drawn from a sermon series on Forgiveness. Watch the video series online at www.newchurchlive.tv

Need photo.

Rev. Charles Blair is pastors of New Church Live in Bryn Athyn, PA. To learn more go to www.newchurchlive.tv

The Heart of Jesus' Message

by Rev. Dr. Jonathan S. Rose; transcribed and edited by Chelsea Odhner

The Easter story is filled with brutal imagery. There is language in the Bible that speaks of blood being the remission of sins. What does this mean? Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose explores the way the Bible uses the imagery of blood and what it has to teach us on our own walk.

Scripture uses wonderfully tangible language to help explain abstract spiritual concepts with examples we know with our senses to demonstrate some very complex ideas.

Blood is referenced quite often in the Bible because it is something with which we all have experience. We each live, breath,

and have blood flowing through our veins, and so blood is something we recognize and understand. It is likewise with water. When someone describes something as fluid like water, we know what they mean because visualize the properties of water. This type of scriptural imagery works to make the invisible become visible.

A problem arises when people take this imagery literally, when they believe the

tangible element in the Bible is physically how a spiritual action occurs.

Baptism is an example, it stands for a repentance process that we go through. But because the ritual of baptism involves water, maybe believe it is actually the physical water that becomes holy and washes away

their sins.

Then why have rituals or scriptural imagery at all? They are important in helping us understand how the Lord works in our lives. You can't physically see your whole process of repentance, reformation, and regeneration; it's interior and it stretches out over years and years. But we know about water. The ritual of baptism is a way for the Lord to communicate with us. He gives

Rituals and imagery are important in helping us understand how the Lord works.

us something we can experience in a moment. We can say, "Oh, I get that, because I saw it with my physical eyes. I went there and they took water and there was a kind of washing motion." It makes the invisible become visible. You can see there's a washing. Does that mean that the ritual of baptism washes away sins? I submit that it doesn't for which there's powerful scriptural evidence. It serves as a symbol that we can see of something that we can't see.

To demonstrate my point, let's look at passages where blood is involved in the remission of sins. Remission is from the Greek word *fi?hmi* meaning literally "to send away." How do you send away sins? It both means the removal of them and also the forgiveness of them. How are sins remitted or forgiven? In Romans 3:25 we read about Jesus Christ "whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed." Here the blood is involved in not having to pay a penalty for your sins. In Ephesians 1:7 we read again about the Lord, that "in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Alright, by now you would understandably think that

His blood did something to redeem us and forgive our sins.

Colossians 1:14 also tells us that it is the Lord "in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." We learn more in Hebrews

9:18-22: "Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and

hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.' Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission." A lot of people on the basis of these four scriptures have believed that Jesus' physical blood was involved in the remission of our sins. However, in Matthew 26: 27-28, which is during the last supper, it says "Then He took the cup," speaking of Jesus, "and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.'" Here the blood is something

He's trying to communicate with us in a language we will understand but also trying to lift our minds.

for the remission of sins and yet what did he hand them? A cup of wine, not blood! He hands them a cup of wine and he says “this is the blood that forgives your sins.” He’s trying to communicate with us in a language we will understand but also trying to lift our minds. He drives in a bit of a wedge into the literalists mindset by handing them a cup and saying, “This is my blood,” when it’s really wine.

In Acts we read that “the God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins” (5:30-31). That didn’t mention a cup, or wine, or blood! It said repentance! Is blood absolutely necessary if repentance will do it? Does it have to be blood? It said it had to be blood and yet there are these other passages that say it doesn’t have to be blood. So what’s going on?

The Lord has to use physical things that we understand. We don’t understand Divine Truth. We don’t even think it exists. If we think about it, it just seems like some abstraction when in fact it is the living force that fills the spiritual and physical worlds and creates everything. We don’t know anything about that, but we know about blood, so the Lord can describe his Divine Truth as blood.

If you understand blood as Divine Truth, and most specifically, that it’s the instructions for repentance on how

to overcome things, that’s why blood has to do with remission of sins. It’s because the blood of the Word, the living blood is truth, but it is truth with a pump! It’s warm truth with a pump that’s serving some purpose. Love is driving this truth out. This is what blood really is—Divine Truth which is the Lord’s love saying, “Here’s the instructions on how to get out of hell; here’s how to overcome the problem that you have; here’s how to be transformed: by practicing repentance.” This is the blood that gives us forgiveness of sins. This is the blood that we have to drink. This is why blood is said to be involved in the remission of sins.

Scriptural imagery works to make the invisible become visible. A problem arises when people take this imagery literally.



The Rev. Dr. Jonathan Rose is a minister in Bryn Athyn, PA. He runs the Bible study program “Nunc Licet” on Wednesdays at 7:30pm EST. Visit www.ustream.tv/channel/nunlicetbiblestudy to watch previous videos or live streaming sessions of the study.

Prayer and Fasting



When we truly ask God for forgiveness, we are acknowledging our wrong doings.

by Rev. John Odhner

We all need forgiveness; we can all be both hurt and hurtful. Often forgiveness is thought of as escaping punishment, like asking a judge to forgive a jail sentence or fine. But the Lord's forgiveness is far beyond removing punishment, but the selfishness that causes the suffering. The Lord is pure compassion and forgiveness, and so He wants to remove the selfishness, hatred, lust and resentments that destroy our relationships and happiness.

We may selfishly ask, "Please don't make me suffer for what I have done!" But we should ask, "Please help me to not hurt others any more, and to right any wrong I have done." Forgiveness can be difficult. We often have many questions for ourselves and God. Why can't I get rid of my resentment? Why do I give in to lust? Why does anger boil up unbidden every time something goes wrong? Why can't I forgive a wrong done twenty years ago?

These questions remind me of a story from the New Testament. Jesus' disciples brought Him a young man pos-

Prayer is turning our hearts to the Lord.

sessed by a spirit that made him deaf and mute. The spirit would often cause the man to throw himself in the fire or water to destroy himself. They asked Jesus, "If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."

Jesus answered, "If you can believe, all things are possible to one who believes."

The young man's father said, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief!" Jesus then commanded the spirit to leave.

Later the disciples asked, "Why couldn't we cast out the spirit?"

Jesus replied, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting." (Mark 9:14-29)

Prayer means not just reciting certain words, but actually turning our hearts to the Lord. If we look to the Lord and acknowledge that everything good and true is from Him, we actually undergo an inward change, turning away from ourselves and turning towards the Lord (Doctrine of Charity 204). Fasting is not about avoiding physical food while indulging one's greed and self-

ishness, its true meaning is "to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free" (Isaiah 58:1-9). True fasting is resisting, turning away from and fleeing from selfish desires.

These two steps need to be hand in hand. If we resist selfishness without turning to the Lord, we do it for our own advantage and it is still selfish. On the other hand, if we pray to the Lord and do not turn away from evil, our prayers are just empty words. "But when we flee from evil desires as sins, we fight against them because they are contrary to the Lord, and against His Divine

Fasting is turning our hearts from selfish desires.

laws, and then we pray to the Lord for the help and for power to resist them, and that power we ask for is never denied" (Doctrine of Charity 204). This is the prayer and fasting that brings us to true forgiveness and compassion.



The Rev. John Odhner is an Assistant to the Pastor at the Bryn Athyn Church. For more information, visit www.brynathynchurch.org.



Small Group Study of Forgiveness

With a friend, a small group, or in individual study, walk through the Bible and explore forgiveness. As you consider the different messages from different books, spend time in prayerful introspection asking “What can I learn here? What resonates? What is God trying to teach me or warn me about forgiveness in this reading?”

There are so many angles, questions, and implications of forgiveness. We invite you to explore a sampling of what the Bible says about forgiveness with insights from Emanuel Swedenborg.

Please go online to download the full version!

WEEK ONE Exploring Forgiveness

“When we were overwhelmed by sins, you forgave our transgressions.”

–Psalm 65:3

“... to forgive one who sins against you is of charity....”

–*Apocalypse Explained* 746:15

Read also: Nehemiah 9:17

WEEK TWO What the Books of Moses Says About Forgiveness

“When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, ‘What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?’ So they sent word to Joseph, saying, ‘Your father left these instructions before he died: ‘This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.’ Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.’ When their message came to him, Joseph wept. His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. ‘We are your slaves,’ they said. But Joseph said to them, ‘You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.’ And he

reassured them and spoke kindly to them.” –Genesis 50:20-21

Read also: Genesis 34:4-11 and Numbers 14: 7-24

WEEK THREE The Poetry of Forgiveness

“Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.”

–1 Kings 8:30

Read all of Solomon’s prayer 1 Kings.

–8:22-61

WEEK FOUR What the Psalms and Proverbs Say About Forgiveness

“You, Lord, are forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call to you. Hear my prayer, LORD; listen to my cry for mercy. When I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me.” –Psalm 86:5-7

See also Psalm 65:3, Psalm 78:8-9,38 , Psalm 103:1-5, Proverbs 17:9

WEEK FIVE What the Prophets Say About Forgiveness

“But you are a God of forgiveness, gracious and merciful, slow to become angry, and rich in unfailing love. You did not abandon them.”

–Nehemiah 9:17

“Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.”

–Isaiah 55:7

Read also: Isaiah 38:17, Isaiah 22:12-14, Jeremiah 31:34, Daniel 9:18-19, Hosea 14:1-2,

WEEK SIX

What the Gospels Say About Forgiving Others

Discussion: What surprises you about Jesus’ message? How do you think it was received at that time? What is your response?

“Then Peter came to him and asked, ‘Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?’ ‘No, not seven times,’ Jesus replied, ‘but seventy times seven!’”

–Matthew 18:21-22

“The Lord... said that we should not forgive our brother or sister up to seven times but up to seventy times seven. This means that we should forgive as often as our brother or sister sins, without limit, or to eternity, which is holy” (Secrets of Heaven 433).

Read Also: Matt 6:12,14,15, Mark 11:25, Luke 11:2-4, Luke 17:3-4, John 20:19-23



Congregations around the world

The New Church is a new Christianity that provides a clear path to eternal happiness and addresses many questions about God, love, and life after death. The teachings are immediately practical and deeply spiritual. The New Church is based on the teachings of the Bible as illuminated in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

The New Church (General Church of the New Jerusalem) has congregations around the world. All people are welcome to join in worship and participate in the life and community of the church.

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The San Diego New Church is a multi-ethnic congregation with warmth and vibrancy that make its church services welcoming and joyful.

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About Swedenborg and Works Cited

Emanuel Swedenborg was an 18th-century scientist and philosopher who continually studied the Word. Late in Swedenborg's life, the Lord called him to receive revelation for a new church. The New Church teaches that these Writings are divinely inspired revelation for the modern age—heavenly doctrines touching on many aspects of religion with a rational and merciful approach.

In this issue the following works of Swedenborg are referenced: *Divine Providence*, *True Christianity*, *New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine*, and *Heaven and Hell*.

New Church TEACHINGS

The perspectives in this magazine are based on the teachings of the New Church found in the Old and New Testaments and the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

Core teachings of the New Church:

- There is one loving, personal God, and He is the Lord Jesus Christ. His providence is powerful and unending. God guides each person's spiritual path, from the smallest things up to the biggest things, and His angels are with us every moment.
- The Old and New Testaments have a deeper meaning, revealed in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, which help people lead happy and useful lives to eternity.
- Spiritual growth is a process. Through recognizing our sins, praying, shunning evils, and living a new life, we are transformed and united more closely with God.
- All religions have goodness in them. People of every faith are saved if they live sincerely according to their religion.
- Each of us continues life as a complete person immediately after the death of the body.
- While people are free to choose to live in hell, God wants everyone to live with Him in heaven to eternity.
- Marriage can last forever, for God blesses people with a special love in marriage that goes on after death, even to eternity.

photo by MARK PERRY



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And when you stand
praying, if you hold
anything against
anyone, forgive them,
so that your Father in
heaven may forgive you
your sins.
-Mark 11:25

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