

TAKING THE BIBLE SERIOUSLY
(not just literally)

new
church

connection

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to Guide
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2011 | Issue 4



New Church Connection makes 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: **A NEW CHRISTIANITY**

new church connection

WELCOME

Connecting you
with a New Christian spirituality
for everyday life

Christianity,
rightly understood,
is the science of love.
—Helen Keller

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You could say the Bible ultimately explores the science of love. When we use the stories of the Bible as arguments, formulas, or even a constitution of sorts, we are going to bump up against inconsistencies, confusion and question. Why? While it is sacred, beautiful, timeless, and relevant, we often forget it is also a story. A story that each of us can be found in, as different characters at different points in our lives.

It is through the Word that the Lord is present with a person and conjoined with a person, for the Lord is the Word, and as it were speaks with the person in it (*Doctrine of Sacred Scripture* 78).

One core theme to the Bible is that love wins. The Bible is not about your ideas or even beliefs. It is about how what you love is embodied in your life. This is explored in the newest New Church Journey program: "SHIFT: Small changes, Big Difference" (PGS. 16–21).

New Church Journey programs are all about bringing people together in community to explore Bible stories. Don't go through a crisis of faith alone. Over the past year I've had the privilege of corresponding with a woman (Shelley) who is currently in prison and have witnessed her reliance on sacred texts *and* others for support through difficult times (her story featured on P.4). There is a lesson there for each one of us.

My challenge (and hope) for you today is to open your Bible. See for yourself what it says. Don't rely only on other people. If you are intimidated, use some of the tips Mac Frazier presents for engaging with sacred text (p.10-11). When you reach confusing stories or elements that make you want to give up, persevere with an open heart, sit with the confusion, and ask yourself, "Why might this be here? Where am I in this story? What do I have to learn?" Share your experience of the Bible with others. Find a group in person or online today.

I'd love to hear how reading the Bible for yourself impacts your journey. Join the conversation and let us know on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/NewChurchConnection).

Peace be the journey,

Bronwen Henry

Bronwen Henry



Surely the LORD is
in this place, and I
did not know it.

—Genesis 28:16

What's next?

✻
Coping with Failure
Jesus and World Religions
Forgiveness
Prayer
Aging

The next issue of New Church Connection will be web exclusive and not available in print.

Visit www.newchurch.org/connection to view the articles or "Like" us on Facebook www.facebook.com/NewChurchConnection

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Shelley's world seemed to go dark when she went to prison. The teachings of the New Church have helped her find light in the darkness and strength to face her situation.

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Are sacred scriptures from other religions part of the Word of God? The Rev. Amos Glenn responds to questions about revelation and the nature of God.

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Reading the Word can be difficult sometimes. The Rev. Mac Frazier encourages us to take the challenge and offers an approach that may make it easier.

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The Word contains more than meets the eye! The Rev. Pearse Frazier and the Rev. John Odhner discuss evidence for truth hidden in the literal meaning of the Bible.

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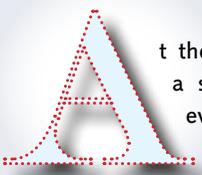
Ready to make changes in your life? Check out this year's program, based on the story of Jacob.



Shelley graduating from a vocational program in prison, 2009

Article photos provided by the author

When life was darkest and most confusing, Shelley found hope by reintegrating religion into her life and being open to the help of others. While her circumstances haven't changed, her attitude and outlook have because of her renewed faith.



At the age of thirty-eight, a series of unexpected events resulted in the rapid collapse of my life. I was living the busy but predictable existence of a single mother of three (two adopted) and grandmother of one. In a matter of days, everyone and everything I had ever known was gone, and I was cast into prison—a cold, comfortless world where I was surrounded by an endless parade of strangers. Today, more than four years later, I'm still in the same physical place, but my spirit is taking up a new residence.

Initially, my thinking was shallow as I struggled to do whatever I thought the Lord required in order to free myself. "If I believe enough, the Lord will get me out of prison," I thought. When that didn't happen, more serious issues surfaced. I was angry with Him, confused by His silence, and doubtful about any hope for the future or purpose to my time behind bars. I prayed, begged, and cried to Him, but the downward spiral seemed to continue, relentlessly tossing me around in an inward and outward storm. I could gain no sense of control; guilt, shame, fear, blame, denial, and anger were suffocating me. Looking back, I can see how, even then,

Divine Providence was at work on my behalf. I spent my first six months in prison in a faith-based program that reminded me a little of my days at the Academy of the New Church Girls School. I was given a sheltered place to adjust, pray, and spend time reading the Word. I began to sense choices still available to me, even when it appeared that any ability to do so had been removed. The most important choice I had was between defeat and a new way of seeing and believing.

I've been deprived of a great deal in prison—things I once took for granted—but each drought I've suffered has come with an unexpected blessing. A lack of financial resources has curbed snacking and helped me to focus on eating



Shelley and her grandmother, 1983

The life leading to heaven is not one withdrawn from the world, but a life active in the world.

-Way of Wisdom 27

healthier, exercising, and losing unwanted weight. During the abundance of downtime, I discovered an ability to draw I never realized I possessed. Diminished communication with my family has resulted in meaningful new relationships and the rekindling of several old ones.

Someone I barely knew, whose son was in my class in high school, learned of my arrest and gave me much-needed support. He was the only person to show up for my court appearances. At a time when I had no outside connection at all, I received visits, letters, and New Church literature. To this day, I still enjoy his cherished guidance and dependability.

My friends Nancy and Marie, whom I met during my time at the Academy, have also reached out in ways too numerous to describe. Even though we



Initially, my thinking was shallow as I struggled to do whatever I thought the Lord required in order to free myself. "If I believe enough, the Lord will get me out of prison," I thought.



Shelley, her two daughters, and a cousin's daughter, 2005

live hundreds of miles apart and haven't seen each other in more than 20 years, the special bond of the New Church continues to unite us in a unique alliance based on sincerity and compassion.

The book *Rise Above It* by Ray and Star Silverman has proven to be an invaluable resource, introducing me to the wisdom of being open to the beliefs of others and even learning more from them. It's been tempting to isolate myself from the unknown, cutting myself off from other people because of our differences. As time passes, I've come to appreciate the value of each person I meet.

Incarcerated people desperately need guidance, and I've become increasingly appreciative of the strangers who've modeled strong moral character. The Lord has sent angels my way in surprising disguises. A particular warden, Dr. Laura B., managed to reach me even in my most hopeless state with her faith and fearless determination in the face of difficulty. Our kind nurse practitioner, Ms. Donna S., who could serve in any number of more rewarding places, demonstrates self-sacrifice by choosing to help down-trodden women deal with their neglected and abused bodies in what can be a very disheartening environment.

There's still a long way to go on this unique journey, learning to live by the

truth that, "The life leading to heaven is not one withdrawn from the world, but a life active in the world" (*Way of Wisdom* by the Revs. Grant Schnarr and Erik J. Buss based on *Heaven and Hell* 535). The compassion and selflessness I've seen in such a diverse group of people in my life have been enormously inspiring. They have provided me with life lessons in forgiveness and love to the neighbor.

Suffering seems to bring spiritual clarity. Having survived the worst, smaller hardships pale in comparison. There's little left to fear once the darkest darkness has been faced. It also becomes clear Who's in charge, for "Peace has in it a confidence in the Lord, that He directs all things, and provides all things, and that He leads to a good end" (*Secrets of Heaven* 8455).

What Is Your Story?
How has your life been impacted by living New Christian spirituality?
Send us your story.
newchurchconnection
@newchurch.org



Suffering seems to bring spiritual clarity. Having survived the worst, smaller hardships pale in comparison. There's little left to fear once the darkest darkness has been faced.



Shelley's daughter with her two sons, 2009

Life is full of QUESTIONS

photo by CALEB KERR



Rev. Amos Glenn responds to questions about Divine revelation, the Bible, and how God leads us to happiness.

NCC WHAT DOES REVELATION REVEAL?

AG Revelation reveals God's love and wisdom. Because God loves each of us and wants us to go to heaven, He reveals Divine truth to us, which teaches us how to be genuinely happy by serving God and other people. The Lord delivers this Divine truth to us by means of the Word, which uses parables to show us how to live. But the Lord's revelation is not just truth; it is an expression of His love for us and His desire to create a heaven from the human race.

NCC WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ENLIGHTENMENT AND REVELATION?

AG Revelation and enlightenment work together to show you a path to heaven. If revelation is like a map, then enlightenment is like a lamp. A map isn't helpful if you can't see it, and a lamp is pointless if you have nothing to see. Revelation happens when the Lord "reveals" His truth—that is, He shows you the map that will guide you to heaven. Enlightenment happens when the Lord gives you the "light" of

understanding; He shines spiritual light on the map so you can see and understand what the map says.

In our lives, revelation comes to us through our senses by reading books or listening to sermons. Enlightenment, however, comes from within, entering into our minds when we allow the Lord to open our hearts to Him. Of itself, enlightenment doesn't teach us anything new, but does give us new understanding of revelation.

NCC ARE SACRED SCRIPTURES FROM OTHER RELIGIONS PART OF THE WORD OF GOD?

AG The "Word of God" is bigger than any book. Some books we call the "Word" because they contain the Lord's true teachings (His "words") from beginning to end. They are nothing but the Word. However, anywhere you find truth, you have found the Word of God. And you will find pieces of the Lord's Word in every religion around the world. The Lord ensures that everyone has some basic truths by which he or she can be led.

However, the only reliable way to identify which parts of a religion's teachings are the Word of God is to compare them with the ideas taught in the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Writings for the New Church, since those books consist entirely of the Lord's true teachings.

NCC IS THE BIBLE A TRUE STORY?

AG The Bible is a true story but not always factual. The truth of the Bible doesn't come from the facts of the stories, but rather from the spiritual meaning of those stories. The true ideas the Bible teaches have little to do with history, geology, or any matters of the natural world, but have everything to do with the spiritual world and the things that really matter in our lives. The Lord indicates a deeper meaning to His words, saying, "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). The Lord gives us truth through the Bible to help us live better lives and help us to work toward the goal of spiritual and eternal living. There are many factual elements to the stories of the Bible, but testing the "truth" of the Bible by examining factual evidence misses the spiritual source and the heavenly quality of that truth.

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



Rev. Amos Glenn delivers New Church doctrinal classes online at NotFridayClass.com and hosts online reading groups at ReadSwedenborg.com. Amos is the Executive Director of NewChurchLearning.net.

realchallenges

I don't take time to read the Bible much, and even when I do, I don't get much out of it. What can I do?

“What?
So what?
Now what?”

realsupport

Why don't we spend more time reading God's Word?

In my experience, sometimes it's that I don't feel like I've got the time. It doesn't always feel like the most critical part of my day. Another reason is that it can be a little intimidating. If you believe there is something holy about God's Word, then it sometimes doesn't feel the same as picking up any book. It's confusing too. Parts of this book, at face value, don't seem to make sense. Sometimes it's hard to see what's actually holy about this book.

But there's a good reason to spend time with the Word. Here's something about reading the Word from a series of books called *The Secrets of Heaven*:

“Everyone receives enlightenment and instruction from the Word, according to their affection for truth and degree of desire for it, and according to their abil-

ity to receive it. Those who are in that way enlightened, understand the Word according to it's inner truths.”

This book is meant to be a source of light. “Enlightenment” isn't something abstract; it's your ability to see the truth shining from the depths of the book. So those who are enlightened understand the Word according to its inner truth. Enlightened people establish guidelines for themselves from the Word to which they then relate the literal sense of the Word.

There are basic truths in the Word which are pretty obvious. If you start with these as guidelines to understand the rest, you're in good shape. And as you come to understand what God is saying to you, you gather more and more of these truths.

When you are reading the Word and trying to understand what God is saying,

here are three question to use: “What?”, “So what?”, and “Now what?”.

Let's use an example from the Bible:

“A certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.' And Jesus answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.'” (Luke 10:38-42)

WHAT?

What happened in the story? First, Martha invited Jesus in, and then got mad at her sister for not helping while her sister was just listening.

SO WHAT?

How is this relevant? Everything in the Word is meant to have some connection to your life. Sometimes the answer to this question doesn't come easily. But the more often you ask the question, the easier it gets to answer. Maybe your answer is that the Lord wants you to take a break from worrying and to spend some time listening to Him.

NOW WHAT?

This is the most important question in some ways. Now that I know this, what

am I going to do differently? How can I use this to improve myself or to serve somebody else? The answer has to do with how you live and what you've learned.

Three questions: that's as complex a study method as you need. Take it as a meditative approach. Now if you'd like to take another approach, you want to get more complex, more detailed, that's fine. But don't let that be why you don't do it. Keep it simple.

We're meant to enjoy reading the Word. Yes, there are hard parts, there are difficult parts, there are complicated parts. But really, we're meant to be enlightened, not weighed down. God wants to lift you up.

If, as you take on this challenge, you're not feeling lifted up, adjust the challenge. Think of it as a light exercise program. The best exercise program is the one that you actually do. Modify whatever you're doing so that you do it. Challenge yourself a little bit, but make it a realistic challenge.

Read God's Word. Make a habit of it. Live it. Once it becomes a habit it's so much easier. That's the path to enlightenment. ●



The Rev. Mac Frazier is the pastor of New Way Church, in Austin, TX. For more information, visit newwayaustin.org or email him at Mac@NewWayAustin.org.

Lectio Divina is an ancient Christian practice which can enliven our study of the Word. Literally meaning “divine reading,” it involves deep listening, pondering, and prayerful reflecting on passages from the Bible. Could it be that some important message has been trying to reach you now, but you have yet to open yourself up to it?

Broaden your communion with God and increase your knowledge of God's Word. It is a way of praying with Scripture that calls one to study, ponder, listen and, finally, pray and even sing and rejoice from God's Word, within the soul.

Lectio Divina

Find a comfortable quiet space, maybe a favorite chair or a spot at the park. Open your Bible to a passage, any passage. Read it slowly, either silently or aloud, and again four or five times. During each reading, be still, breathe, imagine savoring the message from the passage the way you'd appreciate the texture, smell and taste of a healthy meal. Focus on any words or phrases that stand out to you, any feelings that arise in your heart, or any thoughts that come to your mind. Listen for God's message meant for you in the passage and carry it with you throughout the day. A few passages have been provided here to get you started.

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it. He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

—Genesis 28:16-17

And thou shalt love thy Lord thy God with ALL thy heart and with ALL thy soul, and with ALL thy mind, and with ALL thy strength: this is the first commandment.

—Mark 12:30



“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

—Psalm 23:6

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

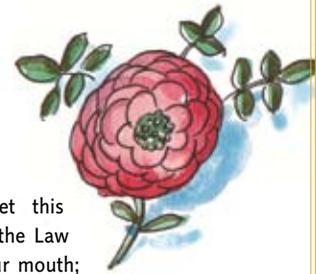
—Matthew 6:19-21

“Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.”

—Psalm 61:1-3

“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.

—Luke 6:27-32



Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

—Joshua 1:8

—John 1:9-13

But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

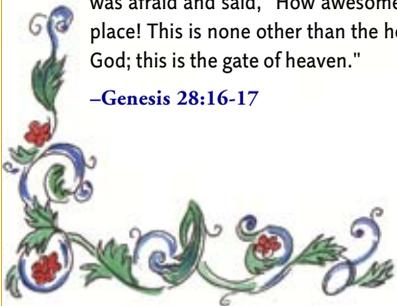
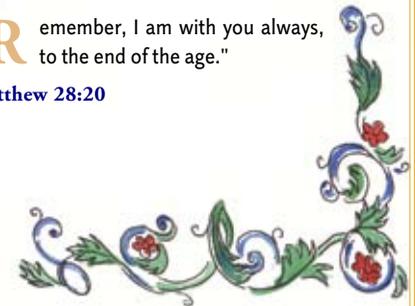
—Isaiah 40:31

Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. Remember, O LORD, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you are good, O Lord.

—Psalm 25:4-7

“Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

—Matthew 28:20



To listen to the full interview or to hear others like it, visit chapmancast.com.

The Bible's Deeper Meaning

The Bible can sometimes make for a confusing read. Should readers be looking for a deeper meaning hidden in the Old and New Testaments? The Rev. Pearse Frazier interviewed the Rev. John Odhner on this subject for his weekly podcast, the ChapmanCast. A portion of their conversation is given here. *Edited by Chad Odhner*

CC: Someone recently accused me of adding to the Bible by trying to interpret it. Does the Bible have a deeper meaning or should we be taking it literally?

JO: The question is whether there is a deeper meaning in the Bible already. If there is no deeper meaning then we might be adding to it by trying to interpret it. But if it was intended to be taken with a deeper meaning, and we strip it out with our method of interpretation, then we are taking away something that's given by God through inspiration. We're saying, "No, I don't want to pay attention to that part of the Bible."

CC: Does the Bible have rules for how we should read it?

JO: I haven't found any passages that say anything should be taken strictly literally. Conversely, I've found dozens of passages that say, "There is symbolism in here, look at this on a deeper level." I like to start with the young man who asks Jesus, "What's the most important

commandment in the Bible?" (Matthew 22:36). It's as if he's asking, "What's the most important thing for us to know about the Bible?" Jesus says, "Love the Lord with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40). So everything in the Bible is about loving God and loving your neighbor, and if we read about all the details in the tabernacle, for example, well what's that got to do with loving God and the neighbor? Jesus was telling us, "Look for something deeper there! The tabernacle was symbolic and if you're missing love for God and the neighbor in any part of the Bible, you're missing the main message."

CC: What do you make of Jesus' parables as a guide towards understanding that everything is about loving the neighbor and loving the Lord?

JO: Well, first of all, Jesus told a lot of parables; the Bible even says, "Without

Without a parable, He did not speak to them.

—Matthew 13:34

a parable, He did not speak to them" (Matthew 13:34). In other words, He was always telling stories that have a deeper meaning. Not only that, but when He refers back to the Old Testament, He often refers to stories that have a deeper meaning. For example, Jesus talked about the manna which came down from heaven for forty years in the wilderness. But Jesus made that a symbolic story about Himself, saying, "Moses did not give you the bread from Heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven." And He said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:32-35). Another example: Jesus said, "See this temple? If you tear it down, in three days I will raise it up again" (John 2:19). He wasn't talking about the temple literally; He was talking symbolically about Himself, because He is the dwelling place of God on earth (John 2:21). And so, when we look back at the temple or the tabernacle, we know from what Jesus said that those are symbols and representations of Him.

CC: But does that open the door to interpreting the Bible however we want to? I think that's a real concern for some people. How do we restrain ourselves from having the Bible mean anything we want it to mean?

JO: The passage I started out with gives us a guide: everything in the Bible hinges on loving God and loving the neighbor. I'm sure you know the story of

how Jesus, after His resurrection, was joining His disciples on a walk to Emmaus. He

told them all the things concerning Himself that were in the scriptures. So the people who say, "Don't look for a deeper meaning," might as well be saying, "Don't look for Jesus in the Old Testament because you're adding something." But it's not us adding something; it was Jesus, who wasn't even adding it then, but saying, "It was there all along." And the New Testament can be understood this way too. When they crucified Jesus, for example, that was a real event but it was also symbolic—portraying the way the Bible would be treated. So when we take the literal meaning of the Bible without the deeper meaning, it's kind of like what happened when they stripped Jesus of His garments. They said, "We'll take the garments and we'll kill the person."

CC: Well it's interesting to think that they then tore those garments up. Some people interpret the Bible in different ways, picking and choosing particular passages—paying attention to the letter of the Bible but forgetting how the Lord said, "The two most important things for you to remember: love the Lord and love your neighbor."



The Rev. John Odhner is a content developer for General Church Outreach. For more information, visit www.newchurch.org



Frequently Asked Questions

New Church Journey develops relevant Bible-based programs for people around the world to assist them in growing spiritually and applying God's teachings to their everyday lives. This year's Spiritual Growth Campaign follows the life of Jacob. Participants will study the stories in Genesis about Jacob's struggles and successes while finding practical application for God's teachings in their everyday lives. The program provides a clear approach for study, discussion, and spiritual transformation.

Genesis 25:19 through Genesis 35:15

Story: The story follows the life of Isaac's son Jacob. It begins even before Jacob is born as he struggles in the womb with his twin brother, Esau. As a young man, Jacob clashes with his brother, runs away from home, gains a new awareness of God's presence, and meets the love of his life. Over time, he learns to disentangle himself from an unhealthy situation, and, after many years, he gains the strength to go back home and face his brother.

Themes: Participants will discover a wide variety of themes in this story including sibling rivalry, favoritism, im-

pulsiveness, grief, fear, dreams, getting stuck, blessings, jealousy, letting love win, justice and mercy, maturity, reconciliation, and forgiveness.

Weekly Focus: Each week, participants will find new ways of "shifting" toward a better life. Each of these follows a shift Jacob goes through in that week's reading. These include shifts of awareness, shifts of expectations, and more. (See pgs. 20-21 for a complete overview.) Small group participants will have a chance to practice using truths from the Word in their lives, returning each week with a wealth of material for discussion.

Audience: The SHIFT program serves a large variety of people, from participants just beginning their journey with the New Church to those familiar with its teachings. We all have struggles in our lives, and SHIFT can help make us aware of those problems or offer new ways we can look at them. It can help anyone with a conflict with a family member, co-worker, friend or spouse, those experiencing depression, someone who is painfully shy and wants to learn to come out of this shell, people who are having trouble feeling God's presence, those who have experienced the recent loss of a job or a loved one, etc. Whatever problem you are facing, SHIFT can help show you a new way to approach that problem with the Lord's help. All are invited to join this journey.

What materials are available?

Workbook

(\$19.99, one per participant): 7-week program, includes Bible stories, journal entries, task cards, space for small group activities, additional readings and more.

Small Group Leader's Guide

(\$9.99, one per small group): scripts for small group leaders, two options for each small group (an activity or discussion) and extra quotes for sparking conversation.

How do I order a workbook?

Order a copy of the workbook online today at <http://stores.lulu.com/newchurchjourney>. Find the link to our lulu storefront at www.newchurchjourney.org. The workbooks will also be available at www.amazon.com soon.

Will there be coordinated multi-congregation launches?

Yes, the Journey team will be supporting two launches: September 25th, 2011, and February 5th, 2012.

How can I get involved with this program even though I don't live near a church running SHIFT?

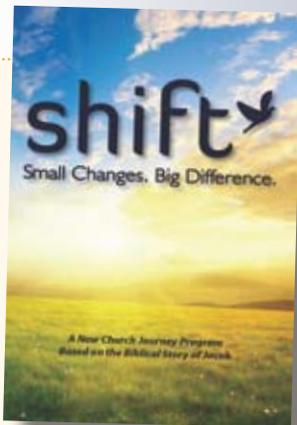
Participating online is a great way to join in. We offer daily emails with readings and insights to the story, a database of SHIFT sermons from churches around the globe, and online small groups. Visit newchurchjourney.org to find ways you can get involved.

More questions?

Contact New Church Journey! Phone: 267-502-4916
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Email: campaignteam@newchurch.org

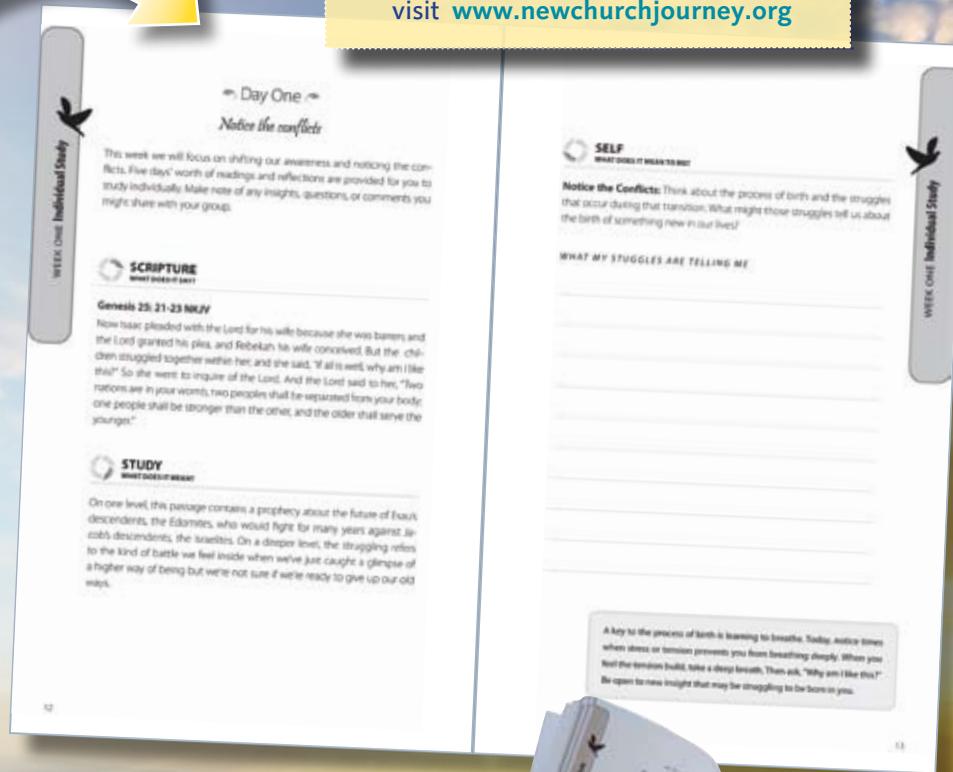
Change is possible!

The latest New Church Journey program, "Shift," focuses on the Old Testament story of Jacob. Participants see his times of deception, frustration, and struggle, as well as his moments of hope, inspiration, and love. At each stage of his journey, Jacob undergoes a shift which brings him a little closer to fulfillment and peace. "Shift" provides an opportunity to examine areas in our own lives that could use a change. These small shifts build up, and like Jacob, we will eventually look at our lives with astonishment, realizing how much has improved.



Look Inside!

To see a preview of the "Shift" workbook, visit www.newchurchjourney.org



What people are saying:

"There are a few things in my life I want to change, but just don't know how. I think this [program] could help me break it down to where I can handle it one step at a time."

"I appreciate the simplicity and easy to understand instructions of the small group activities. Plenty of white space and journaling pages to jot down notes or thoughts I might have. Each day's reading is consistent and there's great structure to help people focus on the story and task. I'm really looking forward to this program."

"I haven't read [the Jacob story] since grade school when I didn't really 'get' the Bible, so it will be different seeing myself in the story now as an adult."



Order the materials,
gather some friends
and join in today!

Join our
online groups on
Facebook at
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NewChurchJourney](http://www.facebook.com/NewChurchJourney)



Photo by MARIAN VANGENNE

In this seven-week program, participants will delve into the stories in Genesis 25-35 which relate the struggles of Jacob and will explore how these apply to their own lives.

| | WEEK ONE | WEEK TWO | WEEK THREE | WEEK FOUR | WEEK FIVE | WEEK SIX | WEEK SEVEN |
|--------------------|---|--|---|---|--|--|---|
| Focus | Shift of Awareness | Shift of Perspective | Shift of Focus | Shift of Expectations | Shift of Motivation | Shift of Confidence | Shift of Heart |
| Quote | If all is well, why am I like this? -Genesis 25:22 | Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it. -Genesis 28:16 | Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted his voice and wept. -Genesis 29:11 | So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it was Leah. -Genesis 29:25 | I will not pass beyond this heap to you, and you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar to me.... -Genesis 31:52 | Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel.... -Genesis 32:28 | I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me. -Genesis 33:10 |
| Week's Task | Notice the conflicts We recognize the conflicts in our lives, in our hearts, and with those around us. | Remember the Lord's presence Even in the middle of the struggle, in the hardest times, we remember that the Lord always has and always will be with us. | Keep in mind who you want to be We gain some insight about the person we want to become. With this as our focus, we are willing to do whatever it takes to reach our goal. | Stay patient with the process When disillusionment sets in, we have patience with ourselves and with the process, remembering to just keep taking the small steps. | Recognize when it's time to change We gather up the strength to let go of old behaviors, thought patterns and motivations that no longer serve us - those that prevent us from becoming the kind of people we want to be. | Hold on through the wrestling We wrestle with doubts and anxiety about making changes in our lives. This is the time of learning to put our confidence in the Lord. | Show your love We emerge as new people, with a new courage to face our greatest fears and a spirit of generosity and gratitude. The results are better than we ever expected: forgiveness, peace, and reconciliation. In the place where we thought we would see anger, instead we see the face of God. We celebrate this new state and thank God. |



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.



FOCUS ON THE NEW CHURCH IN Seoul, Korea

Located in Nok-beon Dong in northern Seoul, the Seoul New Church has their own building and an active congregation. They hold weekly worship services with Sunday School for young people and an adult Bible study. Their Sunday service includes traditional Korean music and instruments. They welcome all to the church and online at <http://www.newchurch.or.kr/>



photos by JOHN JIN



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...and Get Connected!

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*, *Secrets of Heaven (Arcana Coelestia)*, *True Christianity*, *Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*.

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 CAROLINE KLINE

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It is no more possible for God to be absent from us than it is for the sun... to be absent from our earth.

—True Christianity 70(2)

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