



## SPIRITUAL GROWTH

*The path to grow spiritually is simple.*

### LOOK TO THE LORD

Learn what God teaches. Ask Him to show you what changes need to be made in your life. Pray for guidance every day.

### LOOK AT YOURSELF

What habits or behaviors are harming your relationship with God, your family members, your friends, and others?

### CONFESS TO THE LORD

Admit to the things you do which you see are wrong. Pray that God will remove any selfishness you may have and help you move forward.

### WORK ON IT

Choose one habit, thought pattern, or behavior that you wish to change, and ask God to remove it from your life. Take action yourself, but remember that it is the Lord who gives you the strength to overcome temptations and change. Pray for the power to change.

### BEGIN A NEW LIFE

Ask God to help you look forward in this new direction, and show you new opportunities to be of service to other people. Through this process you will become more compassionate, more peaceful, wiser, and less fearful. You will experience greater closeness to God. This is spiritual rebirth.

If you abide in My Word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

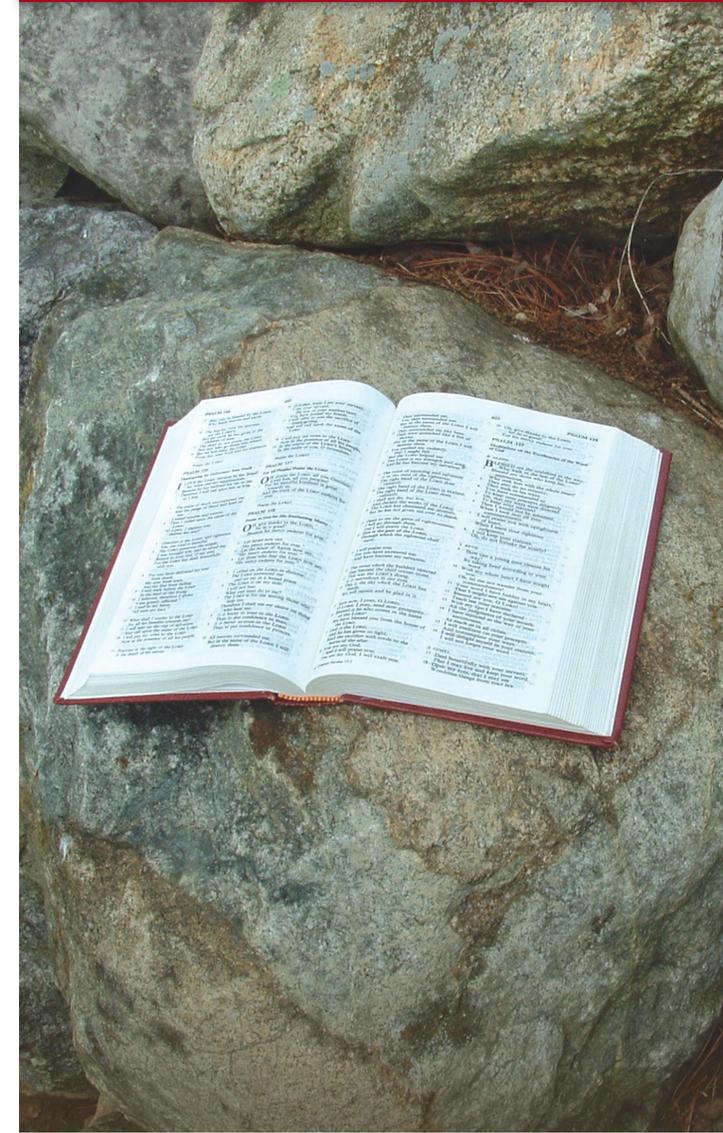
*John 8:31-32*

## THE NEW CHURCH



[www.newchurch.org](http://www.newchurch.org)

# The Bible's Deeper Meaning



NEW CHURCH PERSPECTIVE SERIES

# What Is the Bible's Deeper Meaning?

For centuries people have revered the Bible. At times, however, its meaning has seemed uncertain or been misconstrued. In the New Church we value and respect the Bible's literal meaning, and also honor the Bible's deeper meaning, as revealed in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

## Parables

The Bible is God speaking to us. It is full of stories that tell us about God and show us how to live according to His teachings. God wants us to live a good life and be kind to others because He wants us to be happy. His Bible (the Word) contains all the guidelines for following a path that leads toward happiness, a kind of User's Guide to Life. The New Church teaches that the Bible has deeper meanings which can help us understand God and each other better.

A parable is a story that has a deeper meaning. Jesus often used parables to teach people about how to live. Matthew 13:34 states: "All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them." The Bible is written in parables because every single story contains layers that teach us God's truth.

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35), and to the Samaritan woman at the well He said, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give will never thirst" (John 4:14).



## Everything in the Bible Is Significant

Every element of a Biblical story has meaning and relevance to our lives. Through the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg the inner meanings of stories, and even individual words, open up for us. We have the opportunity to understand more deeply how God loves us and leads us.

For more on this topic read *Secrets of Heaven* by Emanuel Swedenborg.

## Inner Meanings

Many of the stories in the Bible are explained in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg. The Lord revealed the inner meaning of these stories and sometimes even of individual words. For example, The Old Testament story of the children of Israel leaving Egypt and coming to a "promised land," is about us leaving the slavery of harmful thoughts and behaviors and finding heaven. Every part of that story, on a deeper level, teaches us about ourselves and God's leading.

As another example, notice the use of oil and wine in the story of the Good Samaritan, found in Luke: "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where the hurt man was. And when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine..." (Luke 10:33-34). The New Church teaches that by "oil" is meant love and by "wine" is meant truth. Through this story we can learn something about healing. God heals us by means of both His love and His truth.

Another example of the Bible's deeper meaning is the way in which the words "bread" and "water" are used. "Bread" in the Bible is used to mean goodness and "water" is used to mean truth. This gives us a picture of how our hearts and minds are fed spiritual food in the same way that our bodies are fed natural food. Our bodies cannot live without both food and water, and our spirits cannot live without both goodness and truth. The manna, or bread, which was provided to the Children of Israel in the wilderness stands for the goodness that God gives us daily (Exodus 16:31). The water that flowed from the rock that Moses struck with his rod stands for true ideas from God (Numbers 20:8).

The Lord wants us to understand His Word. The stories are about more than historical events. They are about each one of us, and the entire human race. Through these stories we learn about ourselves, about spiritual life, heaven, and about God.