



Love is a Daily Decision

Having a happy, healthy marriage like having a healthy spiritual life takes purposeful effort. Partners need to choose to commit to love every day even when they don't feel 'in love.'

Three important ways to honor your commitment to marriage:

- 1** Resist dominating the other person in decision making because it does not respect the partnership.
- 2** Resist romantic relationships and attractions outside of marriage because they destroy trust and the ability to build something deeper.
- 3** Practice forgiveness.

By practicing all these things, you are becoming a better person, drawing closer not only to your spouse, but also to the Lord and His ways.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

The path to happiness in marriage is not complicated.

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.

THE NEW CHURCH



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Marriage Can Be Everlasting



NEW CHURCH PERSPECTIVE SERIES

Everlasting Love

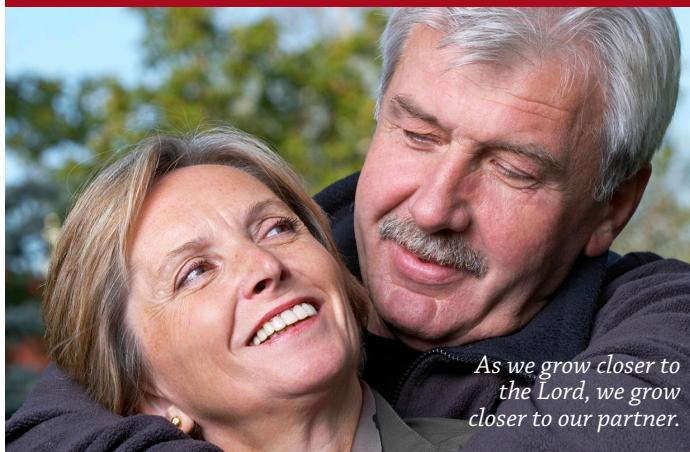
“God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them....” GENESIS 1:27, 28.

True Love

Right from the beginning God created men and women to complement, balance, and strengthen each other on many levels. This is why the New Church teaches that the greatest happiness can be experienced in the love between a husband and wife. Emanuel Swedenborg's Writings tell us a great deal about marriage.

“The states coming from this love are innocence, peace, tranquility, inmost friendship, complete trust, a mutual desire of the mind and heart to do to the other every good” *Conjugial Love* 180. God promises these beautiful states to couples who fall in love, marry, and choose to work for a healthy marriage. It doesn't happen automatically. It is especially important to work on individual spiritual growth.

When there is mutual respect, commitment, and the desire to put God first, married partners can grow together to eternity.



Love Is Eternal

One unique teaching of the New Church is that marriages can last forever. This teaching may seem to contradict Matthew 22:30 “*For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage....*”

Jesus knew that people in New Testament times had a very limited idea of marriage. He was replying in context to a question about a specific practice in which “marrying and being given in marriage” referred to a contractual and practical agreement, not to the beginning of a spiritual relationship. In ancient times women were possessions and frequently had little to say about whom they married. Marriages were not based on the free consent of two equal partners to build a useful life together. In context Jesus was telling people that marriages are different in heaven.

The New Church offers a new vision of marriage where husband and wife form a true partnership and seek ways to serve the Lord together.

Challenges to Marriage

Today there are many messages in the world which are not supportive of marriages. Movies, music, magazines, the Internet, and literature often glamorize relationships where respect and commitment are not present. The media promotes lifestyles that often lead to sadness, emptiness, shame and loneliness. These messages are so prevalent that we barely notice how often these damaging thoughts, ideas, and imagery bombard our hearts and minds.

What can we do? How can we promote the kind of enduring love that we really want to have?

The first step is to see and become aware of what we are taking into our minds.

The next step is to name it for what it is.

The final step is to make a conscious decision to avoid and reject what is harmful.

This process of seeing, naming, and making a conscious choice is ongoing. Each time we are willing to go through this process, our ability to take good spiritual care of ourselves and our marriage increases.

The Lord says “*Ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you*” (Matthew 7:7).

We can have confidence that the Lord wants us to enjoy the happiness of a close marriage relationship. If we are willing to do our part, God will do His.

