

TOGETHER AS ONE

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HOPE FOR MARRIAGE

When a couple marries their family and friends have great hope and confidence for the couple's future together. New Church teachings about marriage are among the most beautiful and helpful ever given on the subject. A man and woman who approach each other with open hearts and a willingness to be led by the Lord will live and grow together as one in friendship, happiness, and full companionship—not only for the rest of their lives, but for eternity. Marriage is not simply an earthly institution, but a Divine and spiritual institution, which the teachings of the New Church call the greatest gift of God to humankind.

CONJUGIAL LOVE

The Writings of the New Church, given through Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), tell us that there is a love which is so special that it rises above every other love. It is called “Conjugal Love.” Conjugal love is true marriage love, a love which can thrive within the marriage of a husband and wife, giving them the greatest blessings possible as they live, work, and grow together as partners in life. This love is not necessarily confined to what we typically think of as romantic love, but is something much deeper, spiritual, and enduring. Therefore, in the marriage ceremony this love is spoken of as being “celestial, spiritual, holy, pure, and clean, above every other love which is from the Lord, with the angels of heaven and the people of the church; and it is also the fundamental love of all celestial, spiritual, and natural loves; and into it are gathered all joys and delights from first to last.”

A FOUNDATION FOR LOVE

Conjugal love, with its blessings and delights, does not come into a marriage simply by virtue of the fact that a couple has promised themselves to each other. A good marriage is built on more than promises, or even sincere hopes. We know from experience or a quick glance at relationships in the world around us that many marriages based on hopes and promises alone sadly break apart. But the Writings assure us that true and lasting marriage love can be restored to the world, that marriages can not only remain intact, but can become beautiful experiences for people who look to the Lord and follow His teachings.

THE LORD AS THE CENTER

Marriages based on a strong belief in the Lord God Jesus Christ and His teachings flourish because He is the source of all that is good and true. He alone has the power to help a couple overcome the many obstacles to a loving relationship. Genuine marriage is not a state of

infatuation, where two look to each other for their only fulfillment, but rather a mutual looking above self to a Greater Power for help and guidance, and as a source of fulfillment.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND MARRIAGE

The New Church teaches that spiritual life and marriage work together hand in hand. To the degree that a couple uses the basic principles of genuine Christianity in their marriage they will be blessed in their marital relationship. The Lord has taught us so much about forgiveness, going the extra mile, and about faithfully fulfilling our duties and our promises. When we apply these same teachings to marriage we set a course toward happier lives. There is no better opportunity to become a spiritual person than in learning to live, work, and play together with a life-partner. It is often said that charity begins in the home, and, when we learn the art of love with our spouse, we are in turn blessed with a rich and meaningful companionship. The Lord has said, “Give and it will be given unto you.” This is true in marriage as in any other relationship.

ETERNITY AND MARRIAGE

True love is everlasting. It cannot die. The Writings teach that those who truly love each other will dwell together in heaven after death. Their love and their care for each other remains and grows. Their joy in working together in service to God and to other fellow human beings flourishes, and takes on a newness each day. Heaven is a very real world, where we will have homes, gardens, and friends. It is not a cloud upon which we sit and play harps or continually adore God through endless worship. True worship is a way of life. People in heaven are very active. Everyone there performs a function or “use” which they love to do and become more proficient in each new day, and what they do benefits everyone around them. This concept holds true of marriage. Good marriages are active marriages. In heaven, each partner works in harmony with the other in acts of charity and love. Marriage brings blessings, but the blessings come into their fullness through acts of unselfishness and charity to the neighbor.

THE LORD PROVIDES

The Writings of the New Church teach that those who trust in the Lord are gently led by His stream of providence. “They are all the time carried along toward everything that is happy, whatever may be the appearance of the means; and those are in the stream of Providence who put their trust in the Divine and attribute all things to Him” (*Arcana Coelestia* 8478). Whether we are single or married, the Lord is leading us to the greatest potential for good in our lives. We can, of course, swim against this gentle current, but those who trust in the Lord and allow Him to guide them are carried toward heaven and heavenly happiness. Trust is also essential in marriage, not only trust in our partners, but trust that the Lord will gently lead toward what is good. Couples who approach the Lord with a sincere heart, and rely on the Lord and His teachings as their guide and source of life and love, will be carried within that stream toward all things blessed, happy, and delightful—forever, together as one.