

General Church Education



FAMILY LESSON: MARK 10 THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

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Family Lesson 31-G

The Kingdom of Heaven
Mark 10

Family Talk:

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

The Gospel of Mark, chapter 10, is about the kingdom of heaven. It is about false ideas we sometimes have about what it means to be good. It is also about the Lord gently teaching His disciples about the true way to heaven.

From the reading in the Word, could you tell what some of our false ideas might be? Could you understand what the Lord was saying about heaven?

One thing the Lord was saying is that there are times when our hearts are not as ready as they could be to receive Him. There were people who wanted to bring young children to the Lord, so that He could touch them.

But the Lord's disciples tried to stop them, maybe thinking that the Lord's teachings were only for adults. Immediately the Lord helped the disciples to see a new truth about heaven:

“Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of God.”

He said that everyone should have a little child's innocent way of receiving the kingdom of God. “Innocence” means a willingness to be led by the Lord, so the innocence of children is very precious to the Lord. And then, as the disciples watched, the Lord lifted the children up in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them. The Lord's blessing is His wish, with real power in it, that good things should come to those He blesses. Does a picture come into your mind when you hear this story?

The next part of the story is another lesson about heaven. A man came running to the Lord, asking what he should do to receive everlasting life. The Lord's answer was to obey the Ten Commandments. The man replied that he had tried to keep these Commandments ever since he was young. And the Lord's first response to that was to look at the man and love him:

“Then, Jesus, looking at him, loved him.”

The Lord knew that even though the man was trying to be good, as is often true with us too, there is one big thing that gets in the way of our being good. For this man, it was that he was too fond of riches. So the Lord helped the man to see his problem. He showed the man that riches and possessions are not the most important things of life. The man then went away, feeling the pain of having to give up his fondness for so many possessions. But the man went away with the Lord's love too. He knew that a hard struggle was ahead for him — to have to give up his precious possessions — but he also knew that with the Lord's help, he could do it.

At first, when the Lord spoke of the difficulties of a rich man trying to go to heaven, the disciples were astonished. But then the Lord spoke very clearly. He said:

“Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!”

To trust in riches is to set your heart only on them, and to love yourself in them rather than to love the uses which may, through them, come to others (Divine Providence 217).

It was, in a way, a day of hard lessons for the disciples. They had been rebuked for stopping children from coming to the Lord. And now when they heard the Lord talking of how hard it was for one who loves riches to go to heaven, they felt discouraged. They wondered whether anyone could get to heaven. **“Who can be saved?”** they asked.

Then Jesus looked at them. His look was one of understanding. He knew that His disciples were trying to grasp at truths not always easy to see. But He loved them, and looking at them with that understanding of His love and that love of His, He said something uplifting and true:

“With God all things are possible.”

He said that by ourselves, we are not strong enough or powerful enough to go to heaven. None of us can get to heaven on our own. But His words can uplift us, like the rich man and the disciples. They can make us feel powerful and strong and full of hope. For the Lord says:

“Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

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Family Talk:
“WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE”

Does a picture come into your mind when you hear these words? “Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him.” How good a feeling that man would have. The Lord spoke to him and heard him say something, and then, looking at him, loved him. This is one of the things we read of in the 10th chapter of Mark.

Near the beginning of the chapter, mention is made of hardness of heart. If we are hard-hearted, we are not really ready to hear the most beautiful and precious things. The Lord reminded people that in the first chapter of Genesis is the teaching that God made male and female that they might become one in a beautiful relationship. Let us never let our hearts get hardened so that we lose sight of that beautiful truth.

There are times when our hearts are not as ready to receive as they should be. Were the Lord’s disciples in a bad mood or being thoughtless for a while when they were about to stop children from coming to the Lord? There were people who wanted to bring young children to the Lord, wanting the Lord to touch the children. This was something good, something that the Lord really cares about.

At first the disciples told them to stop, but immediately the Lord taught them a lesson.

“When Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased, and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of God.’”

He said that everyone should have something like a little child’s way of receiving the kingdom of God. This is so different from a hard-hearted way. There could be no doubt about the Lord’s love for those little children, for as the disciples watched, He picked them up, held them in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them. The Lord’s blessing is His wish, with real power in it, that good things should come to those He blesses.

A man came running. It was the man that the Lord would soon look upon with love, and we see now what brought about that look of love. The man asked what he should do to receive everlasting life. The Lord then mentioned to him the Commandments, first the one about not committing adultery, which means not to take anything good and beautiful and harm it or make it into something ugly. Especially it means not to harm marriage. He mentioned the Commandment not to murder, not to steal, not to lie or to cheat, and He mentioned the Commandment to honor father and mother.

Then the man spoke to the Lord, and he was able to say honestly to the Lord that he had tried to keep these Commandments ever since he was young. His saying *that* brings us to those beautiful words:

“Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him.”

Keep those words in mind, and be sure that wherever love.

It was in love that the Lord said something more to this man who wanted to try even harder. The Lord knew that as yet the man had not had to pass through hard trials in life (which are meant by taking up a cross to carry), and He knew that at that time the man was too fond of riches. He made the man realize that riches and possessions must not be the most important things of life. The man then went away, feeling the pain of having to give up his fondness for so many possessions. But the man went away with the Lord's love on him, and although he might have a hard struggle ahead of him in life, with the Lord all things are possible.

At first, when the Lord spoke of the difficulties of a rich man trying to go to heaven, the disciples were astonished. But then the Lord spoke very clearly. He said,

“Children, how hard it is for those who *trust* in riches to enter the kingdom of God!”

To trust in riches is to set your heart only on them, and to love yourself in them rather than to love the uses which may, through them, come to others. (*Divine Providence 217*)

It was, in a way, a day of hard lessons for the disciples. They had been rebuked for stopping children from coming to the Lord. And now when they heard the Lord talking of how hard it was for one who trusts in riches to go to heaven, they got a discouraging feeling. They wondered whether anyone could get to heaven. “Who then can be saved?” they asked.

But Jesus then looked at them. His look was one of understanding. He knew that they were sometimes slow to grasp the truth. He knew that sometimes their hearts were a little hard. But He loved them, and looking at them with that understanding of His and that love of His, He said something true and uplifting. He said that with men alone it was impossible to go to heaven. No one can do it with their own power. But His words could uplift them with hope, for He said,

“With God all things are possible.”

The Kingdom of Heaven

Mark 10

LEVEL 1 – BLESSING THE CHILDREN

“THEN THEY BROUGHT YOUNG CHILDREN TO HIM, THAT HE MIGHT TOUCH THEM.”



On the next page is a picture of the Lord blessing little children.

- ❖ Using crayons, let the child draw many children all around the picture.
- ❖ Add some background — grass, trees, flowers, sky.
- ❖ When finished, mount the picture on a piece of colored construction paper, and put it up for display.

Remember that at this age most children will still be in the scribbling stage. What they draw may be merely circles with lines extending from them. Some will draw eyes and a smiling mouth in the circle and consider it finished. Others may do full figures, complete with bright clothes. Anything they produce is perfectly acceptable. The joy they feel in doing it is all that counts.

Occasionally, a child will not know how to begin. In that case the adult might draw a number of circles (for heads) surrounding the center, and then encourage the child to add bodies, legs, arms, faces, hair, etc. Usually that will be enough to start the ideas flowing.

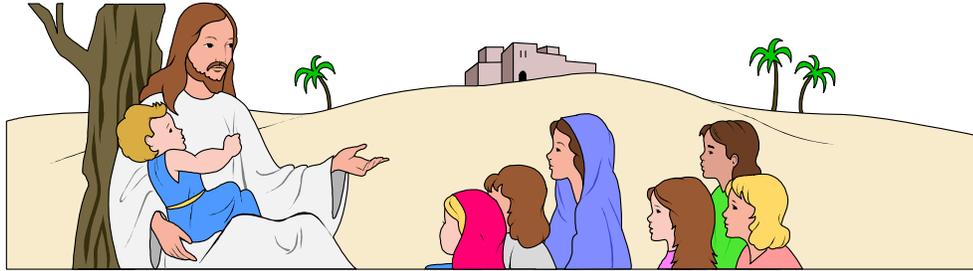
Remember also that it is important to be relaxed, enthusiastic, and accepting of your child's efforts.



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LEVEL 2 – THE LORD BLESSES LITTLE CHILDREN



For this project of the Lord blessing little children you will need the following supplies:

The enclosed picture of the Lord blessing little children.

A piece of colored paper

Scissors

Paste or glue

Old magazines or catalogs

1. If you would like, color the picture of the Lord that is in the center of the large paper.
2. Cut out many children's heads and/or full figures from magazines and catalogs, and paste them all around the main picture.
(Catalogs, the National Geographic, and various home and children's magazines are good sources.)
3. Encourage the children to overlap and group the figures in interesting ways. Remind them to choose some front, some side, some back views. Also, if possible, include some children of varied races, pointing out that the Lord loves all children in the whole world equally.
4. Mount the picture on the piece of colored paper.
5. This may easily become an ongoing project. Display the picture in a prominent place, and as the children find new pictures, they could continue to add them.



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LEVEL 4 – THE HOLINESS OF MARRIAGE



Read the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20: 1-17. Some of them are listed in this order:

- Honor father and mother
- Not to murder
- Not to commit adultery
- Not to steal
- Not to bear false witness

(If we listed all ten, we would not put “honor to parents” first, but we are just listing some of them.)

The commandments are mentioned many times in the Word. But they are not always in the same order. It depends what subject that chapter in the Word is emphasizing.

Look up the commandments mentioned in *Jeremiah*, *Matthew* and *Mark*. The three lists will show the different sequences of some of the Ten Commandments.

Jeremiah 7:9

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1) _____ | 3) _____ |
| 2) _____ | 4) _____ |

Matthew 19:18-19

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1) _____ | 4) _____ |
| 2) _____ | 5) _____ |
| 3) _____ | 6) _____ |

Mark 10

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1) _____ | 4) _____ |
| 2) _____ | 5) _____ |
| 3) _____ | 6) _____ |

The Holiness of Marriage

In different contexts and for different reasons, certain commandments are of central importance. You notice that in Mark 20 the commandment against adultery takes the number one place.

It is not hard to see that a reason for this is that in this chapter we have one of the outstanding places in all of the Word for emphasis on the holiness of marriage.

In Mark 10 in the New King James Version, the lovely verses on marriage go like this:



From the beginning of the creation
God made them male and female.”

For this reason a man shall leave his
father and mother and be joined to his
wife,

and the two shall become one flesh; so
then they are no longer two, but one
flesh.

Therefore what God has joined together,
let not man separate.

(Mark 10: 7-9)

The wrong of adultery

The same chapter also talks of the harm of adultery. In a dictionary you find that the word “adultery” means “to make inferior, impure, not genuine by adding a harmful, less valuable or prohibited substance. The wrong of adultery is the wrong of taking anything that is really good and clean and making it into something low and degrading.

The more you know about the quality of true marriage, the more you see that adultery against marriage is so harmful.

Remember the eager young man asking the Lord what he should do to receive eternal life:

Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

(Mark 10:17)

And the Lord replied:

You know the commandments...

...and the first commandment the Lord mentioned was the one against adultery, The commandment about doing what is harmful to marriage.



The innocence of married love

The teachings of the New Church emphasize the beauty and good of marriage and married love more than do any teachings in the world.

The Writings teach that married love is holy, pure and clean. They teach that those in married love have innocence and peace. Do you know what the quality of innocence is? A quick way of capturing its quality is to think of the way you are affected by a very sweet baby or child.



So it is not surprising that after the beautiful words about marriage in *Mark 10*, we find the subject of little children. The Lord took little children into His arms, and He said that anyone who wants to go to heaven must be “as a little child.”

Powerful illustrations from the Writings

The Writings give very clear and simple ways of learning the quality of true marriage love and the quality of the harmful love of adultery.

Think of two bunches of grapes which seem to be the same, but one has a beautiful taste and the other a horrible taste. Well, that is one illustration, using the sense of taste.

Before you read the following comparison, which uses the sense of smell, think to yourself of a smell that you really like that makes you feel good. Then think of a smell that you find very offensive that makes you sick at the stomach.

As Swedenborg was learning the real quality of the love of adultery, a smell from hell was sensed by him, and it made him sick at the stomach. (Described in *Conjugal Love* 431.) He noted that just as worms and maggots cluster in smelly places, so evil spirits actually prefer what is dirty.

On the other hand, when he learned of the quality of true married love, he was touched with the fragrance of lovely flowers and gardens.

Something to think about

Here is a final thought for you.

“A sweet odor is not perceived by the nostrils while a foul stench clings to them.”
(Conjugal Love 439)

If a person was always close to bad smells, that person would miss the experience of delicate and beautiful aromas. Think about that for a while, because there is more of a lesson here than just a saying about smells.

Discuss the quote with your parents, and the many ways it could apply to our lives.

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LEVEL 5 – MARRIAGE IS HOLY



The Lord teaches us about marriage in every phase of His Revelation. In the very beginning of the Old Testament He teaches:

“So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” (*Genesis 1:27*)

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” (*Genesis 2: 24*)

From the beginning of time, people were to know that it is in God’s order for one man and one woman to be married.

This teaching is reaffirmed in our current chapter of the book of Mark. Jesus’ answer to a challenge from the Pharisees was to quote this teaching and then emphasize the importance *before God* of a chaste marriage. He said:

From the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.”

For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh.

Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate. (*Mark 10: 6-9*)

With the Writings given for the New Church, the Lord has made clear all the teachings contained in the Old and New Testaments. The very important teaching that monogamous marriage is in Divine Order is emphasized and expanded in all the books of the Writings, especially in the book devoted to it—*Conjugal Love*.

Love truly conjugal is from the Lord alone. (*Apocalypse Explained 983:2*)

Marriage on earth descends from the marriage of good and truth in heaven.
(*Arcana Coelestia 4572*)

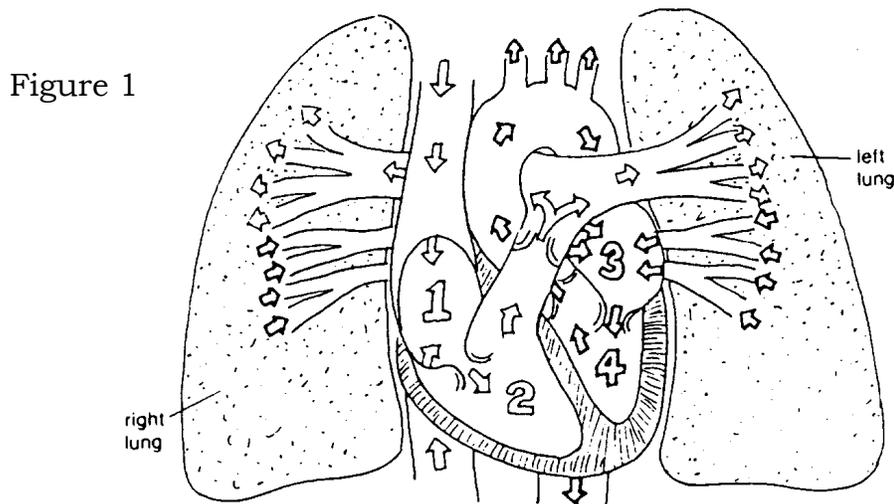
The conjugal union of one man with one wife is the precious jewel of human life and the repository of the Christian religion... a person is a living soul as a result of that love.
(*Conjugal Love 457*)

The Heart and the Lungs

Once when an angel was describing to Swedenborg his relationship with his wife, he said:

“We are one. Her life is in me and mine in her. We are two bodies but one soul. The union between us is as that of the two tents in the breast called the heart and the lungs. She is my heart and I am her lungs. But as by the heart we here mean love and by the lungs wisdom, she is the love of my wisdom and I am the wisdom of her love. (CL 75)

Let us look at the relationship between the heart and the lungs and see what teachings it illustrates about the relationship between husband and wife.



Follow the blood through one cycle. See where it enters the heart into the left chamber. From there it is pumped out to the lungs. In the lungs it goes through veins, which divide and divide into tiny capillaries. There, in tiny air sacs, the impurities which the blood brought from cells all over the body are exchanged for fresh oxygen received by the lungs. The oxygenated blood is collected in tiny arteries, and returns to the heart through greater and greater arteries. There it enters a different chamber than before, and is pumped out again to the whole body.

Follow this route on figure 1. Color the blood coming from the body through the first chamber dark red. Color it bright red once it has given up carbon dioxide and taken on fresh oxygen in the lungs.

What does this action show us about the interaction of husband and wife?

In the Writings we learn that blood corresponds to love, and even gets its color red from that correspondence. We also learn that the wife receives love from the Lord, which she gives to her husband, just as the heart receives blood and gives it to the lungs.

The husband receives wisdom from the Lord, or the lungs receive air. He loves his wife, and fills her with his wisdom, as the lungs return oxygenated blood to the heart.

Then together, when they have both received influx from the Lord and given to each other, they can serve the rest of the world through their family and uses.

Being Useful

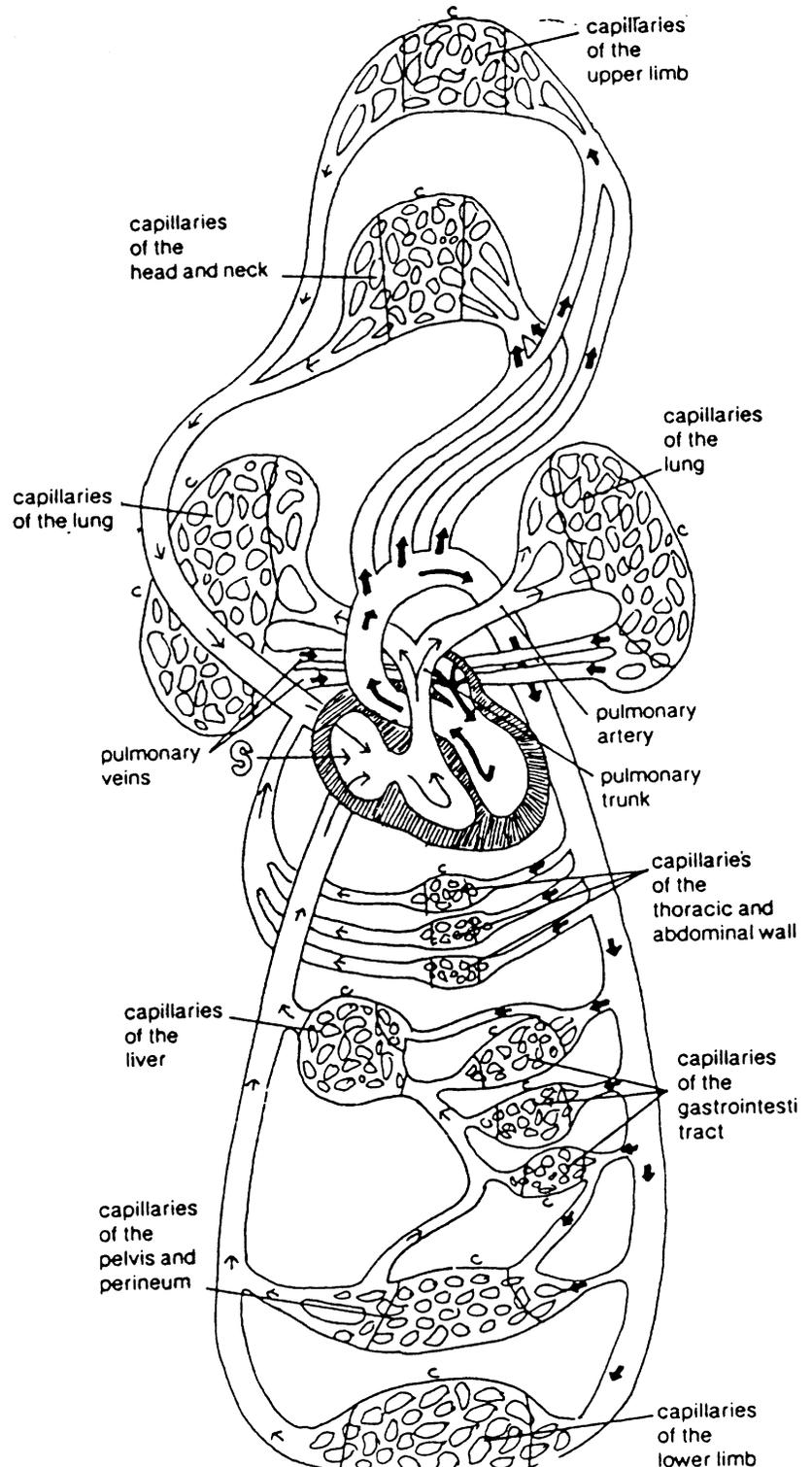
Look at figure 2. Notice how silly it would be to consider the heart and lungs alone without their use to the rest of the body. They are only part of the circulatory system, which carries oxygen and nutrients to all the cells and carries wastes away to be removed from the body.

Similarly, a husband and wife do not look only to each other, but function together for the sake of the uses they can perform. The Lord tells us that love of children is very close to the love of husband and wife, and that providing a caring home is one of the first uses of marriage.

“The spheres of conjugal love and of the love of infants, flow into all things of heaven and all things of the world...”
(CL 389)

The sphere of the love of infants is a sphere of protection and support of those who cannot protect and support themselves.
(CL 399)

“...it is provided from creation that things created shall be preserved, guarded protected, and supported...” (CL 391)



“The innocence flowing into the souls of parents joins itself with the innocence of their infants.” (CL 396)

Love from the Lord and love for each other



Another important teaching about marriage is illustrated in figure 3. Note that blood vessels are not only carrying blood through the heart and lungs. There are also vital arteries bringing blood to nourish the heart itself and the lungs themselves. These are the arteries which cause a heart attack if their flow of blood is blocked.

Similarly in marriage both the wife and the husband must be nourished by love from each other and the Lord. If that love is cut off, the function of the married partner stops and the marriage dies. Just as modern health professionals urge us to exercise for cardio-vascular fitness, so every married couple must exercise their love for each other and guard its health. The proper interaction of husband and wife is a truly beautiful harmony.

Conjugal love in its essence is nothing else but the wish of two to be one, or, in other words, a will on their part that their two lives become one life. To carry out that will is the constant endeavor of this love, and all that it does flows from it. (CL 215)

No others come into that love and no others can be in it but those who go to the Lord and love the truths of the church and do the good things it teaches. (CL 57)

The following activity will help you remember how the heart and lungs mirror the relationship between a husband and wife.

The Correspondence of the Heart and Lungs

Get a piece of tracing paper. Lay it over the diagram below (figure 4) and trace the heart and lungs and their connecting vessels.

- Where it says: **heart** - write **wife**
- lungs** - write **husband**
- blood** - write **love**
- oxygen** - write **wisdom**
- body** - write **uses**

