



Friendships: Men & Women

Lesson Overview

1. BrainBuilder

Think about friendship. What makes a good friend?

2. Read

Friendships with the opposite sex. pp. 2-3.

2. What Are You Looking For? Activity

Complete an "online dating" form about yourself or another person. p. 3. Discuss

New Church Concept Friendship

After death everyone comes into a society of his own people, who are people who possess a similar love, and he recognizes them as relatives and friends. Remarkably, moreover, when he meets and sees them, it is as though he had known them from early childhood. It is a spiritual relationship and friendship that occasions this. *Divine Providence* 338:4

FaithBuilder 2 | Lesson 19 | Conjugal Love

BrainBuilder

Choose a question or activity to involve students in a discussion.

1. What makes someone a good friend?
2. How can your spiritual life help your friendships?
3. What did the Lord say about friendship while he was in the world? (See John 15:14.)
4. How do you know if someone is a friend? What will they do or not do for you?
5. Rate the following on a scale of 1-10 individually. The value of sports, entertainment, school, clothes, friendships. Discuss your responses as a group.

Read

While it is easy to make friends with people like ourselves, it may be more challenging to make friends with people who are different. Many people find this is true of friendships with members of the opposite sex. Respecting and honoring masculine and feminine differences is important if we are to develop healthy relationships with the opposite sex.

Swedenborg once had a conversation with wives in heaven about the ways in which their wisdom was different from their husbands. They explained though that this was not a matter of which was superior, as one wife reflected:

We do not glory over you on account of our wisdom. See *Conjugal Love* 208

Many people find that they can become more familiar with the qualities of men and women by forming friendships with a variety of people.

The book *Conjugal Love* begins with an account of a memorable experience Swedenborg had in the spiritual world. Groups of people were given the chance to experience what they thought heaven was like for several days. Their ideas of heaven were quite different. Some people expected that they would eat and drink with famous people. Others thought they would have important discussions. Still others thought they would do nothing but sit in gardens all day. Afterward they all experienced what they thought heaven would be, the groups met and talked

about their experiences. All of them discovered that what they *thought* heaven was like was not accurate at all!

In a similar way, our ideas about what men and women or marriage are like might not be accurate either. Getting to know a variety of men or women can help us learn more about the opposite sex. It also helps us get to know the kinds of qualities we deeply care about and that we will eventually look for in the person we marry.

Activity

Complete the activity, *What Are You Looking For?* on p. 3.

Optional: Discuss your answers.

Healthy Friendship

For Teacher Reference

'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Mark 12:30-31

"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. John 15:9-14

I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison and you came to me. Matthew 25:35, 36.

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

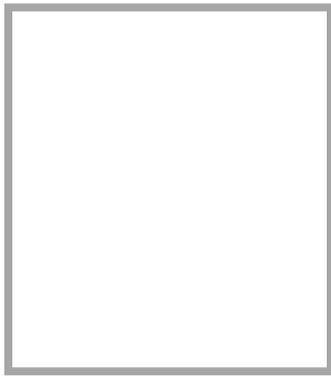
Charity consists in desiring the welfare of one's neighbor, in having an affection for what is good, and in acknowledging that since what is good is one's neighbor, those who are governed by good are consequently one's neighbor, but varyingly so, depending on the amount of good that governs the individual person. Therefore since charity consists in having an affection for what is good, it also consists in feelings of mercy for those in distress. The good of charity holds such feelings within it because it comes down from the Lord's love towards the whole human race, a love which is 'mercy' because the whole human race is in distress. Mercy sometimes seems to exist among the evil who have no charity. But this is a case of pain because of their own suffering; for it consists in a concern for friends whom they identify with themselves, and when those friends suffer, they suffer too. This kind of mercy is not the mercy that belongs to charity but that which goes with friendship based on self-interest, which regarded in itself is the opposite of mercy. That kind of person despises and hates everyone else apart from himself, and so everyone else apart from the friends whom he identifies with himself. *Arcana Coelestia* 5132.2

There are very many communities in the next life which are called friendship-communities. They consist of those who during their lifetime preferred the delight of association with others to any other delight and who loved those with whom they associated, without any interest at all in whether these were good or evil people, provided they gave them delight. Thus they were not ones who befriended what was good and true. Those who have been like this during their lifetime remain the same in the next life. Many such communities have been present with me. I was made aware of their presence by a dull and sluggish feeling, and by a loss of my own feeling of delight; for the presence of communities such as these leads to this. Indeed when they arrive on the scene they remove others' feeling of delight, and what is remarkable they make it their own. For they turn away the spirits present with others and direct them towards themselves, thereby transferring another's delight to themselves. And because such communities are for this reason dangerous and harmful to those governed by good, the Lord therefore holds them back to prevent them going near heavenly communities. From this I was enabled to know how much harm friendship does to someone's spiritual life if he pays attention to the person but not to what is good. Anyone can indeed befriend another; but most of all he ought to befriend what is good. *Arcana Coelestia* 4804 (parts)

What Are You Looking For?

Some people look for a married partner using an online dating service. Complete the following form as if you were going to post it online.

Choose whether to complete this from your own perspective *or* from the perspective of the partner you would like to marry. Keep your answers brief. Write so that someone will want to learn more about you.



Name _____

Alias _____

Make up a name that describes your inner self e.g. lookin4fun, funnygirl, shyguy

Age _____

Gender _____

Photo

Religious Views _____

What do you value most in your life? _____

Occupation (future) _____

Education (future) _____

Hobbies/Activities _____

Ideal Partner _____

Best Date (fun/romantic/exciting) _____

What did you learn about yourself by doing this? Discuss what you wrote with your group. What similarities or differences did you notice?