

Challenges to Marriage

Today there are many messages in the world which are not helpful/supportive of marriages. Movies, music, magazines, the internet, and literature 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 much 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?

The first step is to see or become aware of what we are taking into our minds. The next step is to name it for what it is. The last step is to make a conscious decision to avoid and reject it.

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.

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 and relationship. Pray for guidance every day.

Look at yourself - What habits or behaviors are harming your relationship with God, your spouse, and others?

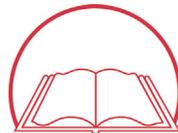
Take responsibility - Acknowledge the things that you do which you see are unhealthy and wrong. Confess them to God and ask for His help to overcome them.

Work on it - Choose one habit, thought pattern, or behavior that you wish to change. Ask the Lord daily to remove it from your life. Take action yourself, but remember that it is the Lord who gives you the strength to overcome and change.

Begin a new life - Through this process we become more compassionate, wiser, and less fearful. We are spiritually reborn.

The New Church

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Marriage can be Everlasting



New Church Perspective Series

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True Love

The Bible begins with the story of Creation: *“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

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 marriages. *“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.”* *Conjugal Love* 180

These beautiful states are a promise from God for couples who fall in love, marry, and choose to work for a healthy marriage. It doesn’t happen automatically. Married people, have to work for this kind of love - especially on their own spiritual growth.

Spiritual Growth

There is a spiritual principle at work in marriages. As we grow closer to the Lord, we grow closer to our partner. This means that married partners must choose to resist selfish and controlling thought patterns and behaviors and choose instead unselfish and supportive thought patterns and behaviors based on what God teaches.

Love Is Eternal

One unique teaching of the New Church is that marriages can last forever. But how does this teaching support what Jesus said in Matthew verse 22: *“For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage...”*?

Because Jesus knew that people in those times held an idea about marriage that was very limited. Here Jesus was replying in context to a question about a specific practice where “marrying and being given in marriage” referred to a contractual and practical agreement, not 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. Jesus was replying that things were 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 God.



When there is mutual respect, commitment, and the desire to put God first, married partners can grow together to eternity. Couples can make daily choices for this kind of marriage.

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 their commitment are:

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

By practising all these things, we are becoming a better person, drawing closer not only to our spouse, but also to the Lord and his ways.

This does not guarantee there will not be challenges in a marriage.