

NAVIGATING FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

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# WELCOME

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Connecting you with a New Christian spirituality for everyday life



“Think global. Act local.” I have heard this expression in many contexts. Today, I invite you to consider it in terms of family relationships.

If you have a vision and a hope for a peaceful world, strive to bring this harmony into your “local” relationships: those within your family.

Sometimes these are the relationships we struggle with most, and they often provide the most opportunities to apply our growing knowledge of how to live well.

As contributions for this issue came across my desk, I noticed the positive impact the ideas had on my own relationships. I’m confident that, if you apply the ideas presented here, you will observe similar changes.

Notice the new intimacy that is possible with an increased awareness of microboundaries—those invisible yet significant spaces between two people (p.14). Witness the beauty of choosing your own path and empowering your children to do the same (p.6). Create a strong spiritual foundation for your children with simple ideas you can use every day (pps.12-13).

Navigating family relationships can be a beautiful thing. And who knows? Maybe your local intention and action will make a global impact.

Bronwen Henry  
General Church Outreach

New Church Connection makes the connection between religion and life. Every issue features content that highlights the personal nature of spirituality, providing applicable ideas to support your journey with insights from the New Church (Swedenborgian) faith.

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You are the children of the Lord your God.

–Deuteronomy 14:1

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cover photo by: ANDY SULLIVAN

# Life is full of QUESTIONS

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

—Joshua 24:15



Photo by RANDY VANHELDEN

## Q HOW DO I KNOW IF SOMEONE IS THE ONE I SHOULD MARRY?

**a** As with any spiritual question you have, you need to ask it with your spiritual life in mind. A commitment to the work of your spiritual life will enable you to recognize when the Lord brings your future marriage partner into your life. Pray that the Lord leads you to your eternal partner, and cooperate by being

*From Resolving family grudges to choosing your spouse, Rev. David Roth offers his thoughts in an interview conducted by Chelsea Odhner.*

honest with the Lord about what you want in a partner. It is important to realize that you don't find the perfect person to marry; you find someone you're willing to work with, and through your life together, you become the perfect partners for each other.

## Q WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO BRING MY SPIRITUALITY INTO MY PARENTING?

**a** We bring spirituality into our parenting through practicing repentance (examining our lives, recognizing our faults, praying for help to change them, and beginning a new life). Our children are not really ours. They are the Lord's, and we raise them so that they might know, love, and serve Him. In this, our example is more powerful than our words. We must work to obey the Lord and be honest with our children about how we are in process, too. Simply saying we're sorry when we make a mistake, for example, can teach them words about spiritual life.

## Q THE BIBLE TELLS ME TO HONOR MY FATHER AND MOTHER. HOW DO I HONOR A PARENT I DON'T TRUST OR RESPECT?

**a** It is important to try to see the good in a person regardless of the glaring evils that may be there. Just as Shem and Japheth put a garment on their shoulders and walked backwards into their father Noah's tent in order to cover his nakedness (Genesis 9:23), so too does the Lord want us to use all our power to focus on the good in people, and not to dwell on their faults.

## Q HOW DO I RESOLVE DIFFERENCES IN RELIGION BETWEEN ME AND MY FAMILY MEMBERS?

**a** There is no problem with people having different religions. Rather than focus on the differences, find common ground. Look for the good in other people and their religion, rather than look for the points of difference. If people have charity as their aim, then differences are not an issue. Seek to understand, not just to be understood. By focusing on the common good or love that exists, people can dwell happily together.

## Q HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO LET GO OF LONG-HELD FAMILY GRUDGES?

**a** Forgiveness is a choice. We can choose to forgive someone and have compassion, regardless of what the person does. The truth is that the Lord already forgave the person; it's just a matter of opening ourselves up to that forgiveness. We can forgive someone and request that the person change his or her behavior. The Lord didn't condemn the woman caught in adultery, but He did offer correction when He said, "Go and sin no more" (John 8:11). Forgiveness is a process. We are to keep working on it, keep praying for it, and then our feelings will gradually shift.

SHARE YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT LIFE.  
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Mention "New Church Connection".



Rev. David Roth is the Pastor at the New Church of Boulder Valley in Colorado. Learn more at [www.bouldernewchurch.org](http://www.bouldernewchurch.org).



article photos from HOWARD THOMPSON

While pursuing the best education for his daughter, Howard Thompson found a faith that resonates deeply.

Sasha Silverman interviewed Howard about his experience and describes his journey.

Howard Thompson “had it all”: He had a rewarding and respected career, nice cars, high-quality suits, a comfortable community, a supportive wife, a teenage daughter, and two young sons. Yet in the fall of 2008, he gave up all the comforts and security of his job and even his house. He moved his family to Bryn Athyn,

Pennsylvania to become a student in the Academy of the New Church Theological School. What was the reason for this bold move?

The seeds of his decision had been growing for years, but he traces some of the earliest inspiration to a memory of his older brother, Ed. Howard vividly recalls hearing a conversation between Ed and his parents. Ed was expressing a desire to take some time off from college. He had a dream of supporting himself and seeing the states by driving a truck across

the country. Howard still remembers the way his brother was forcefully denied this opportunity with the question, “Why would you throw away all those years of private school to become a truck driver?” Six years later, Ed took his own life.

The memory of his brother’s thwarted ambitions never left Howard; he developed a passionate belief that all children should have the chance to do what they love. As a young adult, Howard decided that he would try to take advantage of every opportunity—something his brother no longer had the chance to do. For a time, he thought he’d join the Navy. Later, he wondered about the Peace Corps or a political career. He followed none of these paths, though, and he soon found himself immersed in the day-to-day priorities of his business, managing insurance programs for independent schools.

Through his business, Howard learned of a New Church community in Bryn Athyn. He noticed something positive about the people from this town—that they seemed

to “walk the walk.” When the time came to choose a kindergarten for his first child, Chelsea, he and his wife Debra decided to ask whether the Bryn Athyn Church School admitted children who were not members of the New Church. The answer was “yes,” so Howard and Debra began having meetings with the school principal. On the way home from the last of these meetings, Debra was quiet. Finally, she turned to Howard and said, “What this school offers is everything I would ever want

Howard found that he easily accepted the idea of one God; in fact, it’s what he’d always believed.



Howard’s brother Ed, a spiritual companion for his journey

for my children.” At this point, Howard and Debra only thought of the impact that a good school would have on their daughter. “We had no idea what the impact on our lives would be,” he said later.

After attending a series of newcomer classes, Howard and Debra were invited to join a doctrinal class, where they began a deeper study of the tenets of the

New Church. Howard found that he easily accepted the idea of one God; in fact, it's what he had always believed. Even the idea of the Second Coming did not startle him. It made sense to him that the Second Coming would not literally occur in the future, but rather happens within



people as they invite the Lord in. After a few years, Howard told Debra that he was ready to become baptized. She had been thinking the same thing, so with their daughter (the two boys had not yet been born), the young family was baptized into the New Church. After the baptism, Howard thanked everyone for coming. His confident delivery prompted the Rev. Jeremy Simons to say, "Howard, you speak very well. Have you ever thought of becoming a minister?"



This question stayed in the back of Howard's mind for many years. Howard and Debra continued to meet with the same group of couples in their doctrinal class, and their affection for the New Church community con-

tinued to grow. When the first Journey Campaign began, Howard watched with awe the power of a whole community actively studying and trying to follow the Ten Commandments. Occasionally, he would recall the question asked of him on his baptism day. He also watched the way his daughter, Chelsea, was making the most of her young life, taking every opportunity available to her.

Chelsea's courage inspired Howard to reflect on his own life. He asked himself, "Am I the best husband I can be? The best father, neighbor or friend? Could I be less judgmental of others?" Finally, he realized that although he was making a good living, he still had room to grow. After much prayer and soul-searching, and after speaking with the Dean of the Theological school, he decided just to go for it. He decided to ignore the inner critic that scolded, "Why would you throw away all this comfort and start again?"

Now, Howard is in his third year of Theo-

logical School. He is scheduled to graduate in 2011, the same year Chelsea will graduate from the Academy of the New Church Girls School. His life is busier than ever, but he does not regret his decision. Recently, while strolling through Macy's, he saw a group of men examining some expensive suits. Howard remembered what it felt like to wear and buy suits like that. With relief, he realized that those physical things no longer have the same appeal to him (though he admits that he's still referred to as the "best-dressed theologian"). Howard is not sure exactly what he will do when he graduates, but his life's guiding mission remains clear. With shining eyes and conviction in his voice he says, "I want children to lead the lives they love." ●

For more information, go to Bryn Athyn Church School [www.brynathynchurchschool.org](http://www.brynathynchurchschool.org) or the Academy of the New Church Theological School go to [www.ancts.org](http://www.ancts.org).

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In marriage, we may sometimes feel as if we have lost touch with the love we originally shared. Lori Odhner shows us that there are practical ways to remind us of our love when it seems like we've forgotten.



Feeling forgetful... or perhaps frustrated?

### realchallenges

I don't feel love for my partner. How do I get that feeling back?

### realsupport

**I** sometimes forget things. I forget appointments, or promises to bring cookies to school. Recently my teenager asked me to help him with his homework, and I was embarrassed to realize I can no longer factor polynomials. Once upon a time I could, but I have forgotten how.

The feeling of forgetting is like when I look in the refrigerator, and there is no guacamole. I expected there to be, since I was planning a Mexican dinner, but the little corner of the middle shelf where I usually put it has peanut butter instead.

I have a son with autism. There are some things he never seems to forget. He knows what happened in the twelfth scene of Walt Disney Pictures' Toy Story (Woody got lost at the gas station), or

the date of our trip to the shore last year, (June 28th, 2009). He knows who was the 23rd president of the United States of America (Benjamin Harrison) and the day of the week Christmas will fall on in 2011 (Sunday).

How is it that some things stay Velcroed in our memories, and others fall off like the magnets on the fridge? I don't think I am morally depraved because I cannot factor polynomials. But if I were subbing in Algebra 2, I would be remiss if I did not brush up on those skills. Running out of guacamole is not a tragedy either. I have enough loose change in my pocket and gas in the car to go get some. Even forgotten appointments will not land me in jail, though occasionally there is a penalty. That is why I go to the effort to put reminders on my phone or in my daily planner.

Feelings can slip through my sieve-like brain too. One time I banished a recalcitrant child to his room for misbehaving. He continued to spew insults at me. I forbade him to speak. After a poignant pause he quietly asked, "Do you still love me?" I sighed. My scowl softened. "Just barely."

He reminded me, at a time when the knowledge had thunked to the floor and was about to get kicked under the refrigerator, that I indeed do love this small boy. There are ways to help the forgetful among us to keep hold of those good feelings, when they threaten to evaporate in puffs of anger. Marriage is not immune to forgetting. The devotion that flooded us in our beginnings is like bringing home eight bags of groceries. There are so many kinds of

Sometimes we hold hands, not as a reaction to friendly feelings, but as an invitation for them to return.

fruit and ice cream we hardly know where to start. But a few years into the relationship, it feels less well stocked. Sitting across from my spouse is not as riveting as it was when we were newly married. Seeing him walk through the door does not set my heart afire the way it did when that simple gesture was less expected, in our dating era. Yet I can replenish those emotions almost as easily as I can the algebraic equations. I can brush up on loving.

My husband and I have a habit, long established, that every phone call ends with "I love you." It flits off my tongue without fanfare. After a romantic call

about our pending evening out, the words come as easily as they did in my twenties. But after a terse exchange about the bank account, it is less of an effusion, and more of a reminder. To me.

I purposefully hang photographs of us in the stairwell, where every descent to the living room takes me past the captured images, un-Photoshopped, of abundant love. Is it true? I wonder. Can I feel that way again?

Sometimes we hold hands, not as a reaction to friendly feelings, but as an invitation for them to return. Kisses, too, can erupt as an irresistible response, or as a way to open up memories of past kisses.

My calendar can rescue me here too. I put "Marriage Group" on Wednesday night, and sure enough, Wednesday comes and I sit next to John on the couch and listen to him... an unlikely thing if left completely to chance.

Sometimes I wish I were a little bit autistic. Then I would be rock certain that on January 14th, I held John like I would never let him go. I could know that in the thirty-third scene of our marriage I was lost and John found me. It would be like opening the refrigerator and finding that some kitchen angel has replaced the guacamole. ●

Affection and thought become matters of your life when you put them into practice and do them.  
-Divine Love and Wisdom 216



Lori Odhner is the editor of *Caring for Marriage* Newsletter. To learn more go to [www.carinformarriage.org](http://www.carinformarriage.org) or email [lori@carinformarriage.com](mailto:lori@carinformarriage.com).

There are many simple ways to invite the Lord into your family life. Find your way today.

# 28 WAYS to Bring Spirituality into Daily Family Life

Wherever you live, whatever the make-up of your family, you can integrate spirituality into everyday life.

1. Invite the Lord into your home by reading His Word together.
2. Create a special place in your home to keep the Word. Involve family members in beautifying the space.



photo by ALIX SMITH

3. Say a blessing before dinner. Every topic on [www.newchurchvineyard.org](http://www.newchurchvineyard.org) has a card of blessings that can be printed out.
4. Play uplifting music first thing in the morning on Sundays.
5. For one week, write down a blessing on a slip of paper every day and put it in a jar. Encourage everyone to get in the habit of looking for blessings, remembering that these can come directly from the Lord or through other people. See how the jar fills up over a week's time!

6. Before reading a story to young children, tell the story in your own words to help them understand what they're about to hear.
7. After reading a story from the Word, ask questions and give everyone in the family a chance to answer. Who are the characters? What is happening? When is it happening? Where does it happen? What is the Lord telling us?
8. As children learn to read, give them their own copies of the Word or Bible.
9. Help children to create a special place for the Word in their rooms.
10. Say the Lord's Prayer together.
11. Every morning, say together: "This is the day which the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it."
12. Read one or two verses from the Word aloud at breakfast.
13. Involve children in useful service. They can help deliver a meal to a family with a new baby, clean the church building, or do kind things for an elderly neighbor. Even a toddler can take great joy in carrying a newspaper to a neighbor's doorstep!



photo by NINA KLINE

14. Attend church as a family.
15. Have family worship, letting all family members participate in lighting candles, choosing passages to read, opening the Word, or putting out the candles.
16. In the evening, talk with your children about the choices they made to obey the Lord that day.
17. Encourage your children to talk to the Lord. Remind them that the Lord always knows what is going on with us.



photo by ALIX SMITH

18. When doing chores, remind children that they are serving the Lord. Encourage children to do tasks "honestly, justly, and faithfully" (*Doctrine of Charity* 158).
19. Read stories from the Word that illustrate angelic qualities such as kindness, courage, honesty, mercy, forgiveness, and obedience.
20. Read stories about heaven at bedtime like *Where is Heaven?* and other titles available.

Ideas excerpted and adapted from [www.newchurchvineyard.org](http://www.newchurchvineyard.org) created by the General Church Office of Education



photo by JONATHAN KLINE

21. Give each family member his or her own candle to light before reading the Word or worshipping.
22. Weekly, choose a quote from the Word for the family to learn.
23. Use Bible illustrations to help your children visualize the stories they read or hear.
24. Let your children see you praying and reading the Word.
25. Ask each family member to describe a purposeful Sunday activity. The Lord tells us that the Sabbath should include instruction about the Lord and His teachings, time to think about eternal life, rest and relaxation, and love to the neighbor. Choose one or two ideas to implement.
26. Sing songs about the Lord with your children. (See CD sales at store. [newchurch.org](http://www.newchurch.org).)

These commandments that I give to you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.  
—Deuteronomy 6:6-8

27. Involve children in tithing or charitable donations. Explain why they're putting quarters in the offertory or giving money to a good cause.
28. Identify beautiful truths from the Word that point the way to joyful living. Create reminders (cards, stickers, or signs) to put up around your home.

# Respecting Boundaries in RELATIONSHIPS

Boundaries are important elements of healthy relationships. Family members often find it particularly difficult to respect each other's boundaries. However, we must approach our everyday interactions with the most care. Here, Taryn Frazier reports on a workshop in which Rev. Mark Carlson expands on his theory of microboundaries.



Illustrations by NOBMANDY ALDEN

Human relationships seem contradictory because two paradoxical, true things happen. First, every person wants connection, closeness, and intimacy. Second, every person wants to be free and autonomous. These two needs are apparently in conflict. The closer someone gets to us, the less free we sometimes feel.

Which will we choose if we have to choose: connection or freedom? People almost always pick freedom. The teachings of the New Church indicate that freedom is a gift from the Lord and without it, one would not be able to feel delight—to be happy (*Divine Providence*

It must be known that freedom is wholly a matter of love, so that love and freedom are united. Moreover, because love is a person's life, freedom is also a matter of his life.

—*Divine Providence* 73

73). Love and freedom are closely intertwined. **A functional relationship must strike a balance between intimacy and freedom.** When a problem arises in a relationship, no matter what the area of conflict is, the real issue is often power.

Who is in charge, you or me? Boundaries are on the line. There are two categories of boundaries in a relationship, what I call “macroboundaries” and “microboundaries.” Macroboundaries are a familiar idea to most of us. Macroboundaries are boundaries between people or nations. When someone breaks a macroboundary, he or she has violated an external boundary. For example, a person who physically harms another

breaks this type of boundary. Crossing these is an act of aggression and can lead to conflict or war. It is commonly accepted that violating macroboundaries is wrong.

The second category is more subtle. When someone breaks a microboundary, he or she has violated an internal boundary. We all have an internal state—the realm of the mind, of our consciousness. There are several types of microboundaries. I've included ways these can be violated in the chart below.

**When someone makes assumptions about another's internal state, that person crosses a microboundary.** In short, microboundaries are respect in action. Any time we speak to another person as if we know what they think, feel, or should think or feel, we cross a boundary. Crossing these boundaries always

causes trouble. Just as violating a macroboundary can lead to conflict, violating a microboundary can lead to anger. With microboundaries in mind, do you see why marriages fall apart? Why adolescent children become estranged from their family? Why aging parents encounter friction with their children and grandchildren?

Anger is a misunderstood emotion. Many people think of anger as an unhealthy, negative frame of mind. In reality, anger is a God-given emotion to help us defend our boundaries. The teachings of the New Church indicate that anger is love burning to defend itself (see *Married Love* 358).

When experiencing conflict in a



## Crossing Microboundaries

MICROBOUNDARY	VIOLATIONS
Feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–Telling a person what to feel</li> <li>–Claiming you know how a person is feeling</li> </ul>
Intentions, Desires, and Motives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–Assuming you know what a person thinks or wants</li> <li>–Believing you know a person's motivations</li> <li>–Expecting a person to know your unspoken wishes</li> </ul>
Thoughts, Opinions, and Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–Negating or contradicting a person's thoughts</li> <li>–Speaking for another person</li> <li>–Telling a person what to think or believe</li> </ul>
Family of Origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–Criticizing a person's family</li> <li>–Claiming to understand a person's experience</li> </ul>
Experience of the Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–Minimizing a person's pain</li> <li>–Assuming a person has the same physical experience as your own</li> </ul>



relationship, people mistakenly identify anger as a problem with the relationship itself. If we stop crossing microboundaries, we solve this problem and may be able to salvage the relationship. A fight is not about content; it's about process.

For example, if a mother assumes something about her son's political attitude and speaks as if she knows her son's opinions, the son may become angry. His love for those ideals burns, making him defensive about his parent's assumptions. The son does not strike back because he hates his mother; he strikes back because something he loves is at stake.

**Why do people so often cross microboundaries?** Because it's easy, for one thing. People are constantly changing, and it takes a lot of work to get to know someone every day. It's simpler to make assumptions about a person's internal state and to move on with your own life, rather than spending the time and energy to see the ways your loved one's life is changing.

We also cross microboundaries because we think we know better. Every time we do so, it's a power play in which one person tries to mold the other. However, the Heavenly

Doctrines teach that the most destructive thing to a relationship is a love of dominion (see *Heaven and Hell* 380).

The teachings of the New Church consistently emphasize the importance of refining our internal state: patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving.

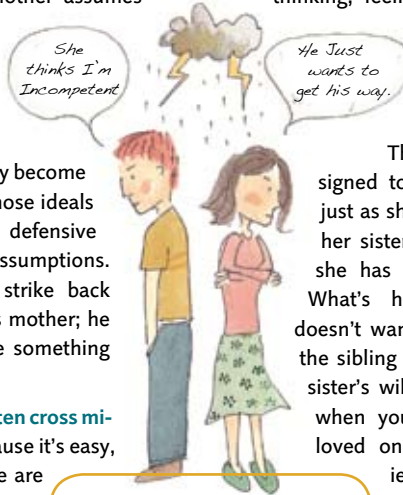
**The only person for whom you will change is yourself.**

Think of a child assigned to do a chore, and just as she is about to do it, her sister reminds her that she has to do that chore. What's her reaction? She doesn't want to do it. Just as the sibling interferes with her sister's will to do the chore, when you interfere with a loved one's microboundaries, you are removing his or her chance to discover, change, and improve.

**Change is the issue every time we communicate.** We're here on this earth to make internal, spiritual change—what the New Church calls regeneration. But our natural stance

is that we don't want to change. We'd rather say, "If it weren't for you, I'd be happy."

Carl Rogers wrote a book titled *On Be-*



Love is the being of a person's life, and therefore one who assaults the love assaults the life itself, and then a state of wrath arises against the assailant, as the state of any one whom another attempts to kill....

—Married Love 358

When we respect microboundaries, we can better preserve the bonds of love while leaving our loved ones in freedom.

don't know. You tell me." "You" statements don't work. They cross microboundaries and undermine a person's sense of autonomy. We cannot judge each other's internal state.

Perhaps you work hard to respect your loved ones' microboundaries, but they don't return the favor. **What if someone crosses your microboundaries?** Don't strike back. It's a typical pattern in fights that if one partner crosses a microboundary, the other partner will respond in kind. Instead, notice what it feels like to have your microboundaries violated and use this knowledge to inform your future interactions with others.

We are humans. We are not perfect angels, and we are not beasts. We're half and half. We're made in the Lord's image and likeness, but we have a very imperfect natural element. I tell counseling students, "Less is more." This applies not only to counseling but to relationships as well. **Talk less. Fix less. Listen more.**

When we respect microboundaries, we can better preserve the bonds of love while leaving our loved ones in freedom. After all, God does this for us. He never pressures or forces us. He never stops loving us and rejoices when we choose to seek Him. ●

For more about microboundaries, see *New Church Connection* Issue 1, 2008 for Rev. Mark Carlson's article "Microboundaries: Protections of Love."



Rev. Mark Carlson is a minister and licensed marriage and family counselor in Pennsylvania.

*coming a Person.* In it, he encourages people to approach others with "unconditional positive regard." He speaks of the value in permitting oneself to truly understand another person. We have to permit ourselves to understand our loved ones. We instinctively evaluate and judge something another person does. We say, "That's unreasonable," or, "That's correct," or, "That's silly." In doing so, we violate microboundaries. Rarely do we permit ourselves to understand our loved ones because understanding is risky. The ultimate risk is that we might be changed by that understanding.

When we permit ourselves to understand another person, it can be deeply enriching. First of all, we learn about that person in ways that change us for the better. Second, and more importantly, by understanding them, we permit them to change for the better.

People have to know who they are before they can change. If you're lost and holding a map, you have to know where you are before you can move toward your intended destination. If I understand my spouse, she can accept all her bizarre thoughts, bad feelings, moments of courage, and so on. You set your loved ones free when you strive to understand them.

The way people speak to each other impacts others' sense of free will. Good communication is not a contest. No one wins, and it's enjoyable for both sides. Respect your loved ones' internal states. Be careful as you approach a microboundary. Say, "It looks to me as if..." or, "I

Will you lay down  
your life for Me?

—John 13:38

## Bible Story

Luke 14:25-26

**If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes even his own life—he cannot be My disciple.**



Are we really to hate our brothers and sisters?

## Going Deeper Insight

Is the Lord really saying that we should hate our family members, those who care for us and dearly love us? We can readily acknowledge that the Lord deserves our love more than

our father and mother, but 'hate' seems much too strong. There are also lots of places where the Lord tells us that He wants peace, not discord, for us (for example, see John 14:27). Could it be that the Lord is using the idea of hating our family in order to instruct us about something else?

But what could that 'something else' be? Just because we sense that the passage must mean something else doesn't mean we have any idea what that deeper meaning might be. Thankfully, the Lord has revealed the deeper meaning of His Word in the theological works of Emanuel Swedenborg. We learn that, in this case, the Lord is not talking about family discord but the struggle we all face as we try to live His Word. The Lord is reminding us that there are things close to us, as close as family, that we must fight against. In this passage, the 'father and mother' we are to hate are all the evil loves and desires that we are born with and must resist. The 'wife and children' are those falsities we bring into our lives

and nurture, much to our own misery. We should of course love, not hate, our brothers and sisters, but here the Lord is talking about harmful ways we see the world and people around

**Sometimes, though, as we read the Lord's Word, we come across some of His statements that just can't mean what they seem to say at first. Rev. Scott Frazier explores an instance in the New Testament.**

us, such as the terrible idea that the Lord loves our suffering. These are all things we should 'hate' in the sense of rejecting them because they lead to misery, not to the Lord's love.

The Lord even asks that we hate our own life. We shouldn't take this to mean that the Lord wants us to treat our lives as worthless and contemptible. Instead, He wants us to reject the terrible idea that we are the source of our own goodness—an idea that works directly against the Lord's plan for our happiness.

The Lord knows we have struggles, and He is dedicated to helping us. The passage in Luke is about recognizing that there are things in us that must be resisted. Far from being a disturbing message of strife, this passage is a merciful reminder that we don't have to accept ourselves as we are. The Lord has much more in store for us. ●



Rev. Scott Frazier is an instructor in Latin, Hebrew and Religion at Bryn Athyn College. To learn more go to [www.brynathyn.edu](http://www.brynathyn.edu).

# Transforming Communication

This six-week series provides an opportunity for greater awareness of your own communication. You can use this program individually, or with a small group.



Communication has the power to turn us from self-involved individuals into connected, compassionate human beings. With time invested in communication, we can work miracles in our relationships with others, with ourselves, and with God.

**THERE'S MORE!**  
 Find quotations, discussion questions, and expanded tasks online.  
 Download the complete small group outline at [www.newchurchconnection.org](http://www.newchurchconnection.org)

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6
THEME	Truth Telling	Listening	Body Language	Resolving Conflict	Internal Dialogue	Inviting God In
READINGS FROM SCRIPTURE	<p>You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. -John 8:32</p> <p>The Divine Providence continually causes us to see truth, and gives us the affection of perceiving and receiving it. -Divine Providence 298</p>	<p>We have the sense of sight primarily for receiving intelligence, but we have the sense of hearing primarily for receiving wisdom. -Apocalypse Explained 14</p>	<p>Read John 13:1-17. Jesus washes the disciples' feet.</p> <p>Angels have the power of seeing a person and immediately knowing all about that person's character. -Secrets of Heaven 803</p>	<p>Seek peace, and pursue it. -Psalm 34:14</p>	<p>Everything we think flows in from the spiritual world, so our thoughts originate as spiritual and become natural in our conscious mind. -Secrets of Heaven 10215</p>	<p>Prayer is speech with God. -Secrets of Heaven 2535</p> <p>A person who lives a life of love and compassion is constantly at worship. -Secrets of Heaven 1618</p>
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	How can we learn to say what's true for us without judgment of others?	How do we silence our own inner monologue long enough to really hear another person?	What is it like when our body language conflicts with our words? How does this impact the effectiveness of communication?	How do each of us react to conflict? Are we more likely to 'fight' or take 'flight'? How does that impact our relationships?	How can we become aware of the angelic messages available to us at all times?	How would it look to bring God into our relationship(s)?
WEEKLY TASK	Speak your truth with love.	Practice listening even when you don't want to.	Ask for clarification before assuming another person's nonverbal signals are negative.	Strive to be a peaceful presence in conflict. Work harder to defend others than to attack them.	Notice negative messages you listen to about yourself. Choose to replace these thoughts with inspiring ones.	Create space for God in your communication with others.





## Congregations around the world

The New Church is a new Christianity that provides a clear path to eternal happiness and addresses your questions about God, love, and life after death. The teachings are immediately practical and deeply spiritual. The New Church is based on the teachings of the Bible as illuminated in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

The New Church (General Church of the New Jerusalem) has congregations around the world. All people are welcome to join in worship and participate in the life and community of the church.



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...and Get Connected!

## New Church TEACHINGS

The perspectives in this magazine are based on the teachings of the New Church found in the Old and New Testaments and the Theological Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

### Core teachings of the New Church:

- There is one loving, personal God, and He is the Lord Jesus Christ. His providence is powerful and unending. God guides each person's spiritual path, from the smallest things up to the biggest things, and His angels are with us every moment.
- The Old and New Testaments have a deeper meaning, revealed in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, which help people lead happy and useful lives to eternity.
- Spiritual growth is a process. Through recognizing our sins, praying, shunning evils, and living a new life, we are transformed and united more closely with God.
- All religions have goodness in them. People of every faith are saved if they live sincerely according to their religion.
- Each of us continues life as a complete person immediately after the death of the body.
- While people are free to choose to live in hell, God wants everyone to live with Him in heaven to eternity.
- Marriage can last forever, for God blesses people with a special love in marriage that goes on after death, even to eternity.

### About Swedenborg and Works Cited

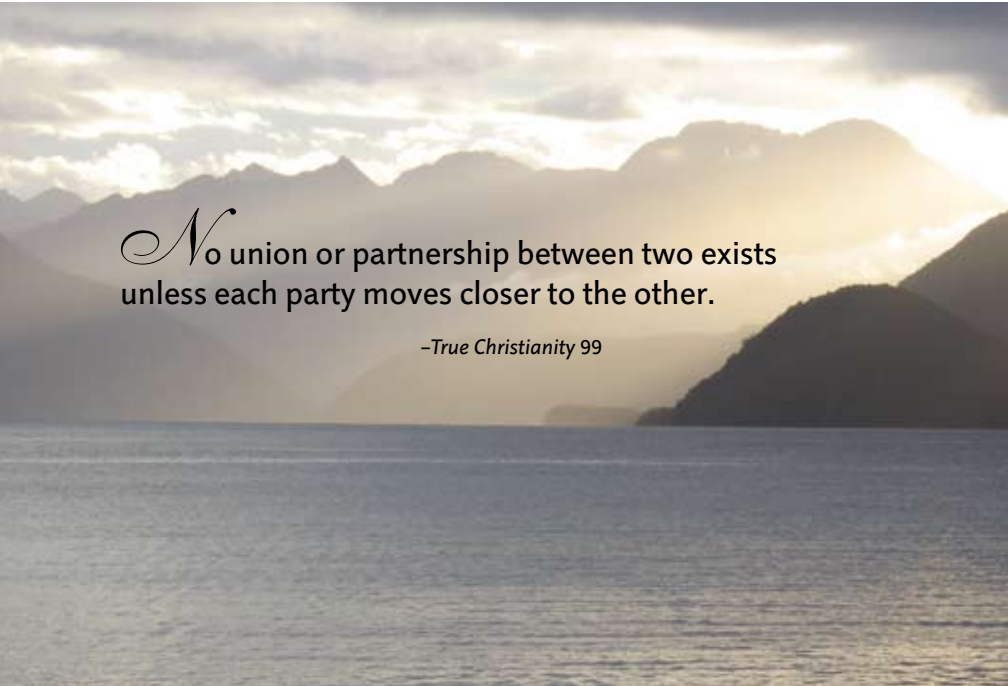
Emanuel Swedenborg was an 18th-century scientist and philosopher who continually studied the Word. Late in Swedenborg's life, the Lord called him to receive revelation for a new church. The New Church teaches that these works are divinely inspired revelation for the modern age: heavenly doctrines touching on many aspects of religion with a rational and merciful approach.

In this issue the following works of Swedenborg are referenced: *Apocalypse Explained*, *Heaven and Hell*, *Secrets of Heaven*, *Divine Love and Wisdom*, *Divine Providence*, and *Doctrine of Charity*.

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No union or partnership between two exists  
unless each party moves closer to the other.

-True Christianity 99