

PAUSE: MAKE SPACE FOR GOD

new
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Journey Program Workbook

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the Bible seem
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huge problems
in God's hands."

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WELCOME

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Connecting you with a New Christian spirituality for everyday life



My grandfather once compared breathing to God's desire to be present in my life. As a self-centered teenager

I may not have shown interest at the time, but his words had a lasting impression. He told me I was not 'taking a breath,' but rather that as I expand my lungs, the air instantly flows in. It's the same with God's presence: it isn't that I bring Him into my life; I create a space in my life for His love and His wisdom to pour in without hesitation.

This issue of *New Church Connection* features the latest Journey Program, devoted to the idea my grandfather was trying to convey: making a place in our lives for God's presence. Check out this compelling program and find structure and support from others along the way (pps. 12-19). Follow Dave Deibert's journey—how he made space for God and then invited others in (p. 6). Discover new insights on God's wisdom in the Bible (p 10). Consider how our view of God influences our path (p.20).

This issue and the upcoming Journey Program challenge us to make space for God and to examine any barriers that prevent us from doing so. Whether this means taking a breath, preserving time in your day to participate in a small group, or shifting your outlook and attitude, I believe making the effort will yield results in your life—sometimes subtle, sometimes enormous, and always beautiful.

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.

in this issue: PAUSE: MAKE SPACE FOR GOD

Worship of the Lord does not consist in mere belief nor in mere love. Rather it consists in leading a life in accord with His commandments

—*Secrets of Heaven* 10645:2

photo by WALCOUN SMITH

Seeking Answers

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- The Christmas Story
- Salvation: An Active Process

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photo by BARRIE RIDGEWAY

God and the Bible do not have to be mysterious. Rev. Coleman Glenn explores questions regarding the nature of God and how He communicates with us.

Life is full of QUESTIONS

The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth.

Psalm 145:8



Seek the Lord with humility and love.

Q DOES THE BIBLE HAVE A DEEPER MEANING?

a Yes! The Writings for the New Church reveal that there is a deeper meaning within every single part of the Word. Jesus told the disciples that He spoke to them in “figurative language” (John 16:25).

Q HOW DOES GOD COMMUNICATE WITH ME?

a The primary way the Lord communicates with us is in His Word, in the stories and teachings of the Old and New Testament. And in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, He has given us a new revelation that helps us see Him in a deeper way. When we go to His Word with the intention of seeing how it can help us love our neighbor better and love the Lord more, we are given insight into how it applies to our own lives.

Q HOW CAN I COMMUNICATE WITH GOD?

a We can communicate with God daily by praying to Him. Sometimes it seems He does not answer our prayers—but the truth is that He gives us what we need most. In all spiritual prayer, we acknowledge that we do not know what is best for us, and we pray, “Your will be done,” as the Lord Himself did in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:42). No matter the material outcome, when we

pray from love for and faith in heavenly things, the Lord always responds by giving us “hope, consolation, and a certain inward joy” (*Secrets of Heaven* 2535).

Q DO I HAVE TO KNOW JESUS?

a If we want to know God, we need to get to know Jesus, because He is God made visible. *Heaven and Hell*, a book of the Writings for the New Church, says, “Throughout all heaven, no one other than the Lord alone is acknowledged as the God of heaven” (n. 2). “The Lord” means Jesus. The Lord Himself said, “If God were your Father, you would love Me” (John 8:42).

However, a person is not condemned for ignorance. Jesus said, “If you were blind, you would have no sin” (John 9:41). Some people have never heard of Jesus, and others have rejected Him because they were given a false impression of who He is. These people can still love Him in their hearts, because they can still follow His commandments: to love God and to love others. The Lord said, “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me” (John 14:21). When a person like this is taught the truth that Jesus is God Himself, because He is the embodiment of Divine love and wisdom, he gladly accepts the Lord as God.

Q HOW DOES ONE RECONCILE THE TRINITY WITH ONE GOD?

a In John 16:25, Jesus says, “These things I have spoken to you in figurative language.” The things that He had just spoken to the disciples were statements about Himself and the Father. The Lord’s words about Himself and the Father are figurative. The reality is that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all aspects of the Lord Jesus Christ—his soul, body and activity. When Philip asked the Lord to show him the Father, Jesus said, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). Jesus could not show Philip the Father in any other way than by showing him Himself. If a person said, “Show me your soul,” you might reply the same way Jesus did: “If you want to know my soul, get to know me.”

SHARE YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT LIFE.

Email questions@newchurch.org.

Mention “New Church Connection”.



Rev. Coleman Glenn is an assistant to the pastor at the Olivet New Church in Toronto.

To learn more about this church go to olivetnewchurch.org or email assistant@olivetnewchurch.org.



article photos from DAVE DIEBERT

Dave Deibert relates the story of his spiritual travels and, on the way, his discovery of the teachings of the New Church. He highlights the importance of community in the life of religion. Dave sees himself as a fellow traveler of other like-minded people, journeying toward heaven and the Lord.

My journey starts with a boy who is the youngest of three children born to a loving couple from a small, blue-collar town. This couple moved from their small town into the Philadelphia metropolitan area in the late 1940s. The move was mind-expanding in and of itself for my family, as none of my relations

had ever moved from the upstate small town. To this day we are the only ones to have moved.

My brother and sister were born in the late '40s, and I came a decade later. My father was very moral and intellectually curious about different customs and beliefs, but largely agnostic and happy to stay that way. My mother was similar, but she was unsatisfied about not having answers to life's questions. This need to have her questions answered led her into a progressive spiritual unfolding. She

discovered yoga first; she then found *The Power of Positive Thinking*, by Norman Vincent Peale. A gradual interest in other religious books followed, eventually including the works of Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of the Christian Science movement. Over this twenty-five year period, I was exposed to many conversations and books that helped to shape my spiritual outlook at a relatively early age. One of my mother's favorite reminders for me was what she called the "Three Rules." Now I'm sure everybody is aware of the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you;" but do you know of the rules on either side of the Golden Rule? The rule before the Golden Rule is the "Silver Rule" that dictates: "Speak unto others as you would have them speak unto you." And the rule after the Golden Rule is the hardest to keep, so it is called the Diamond Rule: "Think unto others as you would have them think unto you."

At the age of ten or so, trying to keep all the rules was not an easy job, but it gave me a big start in spiritual growth. My mother's Silver, Golden and Diamond rules made me aware of inward goodness, when most of my friends were all about outward goodness—that is, if they were trying their hands at any goodness at all. As I progressed through my teens, I had the usual angst that all teens experience, but it was much more bearable with a spiri-

tual foundation. I found relief in putting my seemingly huge problems in God's hands and having faith that He would guide me to where I should be. Through His love and guidance I found the love of my life, my wife, Nancy. We met when I was a senior in high school and have been together ever since (33 years). We have grown together both physically and spiritually, and God has blessed us with two wonderful children.

The one component that my mother never stressed (and Dad never cared about) was a church. I didn't value this aspect of spiritual life much either, but Nancy always missed the community that a church provides. We have lived in the Bryn Athyn area all of our lives and have passed by the Cathedral millions of times. When friends would visit, we would show them this fabulous landmark without a thought as to what it stood for. One day I was browsing the Internet for

more information about the

Cathedral and became curious about the tenets of

the New Church. To my surprise, the deeper I dug, the more I realized that they were the very same beliefs

I held. I was excited to share my findings with my wife, and she agreed

that we should see what the

New Church was all about. Well, after a few months, including participation in the Journey program, we soon realized we had found a home. I never under-

I was wrong in thinking that the community of the church was not important.

stood the strength that can be realized with a church community. Even though I thought I was strong in my beliefs and thought I needed only a belief in God to get along, I was wrong in thinking that the community of the church was not important. A drop of water is not a big force, but a gathering of water drops can be an ocean. I now see a church as a gathering spot for like-minded people to combine their energy to withstand the challenges that the material world presents. A church can be a place where we give each other strength and grow together to be closer and truer to God's image.

So that's where I am now in my journey. I have caught up with a caravan of travelers on the way. We share stories, help each other, and negotiate our way along life's path together. The way ahead may be hard, but I think I'll enjoy it all the better with a little help from my friends. ●

What Is Your Story?

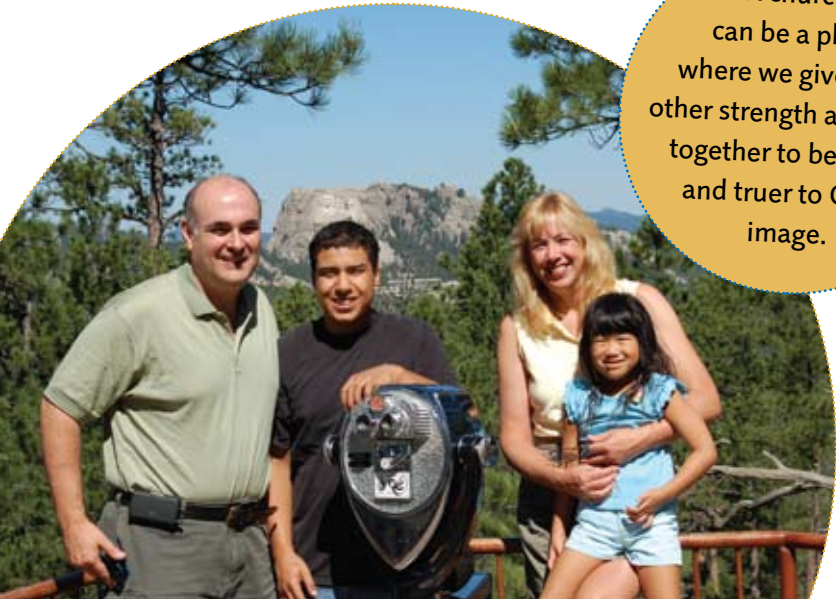
How has your life been impacted by living New Christian spirituality? Send us your story.

newchurchconnection@newchurch.org

For more information on joining a Journey Spiritual Growth Program in your area see pps. 14-18 or go to www.newchurch.org.

The Bryn Athyn Cathedral, in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, is located in the largest center for the New Church around the world. For more information go to www.brynathynchurch.org.

A church can be a place where we give each other strength and grow together to be closer and truer to God's image.



realchallenges
How can I overcome any negative thoughts and feelings toward the Bible?

The Bible contains some of the most profound and beautiful truths ever recorded. Its words can bring peace and comfort in times of pain and darkness. And yet its words can just as often seem confusing, contradictory, or disturbing. *Thane Glenn* addresses this experience of discord.

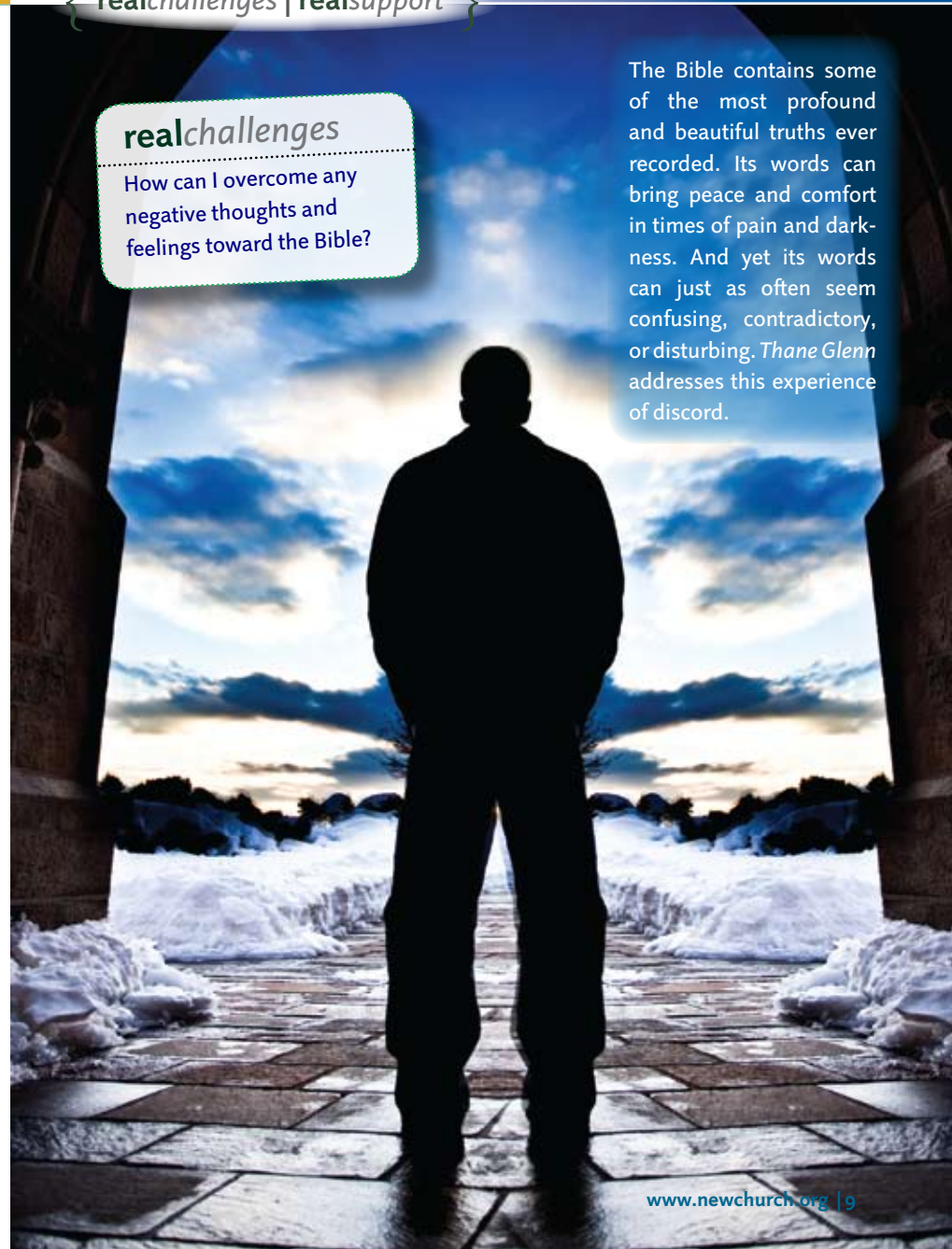


photo by ISTOCK



Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them

-Matthew 18:20

realsupport

Recently, I led students through a book of the Bible. Many of them were shocked to find that they couldn't understand a lot of what they were reading or that it didn't seem to fit with the picture of a loving God they had learned to value.

What is this book the New Church calls the Word of God, and how do we deal with the challenges it presents?

When Jesus Christ taught in the temple at Jerusalem, He told the people that there are two commandments which always take precedence in a spiritual life—to love God with all of our hearts, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. And then He added a remarkable statement: "On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets"—that is, the whole of the Scriptures (Matthew 22:37-40).

Jesus was teaching that the Scriptures are all about love. Putting your whole heart into the hands of an all-wise Creator, and seeking to bring that love to those

around you—is that really what the whole Bible is about? It sure doesn't seem that way sometimes. What about vengeful statements? What about tedious lists of lineage?

Was Christ making a false claim? Or was He teaching us how to read the Bible? If so, what do we do with Scriptures that seem anything but loving?

For example: Psalm 137, a lament for the people of Judah taken captive by the massive Babylonian empire, ends with a kind of a curse against the captors: "O daughter of Babylon...Happy is he who takes and dashes your little ones against the rock" (Psalm 137:8-9). Is this sentiment—that solace will be found in ripping little children from their mother's arms and beating them to death against a stone-face—is

What is this book we call the Word of God, and how do we deal with the challenges it presents?

this the voice, the vision of a loving God? The teachings for the New Church, recorded by Emanuel Swedenborg, offer us help in understanding how this sort of expression can be part of a Divine book.

First, these teachings for a New Christianity suggest that the literal, face-value statements of the Bible are adapted to the earthly understanding of human minds. That is, they were written to reflect an understanding of God's truth from a human perspective. The pronouncement at the end of Psalm 137 about dashing Babylon's children against the rock may represent the Psalmist's best understanding of the force with which God would redeem the Jews from the cruel slavery of the Babylonian empire.

But the teachings for the New Church also tell us that the Bible's literal, face-value statements—while adapted to an earth-bound understanding—were nevertheless directed by the hand of the Divine to hold within them a higher sight of spiritual truth. What makes the Bible Divine is that every verse carries a correspondence between the literal images of our earthly understanding and the higher loving sight of our Creator. For instance, in the Bible's inner message for our spiritual lives, Babylon (that irresistible threat which swept through Palestine and took vicious hold of Jerusalem) embodies those selfish, controlling impulses that take us over and hurt those around us. That overwhelming urge to make my spouse see things my way, that little lie designed to put me ahead at the workplace...that's Babylon. On a spiritual level, the Psalmist gives us sound advice:

our God knows that we will be happier, more loving people if we firmly eradicate those little selfish urges—those children of Babylon—as soon as they come up in us.

So why do we have a Divine book full of these earthly expressions of anger, vengeance and cultural chauvinism? Why not a sacred text that just tells us straight up how to love God and the people around us? The answer seems to be that because we are earth-bound people striving to live a spiritual life, we need both the messy literal, human understanding of God's truth and the higher vision of His truth within. In presenting both, this Divine book reflects our own human limitations in our growing relationship to our eternal Divine Guide.

Consider this. When we aren't getting what we want in life, it's easy to feel as if God is angry or against us; when other people hurt us, it's easy to feel like we want revenge. Imagine if our sacred text had nothing in it that reflected these earthly states of mind. We would be left with no recourse but to think of a spiritual life as something completely beyond us, totally unattainable. Ever a patient Counselor, our Lord gives us both.

If you are struggling with the Bible don't go it alone. Find a Bible study group, or start one. See how others are searching for God's voice in these ancient lines. ●



Rev. Dr. Thane Glenn is an assistant professor of English and religion at Bryn Athyn College. For information go to www.brynathyn.edu or email thane.glenn@brynathyn.edu.



Find insight and encouragement on your spiritual path through this new workbook.

BELOW IS A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF WHAT THE WORKBOOK INCLUDES.



Photo by JARED ALDEN

Order a workbook online today at store.newchurch.org or call 267-502-4980.

Check out www.newchurch.org for information on small groups forming in your area or how to start one today.

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7
FOCUS	How Does God Speak to Me?	Why Did God Create Me?	Who is Jesus and How Does He Relate to My Life?	How Does the Lord Work in My Life?	What Does the Lord Want from Me?	How Do I Follow the Lord?	How Does the Lord Want Me to Serve Others?
READING	Parable of the Sower Matthew 13:1-23	Vine and Branches John 15:1-17	Prodigal Son Luke 15:11-32	Healing of the Paralytic John 5:1-15	The Rich Young Ruler Asks About Eternal Life Mark 10:17-31	The Lord and Peter Walk on Water Matthew 14:25-33	I Was Hungry... Matthew 25:31-40
INSIGHT	If God created us, it makes sense that He would want to communicate with us. The Bible claims to be God's Word, but sometimes it is hard to understand. Because God is infinite, His Word contains more beneath than the literal meaning of Scripture. Using the tools provided, we can look deeper into God's Word to find the answers to some big questions.	Most of us have wondered at some point, "Why am I here, and what is the purpose of the universe?" Many people believe that "God is love." What does this imply about why He created us? What does the Bible say about this question? What is God's plan for our lives?	The name "Jesus" can evoke deeply ingrained ideas and powerful emotional responses. Would we be surprised at the Bible's claim that Jesus was God in human form? How does a deeper knowledge of Jesus change our relationship with Him?	How do you see the Lord leading you and guiding your life? The New Church teaches that the Holy Spirit is the Lord's activity in the world. The Lord created an orderly universe. His goal for creation is a heaven from the human race, so He does all He can to help us lead lives that lead us to heaven. How can we cooperate with the Lord and appreciate His work in our lives?	The Lord is constantly present with us, offering us all that we need to live our lives. How can we invite the love, wisdom, strength, hope, useful service and peace He offers to come in? What prevents us from experiencing the happiness the Lord offers?	The Bible repeatedly talks about "faith." What does that really mean? What do you do when you have a hard time having faith? Being "saved" is not as simple as saying the right words. Rather, building faith is a process that takes time. The Bible states that faith and good works have to come together. How does my belief in the Lord affect the way I live?	As we grow closer to the Lord, how does this affect our daily interactions with others? The Lord wants us to serve others, but what does that look like?
WEEKLY QUOTE	He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Matthew 13:9	You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you. John 15:16	Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. Luke 15:31	Rise, take up your bed and walk. John 5:8	Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven. And come, follow Me. Luke 18:22	Lord, save me! Matthew 14:30	Truly I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brothers, you have done it to Me. Matthew 25:40

Want to bring a relationship with God into everyday life? Anna Woofenden introduces a new program that can help.



Life is busy. Grocery shop. Pay the bills. Call your mother. Finish an important project. Get the mail. Eat. Clean the kitchen. Sleep. Oh, wait... where does my relationship with God fit in?

How often do we find ourselves at the end of the day without having put the focus on our spiritual lives that we had

intended? We want to look to God, we want to live an active spiritual life, and yet the days slide away without us making those things a priority. The 5th New Church Journey Program, *Pause: Make Space for God*, provides tools to support purposefully building our relationship with God throughout our daily lives. *Pause* provides a structure to engage in spiritual growth specifically spending time exploring the Bible and hearing God's message for us.

New Church teachings state that "The acknowledgment and worship of the Lord,

and the reading of the Word, cause the presence of the Lord; but these two together with a life according to His commandments effect a relationship of love with Him" (*Apocalypse Revealed* 796). Think about the power in that statement. The Lord is telling us the equation that results in being in His presence, and from that, being in conjunction with Him. Our part is to acknowledge the Lord, worship Him, read the Word and then actively honor His commandments. When we are doing these things, we can look forward to and expect a powerful connection with our Creator. We can experience the presence of the Lord.

The Lord invites us to experience His presence in every area of our lives. This can be a simple yet transformative process. *Pause: Make Space for God* focuses on tools to help us read and apply the teachings of the Word in our daily lives. By filling ourselves with ideas and insights from the Word and applying them in our lives, we can feel a closer connection with God.

During this program we are invited to ask questions about who God is and how we can relate to our Creator. We will explore the following topics:

- * HOW DOES GOD SPEAK TO ME?
- * WHY DID GOD CREATE ME?

- * WHO IS JESUS, AND HOW DOES HE RELATE TO MY LIFE?
- * HOW DOES THE LORD WORK IN MY LIFE?
- * WHAT DOES THE LORD WANT FROM ME?
- * HOW DO I FOLLOW THE LORD?
- * HOW DOES THE LORD WANT ME TO SERVE OTHERS?

With each of these questions we'll have the opportunity to examine them in prayer and reflection, through reading and studying the Word and by living and applying these teachings to our lives.

The Lord invites us to experience His presence in every area of our lives.

Participating in this program, whether participating as an individual, online or with a local congregation, we will be given the opportunity to commit to taking a step forward on our spiritual

path. And by taking the time to worship, read the Word, and follow the Lord's commandments in our lives we can enter into a growing experience of the Lord's awesome presence. ●



Anna Woofenden is the Program Manager for General Church Outreach. For more information go to www.newchurch.org or email anna.woofenden@newchurch.org.



Look Inside!

SCRIPTURE
WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Our story for today comes from the Old Testament, the story of Noah building the ark. How would you react to the command to build a giant boat in the middle of a wilderness? What might your reaction have been if you were in Noah's shoes? Would you have followed the Lord's instructions?

This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he walked in close fellowship with God. Noah was the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence. God observed all this corruption in the world, for everyone on earth was corrupt. So God said to Noah, "I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for they have filled the earth with violence. Yes, I will wipe them all out along with the earth." Noah built an ark of gopher wood, and he covered the inside of the ark with pitch to make it waterproof it. Then con-

struct decks and stalls throughout its interior. Make the boat 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. Leave an 18-inch opening below the roof all the way around the boat. Put the door on the side, and build three decks inside the boat—lower, middle, and upper. "Look! I am about to cover the earth with a flood that will destroy every living thing that breathes. Everything on earth will die. But I will confirm my covenant with you. So enter the boat—you and your wife and your sons and their wives. Bring a pair of every kind of animal—a male and a female—into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood. Pairs of every kind of bird, and every kind of animal, and every kind of small animal that scurries along the ground, will come to you to be kept alive. And be sure to take on board enough food for your family and for all the animals." So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.

—GENESIS 6:9-22 NLT

...ding a boat the
...alf football fields
...pry building. The
...times longer than
...me ratio used by
...s. This huge boat

...was probably built miles from any
body of water by only a few faithful
people who believed God's promises
and obeyed his commands.

—NEW LIVING TRANSLATION
LIFE APPLICATION STUDY BIBLE

HOW DO I FOLLOW THE LORD? 6.2

HOW DO I FOLLOW THE LORD? 6.2

STUDY
WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Picture and strive to comprehend what a massive task the building of the ark would have been.

The story of Noah and the flood is not a literal story about life being wiped off the earth, but rather a story that represents the personal struggle and temptation that each of us faces in life—and the ways we can protect ourselves in these times of spiritual trials. The book, *Secrets of Heaven* explains the inner meaning of this story: the ark that Noah, his family, and the animals go into for protection from the flood represents the church that carries us through hard times (§639). "By the 'flood of waters' is signified the beginning of temptation" (§739-740). The flood represents the temptations that come in life and threaten to wipe out everything good if we give in to them. It is further explained that

"Noah went into the ark, from before the waters of the flood' signifies that he was protected in temptation." In the story, Noah's wife, his sons, and his sons' wives came with him into the ark because they represent the resources Noah had to help him resist temptations. Noah's wife represents goods, his sons represent truths, and his sons' wives represent truths that are connected to goods (§742). We can see that while the story seems literally impossible it stands for something very real in our lives—turning to the church and the goods and truths that sustain us when we are faced with temptation.

—ARIGAIL ECHOLS

SELF
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ME?

What is something in your life that has the comparable magnitude of Noah building the ark?

SERVE
WHAT DOES IT CALL ME TO DO?

What is the Lord calling you to step out in faith and do? What's holding you back? What are you going to do to step forward?

Regeneration is impossible
without free will in spiritual matters.

—EMANUEL SWEDENBORG,
True Christian Religion 615

Q What is the Pause Spiritual Growth Program?

a Pause is a seven-week program in which participants are invited to work on spiritual growth.

Q What does this look like for me?

a There are three basic components of this program:

1. WORSHIP in an inspiring and enriching environment.
2. EXPLORE the Pause workbook and the opportunity for life application.
3. PARTICIPATE in a supportive and thought-provoking Small Group.

Find a congregation near you running this program today.

If you don't live near a congregation that is running the program, we encourage you to participate online or gather together some friends or family members and create a small group in your home utilizing the resources available online. For information on congregations and this online program go to www.newchurch.org.

Youth Pause Program
From the General Church Office of Education

Support children and teens to grow in their knowledge of the Lord through the Youth Pause Program. Discussions, interactive activities and projects are designed for large or small groups. Leaders select what works best for them from a menu of weekly options. Designed for ages 3-6, 7-10, 11-14 and 15-18. Available online starting in August 2010 at www.newchurch.org/youth-campaigns.

EXPLORING THE BIBLE



Whether you know the Bible well or are picking it up for the first time, here is a framework to support your exploration in a meaningful way and to create a space to hear God's voice in your life.



This tool, developed by General Church Outreach, is featured in *Pause: Make Space for God*, a new Spiritual Growth Program (see pps 14-17 for more info).

Study Resources

www.heavenlydoctrines.org all of the books of the Heavenly Doctrines given through Emanuel Swedenborg—searchable by verse, topic or word.

www.biblemeanings.info a resource available by book of the word or searchable by topic of quotes from the Heavenly Doctrines on the deeper meaning of specific stories, concepts and things.

www.biblegateway.com provides a variety of translations and the ability to search for a specific verse or to do a word search on a particular word or concept.

www.e-swedenborg.com search the Heavenly Doctrines in English and in their original language, Latin.

How to Use this Tool

Set aside at least 10 minutes to use this tool. Go through the steps of the tool with a book of the Bible or with the scripture quotations provided in the *Pause* workbook. As you move through steps 1-4 select a few of the options provided. See the study resources for specific ideas on how to utilize these various steps. Through each step of the process, pray. Let this be a time of connection between you and your God.

1 Scripture: What does it say?

Pray for openness to hear the Lord speaking to you as you read the passage.

- *Notice and record ideas that stand out to you.
- *Consider the context.
- *Note any questions or confusion that you have.
- *Re-read portions that are confusing to you.

2 Study: What does it mean?

Pray for the Lord's insight and guidance as you examine the passage.

- *What comes before and after this passage?
- *Where does this story take place?
- *What are the relationships between the people in the story?
- *Study the inner meaning provided in the teachings of the New Church.
- *What other Biblical passages speak to this theme?
- *Use the study resources to go deeper into the passage.

3 Self: What does it mean to me?

Pray and ask the Lord to show His message for you.

- *What is the overarching message that I am hearing today from this passage?
- *What are the words of comfort, guidance, challenge and wisdom that the Lord is offering here?
- *What situation in my life does this speak to?
- *What change in my life does this challenge me to?
- *Choose one phrase to commit to memory.

4 Serve: What does it call me to do?

Pray for the Lord to show you what action this passage calls you to take and for the strength, courage and commitment to do it.

- *Meditate on the scripture and discover the call to action from the Lord.
- *Notice the commands, directives, encouragement and support for action.
- *How does this passage inform you on how to treat others?
- *How does this passage speak to the attitude you carry into your day?
- *How does this passage relate to others around you and to the world as a whole?
- *When you gain clarity on the action the Lord is calling you to...do it!

Is God Angry?

The Bible contains images of a vengeful, jealous God. But is this image reality? Or a perception we hang on to? *Rev. Derrick Lumsden* explores why God could seem angry, and yet is actually loving and merciful.

The New Church perspective of God rests on the idea that God is loving.

Is God angry? To answer a question with a somewhat cheeky question: “Do you need him to be?” To God a person’s spiritual life is precious. If seeing God as angry helps your spiritual life then He will encourage that idea. The idea that God is angry may not be the truest picture of God, but it might be a useful picture to some people.

The New Church perspective of God rests on the idea that God is loving. In mainline Protestant Christianity God is painted as angry, while Jesus is painted as loving and merciful. Their narrative of redemption is that God the Father was angry with the sins of humanity and was going to destroy the world, but Jesus Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice to assuage the anger of God the Father. The New Church perspective is that God and Jesus really have the same attitude. In the Bible Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner” (John 5:19). Looking at how Jesus taught and lived, most people would agree that Jesus is loving: He taught compassion, He healed the sick, and He destroyed

The Lord never curses anyone. He is never angry with anyone, never leads anyone into temptation, never punishes anyone...for such things can never proceed from the Fountain of mercy, peace, and goodness.

–Secrets of Heaven 245

abundantly” (John 10:10). If Jesus came to give life and offer forgiveness, then this must also be the attitude of the Father who sent Him. (see John 8:1-12 for an example of Jesus’ forgiveness).

So why does traditional Christianity have the perspective that God is angry?

Because sometimes it seems like God is angry. Even Jesus appeared to be angry when He drove the merchants and money changers from the temple at Jerusalem with a whip of cords (John 2:13-17). Jesus may have seemed angry, but this doesn’t mean that He truly was. A good example of seeming angry but feeling something else is a caring parent who yells at a child who is about to run into a busy road. The parent is not necessarily angry but will almost certainly seem angry to the child. Similarly, God is not angry, but if it will help your spiritual life to see Him as angry, He might be willing to yell at you. ●

The Lord is love itself, to which no other attributes are fitting than those of pure love, thus of pure mercy toward the whole human race, which [love] is such that it wills to save all and make them happy to eternity, and to bestow on them all that it has, thus out of pure mercy to draw to heaven all who are willing to follow...by the strong force of love

–Secrets of Heaven 1735



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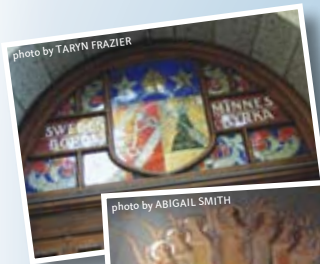
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New Church TEACHINGS

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, later devoting his life to the revelation of the New Church. In the New Church we believe his later works are a divinely inspired revelation for the modern age, touching on all the different aspects of religion with a rational and common-sense approach.

In this issue the following works of Swedenborg are referenced: *Apocalypse Revealed*, *Heaven and Hell*, and *Secrets of Heaven*.

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Be still and know
that I am God.

—PSALM 46:10

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