

New Church

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Connect with God

Is God
ANGRY? p.12

7 Steps to Connect
with God p.15

"MY LIFE
WILL NEVER
BE THE SAME."

A Personal Story p.8

www.newchurch.org





- There is one loving, personal God, and He is the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The life of religion is to follow the Ten Commandments and to act honestly and faithfully in our daily occupations.
- The New Church is based on the Word of God, as revealed in the Old and New Testaments and the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.
- The Word of God (the Bible) has a deeper level of meaning, teaching about the Lord's essential nature and a person's spiritual development.
- Each of us continues life as a complete person immediately after the death of the body.
- God does not judge us, but we judge ourselves by what we love and how we live.
- People of every faith are saved if they live sincerely according to their religion.

Contact Information

General Church Outreach, a department of the General Church of the New Jerusalem
 1100 Cathedral Road, PO Box 743,
 Bryn Athyn, PA 19009, 1-877-411-HOPE (4673),
www.newchurch.org, questions@newchurch.org
 For general information call 267-502-4911

New Church Connection

Exists to inspire, inform, and connect people who are interested in the New Church. Every issue will have background information on New Church teachings; inspirational content from personal testimonies and quotes from the Word; and information about the organized New Church (the General Church of the New Jerusalem), and how to get connected. Each issue will have a theme that helps enrich your spiritual journey.

Production Team

Executive Editor
David Lindrooth
 Editor and Creative Design
Bronwen Henry
 Copy Editor
Abigail Smith, Sasha Henderson
 Subscription Manager
Midje Kerr
 Proofreader
Rachel Glenn

Please contact the production team at outreach@newchurch.org for more information, to contribute an article or personal story, or to subscribe for yourself or a friend to receive this magazine.

Cover Photo by Andy Sullivan

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What would God say? I recently entered the world of the social networking site, Facebook. One component of this site is people answering the question “What are you doing right now?” Many thoughtful, silly, ordinary, and sometimes even profound statements are entered by Facebook users. Recent entries for myself have included “tired” “contemplating life” “getting ready to go to the zoo”. I mention this because of a question I’ve been pondering lately: What would God’s Facebook status be? From my concept of God, these are some possibilities that came to mind:

- God is....
- “...loving you anyway.”
- “...waiting for you to reply.”
- “...being patient while you try again.”
- “...spreading love.”
- “...leading with subtlety.”
- “...present.”

In the Writings for the New Church, the phrase “God is...” is completed many times, for example:

- God is...
- “...one.” *True Christianity* 851
- “...good and truth itself.” *Divine Providence* 157
- “...love itself and wisdom itself.” *Divine Love and Wisdom* 361
- “...constantly striving to regenerate and so save people. *True Christianity* 73

In this issue we take time to explore the nature of God (Is God Angry? p. 12) and what it means to connect with Him (7 Ways to Connect with God p. 15). In a world filled with distractions competing for our time, I encourage you to slow down, breathe, pause, and consider your relationship with God and the steps you can take to strengthen your connection today.

Bronwen Henry *General Church Outreach*



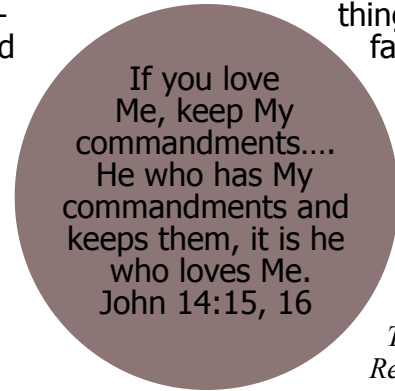
Photo by Thor Odhner

What is your perspective? How we view God changes everything.

A spiritual equilibrium in its essence is freedom because it is an equilibrium between good and evil.... This freedom is given to every person by the Lord, and is never taken away.... [T]his is done that a person may be reformed and saved; for without freedom there can be no reformation or salvation. *Heaven and Hell* 597

The Lord is present with every person, urging and pressing to be received....[A person receives Him] when he acknowledges Him as his God, Creator, Redeemer and Savior.

True Christian Religion 766



If you love Me, keep My commandments.... He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. John 14:15, 16

There are three things which form faith...the first is to approach the Lord, the second is to learn truths from the Word, the third is to live by them.

True Christian Religion 348:1,2

[A]ll the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no other. Let your heart therefore be loyal to the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments, as at this day. 1 Kings 8:60-61



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 Swedenborg’s later works are a divinely inspired revelation for the modern age, touching on all the different aspects of religion with a very rational and common-sense approach.

See www.newchurch.org for more information.

Seeking Answers

Questions about God and Life

Q Is the God of the Old Testament REALLY the same as the one in the New Testament? They seem so different.

A We know in our hearts that the Lord is always the same, and never changes. So it can seem strange that some stories in the Old Testament seem to portray a distant, angry Father, while the New Testament portrays a gentle, and approachable Son. The New Church teaches that these differences reflect a difference in the eyes of the beholders, and not a difference in God. It might help to think about how a child sees a parent. A young daughter might think her mother is angry with her for going in the street, when really what appears to be anger is deep love that strives to protect. The New Church teaches that the way the Lord is portrayed in the Old Testament reflects the similarly childlike thinking of the people of the time. In their misunderstanding of the true nature of God, they felt He would be angry at them if they made mistakes and thought of Him as the Great Judge, ready to save or condemn. When God came into the world in a human body, people were able to see His true nature much more clearly. Like never before, they could sense His incredible kindness, compassion, and wisdom.

Q How does the New Church perceive/understand the higher powers of other religions? (Buddha, Mohammad, etc.)

A There are many paths to the One God, and no matter what name people choose to call Him, we all worship the same God of Love.

Q I think of God as a general positive force in the world, but I also know that the New Church teaches that it's powerful to know a visible, human God. Why?

A Trying to connect with an invisible God (a general, powerful force) is like trying to get your bearings gazing into the empty space of the universe or across the ocean far from land (see *True Christianity* 787). Having a Human picture of God—a person who walked the earth, who taught His friends and followers, who both healed people and underwent tremendous human suffering—allows us to know God as a Person in our lives, a Person who knows our experiences and can work with us, whose path we can follow. A personalized picture of God may seem both threatening and too limiting. It is hard to imagine a God who befriends some people and not

others, who saves some and disregards or even condemns others, whose rules seem arbitrary. New Church teachings emphasize over and over again that God is all-loving, and that He is reaching out to everyone where they are. God is a universal force for good working in countless ways with the vast variety of people throughout the world and this God is Jesus Christ. This is the heart of the teachings for the New Church.

Photo by Heather Allais



Simple ways to involve God in your marriage.

Q I conceptually know God. But He's not an active part of my life. How can I build this relationship?

A The more we treat others with genuine kindness, and the more we try to be useful, the more we open our hearts for the Lord to be with us. He also shows Himself through the Bible. By reading this with an open mind and an open heart, genuinely hoping to connect with the Lord, we will find what we are looking for. The Lord himself

promised us, "Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened for you" (Matthew 7:7).

Q I hear that it's important to have God involved in my marriage. What does that look like?

A God is Love and Understanding, and the more you treat your spouse with love and understanding, the more God will be present in your marriage. For example, if you see that your spouse left his shoes right in the middle of the living room again, try to respond with love and understanding. That's inviting the Lord to be part of your marriage. Another way is to read the Bible together, and support each other in your efforts to improve your relationship.

Q I'm just not sure God is real. Couldn't this all be a big hoax? How can I be certain that a God exists?

A God will never do anything that would force us to believe in Him. He gave humans the gift of freedom along with rationality. With our freedom and rationality, we can choose to look for evidence of God in life...or not. No one can ever convince you one way or the other. It has to be something you decide on your own because it feels right to you. That way, if you do choose to believe in God, you will believe in total freedom.

Changing Lives

Sometimes the answers we seek are right before us. Krystal Villafane (pictured below with her son Leo) lives in Northeast Philadelphia, near the international headquarters for the New Church in Bryn Athyn, PA. She describes how her spiritual path was enriched very close to home.

The story of my Journey to the New Church began ten years ago, when my boyfriend at the time drove me to a thrift shop. In this shop I found a book for a girls' High School religion class, about something called Conjugal Love. On the three mile drive from Northeast Philadelphia to this shop, I was not paying attention to where we were going so I had no idea we were in a town called Bryn Athyn. Upon reading through the book I found an article called "Before and After Marriage" Notes on Conjugal Love, by the Rev. Peter M. Buss. I immediately knew it was the book for me.

This book was unlike any book on marriage I had ever read. It described clearly the ideals and beliefs in my heart, that I had not seen in my life. I read this book repeatedly, loving the truths I found and trying to live by them. I even made photocopies of pages to accompany breaking off a relationship or two. On the cover was printed "Academy of the New Church, Bryn Athyn, PA." This sounded to me like somewhere far away. I thought this book just found its way into a random thrift shop. I wanted to know more for a long time. I even thought of writing to the Reverend listed on the cover, but always dismissed it as a long shot, thinking this faith didn't exist anymore.

A year and a half ago, while trying out online dating, I met an interesting guy. While sharing which schools we went to, he said he went to the Academy of the New Church. That's when I made the connection! I realized that this book was from a faith community only three miles away. I finally realized New Church teachings were at the core of the messages preached at the (Bryn Athyn) Cathedral, which I had been to over the years on walks with my son. Never in my wildest dreams did I think



Photo by Jeremy Simons

Connect with God

Life Faith Action

Quotations from the teachings of the New Church and thoughts on how to bring these ideas into life.



"Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves." Psalm 100:3

Consider your thoughts about yourself. Are they encouraging and hopeful? Or perhaps destructive and debilitating? Take a moment today to pause and remember that you, your mind, your body, your heart, were all created by God with love and with purpose.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment." Matthew 22:37-38

List three ways you can show your love for the Lord. Consider your passions and dreams, your presence, your thoughts and feelings.



Photo by Sarah Leeper

The Lord attributes good to every person and evil to none, consequently He does not condemn anyone to hell, but so far as a person follows raises all to heaven.

True Christian Religion 652

The Lord shows us the higher path to loving others. How can you attribute good motives to the actions of others? Try it today and see how it transforms your outlook.



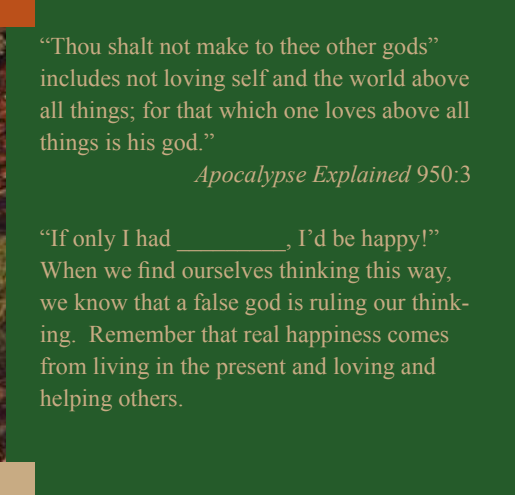
“Thou shalt not make to thee other gods” includes not loving self and the world above all things; for that which one loves above all things is his god.”

Apocalypse Explained 950:3

“If only I had _____, I’d be happy!” When we find ourselves thinking this way, we know that a false god is ruling our thinking. Remember that real happiness comes from living in the present and loving and helping others.

“It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.” Psalm 118:8

When someone criticizes us who can avoid taking offense? Alternately, it’s so easy to feel proud when we’re praised. Keep in mind that no matter what other people say about us, there’s One opinion that takes priority. Thankfully, that’s the One who loves us the most!



Continued from page 8

to look for a sign or name that would match the cover of my special book!

We dated for a bit, and I learned a little more about the faith, but we eventually broke up because, as explained in the book that I knew so very well, our deep loves were very different. Breakups are never great, so I was afraid to come to the Church or even to Bryn Athyn or a while. For four months, though, I listened to New Church sermons online, wanting to follow the Lord’s path for my life. After all, I finally knew it existed and knew deep inside I couldn’t abandon this path now. It wasn’t until last year’s Journey Program that I had the courage to go to the Bryn Athyn Church again. During the first weeks of the program I participated online. I also took my son to the Cathedral one Sunday for Church. During this service I was so nervous I was shaking, and when Rev. Don Rose started his sermon with arms open wide saying, “Do not be afraid; the Lord is with you!” I wasn’t sure if that made me shake less or more!

I continued to listen to sermons online and follow the Journey program, and was still afraid that I didn’t belong. This is when Bronwen Henry from Outreach contacted me. She listened to my story, and assured me that it was okay to come here, that I was welcome, and suggested joining Ray and Star Silverman’s

singles Journey Group that met at the Cathedral! During the next week or so while I was turning it over in my mind, I listened to a sermon by Rev. David Roth from Boulder, Colorado who proclaimed the task for the week by saying plain and simple: “you can’t stay where you are; you have to go forward.” That was it; I got in touch with Bronwen to let her know I was ready to join the group and go forward!

That first Journey group brought me home. Welcomed with such positivity, empowerment, understanding, and kindness, I felt I was among kindred spirits. I quickly got over my fears and felt safe enough to open up and enjoy the group. That group is where I made my first real New Church friends—the people I could hang out with, talk about Spiritual issues with, and learn about being a New Church person! Since then, my son and I have enjoyed so much of what this community has to offer and have made so many new friends along the way. I have been amazed at how everything I learned from that first book ten years ago has come together completely with all I’ve learned over this last year and a half in Bryn Athyn. My life will never be the same that’s for sure. A truth I am sure of is that the New Church is in me to stay, and no matter where life takes me, or where the Lord leads me, I will hold these beautiful people in my heart. ■

Is God ANGRY?

In an attempt to understand God, many people stumble when it comes to the apparent contradictions in the Bible—especially about God being angry or loving. Which one is it? Rev. John Odhner helps us find some clarity on what the Bible says about God’s disposition.

Readers of the Bible may have noticed references to the anger of God—even to times God seems excessively angry. For example, in Deuteronomy 32:22 God says, “A fire is kindled in My anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell.” In Jeremiah 21:5, “And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath.”

God Is Merciful

In contrast with the teachings about God’s anger are the teachings about His mercy. We are told that “God is love” (1 John 4:8.) He is “merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth” (Exodus 34:6).

This picture of God as merciful and loving is quite a contrast to the picture of Him as vengeful and fierce. If these were

all the teachings we had, we might suppose that He alternates between the wrath and mercy: condemning one moment, redeeming the next. The view of God as fluctuating does not take into account all the teachings about His mercy. There are dozens of passages which speak of God’s mercy as enduring, constant, never ceasing. “His mercy endures for ever” (Psalms 100:5).

Photo by Heather Allais

Now some people might try to explain this apparent contradiction by saying that the Lord is constantly merciful to good people, but that He takes vengeance on those who rebel against Him. But the fact is that the Lord is merciful to everyone, all the time, in everything He does. “He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust” (Matthew 6:45). “The Lord is good to all and his tender mercies are over all his works” (Psalm 145:7).

How We Think of God

If the Lord is always merciful to everyone, then He can never be angry and vengeful. In God Himself there is “no variation nor shadow of turning” (James 1:17). Yet He appears in a variety of ways according to the spiritual state of the individual. “With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; with a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless;

with the pure You will show Yourself pure; and with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd” (2 Samuel 22:20). It almost seems as if

God uses our concepts of Him to communicate with us, even when those concepts are distorted.

God’s actions toward each of us depend on our actions toward God and others. If you forgive others, He will forgive you; if you do not forgive others, He will not forgive you (Matthew 6:15). If you draw near to God, He will draw near to you (James 4:8). If you forget Him, He will forget you (Hosea 4:6).

It is as if each kind of person looks at God through differently tinted glasses. A person wearing blue glasses will see everything blue. “To the pure all things are pure,

but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled” (Titus 1:15). A person who is himself vicious and vengeful will tend to see others, including God, as vicious and vengeful: “The children of your people say, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ But it is their way that is not fair!” (Ezekiel 33:17).

How God Communicates

God uses our concepts of Him to communicate with us, even when those concepts are distorted. The result of this is that God is often described in terms of imperfect human qualities—not because He actually has those qualities, but because certain imperfect humans think that He does.

For example, the Bible speaks of God “coming down,” (Genesis 11:5) and “going up” (Genesis 35:13) or “going away,” (Genesis 18:33) when really, He cannot go

or come because He is already constantly present everywhere (see Psalm 139:7; 1 Kings 8:27).

The Bible also says that the Lord “forgets” people (Jeremiah 23:39). In actual fact, God never forgets (see Amos 8:7). But the Bible speaks of Him forgetting, because our impatience and ignorance of His plans make us feel like He has forgotten.

The Lord speaks of Himself forgetting, remembering, coming, going, and so on, so that we can identify with Him more easily. That’s why Paul, speaking of God’s wrath, says that he speaks “as a man” or “in human terms” (Romans 3:5). He makes it clear that His real nature is different than ours—different than it appears. “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are My ways your ways”, says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways, and

My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8).

The Source Of Evil

God has no desire to punish anyone. “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked” (Ezekiel 33:11). When He does tolerate evil it is because He sees that good can come from it.

What has seemed to mankind to be evidence of God’s anger, has usually been not from God at all, but from the cruel influence of hell. For example, in the story of Job, Satan was eager to torture Job, and it was only with reluctance that God allowed Satan to bring disaster on Job. Job did not know that the real source of his disaster was from God (see Job 1:6-21, 2:1-10, 30:21).

In another incident, we are told that God tempted Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his son. But the fact is that “God does not tempt anyone,

but each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed” (James 1:13,14). Although temptation may appear to be from God its actual source is hell. Hell is the source of the trouble which God unwillingly tolerates for the sake of our freedom. Yet because we suppose God is the source, the Bible speaks as if God were the one who is angry.

Who Sees the True God?

God appears in many different ways to many different people, and at times His genuine qualities of love and mercy are veiled behind an appearance of anger. “The Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance” (1 Samuel 16:7). Yet it is possible to know God as He truly is. People who are good and wise can know the nature of His mercy. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). ■

7 Steps to Connect with God



Photo by Kelly Woofenden

What would it look like in your life to connect with God? Mac Frazier discusses a comprehensive path to an intimate relationship with God.

Do you feel connected with the Lord? Do you want to be part of a movement in the world to do so? In this article, I will explore what our personal individual responsibilities to the Lord are, and the path by which we become part of the whole group of those who are willing to connect with Him. Briefly, there are seven things the Lord wants us to do: (1) Pray, (2) Read the Word, (3) Worship, (4) Repent, (5) Shun evils, (6) Serve Other People, and (7) Regenerate, or be born again.

These seven elements are connected and can be broken into two categories. The first category is about piety—praying, reading the Word, and worshipping. But piety is not sufficient to get to heaven—you can get there without it. Of course, you can also get to a neighboring town without a car, but that’s the hard way. You can think of the steps of piety as a set of tools that can lead to the second category: Charity. Charity involves repenting, shunning the evils of sins, and then performing useful services for your neighbor. Living a life of charity is the essential road to heaven.

The seventh part of connecting with the Lord is to be transformed or “regenerated,” to become spiritually reborn, and in this seventh step we rest and let the Lord do the work. I will now describe each step in a little more depth.

1 Pray

There’s a lot of confusion in the world about prayer, and sometimes we can be uncomfortable with how to pray. What is prayer supposed to be about? What do we pray for?

Prayer is not magic. The Lord is going to heal your broken arm, whether you pray for healing or not. He doesn’t withhold that service from people who don’t pray. The Lord, in His divine providence, is going to run the world the way the world needs to be run regardless of how we pray. This does not mean you can’t pray for other people. For instance, you might pray for a friend of yours who is going through a terrible time. They may be struggling in their marriage, or they may recently be in the grip of addiction. You feel for them and you don’t know what to do, so you pray for them. But the result of that prayer is not the Lord miraculously reaching down and changing that person’s life despite what they want to do. Rather, the Lord answers that prayer with a

stirring in your own heart. He answers with enlightenment. When we pray for others it’s an opportunity to listen to the Lord and to find out how we can serve another person.

Make a habit of prayer. Pray daily. Make prayer a normal part of your life rather than a once a week exception when you’re kneeling in a pew. Prayer, once it becomes a habit of your life, will be there at times when you most need it.



Photo by Cathy Schnarr

2 Read

Think of the way Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, sat at the foot of the Lord and listened. Like Mary, we can decide to spend five minutes of our day listening to the Lord. We don’t need

to be extremely intellectual about it. We just need to be humble, and innocent, willing to be led. We have to be able to acknowledge that whatever we find is from the Lord and must be true, and if we don’t understand something, we can just be patient.

Sometimes when we open the Word, it’s delightful because we find confirmation of things we’ve always believed. Other times, we find parts of the Word that alert us to disorder in our own lives and in the lives of people we love. It might

It might be uncomfortable, but the Lord wants us to listen to His whole Word.

be uncomfortable, but the Lord wants us to listen to His whole Word.

As with prayer, the first step is making a habit of it, and if you already have the habit of regular reading, try increasing it. Of course, we’re meant to live in the world, to have jobs, and to enjoy life, but many of us could definitely benefit from more time reading the Word.

3 Worship

Internal worship, true worship, is how we serve one another on a daily basis. External worship, which supports that life of internal worship, includes worshipping together on Sundays, taking the Holy Supper, and participating in other church services. When we get together, when we kneel, when we sing, when we celebrate the greatness of the Lord, all these are practicing, in external form, humility and innocence. We’re also meant to get instruction, so that we can increase our understanding of the Lord’s plan for our life. We also need to be moved by the truth. We need to be motivated. Music that we use in worship can stir the heart in a way that spoken words never can, and ideally when you come out of a church service you should feel inspired to follow what you’ve learned. Then go back to the Word to learn more, to try a little harder to be better at being a citizen of the Lord’s kingdom.

4 Repent

Repentance is examining your life and identifying one thing that does not belong, that is not worthy of the Lord’s kingdom. Something you said, something you did, or perhaps something you

didn't do but should have, and take that to the Lord. Acknowledge that it was wrong, not because God needs to know this, but because you need to face up to it. Then you ask for His strength and His help in slowing and gently removing that unhealthy thing from your life.

5 Shun

In order to get to heaven we need to build the habit of reminding ourselves, in the face of something wrong but tempting, that "the Lord said no." We don't have to win the battle on our own. We don't have to seize evil and wrestle it to the ground. But we do have to turn away. And slowly, the Lord can change us so that our internal mantra against temptation, "The Lord said no," starts to turn into something that we love. Finally, over time, our desire to do those evil things fades away.

Now, we can't expect to get to some point in this life in which there is nothing left to shun and nothing left to repent of. But over time your life will change. It is a slow process, but the Lord promises this transformation, this life of regeneration, as long as we are willing to accept His help.

6 Serve

Serving is doing our job justly, faithfully and sincerely. It is not enough to just punch your timecard. You have to try to do a good job. Put yourself into



Photo by Elaine Knight

it, recognizing that what you are doing is useful to somebody else.

Serving also means doing good works. There are people around us, in our neighborhoods and in the world, who are poor, who are more sick, who are in one way or another needy and we have the capability to help them. It is up to our own prudence

The final piece of a life of charity, is to be useful, to serve the people around you.

to determine what good works we do, to what extent, how and when...but not whether or not to do them.

Beyond that there are also the basic duties that we perform as citizens of our countries and as members of our families. Basically, the final piece of a life of charity is to be useful and to serve the people around you.

7 Be Transformed

Practicing the first six habits opens a way for the Lord to flow more fully into our lives, to transform each and every one of us, to turn each one of us into an angel, so that we can reach the potential that only the Lord can really see.

Conclusion

Sometimes we are in a state where we can't handle a whole lot of challenge. If you feel like you are already dealing with a lot, start at the beginning. Decide to pray a little bit more, decide to read at a set time everyday, and make a small change in the life of piety.

If you feel really solid in the steps of piety, and if you are at a place in life where you feel strong and secure, then this is an opportunity to examine how you are doing in the life of charity. Pick one of those three steps and decide which one needs a little more work.

Your life will change. It is a slow process, but the Lord promises this transformation, this life of regeneration, as long as we are willing to accept his help.

Maybe you haven't really sat down and examined yourself spiritually in a long time, and you might decide to choose that step.

To the degree that you do this work, that you strive to connect with the Lord, the Lord will be present with you, flowing into you with His peace and love, which will not only transform your life, but also the world around you. ■

Is Salvation Available to All?



Photo by Matthew Mayer

BY REV. DON ROSE

Who can be saved? What people can go to heaven? These questions have been discussed for centuries. One view was expressed by the theologian Cyprian, who lived about 200 to 258 AD. He contended that “outside the church there is no salvation.” He had reasons for that position, and others have had reasons to think otherwise.

Has our understanding improved on this over centuries? One hopes that we have grown in a spirit of humility. The disciples who listened to Jesus had humbling experiences. Some things Jesus said amazed and bewildered them. Consider an incident in Mark chapter 10. Jesus spoke of how difficult it is for those who have riches to be saved.

The disciples were “astonished” at this

idea. Noting their astonishment and limited understanding, Jesus addressed them as “children” and explained that it was those who *trust* in riches that have difficulty (verse 24). They were now “greatly astonished,” and then it is said that Jesus “looked at them.”

Picture Jesus looking at the disciples, fully aware of their meager understanding. He assured them, “With God all things are possible” (Mark 10:27).

While we make our best assertions, we can remember that there are possibilities beyond our limited grasp. The topic of salvation is enumerated in detail in a book written 250 years ago called *Heaven and Hell*.

One of the chapters is devoted to the subject of non-Christians in heaven!

In 1758, that was virtually a contradiction in terms. People thought this was impossible.

The opening line of the chapter is, “There is a general opinion that those born outside of the church cannot be saved, because they know nothing about the Lord, and apart from the Lord there is no salvation.” It goes on to say, “Their ignorance of the Lord is not their fault.”

The Lord did say in the Bible, “I am the way” (John 14:6). New Church teachings open up the possibility that a person might learn about the way after death.

Here’s another incident from the Gospels. There was a Roman officer, an outsider, who came with a plea on behalf of his paralyzed servant. Here was an occasion to marvel. Jesus said, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!” (Matthew 8:10)

An ‘outsider’ was being commended for his faith. Then Jesus astounded them further. “I say to you that many will come from the east and west, and sit down...in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 8:11).

While we make our best assertions, we can remember that there are possibilities beyond our limited grasp.

There are things that make one wonder. I have been a teacher of religion for years, and I have to admit that I do not know what Jesus meant when he said, “And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring,

and they will hear my voice” (John 10:16). This could possibly have an application to this subject, but I am not at all sure that it does.

What shall we do when we do not understand the words of Jesus? An incident in the Gospels gives a beautiful example. After a discourse on the bread of life, many followers were saying, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?” As they went away, Jesus said to the Twelve, “Do you also want to go away?” It was Peter who answered, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68).



Explore *Heaven and Hell* by Emanuel Swedenborg.



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- **God is Love** and nothing but what is good can come from God, because His very nature is love. God came to this world in the form of Jesus Christ, who is the one and only God.
- **The Old and New Testaments** have a deeper meaning, revealed in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, which help people learn how to live happy and useful lives to eternity.
- **All religions have goodness** in them. There are many paths and gates into the heavenly city, New Jerusalem.
- **Heaven is for everyone** who wants to live a heavenly life. Heaven is where people (angels) love God and others and want to be useful. While people are free to choose to live in hell, God wants everyone to live with Him in heaven to eternity.
- **The Last Judgment predicted** in the Bible is not about the physical world; nor does God impose His will on us. He affirms the judgment we make upon ourselves according to the way we live. People who love God and try to live a good life according to what they believe are saved.
- **Marriage can last forever** for God blesses people with a special love in marriage that goes on after death, even to eternity.
- **God's 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.

"As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in Him."

2 Samuel 22:31



Photo by Barry Allais

**Everyone is allotted
his place in the heavens
in accordance with his idea
of God. For that idea is like
a touchstone used to test
gold and silver, that is,
it tests the quality
of good and truth
in a person.**

*True Christian
Religion 163*

Photo by Kay Alden

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Contact Information:

PO BOX 743, Bryn Athyn, PA 19009
1.877.411.HOPE (4673); 267.502.4911;
information@newchurch.org