

CHOOSING HAPPINESS

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to increase
your happiness
today p.12

THE PATH TO HAPPINESS

(and why we resist it) p.14

How to Be Happy
in Your Marriage p.18

**“My growth will
continue forever.”**

One Student's Journey
from Buddhism and Catholicism
to the New Church p.4



New Church Connection makes the connection between religion and life. Every issue features relevant, inspiring 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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WELCOME

**"The moments
when I was truly
happy were when I
was fully present."**

As a new parent, I've recently come to think that happiness is a good night's sleep. On exhausting days I might even say happiness is five minutes to myself, a clean floor, or something actually going as planned.

Some faith traditions put aside the notion that happiness is part of a spiritual path. Some say that happiness is not possible and we must accept that life is full of suffering.

Perhaps happiness is in acceptance itself. When I look back over my life, the moments when I was truly happy were when I was fully present, whether big (my wedding day, the birth of my son) or small (a cup of tea with my husband). When I stopped regretting what could have been, or anticipating what might be, I felt a sense of happiness. So how does one increase happy states in life? Well, that is what this issue is all about.

Experience the joy of the courageous journey of Seunghee Lee as she describes her personal and spiritual transformation that followed an international move (p.4).

Get real about increasing your happiness with three practical steps you can begin today (p.12). Remember that our happiness is our choice, and consider the balance available to us and how to choose it more frequently as you read Rev. Grant Odhner's message (p.14). In this issue I invite you to explore these New Church perspectives on happiness, and I hope you experience greater joy today.

With peace,

Bronwen Henry
Bronwen Henry





Photo by Remy Thieu Brierley

“Peace holds within itself trust in the Lord, the trust that He governs all things and provides all things, and that He leads toward an end that is good.”

—*Secrets of Heaven 8455*

CHANGING LIVES

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Transitions are often a catalyst for growth. **Seunghee Lee** shares how the enormous transition of moving from Korea to the United States was all part of her journey of finding a spirituality that she could believe in.

SEEKING ANSWERS

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What is the secret to being happy? Do I need to be part of a religious organization to be happy? Does God answer prayers? **Rev. Derrick Lumden** responds to your questions.

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Spiritual growth doesn't have to be complicated. Discover how a few simple acts could be part of your journey to greater happiness.

THE PATH TO HAPPINESS (AND WHY WE RESIST IT)

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According to **Grant Odhner**, happiness is a choice, so why do we resist it? Rev. Odhner explores how to walk the path to happiness today.

HOW TO BE HAPPY IN YOUR MARRIAGE

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Living happily ever after is a daily commitment. **Lori Odhner** provides insight into making happiness a reality in your most intimate relationship.

Currently a student at the Academy of the New Church Secondary Schools in Pennsylvania, *Seunghye Lee*, feels that the teachings of the New Church have been a significant part of her process of emotional and spiritual maturation.

Here is her story, as told to *Sasha Henderson*.



I grew up in South Korea with a Buddhist father and a Catholic mother. I have some very early memories of going to the Buddhist temples with my father—holding little white candles, pouring water, kneeling in front of large statues, hearing some rhythmical drumming. My mother occasionally took my brother and me to Catholic Mass. She would dress up in a beaded necklace with a cross, and drape a white veil over her head, making her look “holy.”

article photos BY SEUNGHEE LEE



She also kept a Catholic Bible—a much thinner one than the Bibles here in America. During the services I loved listening to the songs from the choir, but the stiff, holy statues of Mary holding baby Jesus kind of creeped me out. They seemed to symbolize a god or goddess above everything, judging me. I sat there as this little, frightened girl under something so good, and perfect and holy.

Around age seven or eight, I had a strong feeling that I wanted to attend a “real” church. Not the places my mom or dad took me, but the kind of church I saw on those pamphlets handed out on street corners. The ones with the gentle pictures of Jesus holding a rod, surrounded by sheep. Like most children, I wanted to believe in something special, something wonderful, and I had a feeling I would find something there in “real” church. I remember saying, “Mom, I really want to go to church and learn about God.” Sadly, although my mother had a strong faith, she almost always had other things to do.

When I turned eight, my circumstances changed. My parents felt too busy to raise my brother and me, so they sent us to live with our aunt and uncle. We saw our parents only on the weekends. I felt sad and confused by this decision, but eventually I accepted my new life. For the next six years, my brother and I lived with our aunt and uncle, who attended church. By this time, though, I had lost interest in God. Still, we went regularly, and I remember hearing a lot about the right and wrong ways to live. In my head,

“I wanted to believe in God, and I knew there was something out there, but I still had no real idea of what or who God was.”

I knew the ideas made sense, but they seemed so formal, so rigid, so cold—not warm, pulsing, and alive, the type I always thought I’d find at “real” church.

At age fourteen, I had a new desire: to go with my family to America. The idea held a hope of change—something totally new, something great. Amazingly, my parents agreed. My father, brother and I packed up our things and flew to live near some relatives who had found a home on the outskirts of Philadelphia. We moved to Upper Dublin, and I began attending Sandy Run Middle School. My mother stayed in Korea for six more months to wrap things up, and then she came to join us.

Having to adapt to a new country—at the beginning of my teen years—threw me into a desperate search for my identity. For the first year, I cried every single night. Suddenly, I had to learn English, get along in this strange new American culture, make friends at school, try to understand the teachers, take tests and do homework. I felt lost, confused, lonely, even helpless. I regretted coming, but I

felt like I couldn't tell this to my family. We had never been close, and this had all been my idea. I felt an enormous pressure on my shoulders to make this all work out—all by myself. I wanted to believe in God, and I knew there was something out there, but I still had no real idea of what or who God was.

Meanwhile, our Korean relatives had been attending a group called "The New Church" in the little town of Bryn Athyn. Our relatives invited my family to join them for a service. My parents, having no other options, agreed to try. Right away, I felt that this church had something special. It was small, with only a few dozen Koreans. But I noticed that they had a strong identity—a belief in the reality of religion. To them, religion applied to life, and they acted on it. This seemed so different from my old church, where although people went to church regularly, there didn't seem to be any connection between church and life.

Also, their main philosophy—which I heard again and again—involved simply loving other people. This just made sense

to me: that religion—life—is about loving others. Other religions include this idea, but this whole religion revolved around love. I learned that in order to love others, I needed to learn how to love myself. And loving myself meant being good to myself by knowing the truth and turning

my heart toward love. By doing this, I began to learn how to share love and goodness with others. That's the most important thing. I believe that thousands of years from now, when people have forgotten my name, a piece of me will remain in the effects of the love I gave to others.

I also appreciated how much this church respects all other religions. At my old church, we were taught that if you didn't believe in their particular religion, you would go to hell. That always felt unfair to me.

If only some people were chosen for heaven, what about the others? It didn't make sense. I liked the understanding approach of the New Church—that all good people could go to heaven.

During that first year, my parents' strict refusal to accept a new religion had begun to soften. They began to attend the New Church regularly and found inspiration to guide them in their personal

"I learned that in order to love others, I needed to learn how to love myself."



emotional, cultural and spiritual adjustments. So when it came time for my first year of high school, they agreed to let me apply to the Academy of New Church, where I was accepted.

In my freshman religion class, I began learning more than ever about the New Church. Before, I'd only learned things through my New Church pastor, but now I could read things for myself. I felt my mind starting to think in deeper and more complex ways. I thought about why we should be good to others, and why belief and life make one. That feeling of "waking up" continued to grow inside, and I found myself feeling happier and more settled.

I've now been here at the New Church high school for two and a half years, and I feel that I am finding my religion. Coming here has guided me in taking one step up on the staircase of life. I know I have so much more to learn, but I have peace in knowing that this process will continue forever, and I can continue learning, even in heaven. My search continues, and I am so grateful to be doing it here with the New Church. ●



For more information:

Philadelphia New Church (Korean)

The Philadelphia New Church holds Korean language services, led by Rev. John Jin, each Sunday at 2895 College Drive, Bryn Athyn, PA, 19009 215-914-1012.

Academy of the New Church

A private school providing 9th through 12th graders with a well-rounded education, inspired by the New Church. www.ncss.org

WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

How has your life been impacted by living New Christian spirituality? Is there a spiritual practice or message that has transformed your relationships, work, or sense of peace and happiness? Share your story. Email newchurchconnection@newchurch.org.

Rev. Derrick Lumsden shares perspectives from a New Christian spirituality about happiness, prayer and more.

Life is full of

QUESTIONS.

“The church of the Lord is spread over all the globe, and is thus universal. All those are in it who have lived in the good of charity in accordance with their religious belief.”

—Heaven and Hell 328

Friendships are a key support on our spiritual path.

photo by LUKAS ODHNER

Q WHAT IS THE SECRET TO A HAPPY LIFE?

a The secret to happiness is guided love. Living a spiritual life is all about love, but it's also about choosing which loves are best. For example, at any given point you may have to choose between a love of

basketball, a love of social life, or a love of learning about the Lord. Sometimes the choices are easy, and sometimes they're hard. When we look to God to tell us which loves will make us the most happy, we are walking a spiritual path, and the Lord can give us blessings we could never have seen on our own.

Q DOES GOD ANSWER PRAYERS?

a Yes, but not always the way we expect. God looks at things from a perspective much bigger and broader than our own; He can see the path that will be best for us. When we look at a child struggling to tie her shoes, we have to weigh the options: either help her or let her struggle so she can learn to do it. Unfortunately, even in this simple example we often don't know which option would be best. When God looks at our prayers, He does know what is best. That best way sometimes looks to us like struggle, but from God's perspective it is the answer.

Q I SOMETIMES FEEL LIKE I AM GETTING NOWHERE ON MY SPIRITUAL PATH. AM I DOING SOMETHING WRONG?

a Not necessarily. The Lord promised us that when we work with Him spiritual life is easy, but He also warns us that there will be ups and downs. One thing to watch for—something that can make spiritual life a chore—is trying to do it all ourselves. When we try to do the Lord's part or when we try to make progress without the support of friendship in a spiritual community, we drain our own finite resources. When we lean on the Lord, we pull from an infinite

source. When we lean on friends, we can support each other and go much farther than we could alone.

Q DO I NEED TO BE PART OF A RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION TO BE HAPPY?

a The Lord alone is the author of your faith and fountain of your life. You can be both happy and spiritual without being a part of a religious organization, but why would you want to? You can become a martial artist or a musician by studying books and movies, but it will take you much longer to master these arts without guidance and community support to facilitate learning and creativity. Similarly, why not find companionship in your route to a happier life? ●

Questions Wanted

Share your questions about spirituality and life. Email questions@newchurch.org and mention "New Church Connection".



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“Practice accepting what is one of the good

We are not alone on our spiritual path.

Rev. Clark Echols shares insights into responding to change in life.



realchallenges

A grandparent dies. A job is lost. A hurricane interferes with travel plans. A beloved teacher gets replaced by someone new. No matter what age or stage of life we are in, there is one constant: change. Whether changes are happy or sorrowful, expected or surprising, they can cause commotion and turmoil in our well-being. How does one adjust to change and find a renewed sense of happiness?

realsupport

Change in our lives is rarely simple, neat and clean. It most often causes turmoil, and even suffering. Although we can never completely escape the inevitability of change, we can be in control of our thoughts and actions. One way to do this is through the following process:

1 Name the feeling associated with the change (sad, mad, shameful, afraid, etc.)

2 Notice the thoughts you have that support and justify the feeling (“Everyone close to me always ends up leaving.”)

3 Take action to help others.

In the Bible, there are many stories about the trials and tribulations good people suffer when confronted with changes and challenges. In certain cases, using these techniques brings about positive change. Abraham, for instance, felt sad that he didn’t have children and afraid for his future. However, he was able to radically change his attitude by remembering the promise Jehovah had made that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars! That thought replaced the negative thoughts, and Abraham was able to remain steadfast in his course, staying open to the blessings of the present and the possibilities of the future.

It is always helpful to remember our childhood hopes and dreams, especially when we don’t feel hopeful in the present. Focusing on the thought of future

happening, while thinking of aspects of your life.”



photo by MIRIAM DECKERT BLACKMON

happiness and fulfillment can drive away negative thoughts. Then we will be able to recognize the nature of our feelings, and choose thoughts to support good feelings or change negative feelings.

Another example from the Bible comes from the story of David, who suffered the devastating loss of his son. He was so sad he went to bed and did not intend to return to his royal duties. However, his best friend came to him and roused him up, reminding him of his duties and how the people depended on him. David then stirred himself and returned to his life, although still mourning his loss.

We can also be roused from mental lethargy by remembering how we can serve others (especially when reminded by a friend or loved one). In fact, being active in our life gives us the chance to see how the great change we have experienced has not destroyed our life. We may have lost an important relationship or a job, but we can still find opportunities to connect with other people and to feel useful and needed.

If we practice naming our feelings and acknowledging the thoughts that support those feelings, we will be able to face the difficult spiritual work of obeying the Lord while simultaneously giving Him control of the outcome.

If this technique is new to you, it may take some work to be able to identify your feelings and their associated thoughts. Many people discover that writing in a journal every day for some weeks is transforming. Writing about your feelings and thoughts may be a huge effort, forcing you to give up some other recreation, or stay up late or get up early, but being able to quickly name your feelings and notice the thoughts that support them can offer greater freedom and control over reactions to life's circumstances.

Change continues to happen. Obviously, we can't stop it. Occasionally we can slightly bend its course. But most of the time we feel helpless in the face of our circumstances. After identifying your feelings and thoughts, practice accepting what is happening, while thinking of one of the good aspects of your life. This will allow you to freely turn to the Lord and remember (or decide for the first time) that He is in charge. He will do all in His power to bring good out of your life situation. ●



Clark Echols is the pastor of the Glendale New Church (www.newchurch-cincy.org) and also the visiting Pastor for the Los Angeles New Church (www.newchurchla.org).

Integrating spirituality into your daily life can be simple. Many spiritual paths emphasize right action as the essence of spirituality. Similarly, the New Church teaches that our eternity, our happiness, is not determined by what we believe alone but by how we live. Here are three steps that can help you to experience greater happiness today.

3 Steps TO GREATER HAPPINESS

Reach Out

Seek out the unexpected blessings present in your own personal struggles and suffering. Consider a difficult event in your life, for example, an injury or illness, a loss, or a time of despair. Take the lessons and understanding you gained from that difficult experience and reach out to someone who is experiencing a similar challenge today.

“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others.” —JESUS, *Mark 10:45*

“When the Lord is with someone He leads him or her and makes provision so that all that happens, whether sad or joyful, may bring him what is good.”

—EMANUEL SWEDENBORG, *Secrets of Heaven* 6303

“I don’t think of all the misery, but of the beauty that still remains.” —ANNE FRANK, *The Diary of a Young Girl*

Think Positive

Focus your thoughts on positive, loving and encouraging sentiments towards other people: a close friend; someone who has a neutral presence in your life; someone with whom you have conflict.

“Those who have charity hardly notice the evil in another person, but instead notice all the goods and truths that are his; and on his evils and falsities they place a good interpretation.” —EMANUEL SWEDENBORG, *Secrets of Heaven* 1079

“I am a little pencil in the hand of a writing God who is sending a love letter to the world.” —MOTHER TERESA

Take Action

Do not wait for inspiration or motivation, just do something—anything—whether it is sweeping the floor, organizing a closet, or going for a walk. Break the inertia or bad energy you may be experiencing by doing a simple activity. Notice how your energy shifts.

“Act precedes, a person’s willing follows.”
—EMANUEL SWEDENBORG, *Secrets of Heaven* 4353.3

“I am only one; but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; I will not refuse to do something I can do.” —HELEN KELLER

The Path to Happ

by Rev. Grant H. Odhner

We will find happiness when we make wise choices. It is easy to blame our poor choices on circumstances, and to say, “Given the right circumstances I would have chosen well and wisely.” But to think this way is to fail to see our true freedom, and to fail to accept the growth opportunities that the Lord is continually providing for us, both when outer circumstances are positive and when they are difficult.

The Lord challenges us to lay up treasures in heaven, not on earth (Matthew 6:19-20). He encourages us to keep our outlook clear—“the lamp of our eye single”—if we want to have light (Matthew 6:22). We must keep our spiritual focus and purpose. And with that focus, we must face the decision of whether to serve God or riches; we can’t

serve both (Matthew 6:24). These verses remind us that we must choose, and we will be blessed if we choose a spiritual focus. The Lord encourages us to trust Him. Sometimes we may worry that by choosing a spiritual path we will make life more difficult. But this is not true. He will take care of us if we seek first His kingdom and its righteousness. It is this innocent trust in Him that opens us up to receive His power to choose the higher path, the path that ultimately leads to happiness.

Let me tell you about the experiences of a man we’ll call “John.” John is in a slump. His job is irksome to him—too many routine tasks, nothing exciting on the horizon, not enough challenge. Chores are mounting at home. The cars are due for inspection. Fire wood needs splitting. The deck furniture needs storing. His shirts need ironing, and the list goes on. There are things he’d rather do, but they don’t seem like possibilities. Things are not great with his wife. She



photo by MIRIAM DECKERT BLACKMON

The path to happiness is one we must choose to walk daily. Grant Odhner explores how we are free to choose happiness and how our level of happiness is our own responsibility and not dependent on our circumstances.

has seemed wrapped up in her own busyness. And the children always seem to be her priority. John's mind wanders away from what he truly values. The choices he makes begin a descent into dark places, and into the consequences: shame, self-loathing, and isolation. It's a grim place. He does not emerge from it quickly or easily.

Now, a month or so later, things are different for John. There have been changes in his outlook: some hard learning, some better choices through his efforts to turn to God. There have not been great changes at work, and home-life still holds many responsibilities, yet they don't seem so burdensome. Life with his wife is not all that different, but he feels "closer" to her. He even takes pleasure in her busy lifestyle and in the way she pays attention to the children's lives. John feels a satisfying sense of connection with others and a certain contentedness with his life. And when faced with a tempt-

ing situation, he chooses not to wander. He's got better things to do. He's got a higher sense of direction.

There is no explaining human choice. It's easy to point to circumstances and excuse John, explaining away his poor choice and saying he wasn't really free. But he was free. In fact, those situations could be re-cast so that things were going well in his outer life, and yet he might still make that bad choice. And when things were down for him, he might have "toughed it out," resisted the urge to be selfish, and gained strength and a greater measure of happiness from that choice. There is no explaining human choice.

Consider the experience of Victor Frankl, a Jewish psychiatrist who survived life in a Nazi concentration camp (his wife and parents did not survive). In studying his own and others' responses to life under those horrendous conditions, he concluded that the meaning of life is found in every moment of living, good and bad, and that we truly are free to choose our response. He wrote:

"Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is

“We can let a positive thought ‘trump’ the spontaneous negative

our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.

Everything can be taken from a man or a woman but one thing: the last of human freedoms, to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”

In considering the issue of our making wise choices, the first thing that we need to accept is that we are free to choose, that we must choose, and that we are responsible for our choices. The Writings for the New Church confirm this. We read:

Let anyone, if he wishes, ask himself whether he can think seventy times a day, or three hundred times a week, about God...and...the spiritual matters of the church.

Is he at that moment aware of any compulsion ..., whether or not he has faith? Test yourself too, whatever your present state, to see if you can think anything at all without free will, whether in your conversation, [or] in your prayers to God.... Is not freedom of choice the all-important feature in these actions? (*True Christian Religion* 480; cf. 497)

We are free. And that means that regardless of our situation we can say “Good morning” to the person who has greeted us and mean it. We can let a positive thought “trump” the spontaneous negative thoughts that come to mind. We are free, and responsible. (Victor Frankl noted that we have a Statue of Liberty on the east coast of the USA; he thought we should have a Statue of Responsibility on the west coast.)

Make no mistake: there is pleasure to be had in putting ourselves first in all things, in the challenge of forging our own happiness—engaging in our friendships, in our church life, in our work, with primarily ourselves in mind. There are satisfying things about managing our life for our own convenience, acquiring economic security, maintaining our creature comforts.

These are real pleasures. Choosing them does have some negative consequences. But the path to heaven has negative consequences for the natural part of us, and it always will. That part of us will always need to face short-



photo by JONATHAN KLINE

“The meaning of life is found in every moment of living, good

thoughts that come to mind. We are free, and responsible.”

term barriers to its delights and be required to wait and subordinate itself. The point is that whether we choose heaven or hell there are consequences which we accept as part of that choice. One choice is not inherently less desirable than the other. Heaven is truly a better choice; but what we find more “desirable” no one but ourselves can decide. The individual decides which choice is “life” for him or her, and which one is “death.”

We tip the balance with our choice. Nothing is stopping us from going this way or that. We choose. With equal pressure on us from both sides, why choose to believe in the Lord and follow Him? Why lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven and not just go for the tangible ones we find on earth? Why believe that His way is good and leads to greater blessing?

Ultimately, we believe in the Lord and choose His way because we want to. We all continually feel the pressure to act for self-advantage. There are short-term benefits and pleasures in doing that. We can look back at a history of acting-for-self and think that it's the easiest thing to do. On the other hand, we can also look back at a rich history of having experienced the satisfaction of denying self and putting ideals first. We've all experienced the profound joy of cooperation, and of mutuality in a relationship. We've felt the joy of serving without thought of reward. And though we come into times of struggle



Photo by LUKAS ODHNER

and doubt and must fight to stay on the path, fight to reassert that choice, fight for what we love, our faith in the Lord sustains us. We know that we will find deeper happiness if we choose His way. We trust Him. We are touched by His truth. We believe His promises. And we are inspired to choose wisely, to choose to be happy, when He reassures us:

Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Matthew 6.25-33) ●



Rev. Grant Odhner is a visiting pastor in New York City and also a teacher at the Academy of the New Church Theological School; find out more about the Theological School at www.ancts.org.

and bad, and we truly are free to choose our response.”

HOW TO BE *Happy* IN YOUR MARRIAGE

Often on television today weddings are portrayed as joyful events while marriages look like a burden. Lori Odhner shows how to shake this negative concept of marriage in your own relationship and to carry the contentment and joy of your wedding day on into your life together. *By Lori Odhner*

We live in a world that is saturated with images of happiness. I can be driving along contentedly when I see a billboard that instantly convinces me that I would be happier if I stopped and bought fries and a cola. But wait! I don't even like soda! Other commercials convince me that happiness comes with a new car. Without my paying attention, that message takes root in my brain. Ideas of what happiness looks like are imposed on me from the outside all the time. But, I can also choose to take the lead. I can promote feelings of contentment with what I already have.

I heard of a man who loved and missed his wife deeply after she died. One way

he nourished that love was to take her framed picture with him wherever he traveled, unpack it first and put it up in plain view. Another couple I know say their wedding vows on the first day of every month, to strengthen their commitment. Sometimes they are not feeling especially happy when they start, but we can lead our feelings with greater intention than comes from glancing at a billboard.

My own dear husband has a new motto. He says "You are my highest priority." Sometimes it is completely heartfelt, and other times I wonder if he is



reminding himself. I, too, have been known to forget. Often in our marriage support groups we start by inviting couples to tell the story of how they fell in love. It is delightful to



photo by MICHELLE KING

I have never played football. But I have watched movies of people who do. I have seen teams that were discouraged slump in at halftime and hear a pep talk that rejuvenates their resolve and sends them tearing back onto the field. They have learned ways to shift from hopelessness to cheering with abandon. Recently, there were people who went to great lengths to get tickets to the World Series games in Philadelphia.

In a depressed economy they were still highly motivated to spend a month's mortgage to be at a game in the pouring rain that they could have watched from their cozy living rooms. Imagine if we put a similar amount of effort and commitment into creating happiness in our marriages!

We can choose good things for our marriages. We can look at pictures of our ideals instead of advertising for fast food and cars. We can recite the words that once came so easily, and so invite those feelings to return. We can tell our own stories and hear them anew. We can find a coach or mentor who can cheer us on at halftime. We can choose to attend a conference that surrounds us with a community of

see
the
change
in them
as they
speak, taking
out memories and
dusting them off.

*“We can choose
good things for
our marriages.”*

love for marriage. And maybe we will find ourselves in the midst of a jubilant parade, celebrating the victory of marriage. ●



Lori Odhner
is the director of the
Caring for Marriage program.

Learn more at
www.caringformarriage.org

Are ancient biblical stories relevant to your life today?

The Writings of the New Church offer deeper meanings to Bible stories, providing greater insight into how they can be applied to our lives. Rev. Amos Glenn explains how a story about the children of Israel living in the wilderness relates to our own spiritual journey.

Bible Story Excerpted from Exodus 16:9-36

And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, "I have heard the complaints of the children of Israel. Speak to them, saying, 'At evening you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. And you shall know that I am Jehovah your God.'"

So it was that quails came up at evening and covered the camp, and in the morning the dew lay all around the camp. And when the layer of dew lifted, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was a tiny round substance, as fine as frost on the ground.

And Moses said to them, "This is the bread which Jehovah has given you to eat." "This is the thing which Jehovah has commanded: 'Let every man gather it according to each one's need.'"

Every man had gathered according to each one's need. And Moses said, "Let no one leave any of it till morning." Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses. But some of them left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. So they gathered it morning by morning, every man according to his need.



*The peace and joy of heaven
are available to us.*

Bible Story Insight

The Lord wants us to have the peace and joy of heaven. Everything He does leads us away from misery and toward happiness. A willingness to follow the Lord's instructions doesn't come naturally to most of us, so we are unhappy at times. The children of Israel complained about their suffering in the wilderness because they trusted neither Moses nor Jehovah to take care of even their needs. Ironically, this very mistrust was the source of their misery.

Just as He cared for the Children of Israel, the Lord responds to our unhappy grumbings by sending two types of happiness: natural (meant by quail) and spiritual (meant by bread). The flavorful quail corresponds to the natural feelings of pleasure that come from doing a good deed—sometimes for selfish reasons. The Lord provides these positive feelings to motivate us, even when we aren't feeling loving, to sustain us during times of struggle.

While sustaining us with feelings of happiness (quail), the Lord also offers bread, corresponding to unselfish, spiritual happiness. Tasting the bread corresponds to genuinely enjoying serving the neighbor, authentic good feelings not mixed with self-gratification. The bread is satisfying and nutritious; quail was tasty, but the bread was life-giving. The bread corresponds to the happiness of heaven, which the Lord provides each of us.

Here is the catch: you cannot generate these simple, good ideas yourself. The bread was impossible to store and it is impossible to provide ourselves with heavenly life. The test for the children of Israel was to collect only as much as was needed for the day and to trust that the Lord would feed them again tomorrow. Bread stored overnight became putrid and full of worms. This is a picture of what happens when we lack trust in the Lord and His Providence.

Happiness comes from the daily journey. We are filled with heavenly happiness when we gather true ideas from the Lord's Word and make them part of who we are, when we do what the Lord teaches because we acknowledge Him as God. The Lord understands there are times when the bread is difficult to eat, when it seems tasteless, dry and unpleasant. In those times, the lower delights, represented by the quail, serve to motivate us to continue acting in a good way. These actions form a container into which the Lord can rain down the bread of life and its heavenly happiness. ●

[T]hat the manna was given every morning and that worms bred in what was left over, means that the Lord provides people's requirements every day and that for this reason they ought not to be anxious to acquire them of themselves.

—*Secrets of Heaven* 8478



Rev. Amos Glenn is Pastor of the Pittsburgh New Church.

Find out more about the church at www.pittsburghnewchurch.org

CONGREGATIONS around the world



The New Church is a new Christianity that provides a clear path to 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.

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focus on the New Church at

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The New Church at Boynton Beach, Florida is a strong spiritual community, emphasizing the importance of knowing the Lord through the Old and New Testaments and the Writings of the New Church.



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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.

Here are core teachings of the New Church:

- **There is one loving, personal God, and He is the Lord Jesus Christ.**
- **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.
- **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. 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.
- **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, and His angels are with us every moment.

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 *Secrets of Heaven* and *Heaven and Hell*.



“Those who
trust in the *Lord* are
constantly receiving *good*
from Him; for whatever
happens to them,
whether it seems to be
advantageous or not
advantageous, is
nevertheless good, for it
serves as a means contributing
to their *eternal happiness*.”

—*Secrets of Heaven* 8480

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