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## **The New Church Newsletter**

### **Hurstville Society June 2024**

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### **That Missing Chapter from Conjugal Love**

by Rev Todd Beiswenger

I was in my second year at Bryn Athyn College, and I was taking a class on *Conjugal Love*. The class started around 8am, so I was up early getting ready when the house phone rang. It was my Dad. He was on his way to work, 30 minutes from home, and his car had a flat tire, and the wrench that came with the car had broken in his attempt to remove the tire. He was asking me to drive out with some good tools and rescue him.

I said, “Ok, but I’ll have to skip my *Conjugal Love* class this morning, so if my marriage turns out bad, it’s all your fault.” I didn’t even have a girlfriend at the time, so I don’t think he was too worried about my marriage.

However, June 12 marks 25 years of marriage for me, and there have been a number of times where I’ve gotten things wrong and thought, “I must have missed a lot in that one class.” Yet, when I later looked through *Conjugal Love*, I couldn’t find my answers there either. I know that there are a few missing numbers throughout the Writings, some in *Arcana*, TCR 765, and there’s lots missing from *Coronis*... so maybe there’s a missing chapter in *Conjugal Love*?

This “missing chapter” became a bit of joke among my guy friends about 20 years ago. We were all early in our marriages, and finding that our preconception that “marriage = bliss” was, well, wrong. “Marriage” did not in fact equal “bliss.” Many of us complained – men and women – that *Conjugal Love* sold us a picture of marriage that just didn’t match our reality.

So what are some things I’ve learned over the past 25 years, things that are not found in the pages of *Conjugal Love*?

Your wife is not one of the guys. I know, it’s rather obvious as she’s way better looking than one of the guys, but let’s take a look at the following quote: “When friendship and mutual trust join together with the first love in marriage, conjugal love results, which opens the partners' hearts and inspires in them the sweet enjoyments of love, and this more and more deeply as friendship and trust are added to the original love, and as that original love enters into this friendship and trust and they into it” (CL 162)

What did I take from this? Your wife is your friend. Friendship is the starting point. However, being friends with another guy was an experience of bantering and making fun of each other. For example, calling another guy that you're friends with an "idiot," "stupid" or "fool" is fine. Even a "stupid fool" is totally acceptable. Now, I don't think I ever called my wife any of those things, but my point is that wives apparently don't find male banter to be playful or fun. Who knew?! I remember once being told by my wife in no uncertain terms, "Support your wife!" I never saw that instruction in *Conjugal Love!* So your wife *is* your friend, but not in the same way a guy is. Got it.

Children add stress to the relationship! Let's talk about another thing that doesn't equal "bliss." Don't get me wrong, children are the greatest thing, even better than fast cars and motorcycles, but oh my, I didn't realize in advance how many places they can put a wedge between the parents. I actually think it was when we had Zach and our friends were having kids too that this whole "missing chapter" thing really came up. None of us were really prepared for what was happening. Managing nap times, feeding times, trying to keep the household going, and finding that one partner thinks some of these things are really important, while the other does not, creates a massive disconnect in the relationship. One example I heard about from many couples was a disagreement over whether or not their child should sleep in their bed with them, and for how long. There was one marriage I thought might actually end over this one.

So when we read "That conjugal love is conjoined with the love of infants with parents, by causes spiritual and hence natural" (CL 404), we can know that, yes, this is true, but while plenty of couples go through pre-marriage counseling courses, I actually think that couples

might do well to do some pre-parenting courses as well... or at least some sort of warning about what they're getting into.

Love Languages Are Real. What I'm about to write is something that I think every married man has encountered at some point. We're going along, doing our thing, and when we look over at our spouse, we know that we've done something wrong. We don't know what, but clearly the waters are not smooth at the moment. What are we to do? Go ahead, do a deep dive study in *Conjugal Love* and look for the answer of what to do when your wife is mad at you, and you don't know why! If you look through the section on "colds in marriages" you will find that there are things that create problems in a marriage... stiving for control over each other and/or treating your wife like a harlot are a couple mentioned... but what if, maybe, those aren't the problems you're dealing with? I feel pretty confident I was doing neither of those things.

What I've come to find more often than not, is that my wife is simply not feeling loved at that time. Usually I've omitted doing or saying something that she wanted done or said, and as a result she feels that I have not loved her. This of course, is not how I saw things, and thus, this is where the problem actually lies. What I was expressing as love, or had previously expressed, as love was not being perceived as love(it also turns out some mutually agreed upon expressions also seem to wear out, or expire, with time and need the expression renewed). Again, explanation of this must have been in the missing chapter.

However, I have reason to believe that perhaps at least some remnants of the missing chapter have been found and perhaps published under a different title. In Gary Chapman's 1992 book, *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate*, he says that people express and wish to receive love differently, and that often

things go wrong for a couple when one partner is expressing their love for the partner in a way that is not being perceived as love. Chapman's five love languages are: words of affirmation, acts of service, receiving gifts, quality time, and physical touch.

For me, this book was gold. It was something that struck me as both obvious and common sense when I read it, and yet, I clearly needed the education. From what I've read, Chapman learned this through years of marriage counseling. However, my suspicion is that he had access to the missing *Conjugal Love* chapter from legendary Swedenborgian Johnny "Appleseed" Chapman... who maybe, just maybe, is actually Gary Chapman's great-great-great-great grandfather.

So while there are many things, useful and true things, that I did learn from studying *Conjugal Love*, these are just a few of the things I've learned elsewhere over the past 25 years. Maybe I've saved you from making the same mistakes I have. Or you might be thinking, "You're a slow learner," and quite frankly I think that's what my wife has concluded about me as well. But, she's also concluded that I do make progress, slow though it may be, and we actually do make a great pair. I'm also sure she's hoping I'll learn some more things about marriage over the next 25, things that I'm sure are in that missing chapter of *Conjugal Love*.

## **2025 NCIA Retreat – January 2-6 at Stanwell Tops**

I think the headline captures the basics... there's going to be a retreat at "The Tops" in January. There was plenty of feedback regarding the accommodations for the proposed camp this past January, and your cries have been heard.

We will have access to two sites at The Tops:

- Boronia - 16 ensuite bedrooms, 2 meeting rooms, sleeps 86

Situated with breathtaking ocean views and a beautiful bush outlook. Each room has a double bed. The building is surrounded by outdoor balconies. Each bed has a pillow and light doona. Disabled access room available. 3 air conditioned meeting rooms.

- The Retreat - 5 bed, 3 bath, kitchen, lounge, sleeps 18 A self contained fully air conditioned house nestled in the bush and opposite the pool. It's only a short 2 minute walk from Boronia. One bedroom has an ensuite. All rooms have a double bed. Each bed has a pillow and light doona.

Prices (all per person)

Adult twin with ensuite \$490.00. Adult shared \$450.00
Pensioner twin with ensuite \$470.00. Pensioner shared \$420.00
Student (14-17) \$350.00. Student (9-13) \$300.00
Child (5-8) \$250.00. Child (3-4) \$140.00. Baby (0-2) free

That said, don't let money be an issue for you. We want you there if you want to be there. We've been given a generous donation by Kurt and Martha Asplundh, which we've decided to use for subsidies for the retreat. Contact Murray Heldon ([ozmuzz@gmail.com](mailto:ozmuzz@gmail.com)) for details on subsidies.

Lastly, we need 41 people to make this camp a "go," and we need the 41 to sign up by September 1. Initial sign ups have been good, we've already got 30+ who are coming, including some teens, but we would love to have more than just the bare minimum. Come and join the party and contact [nciarettreat@gmail.com](mailto:nciarettreat@gmail.com) to book in for the event!

## **More Meetings! Pastor Away June 24-July 5**

One of unique things for me is that I attend clergy meetings for two organizations: the General Church and the New Church in Australia. I wrote about the NCIA meetings last month, but in June I'll be heading off to Bryn Athyn with Jenn for GC clergy meetings and the GC Assembly.

It's going to be a really busy and fast trip. We leave here on the 24<sup>th</sup>, meetings go right into the Assembly, which runs through Sunday June 30<sup>th</sup>. I've given us two days to do whatever in Philly, probably just visiting with family, then getting back on the plane on July 3, arriving back on the 5<sup>th</sup>. It'll be the kind of trip where I just get over the jet lag from the flight to Philly when I'll have to return home.

I'll also mention now that we'll be taking our family holiday in July, departing on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Basically I'll be back from the US for one Sunday, then miss the next two. We'll have to figure out what will happen here in my absence.

## **Vastations Part 2 - Doctrinal Class, June 13<sup>th</sup> 11am**

Our class for May was on vastations, and the idea was to present an overview of the topic that to my mind is one that we rarely spend any time talking about. In doing my research to put together the class, I ended up finding that there was a lot more to present than I could possibly do in a single, one-hour class. As a result, we'll have a continuation of the topic for our June class as well.

There are a couple of things I want to explore. One is that the plagues of Egypt and the opening of the seals of the scroll in Revelation are both stories about vastations, so I'd like to compare and contrast these. Additionally, there are a number of interesting passages about the

different methods used to vastate spirits. We'll see if I can manage to present it all in an hour, or else there may be a part 3!

### **Birthdays**

Happy Birthday to Angela Caldwell and Michelle Heldon (8th), June  
Kirsten (9th), Izaak Horner (17th)

### ***What's "new" about the "New Church?"***

A very common question, to be sure. Well, it all started just over 200 years ago... the main branches of the Christian church had become less correct, and one man named Emanuel Swedenborg had written volumes about how Christianity was missing the point. Some readers of Swedenborg realised he was right, and formed a new organisation that would strip away the centuries of politics and tradition and get back to what Christianity was supposed to be about: loving God and loving each other. Everything else could be seen as merely a difference of opinion if those two main principles reigned supreme through this new church.

As a result we believe in a positive Christianity, one where we look to the best in ourselves and others while still holding ourselves accountable to a higher standard and taking responsibility for our lives. Nowadays we're not so much "new" as we are "different." We still keep the name, and yet make every effort to incorporate the ideals that were instrumental in being "new" over two centuries ago.

Editor – Rev Todd Beiswenger  
22-24 Dudley St., off Hillcrest Ave. in Penshurst  
Tel (02) 9580-1589

Email: [todd@hurstvillenewchurch.com](mailto:todd@hurstvillenewchurch.com)

<http://www.hurstvillenewchurch.com/>

Call or come at any time.