

## DOCTRINE FOR THE YOUNG

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# BEING A NEW CHURCH DISCIPLE

by the Rev. Geoffrey H. Howard

All people who receive and read this magazine, whether old or young, have in some way been affected by the teachings of the Lord's Second Coming. The Writings give us a completely new idea of the Lord God, the Creator and the Savior of mankind. We are shown how there is only one God, and how He came on earth in order that we might know Him and come to follow Him. He created us that we might learn of Him and also learn what He wants us to do so that He can lead us into His heavenly kingdom.

**“The Lord leads all people through spirits and angels....”**

We are told that the Lord can lead people to heaven only if there is a church on this earth that worships Him as the one God of heaven and earth. That church, even if it is only with a few people, may serve as the means whereby heaven can be kept open to the vast myriads of people who do not yet know the Lord. As long as such a church is kept alive in the hearts and minds of faithful men and women, the saving power of the Lord can be extended to anyone else who has only a few truths by which he may be led. Regarded from this point of view, the New Church is a vitally important and a very special church. If we grow up to be good New Church men and women who seek to learn more about the Lord and learn how we should live our lives, we may then affect the lives of many others whom we cannot immediately see and perhaps may never know. The Lord leads all people through spirits and angels who are in the spiritual world, but those angels need some men and women on earth who know the Lord as He really is, and who worship Him. This is the responsibility the Lord has placed before those who will be of His New Church. Just think of what this means. We can help the Lord to bring others into heaven if we become faithful New Church people ourselves. The true New Church can exist only in the human heart, only in the heart and mind of a person who knows the Lord and is obedient to Him.

**“Each one of us can therefore become a disciple of the Lord.”**

The church is the Lord's kingdom on earth. Just as the kingdom of heaven can be formed only within the heart and mind of each man and woman, so is it also with the church. The church begins to be built in us, by the Lord, when we are young. Each one of us who knows about the New Church has a special opportunity of serving the Lord and of bringing the kingdom of heaven closer to earth through what we learn and do. In one sense we are called upon to become like the disciples whom the Lord gathered so that He could begin His Church.

Let us think for a moment about those disciples. He called them together to receive His Divine instruction while He was on earth. For three years He taught them. Often they found that their lives were not made easier simply because they had chosen to follow him. In fact, He told them that they could expect to be persecuted and ridiculed because of their willingness to follow Him.

It is the same with us. If we are to follow the Lord, then we must try to do what is right, try to do what He asks us to do. Sometimes this is not easy. We can remember how frightened the disciples became when the Lord was being tried and when He was finally crucified upon the cross. That was a very lonely time, not only for the Lord, but also for the disciples. It was a severe test of their faith, a temptation. However, those same disciples, once they had seen that He rose from the dead and continued to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, then their faith was restored and truly established. After that, all earthly fear left their hearts. In the end, Peter's faith became so strong that he preferred to die as a martyr rather than to deny the Lord. He had made that mistake once, but he did not make it a second time.

The Lord further explains to us that anyone who is prepared to believe in Him, and to follow Him by, doing what He says, can also become one of His disciples. That is true for each New Churchman living in this world today. Each one of us can therefore become a disciple of the Lord. That is what the Lord asks of us in the New Church. In some ways that may not sound very exciting. However, it is the only way to live a truly happy life and find the real treasures of life. There is actually a deep sense of happiness and peace that the Lord can give to those who love Him, and this we do not always appreciate when we are young.

We all want to be happy. We would like to be successful perhaps in our school work and, then, in securing a fine position of employment when we grow up. We would like to find someone truly wonderful whom we can marry, someone with whom we can find a true and eternal relationship. We would probably like to have a family and have our children grow up to become good and useful men and women. Yes, everyone wants to be happy.

**“...we must ask ourselves if the Lord would like us to do it.”**

However, only the Lord can give true happiness to us. We cannot make ourselves happy—not from ourselves. Only the Lord can do that. We can allow Him to make us happy by following Him and by learning of His teachings and thus being numbered as one of His disciples.

How do we do this? We must learn from our teachers and our parents about the Lord. We must read the Word for ourselves and find out what the Lord is like, discover what He expects from us, and do that. Only then can we become truly happy.

Sometimes others may entice us to do things that we know from conscience, and from the teachings of the Word, are wrong. When this happens, we must ask ourselves if the Lord would like us to do it. If the answer is “no” we must muster the courage to say “no,” and to turn away from following those who would entice us to do evil. This is not always easy, but it is following the Lord. Some might ridicule and persecute us, and perhaps speak of us unkindly. The Lord did not promise that life would always be easy, but He did promise that if we would be faithful unto Him, if we would follow Him in the first place, then He would give us heavenly treasure which would be safe and last forever.

We have all made mistakes. We have all done things wrong. But let us remember how we feel when we have made a mistake. We feel terrible inside. If we are caught we are punished. However, after we have accepted the punishment we feel as though a burden has been lifted from our shoulders and we begin to sense a new quality of peace. There is always the opportunity to start anew, to begin again. So let us remember that if we are to be true disciples of the Lord, true New Church people, we must be prepared to take up our cross daily and to follow the Lord.