

## **The Rewards of Total Love**

Excerpted from a pamphlet on *Marriage Love*  
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When we feel romantic, we talk in flowery terms about marriage and all it does for us and sometimes the words seem a bit forced. On the other hand, talking of our love is a good thing. Putting it into words, finding ways of telling someone how much he or she means to you is a real contribution to that person's happiness. How often do you hear someone say she is sick of hearing her husband tell her how much he loves her?

In the remarkable book about marriage called *Conjugal Love*, Swedenborg talks about the rewards of true marriage love. He makes the point that these go on forever because a couple who love each other tenderly here on earth will go right on doing so in the world to come and will live as husband and wife in the Lord's kingdom.

### ***Innocent Love***

The first delight Swedenborg mentions is innocence. When two people really love each other, they are often like children. They enjoy playing together; they share very simple jokes. Together they can be like two children, whereas to the rest of the world they may seem quite stern or very upright and serious. On a deeper plane, they have an openness of feeling with each other. A couple may look into each other's eyes, and the only way to describe their communication is to say it's innocent. They aren't afraid to be helpless in the presence of their love; they aren't afraid to let their deepest loves be seen. Just as children are not proud and accept the kindnesses shown by their parents, so married partners can learn to ask for what they need and to offer themselves with total trust.

There is an even deeper plane of innocence too: the fact that two people can share with each other their willingness to let the Lord lead them. We are helpless in the presence of the Lord; we need everything from Him. Perhaps only with our partners can we truly share that realization.

### ***Peaceful Love***

Another reward of marriage is peace. When your love is certain, you have tranquility. You don't have to worry about competition; you don't have to fear that your partner will stop loving you. A loved partner is a haven in the storms of life, someone you can cling to if things are bad and know that he or she will always care.

That's tranquility. Peace is even deeper. It's the positive joy of living in such a haven. The delight of doing good things with someone who is your partner and never a competitor, the happiness of working as a team in all the good things the Lord has given you to do, that wonderful feeling inside of you when you know that no angry or hurtful feeling is going to come between you, that with this person you can live your life in safety: these things are the peace of marriage. You won't have that perfect peace until you get to heaven, but you can get glimpses of the heaven that's waiting for you, even here on earth.

## ***Friendship***

One of the most tangible rewards of marriage is friendship and the confidence that goes with it. Getting to be good friends is something you can actually watch happen. Often people fall in love, and friendship seems to come later, but it is an essential ingredient of any love. Swedenborg calls it the face and the clothing of love.

What does that mean? Well, clothes are worn and put off; they are not a part of a person. A certain garment might be treasured for a year or two and then rejected without any regret. The “clothes” of love are the things good friends do together. When you’re young, you might go hiking, or play tennis, or build cupboards in your kitchen. It’s fun. It brings you close together. With time your interests change, and so the garments of love change. You find different things to share.

The face is part of a person. It doesn’t get cast off. The “face” of love is sharing feelings about the things of earthly life. It’s communicating; it’s giving the ideas and feelings of your mind to someone. That’s more precious.

You know, it’s a funny thing, but friendship in marriage has to be learned. Many people—usually the husbands—find sharing their ideas and feelings a hard thing to do. But as two people grow together, and as they work on communication and learn to trust the other not to hurt them if they open up, then they find ways to break through the barriers inside of them. They give of themselves and find deep pleasure in doing so, and they find a friendship that is on a higher plane than any other friendship.

Swedenborg mentions one more reward of true marriage love; the heartfelt wish to do whatever good things you can for your partner. That tender concern for the mind and body of the loved one is the most tangible blessing of a complete love.

## ***Is This Impractical?***

Now maybe it seems that all these blessings are just so many words. People might be tempted to say, “Innocent, trusting love; peaceful love; complete and confident friendship: that doesn’t sound like the kind of marriage I know. It sounds impractical.”

Every ideal sounds impractical. Every promise the Lord makes for our happiness sounds impractical. And let’s face it: if we are going to try to do it for ourselves, it’s not just impractical, it’s hopeless. *You* can’t build your marriage into an ideal, totally loving union. *You* can’t create peace and innocence in your relationship.

These aren’t pipe dreams pulled out of the air. They are promises from the God of heaven and earth, and *He* can make them happen. He can do it for every person who was ever born, if that person wants it.

Isn’t it true that you want it? Don’t you want to live your life on earth with someone whom you love and cherish with growing charity? Don’t you want to regain your youth and good looks in heaven, and serve the God of heaven as a completely loving couple, ever young, always together?

You can. The Lord has said you can if you want to badly enough. He can make it come true.