

Swedenborgian Sunday School Notes for the Revised Common Lectionary

Mark 10:2–16 • Lasting Relationships

Prepared by the Rev. Lee Woofenden

Mark 10:2–16 Lasting relationships

Psalms 26 Calling on God in difficult times

Overview

This lesson focuses on family relationships: relationships between married partners and between adults and children. Younger classes can discuss kindness and unselfishness as the basis for *any* good and lasting relationship. Older classes can deal with specific issues of sexual and marital relationships, bringing out their spiritual source and nature.

Key Points

- Marriage is an expression of our deepest longings to be united with another person.
- Marriage works only if there is mutual respect, equality, and a desire to care for one another.
- Our childlike innocence from lack of experience should grow into an adult innocence from wisdom.

Example for Teaching Children

Who are the most important people in your life? (*Wait for their answers.*) It wouldn't be much fun if there were no other people to play with and do things with, and if there were no one to take care of us.

God purposely created us to have *relationships* with each other. What is a relationship? It is the way two (or more) people get along with other. We often think of marriage and boy-girl relationships. But there are many other kinds of relationships. Can you think of some? Our communities are made of many relationships. Today's Bible story is about how to have relationships that are friendly and caring.

First, Jesus talks about marriage relationships. Some Pharisees (religious lawyers) asked him a question about how the law of Moses allowed husbands to divorce and send away their wives for any reason they wanted to. Jesus said that Moses gave them that law because they were hardhearted—in other words, because they didn't know or care what love and marriage were all about.

Love and marriage are about caring for another person just as much as we care for ourselves. If either or both partners are self-centered and want to “run the show,” it will ruin a marriage just as it ruins our friendships if we always tell our friends what to do, and never listen to what *they* want to do.

This brings us back to innocence, which we talked about two weeks ago. In our lesson today, Jesus says that we need to become like children in order to enter the kingdom of God (meaning heaven).

Why don't babies hurt anyone? Mostly because they are too small. (There are also angels with them.) Can kids your age hurt people? Yes, because you are stronger and you know more. When we are babies we are innocent mostly because we aren't old enough to hurt anyone. But now that we are older, we have to learn not to *want* to hurt anyone, but to always love each other. This is called “innocence from wisdom,” and it is the kind of innocence angels have.

Basic Correspondences

marriage = union of thoughts and feelings

children = innocence from lack of experience

elderly people = innocence from wisdom

Thoughts from Swedenborg

People who have real marital love constantly want to be one person; but those who do not have marital love want to be two people. In essence, marital love is nothing but two people wanting to be one. That is, they want two lives to become one life. . . .

People who do not have marital love are just the opposite—as they well know. They do not grasp what the Lord's words mean, “they are no longer two, but one flesh” (Matt. 19:6), since due to the separation of their souls and minds, they always think of themselves as two people. *Marital Love #215*

When partners fight for dominance, it causes coldness in the marriage. The main goal of marital love is a union of intentions, and the freedom this brings. Vying for the upper hand (control) throws this right out of the marriage. It divides the partners' intentions, splitting them into sides, and changes the freedom of agreement into slavery. *Marital Love #248*

The innocence of our early stages is the innocence of babies and children; the innocence of our later stages is the innocence of adults and elderly people who are involved in the goodness of love for the Lord. The innocence of babies and children is on a surface level, and lies in a total lack of experience. But the innocence of elderly people is deeper within, and lies in wisdom. *Arcana Coelestia #9301*