

The Lord flows into this filling us with heavenly delight.

*A marriage of good and truth radiates from the Lord and flows into people, and they receive it according to the state of their minds and of their lives.*

*A person receives truth from the Lord, and the Lord adds good to this truth to the extent that the person applies truth in his actions.*

*The Lord forms a church in a person in this way because then he is joined with the Lord in good from Him and in truth that seems to come from himself. So the person is in the Lord and the Lord in him, according to His words in John 15:4-5.*

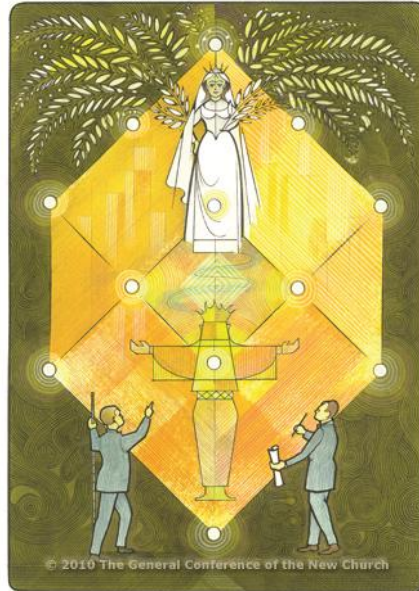
Love in Marriage 121,123-124

When we live our lives from the Word of God we are united with the Lord in the deepest way and suffused with the light of his love. This relationship is epitomized in the beautiful image of the holy city shining with the radiance of a bride.

*I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.*

*“Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”*

Revelation 21:2, 9



## Loving the Lord - as our Father and Husband



**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name. Matthew 6:9**

**Have we not all one Father?  
Did not one God create us? Malachi 2:10**

**For your Maker is your husband -  
the LORD Almighty is his name -  
the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer;  
he is called the God of all the earth. Isaiah 54:5**

### Our Father

For most of us the first love we experience is from our father and mother. We imbibe it in the cradle. It is as life-giving as our mother's milk. The holding and the caring give us a sense of security and belonging, of being. We are because our parents enable us to be.

Yet they are only the instruments of our heavenly Father's creative love which brought us into being and holds us in being. What love we have to support us! And so we imbibe an awareness of God as our heavenly Father. We have him to thank for all we have. Our first responses are of thankfulness and praise, unless our experience is damaging, then later on in our life we have the possibility of knowing the real love that comes from our divine Father.

***Pause and reflect on your relationship with God as your heavenly Father. What is the essential nature of your relationship? ... What links might there be with your relationship with your own father? What might have made them different?***

## Bible focus

As we grow up Jesus becomes our prime model for our relationship with the Father, and source of our intimate knowledge of him.

*"I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth. ... no-one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."*  
Matthew 11:25, 27



Jesus prays often and teaches us to pray, 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name...' All aspects of our relationship with the Lord are embodied in this prayer. *Set aside a time to **reflect prayerfully** on each phrase and how it contributes to your relationship with your heavenly Father.*

Jesus speaks of his mission, the purpose of his life here, the trust his Father places in him, the closeness of their working together, his struggle in fulfilling his mission, their oneness. Is this what our relationship with our Father is about? A mission of love supported by love, endured through love and fulfilled by love. Beginning and ending in love.

Yet Jesus came to fulfil the law and the prophets. There was hard work, temptations to be resisted, rejection to be endured, the hells to be overcome. Love was the powerhouse, the Word of truth the sword. The inner loving Father crucial at every moment of the strife, as the Word made flesh battled with the forces of hell.

*Oh that we might have such love and faith, that we might rely on the Father in us!  
You, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.* Isaiah 63:16

*At what times are you most reliant on the Father?*

## Bridegroom and Husband

Our relationship with the Lord is not only one of Father and child, where we learn to obey our Father's will. Through love of his ways and through

love of him, who he is and how he is - his forgiving love for us, his constant presence with us, drawing us from what would harm us and hurt others to what is good and true - we grow into a new relationship with him.

The Lord will always be our Father, the One we depend on for everything, for our very life. Yet we are invited into a more mature, more equal relationship with him, taking on responsibility just as children do as they grow up. A more intimate relationship based on love and trust, becoming co-creators with him, one of bridegroom and bride, husband and wife. The promise of this is expressed in the prophets:

*As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.* Isaiah 62:5

*I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown.*  
Jeremiah 2:2

*"In that day," declares the LORD,  
"you will call me 'my husband';  
you will no longer call me 'my master'.  
I will betroth you to me forever;  
I will betroth you in righteousness and justice,  
in love and compassion.  
I will betroth you in faithfulness,  
and you will acknowledge the LORD."* Hosea 2:16,19-20

Jesus refers to himself as the bridegroom, when asked why his disciples did not fast.

*Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn [fast] while he is still with them?"* Matthew 9:15 [Mark 2:19]

*When might Jeremiah's assertion, 'how as a bride you loved me and followed me' have been true for you?*

## Teaching focus

Let us look more closely at this marriage relationship. We are drawn to the Lord, to the beautiful truths of his Word, which make sense of life and which we have absorbed into our lives and made our own, so to speak.