



Lesson Overview

1. Freedom

What impact does being compelled have on you?

2. Read & Discuss

Discover what the New Church teaches about consent, proposal and betrothal. Discuss.

New Church Concept Virginity

Virginity is a symbol of the sacredness of marriage; for after yielding her virginity the bride commits herself to the bridegroom, now her husband, and the bridegroom commits himself wholly to the bride, now his wife. Virginity is a token of conjugal love because it is a part of a covenant whose goal is that love may unite them into one. See *Conjugal Love* 503

Pre-marital sex is light in the measure that it looks to conjugal love for the reason that the person then looks, from the unchaste state in which he is, toward a chaste state. Moreover, to the extent that he prefers the chaste state, he is to that extent also in it in regard to his intellect; and to the extent that he not only prefers it, but also values it more, he is in it as well in regard to his will and so in regard to his inner self. See *Conjugal Love* 452.2



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Marriage Proposal | Betrothal

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Freedom vs. Compulsion

1. How do you feel if you are made to clean your room when you have plans?
2. How do you feel about cleaning your room when a friend is coming over?
3. Why can doing something that is not your own choice be difficult?

Compulsion or Free Choice?

Everything we do is affected by how we start. For example, if we want to build a house we must make plans, choose a good location and lay a solid foundation. If we skip a step the house may be unsafe to live in. This is true in marriage relationships too. A marriage built on a solid foundation will probably be more stable than one with a weak foundation. The first step in preparing for marriage is the decision to marry. The Writings say healthy marriages are founded on *consent*.

The consent is the essential element in marriage, and the rest of the things that follow are its formalities. *Conjugal Love* 21

Consent involves more than saying “yes” to a proposal. The proposal sets the stage for asking and giving consent *throughout* marriage. By consulting each other and sharing decisions each day partners may experience increasing freedom and trust, and a deeper sense of truly being married.

Who Proposes?

The Writings give several reasons why men should take initiative in starting a relationship and proposing marriage. The first reason is that by nature the masculine mind can more objectively consider whether a particular woman will be a suitable partner. Another reason is that men and women are attracted to the opposite sex in different ways. If a woman shows a strong interest in a man he may enjoy it and respond positively. But he may not like being pursued, or may try to take advantage of the woman’s interest by seeking sexual intimacy even though he is not interested in a real relationship. Part of the reason this happens is that men have a general love of the opposite sex. It is easy for them to be attracted by many different women. By contrast women may appreciate qualities in a number of men but tend to want a relationship with just one man. So the masculine mind looks around more freely and considers numerous possibilities, from which he chooses one. Because of her innate love for one, a woman tends to focus quickly on one man. Since this innate love is for one of the opposite sex, women are drawn to conjugal love (see *Conjugal Love* 296).

The Writings encourage us to see that men and women experience different kinds of freedom when choosing a marriage partner. A man’s freedom is in choosing the

woman to whom he will propose marriage. A woman's freedom is in accepting or declining his offer of marriage.

Discussion

1. When it comes to choosing marriage a partner the Writings support the idea that it's best for a man to propose. Why is this?
2. Compare the freedom a person has in choosing a partner with the freedom a person has in accepting or rejecting a proposal. How are these freedoms different?

Betrothal

Conjugal Love recommends that couples who have consented to marry bring their love to the Lord in a worship service called a betrothal. Although not legally binding like the commitment made during a wedding, promises made during a betrothal help a couple focus on deeper levels of friendship and love as they prepare for marriage. The Lord can bring about the marriage of a couple's spirits before they live together as husband and wife. The marriage of the spirit is an important spiritual marriage foundation that can most easily take place before partners express their love physically.

When a couple is sexually intimate their relationship focuses on a physical level of communication, and preparation for the deeper levels of marriage—the free sharing of values and ideas—does not happen. Consequently *Conjugal Love* states:

When a couple is betrothed it is not lawful to be joined physically in sexual intercourse. For if they are joined physically the order engraved on conjugal love perishes. See *Conjugal Love* 305

Focusing on spiritual qualities and healthy friendship during the time of betrothal draws a couple's souls together and provides a strong foundation for their marriage.

The Lord tells us this is the ideal way to prepare for marriage because He wants us to have the happiness of true marriage love. Premarital sex can have a negative spiritual effect on the quality of a future marriage. When we make “detours” from the ideal path we complicate the process, but the Lord gives us the opportunity to try again in each new situation. He says,

No love can ever become pure in human beings, nor in angels. So neither can conjugal love. But because the Lord primarily regards the intention that is in the will, therefore to the extent that a person has the intention and perseveres in it, to that extent he is introduced into the purity and holiness of conjugal love, and gradually makes progress in it. *Conjugal Love* 71.2

A person's efforts to cooperate with what the Lord teaches about the foundations of conjugal love pave the way to receiving the blessings the Lord intends.

Discussion

1. Have you ever witnessed a betrothal? What was it like?
2. In what ways can a betrothal ceremony help a couple prepare for marriage?
3. What are the spiritual benefits of a couple waiting to be physically intimate until after their wedding?
4. Many people make mistakes. Can conjugal love ever be completely pure?

New Church Concepts

Betrothal

The souls of two unite when love for the opposite sex is confined to one of the sex—as happens when a woman has pledged herself wholly to a young man and the man conversely has pledged himself wholly to the woman—and this is clearly apparent from the fact that their two lives unite, and so consequently their souls, because these are their life in its beginning. *Conjugal Love* 482

By betrothal each is made ready for conjugal love.... By the order engraved on it, truly conjugal love ascends and descends. It ascends from its first warmth upward toward people's souls in an effort to form conjunctions there, and this by continually more interior openings of their minds. There is, moreover, no love which strives for these openings more intensely, or which opens the interior recesses of minds more forcefully and adeptly, than conjugal love; for it is the soul in each which impels it. On the other hand, in the same moments that this love ascends toward the soul, it also descends toward the body and invests itself in it. People should know, however, that conjugal love is of the same character in its descent as it is in the height to which it ascends. If it soars aloft, it descends chaste; but if it does not soar aloft, it descends unchaste. See *Conjugal Love* 302

From this union of souls, where it exists in its spiritual holiness and purity, conjugal love flows down into the life of the entire body and fills it with blessed delights, so long as its course remains open, as is the case in people who from the Lord become spiritual. *Conjugal Love* 482