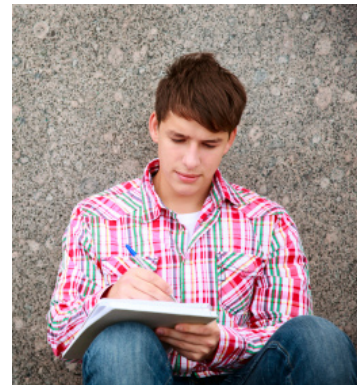


# Explore: Developing a Relationship with the Lord

The parable of the prodigal son pictures a father’s loving relationship with his two sons. On a personal level, this parable describes our relationship with our own heavenly Father. The Heavenly Doctrine for the New Church describes the steps that are needed to develop a growing relationship with the Lord. This activity explores those steps.



### Materials Needed for the Group

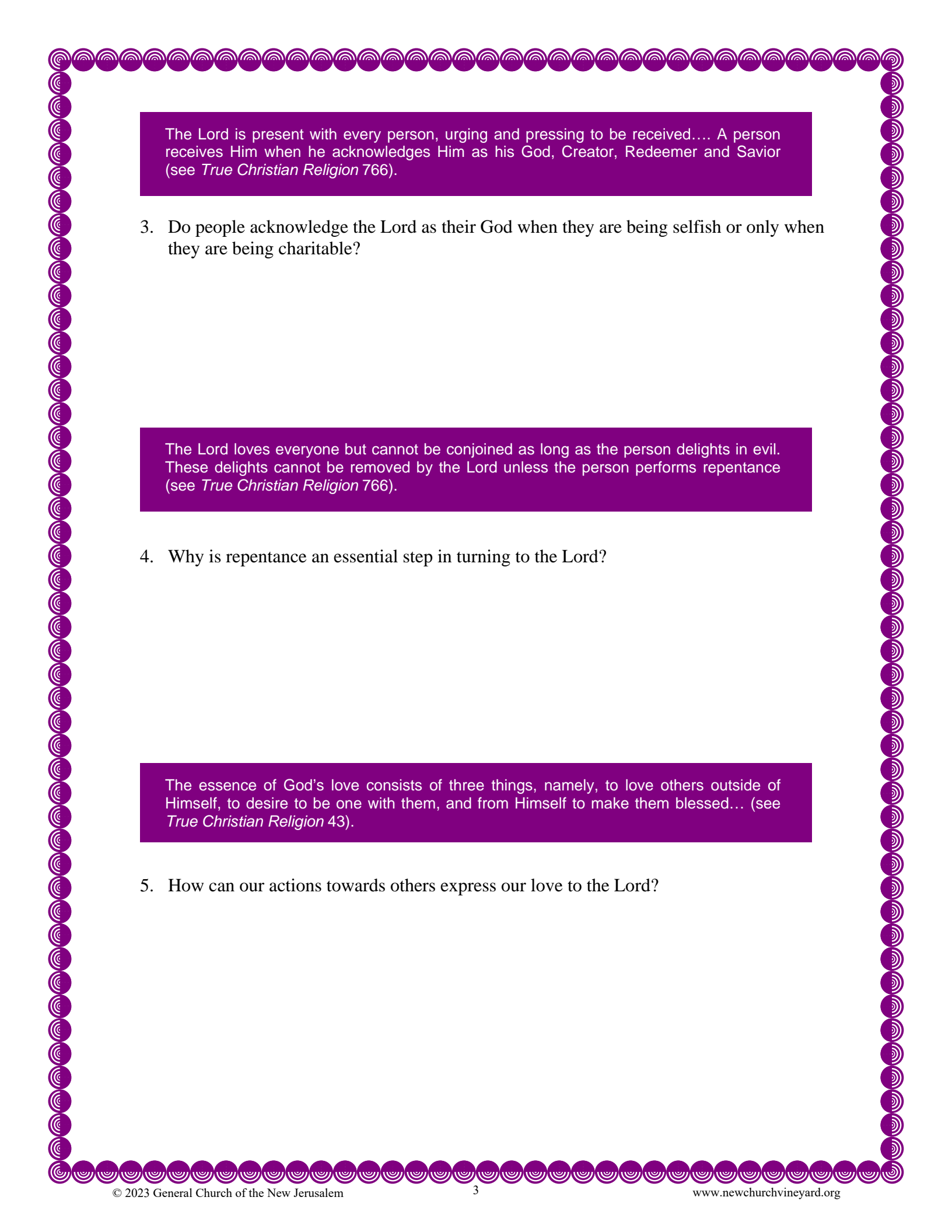
- copy of *Developing a Relationship with the Lord* (see following pages) for each student
- pen or pencil for each student
- one board or large piece of paper and a writing implement

### Warm-up Activity

1. Start this activity by brainstorming as a group. Using a board or large piece of paper, draw a blank chart or Venn diagram and invite the students to compare the relationships between the two brothers and their father. (Samples of two possible charts are given below.)
2. Add the relationship between students and their heavenly Father to the chart. How is this relationship similar to the relationship between the brothers and *their* father? It may be useful to note that our relationship with our heavenly Father varies from day to day and also at different stages of our lives.

Comparison Chart			Venn Diagram
<b>Prodigal</b>	<b>Older Brother</b>	<b>Me</b>	Note differences (in each circle) and similarities where the circles overlap  
Selfish	Faithful	Faithful	
Wasteful	Obedient	Selfish	
Remorseful	Angry		
Humbled	Jealous		





The Lord is present with every person, urging and pressing to be received.... A person receives Him when he acknowledges Him as his God, Creator, Redeemer and Savior (see *True Christian Religion* 766).

3. Do people acknowledge the Lord as their God when they are being selfish or only when they are being charitable?

The Lord loves everyone but cannot be conjoined as long as the person delights in evil. These delights cannot be removed by the Lord unless the person performs repentance (see *True Christian Religion* 766).

4. Why is repentance an essential step in turning to the Lord?

The essence of God's love consists of three things, namely, to love others outside of Himself, to desire to be one with them, and from Himself to make them blessed... (see *True Christian Religion* 43).

5. How can our actions towards others express our love to the Lord?