

Explore: Natural and Spiritual Acts of Charity

This discussion activity helps students reflect on ways they can be of service both naturally and spiritually.

Supplies Needed for Each Student

- 1-2 copies of *Natural and Spiritual Acts of Charity* chart (Charts are designed so students can explore 3 acts of charity. If you have time and students show interest, distribute a second page for them to explore the remaining 3 acts of charity.)
- pen or pencil



Preparation Needed Ahead of Time

Set the scene for this activity by presenting yourself as a hungry person. Make a sign to hold out saying something like “Hungry and homeless” or “No job, no food”. Make a second sign that says “Spiritually hungry and spiritually homeless”.

Activity

1. Show the students your first sign and pretend that you are genuinely asking for help. Brainstorm ways to help people who are hungry, who have no home or job. (See *Teacher Copy Natural and Spiritual Acts of Charity* chart for ideas as needed.)
2. Now show the second sign—“Spiritually hungry and spiritually homeless”. Brainstorm what this might mean and what we might do to help people with these needs.
3. Distribute *Natural and Spiritual Acts of Charity* student charts and pens or pencils.
4. Invite students, either individually or as a group, to choose one act of charity—e.g., I was hungry and you gave Me food—and write it in the column on the left.
5. Have the class brainstorm and then write action ideas in the second column, either individually or as a group.
6. Introduce the idea that our spirits have needs in the same way that our bodies have needs. Explain that the Heavenly Doctrines for the New Church teach that “Love sustains our spirits as food sustains our bodies.” Ask, “If love is the food of spiritual life, what might spiritual hunger be?”. Encourage brainstorming and have students write down their ideas.
7. Ask students what they can do to help meet others’ spiritual needs. Have them brainstorm and write down ideas. (See *Teacher Copy: Natural and Spiritual Acts of Charity* for ideas as needed.)
8. Repeat steps 4-7 for up to all six ideas, using a second chart page as needed.
9. Remind students that when we act in ways that support and build the Lord’s goodness and truth inside another person, we are also acting charitably towards Him.

Natural and Spiritual Acts of Charity

Natural Need	What can you do?	Spiritual Need	What can you do?

Teacher Copy Natural and Spiritual Acts of Charity

Natural need	What can you do?	Spiritual need	What can you do?
Hungry	<p>Feed a hungry person.</p> <p>Support local or global efforts to end world hunger.</p>	<p>Love sustains our spirits as food sustains our bodies.</p> <p>We hunger spiritually to have what we say and do make a difference for others.</p>	<p>Share the Lord's love through acts of useful service.</p> <p>Encourage others to find something to do that is useful to others.</p>
Thirsty	<p>Give a thirsty person a drink.</p> <p>Support water projects for people who have no clean water.</p>	<p>Truth from the Lord does for our souls what clean water does for our bodies.</p> <p>We are spiritually thirsty for truth to help clear away false ideas and wrong desires and to give our lives purpose and direction.</p>	<p>Read and think about the Word.</p> <p>Share ideas from the Word with others and lead by example.</p>
A Stranger	<p>Provide shelter or hospitality for someone who needs it.</p> <p>Invite a lonely person into your group of friends.</p>	<p>If a person does not know the Lord, then His qualities of love, wisdom and mercy are unknown.</p> <p>When the Lord's good and truth are strangers to us, we can't love His qualities in others.</p>	<p>Learn about the Lord so you can bring Him into your life.</p> <p>Get to know others so you can help their good qualities shine.</p> <p>Help others know the Lord and His qualities.</p>
Naked	<p>Give clothes to someone who needs them.</p> <p>Support causes that provide clothing for people who don't have clothes.</p>	<p>Spiritual clothing—true ideas—protect us from the heat or cold of selfishness.</p> <p>People appear naked when they act badly—when their selfishness is exposed.</p>	<p>Forgive other people's faults and mistakes when you see them.</p> <p>Help others see the true ideas that can spiritually clothe them.</p>
Sick	<p>Visit or reach out to someone who is sick.</p> <p>Support organizations that provide care for sick people or research cures for diseases.</p>	<p>When selfishness stands in the way of loving what is good and true, we are spiritually sick.</p> <p>Spiritual sickness destroys the life of faith and charity.</p>	<p>Pay attention to someone who is struggling with a bad habit by listening, and responding with love and mercy.</p> <p>Sensitively help people see a truth about the bad effects their choices are having.</p>
In Prison	<p>Reach out to someone who is in prison.</p> <p>Help families who have a loved one in prison.</p>	<p>Our minds are imprisoned when we break spiritual laws.</p> <p>Hell traps and imprisons us when we lash out in anger or participate in other forms of selfish behavior.</p>	<p>Focus on one challenge in your life. Look for help from truths you know, or learn new truths from the Lord's Word.</p> <p>Sensitively bring truth to someone who is in a mental prison.</p>