

Lesson 8: CHARITY AND WORSHIP

Doctrine of Charity, chapter 8

Introductory Ideas for the Eighth Lesson

The remaining chapters of the *Doctrine of Charity* are quite brief. At this point in the original manuscript, several pages are missing. The lessons are listed here as individual lessons, but you may wish to combine the topics and have a little more material to discuss with your group. This little chapter has specifics about forms of worship for our minds and bodies in our daily lives. It also introduces the concept of “signs” of charity— outward manifestations of our spirit. Here are a few introductory questions:

1. Why is it important for us to go to church?
2. What is the human “spirit” and the “flesh?”

Some Key Points in Chapter 8:

Charity 173 introduces the term “signs.” We do not know anything about the spiritual life of a person, except by the signs that their spirit shows in the actions of their body. The signs of charity are acts of worship. A distinction is made between the actions of our minds and the actions of our bodies.

Charity 174 describes acts of worship at church and at home. Ask the students to think about whether they do or have thought about the specific things that are listed here. (These are externals of the body, but they should be reflective of what is in our minds.)

Charity 175 outlines the mental processes that we are to do. This would be a good number to have the students copy as a “To do” list. You could type them up and format them for display at home. Encourage them to display them in a place where they will see them and reflect on them from time to time. (You may also want to compare them to Swedenborg's own Rules of Life.)

Charity 178 and **179** talk about the “spirit” and the “flesh.” You may wish to discuss passages from the New Testament where the spirit and the flesh are mentioned. Note that we can come to know ourselves through self-examination and repentance. Someone who does not examine their life will not be aware of the quality of their spirit.

Charity 180 tells an essential truth. “If we fail to do these things, our internal person is evil; but if we do them, our internal person is good.” (This refers to the examination and repentance mentioned before.) This battle is the only way we can become regenerated.

Charity 183 states that “no internal is without its sign, its evidence.” Our good intentions will come to nothing unless we can fight with the external part of our mind. There is a good example given of a fountain that is stopped up becoming stagnant. You could illustrate this by pouring water into a bowl— and then showing the students a bowl of stagnant water as a comparison.