



# What Is Charity?

## Lesson Overview

1. Discuss
2. Read & Discuss

What does the New Church teach about charity? How do New Church teachings modify “charity”?

3. Watch a Video

Watch *Different Ways to Practice Goodwill* online at [bit.ly/OTLECharity](http://bit.ly/OTLECharity) (6min 39 sec)

## New Church Concept Loving the Neighbor

To love the neighbor as oneself is: not to hold him in light esteem in comparison with oneself, to deal justly with him, and not to pass evil judgments upon him. *True Christian Religion* 411

The person immersed in self-love is one who despises his neighbor in comparison with himself, and who regards his neighbor as an enemy if he is not favorably disposed towards him and does not defer to him. *Arcana Coelestia* 7370

Charity means love towards the neighbor and compassion, for anyone who loves his neighbor as himself also has as much compassion for him in his suffering as he does for himself in his own. *Arcana Coelestia* 351

## Year 1 | Lesson 16 | Charity

### Discuss

2. Explain the word “charity”.
3. Is “charity” only acts of kindness? Or is it more than that? New Church teachings offer a different explanation.

### Read

The Old and New Testaments are clear about how we are to treat others. On a fundamental level they define charity as “doing good to the neighbor.” In order to understand what is genuinely “good”, though, we need to know who God is and what He wants, because all genuine good is from Him. We do this through reading the Word and acting in its light.

Thus says the Lord of hosts: Execute true justice, Show mercy and compassion everyone to his brother. *Zechariah 7:9*

If one of your brethren becomes poor, and falls into poverty among you, then you shall help him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you. *Leviticus 25:35*

He has shown you, O man, what is good;  
And what does the Lord require of you  
But to do justly,  
To love mercy,  
And to walk humbly with your God? *Micah 6:8*

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets. *Matthew 22:37-40*

This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. *John 15:12-13*

The Writings for the New Church extend the idea of charity, making it more than compassionate actions towards those in need. While you read the following, underline any new ideas about charity you see.

By charity is meant the good that a person does to the neighbor. *Charity* 202  
Charity is a person's spiritual life. *Last Judgment* 39.9

The first thing of charity is not to do evil to the neighbor; and to do good to him holds the second place....Willing evil and doing right are two essentially

opposite things; for evil belongs to hatred towards the neighbor and good belongs to love towards the neighbor. See *True Christian Religion* 435

The fundamental requirement of charity is to act in an upright and just way in everything connected with one's duty or function. *Arcana Coelestia* 4730.3

No one can have charity from the Lord unless he shuns evils as sins.... Anyone can do good to the neighbor, an evil as well as a good person. But no one can do it from good in himself unless from the Lord. *Charity* 202

It is believed by many, that love towards the neighbor consists in giving to the poor, in assisting the indigent, and in doing good to everyone; but charity consists in acting prudently, and to the end that good may result. People who assist a poor or indigent evil doer do evil to the neighbor through him, for through the assistance which they render, they confirm him in evil, and supply him with the means of doing evil to others. It is otherwise with people who give support to the good. *New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* 100

## Discuss

Choose questions for discussion.

1. Choose one new idea you underlined. How does this idea expand the idea of charity?
2. What is the first thing we must do to act charitably? Why is this?
3. Who or what is the neighbor we are to love?
4. The New Church teaches we should treat everyone charitably, but not in the same way. Why is this? What are the risks of treating everyone with the same kind of charity?
5. Everyone has faults. How should we view others' faults in relation to how we treat them? (See *Seeing Good in Others* on right.)
6. Micah 6:8 says we are to "do justly". What does charity or "just behavior" look like in our daily work? (See *Charity in the Workplace* on right.)
7. Is *thinking* well of others charity? Or does charity always mean *doing* good?
8. How are charity and religion linked? Can a person who does not love the Lord act with true charity?

## Watch a Video

"Charity" is sometimes translated from the Latin of the Writings as "good will". The video *Different Ways to Practice Goodwill*, online at [bit.ly/OTLECharity](http://bit.ly/OTLECharity) (6 min 39 sec), discusses ways we can act "charitably" with love the neighbor as we go about the routine tasks such as finishing a report, paying bills, playing video games, and food shopping.

## New Church Concepts Charity in the Workplace

Charity itself is acting justly and faithfully in the office, business, and employment in which a person is engaged, because all that such a person does is of use to society, and use is good, in a sense abstracted from person is the neighbor.... The priest who teaches truths from the Word, and thereby leads to good of life, and so to heaven, because he consults the good of the souls of those of his church, is eminently in the exercise of charity. The judge who judges according to law and justice, and not for reward, friendship and relationship, consults the good of society and of each individual.... The merchant who acts from honesty and not from deceit, consults the good of his neighbor with whom he has business. It is the same with a skilled workman, if he does his work rightly and honestly. *True Christian Religion* 422

### Seeing Good in Others

Those who are in the faith of charity observe what is good, and if they see anything evil and false, they excuse it, and if they can, try to amend it in him.... Where there is no charity, there is the love of self, and therefore hatred against all who do not favor self. Consequently such persons see in the neighbor only what is evil, and if they see anything good, they either perceive it as nothing, or put a bad interpretation upon it.... They who are in charity scarcely see the evil of another, but observe all his goods and truths, and put a good interpretation on what is evil and false. *Arcana Coelestia* 1079