

FRIENDSHIP OF CHARITY

Friendship is not the same as charity, civility even less so.
They are steps down from charity, though the more they draw from charity
the more genuine they are (*Arcana Coelestia* 1158:2).

To act with charity is to think kindly of others, wish them well, and do good for their benefit. This is also a good description of genuine friendship.

READ: “Friendship: The Outward Expression of Love” by the Rev. David Simons

How does the Heavenly Doctrine of the New Church define friendship and what do they say we should base it on?

READ: “Friends” by the Rev. Cairns Henderson (*for preschoolers*)

True friendship is where you forget about yourself and think only of making the other person happy. This is the kind of friendship the Lord wants us to have.

PROJECT: Paper Doll Chain (*for ages 3-8*)

Fold the paper, cut out the figures, and open it up to see all the neighbors.

PROJECT: Friendship Necklace (*for ages 3-6*)

Give the child a pile of hearts with these words written on them: “I love _____.” With help from an adult, the child can designate a heart for each friend, family member, pet, *etc.* by writing in the name or making a picture of each one. Then string the hearts together to make a necklace.

READ: “Being a True Friend and Neighbor” by the Rt. Rev. Peter M. Buss

If we want to be good friends, we must listen and look for the times when our friends really need us. We mustn’t just use our friends for what we can get out of them, and then leave them alone when they are in trouble.

ACTIVITY: What Makes Someone a Good Friend? (*for ages 9-12*)

What do you love about your friends? What can you do to be a good friend to them?

ACTIVITY: Make Friendship Bracelets (*for ages 10 and up*)

Braid strands of embroidery thread to make friendship bracelets to give to a friend. Choose colors that your friend likes or that have a special symbolism. Red, for example, symbolizes good or love, and white symbolizes truth or wisdom.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Friendship (*for teens and up*)

Read and discuss some passages from the Word about friendship.

ACTIVITY: Prayer and Relationships (*for teens and up*)

How can prayer to the Lord help us improve our relationships with the people around us? Read the article and then write a prayer of your own for a relationship which you would like to heal or improve.

DAVID AND JONATHAN'S FRIENDSHIP

[T]he soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.
(1 Samuel 18:1)

When looking for a good illustration of friendship in the Word, the story of Jonathan and David leaps to mind. We see Jonathan as a brave man who gave his loyalty to the Lord who chose David to be the next king of Israel rather than going along with his father's animosity toward David. The two young men both wanted to serve the Lord and the kingdom of Israel.

READ: "David and Jonathan's Friendship" by the Rev. Cairns Henderson

Jonathan knew that the Lord wanted David to be king, so he gladly gave up any thought of becoming king of Israel himself. Instead, he became David's friend and helped him become the next king.

PROJECT: Knit Together in Friendship (for ages 3-6)

Let children combine two hearts together by threading yarn through holes around the edges.

PLAY: Jonathan Helps David (for ages 10-14)

This is one of a series of plays drawn from the Lord's Word for use as Reader's Theater, where each person takes a part and reads through the script.

ACTIVITY: Jonathan's Gifts Prepare David for War (for ages 11-14)

Jonathan gives several gifts to David to show his friendship. What do these gifts tell us about some possible uses of friendship?

COLORING PAGE: Jonathan Gives David His Robe

SING: "David and Jonathan" by Lori Odhner

BEING FRIENDLY TO WHAT IS GOOD

Everyone may indeed be friendly to another,
but he should be most friendly to what is good (*Arcana Coelestia* 4804).

When we befriend what is good in another, we are nurturing what they are receiving from the Lord.

READ: "Looking for the Good in Other People" by the Rev. Donald Rose

It is important to look for good in people while also recognizing when their actions are not good.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Seeing the Good in Others (for teens and adults)

Read passages from the Word, and then discuss questions such as "How would you know if someone is 'friendly to what is good?'"

READ: “The Lord’s Example of Friendship” by the Rev. James Cooper

The Lord is able to see our true spiritual character, and He loves the good that He is able to see in us. He constantly seeks to build on that good. We must follow the Lord’s own example and seek out what is good in others.

SING: I Was Hungry

JOURNAL PAGE: Looking for the Good *(for ages 14 and up)*

Here is a process to try when you are feeling angry or upset with someone that may help you feel better about your relationship.

JUDGING OTHERS

One is never allowed to judge the nature of another person’s spiritual life, for the Lord alone knows this. But one is allowed to judge the nature of another person’s life, private and public, since this is of importance to society (*Arcana Coelestia* 2284:4).

Since the Lord wants us to be “most friendly to what is good”, this is what He expects us to look for and support in other people. Discerning the good in other people involves using our judgment about their actions and words. We can never completely know the internal motivation for the actions we see, and therefore we cannot judge another’s spiritual state. But we need to think about whether or not the actions and words of others are good and distance ourselves from any disorderly activity.

ACTIVITY: Categorizing Judgments *(for teens and up)*

Try your hand at deciding whether a judgment call is a civil, moral, or spiritual judgment.

READ: Kate and Sally: A Story About Friendship and Judgment

This story explores how we must use our judgment to think about what would help our friends, rather than just going along with whatever they wish.

ACTIVITY: Making Judgments *(for teens and up)*

Reflect on how the Lord would view various judgments that one might make.

READ: “The Faults of Our Friends” by the Rev. Donald L. Rose

Far more important than showing disapproval of our friend’s backslidings is to be sure that we do not show approval. Perhaps the best way to help our friends is to expect the best of them. If we are sincere, we will not be praisers or ego feeders, but encouragers who are sometimes a little tough.

PROJECT: By Their Fruits *(for ages 3 and up)*

Picture good and bad fruits, and then write some activities that are symbolized by the two main categories of fruit.

READ: “Separating Good from Evil” by the Rev. W. Cairns Henderson

Judgment, the separation of good from evil, is an essential part of human freedom. But what kinds of judgments are we allowed to make and what ones are beyond our ability?

SING: The Lord in His Righteousness Judges the People

DAVID AND NATHAN THE PROPHET

“As the Lord lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity” (2 Samuel 12:5-6).

It was much easier for David to recognize that his actions toward Uriah were wrong after Nathan told him the parable of the ewe lamb. He could easily judge the rich man who stole the ewe lamb. So too, it is often easier to recognize evil actions when we read a story or look at the lives of others.

READ: “The Parable of the Ewe Lamb” by the Rev. James Cooper

The story of Nathan and David shows us how the Lord gently leads us back into order when we stray. Nathan does not accuse David or threaten him. He simply presents the truth to David, and then lets him judge himself in comparison to the truth.

PLAY: Nathan Rebukes David (for ages 11-14)

This is one of a series of plays drawn from the Lord’s Word for use as Reader’s Theater, where each person takes a part and reads through the script.

READ: “You Are the Man!” by the Rev. Hugo Odhner

When Nathan told him the parable of the ewe lamb, King David could see the fault with the man who stole the lamb. Yet he was blind to the evil he had done by stealing another man’s wife. We don’t have Nathan the prophet to tell us when we have done wrong, but by reading the Lord’s Word we can strengthen our conscience to help us. And like David, we can humbly admit when we have done what is wrong.

RELIGION PROJECT FOR PRIMARY: David and Nathan the Prophet (for ages 5-8)

Make white finger puppets and let your child add details (such as ears and tails) to make little lambs. Then act out the story of the rich man taking the lamb from the poor man.

COLORING PAGE: The Parable of the Ewe Lamb

This beautiful line drawing pictures the ewe lamb with the poor man and his family.

SONG: “Measured Back to You” by Karen Childs Elder

Karen has composed several songs to help people memorize words from the Old and New Testaments. The lyrics for this song are taken from the gospel of Luke (6:37-38).

COLORING PAGE: You Are the Man!

This line drawing shows Nathan the prophet pointing the finger at David as he tells the king that he is like the rich man who stole the ewe lamb.

JUDGING OR EXAMINING OURSELVES

To repent, a person must examine himself, recognize and acknowledge his sins, pray to the Lord, and begin a new life. And unless evils are removed by repentance, a person cannot love his neighbor, still less God (*True Christian Religion 530*).

As we examine our own words and actions and recognize them as good or evil, we will be able to be better friends to those around us. This process takes a lifetime, so we need to be persistent.

READ: “The Speck and the Plank” by the Rev. Harold Cranch

This common-sense teaching clearly says that we should not criticize others for evils that we ourselves do. We must learn to see the faults deeply hidden in our own character so that we can remove them. And in the process of removing our own evils, we actually do help others.

JOURNAL PAGE: The Mote and the Beam *(for teens and adults)*

READ: “Judgment” an article by the Rev. Walter Orthwein *(for older teens and adults)*

When the Lord says “judge not,” the meaning is that we are not to judge falsely, or from a selfish motive, or based only on external appearances. And instead of looking for faults in others, we should concentrate on removing the evils and falsities within ourselves. If we judge ourselves first, then we will be better able to discern the real character of others.

LOVE OF SELF VERSUS LOVE OF THE NEIGHBOR

Spiritual love to the neighbor begins with the Lord, and goes forth from Him as its center to all who are conjoined to Him by love and faith, according to the quality of their love and faith (*Heaven and Hell 558*).

Those who love the Lord can have a spiritual love for the neighbor. But those who primarily love themselves only, love the neighbor only if it is to their benefit.

ACTIVITY: Looking to the Source of Love to the Neighbor *(for older teens and adults)*

How does love from the neighbor that flows in from the Lord compare with love for the neighbor that flows from a love of self?

ACTIVITY: Disorderly Friendships *(for teens and adults)*

What are disorderly friendships? Do any of them exist in your life? What might you be able to do to change these situations?

PROJECT: Kindly or Selfish Hearts *(for ages 10-14)*

Cut out all the pieces for the kindly heart and the selfish heart. Then try assembling them to see which one will make a true heart shape.