

WHAT IS TRUE CHARITY?

“The first thing of charity is not to do evil to the neighbor; and to do good to him holds the second place (True Christian Religion 435).

There are many teachings in the Word that help us understand how the Lord wants us to treat other people. These teachings apply not only to our actions, but to our thoughts and feelings toward others. For only when we can love others as much or more than ourselves, will we experience the happiness which comes with true charity.

LISTEN TO: “Loving Even Our Enemies” by the Rev. Eric Carswell *(family talk)*

The Lord wants us to consider the needs of others no matter what. The angels do this whether they are dealing with another angel or with an evil spirit.

PROJECT: Rules Worth Living *(ages 3-6)*

Read the rules in Micah 6, color the pictures illustrating them, and then roll up the page like a scroll.

PROJECT: Garden vs. Desert *(ages 6-12)*

A person is like a garden when charity and faith are linked in him. But if these are not linked, a person resembles a desert. Map out some attitudes that make a person like a garden or a desert.

ACTIVITY: What the Lord Wants from Us *(ages 12-15)*

This activity from a Family Lesson on Micah 6, explores the Lord’s teachings on charity.

OVERVIEW OF THE TEN BLESSINGS

Charity is a person’s spiritual life (Last Judgment 39:12).

The Ten Blessings provide beautiful teachings at many levels about enriching our spiritual lives, both in this world and forever in heaven.

READ: “Attitudes for Heavenly Happiness”

Blessedness or happiness is heaven, and the blessings give a summary of the various states or attitudes that can inherit the eternal life of heavenly happiness.

COLORING PAGE: The Lord Teaches the Multitude by Marguerite L. Acton

This picture shows the Lord teaching His disciples and the multitude that gathered around them.

ACTIVITY: Picture Matching Cards for Eight Blessings *(ages 7-10)*

Use these colorful picture cards to help memorize and sequence the first eight of the Ten Blessings.

POSTER: Ten Blessings *(for all ages)*

A printable poster of the Ten Blessings with a beautiful color border.

ACTIVITY: Ten Blessings Word Search *(ages 9-14)*

Search for 40 different words that are used in the Ten Blessings.

SING: The Ten Blessings by Lori Odhner

PROJECT: Ten Blessings Book (ages 6-12)

The blessings can be difficult to understand when taken literally, so each page of this book quotes one of the blessings and then paraphrases as one might explain it to children. Suggestions for illustrations are provided, but children should feel free to come up with their own ideas.

READ: “The Meaning of the Ten Blessings” by the Rev. Geoffrey Childs

When the Lord gave the Sermon on the Mount, He was teaching people the steps leading to a heavenly life. The words He spoke then can still teach us how to follow Him into eternal happiness.

ACTIVITY: Echo—The Ten Blessings (ages 4-8)

To help young children learn the Ten Blessings (in Matthew 5:3-12), say one part, such as “Blessed are the poor in spirit” and then have the children repeat or echo what you said.

ACTIVITY: Finish the Quote—The Ten Blessings (ages 4-10)

As the children become familiar with the blessings, they may enjoy trying to finish a passage from where you leave off. For example, if a parent or teacher starts with: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs” and then stops and waits for the children to supply the rest, they would say “is the kingdom of heaven”. If they have difficulty, give them the next word to help them along.

PROJECT: Blessings Bracelet (ages 6-14)

Create a colorful bracelet using different beads and buttons to represent some of the Ten Blessings from the Sermon on the Mount.

ACTIVITY: Matching Quotes from the Word with the Ten Blessings (ages 12 and up)

Look at the Ten Blessings on the left side of the page and various quotes from the Word on the right side, and then draw lines from each quotation to one or more of the blessings that seem to be talking about similar qualities or ways that the Lord rewards us for doing what is good.

ACTIVITY: Ten Blessings Sequencing Cards (ages 8-12)

One way to work on becoming familiar with the Ten Blessings is to try to sequence them. These cards can be printed and cut apart to allow children to put them in the correct order.

ACTIVITY: Comparison of the Two Versions of the Blessings (teens and up)

Look at the two places the blessings are given—in Matthew and in Luke—and examine the similarities and differences between them to enrich your understanding of the Lord’s teachings.

ACTIVITY: Ten Blessings Vocabulary Discovery (ages 8-12)

Some of the words in the Ten Blessings may be unfamiliar. Use this activity to understand what the Lord is teaching us in the literal sense.

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

To be spiritually poor, and yet to be rich, is to acknowledge in heart that one has no knowledge nor understanding nor wisdom from himself, but that he knows, understands, and is wise wholly from the Lord (*Apocalypse Explained* 118).

Those who are poor in spirit recognize that the Lord is the only source of truth, and they are willing to look to the Lord for guidance. They are intellectually humble. It is this attitude which allows their minds to be enlightened by the Lord's truths.

READ: "The Blessings of the Sermon on the Mount" by the Rev. Peter M. Buss, Jr.

The message in the Sermon on the Mount, indeed, the whole of what the Lord was trying to accomplish with His life on earth, was to teach people how to figuratively follow Him to heaven, as they had literally followed Him up the mountain that day.

PROJECT: The Lord's Teachings About the Riches of Heaven (*ages 9-12*)

This activity on Mark 10, explores who is rich and poor from a spiritual perspective.

SING: Lead Us and Guide Us Lord

BLESSED ARE THEY WHO MOURN OR WEEP

*To weep symbolizes mourning on account of falsities,
and to wail symbolizes mourning on account of evils (see *Apocalypse Explained* 1129:2).*

If our conscience bothers us when we do something wrong—not because of the consequences, but because it is evil—then the Lord is able to help us turn away from those evils. Over time, He can "wipe away" our tears as we make progress in our regeneration.

READ: "Blessed Are Those Who Mourn" by the Rev. Peter M. Buss, Jr.

In the process of trying to be a person who is growing spiritually, there will be mourning. We will see things that are not the way they should be—in ourselves and in the world around us. This sermon examines ways in which we can be comforted?

FOR REFLECTION: Weep-Mourn: Laugh-Comfort (*teens and up*)

[add description when activity is completed]

ACTIVITY: Jumping for Joy (*preschool*)

This fun activity was developed to show joy in the Lord's victory at Easter, but can be used at any time to show joy for all that the Lord gives us.

SPIRITUAL TASK: Turning Mourning into Dancing (*teens and up*)

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

*The "meek" mean those who are in the good of charity (*Apocalypse Explained* 304:44).*

It may seem that this blessing is telling us to be weak in our interactions with others. The Lord certainly wants us to be gentle and kind with other people. But He also wants us to stand up to evil, fighting against it in our own lives and when others try to get us to do what is wrong.

SPIRITUAL TASK: Humility (*teens and adults*)

READ: “Ten Blessings Part I: The Kingdom of Heaven Is Within” by the Rev. Michael Gladish

When we think of blessings we do not usually think of sadness, difficulty or want. We usually think of happiness, peace and plenty. Indeed the word *blessing* means happiness. Why, then, does the Lord seem to say the opposite in the Sermon on the Mount?

ACTIVITY: Ways of Walking (*all ages*)

Act out different ways that we walk through life: happy, angry, sad, proud, etc. Then walk as if you are walking with the Lord.

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST

By the “hungry and thirsty” are meant those who continually long for truths, and long to be perfected by means of truths (*Apocalypse Explained* 118:3).

Those who hunger are people who want the goodness of love. Those who thirst are aware of their need for a greater knowledge of truth. The righteousness or justice that they seek is a life which incorporates both goodness and truth into some useful endeavor.

PROJECT: Living Waters (*ages 8-12*)

Two fun projects illustrating the concept of the Word as our source of living water or truth.

PROJECT: Following the Lord’s Path to Heaven (*ages 6-8*)

Cut out this paper spiral, then attach the color picture of the Lord at the top, and make a picture of yourself to put at the beginning of the pathway—looking upward to the Lord!

Read: Blessings about Our Need for Spiritual Food and Drink

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

Since charity consists in having an affection for what is good, it also consists in feelings of mercy for those in distress (*Arcana Coelestia* 5132:2).

The Lord inspires us to care for others and gives us abilities to serve them. Yet in the Heavenly Doctrine, the Lord also makes it clear that we need to distinguish between true charity and simply helping every needy person no matter whether they are motivated by good or by evil. We need to be careful not to facilitate wrong-doing, for this is not genuinely merciful.

READ: “Ten Blessings Part II: Loving One Another” by the Rev. Michael Gladish

This sermon shows that someone who really cares about others will seek to understand the truth so that he may serve in intelligent ways. When this happens, greater blessings are achieved for all.

ACTIVITY: Being Alerted by the Lord (*teens and adults*)

Have you ever felt called by the Lord to do something for family, friends, or neighbors?

PROJECT: Paper Doll Chain (*preschool*)

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

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART

[This blessing refers] to the conjunction of the Lord with a person
in whom evils have been put away (*Divine Providence* 33).

When the Lord came on earth, He often warned people against hypocrisy. While it is often true that our actions speak louder than our words, it is always true that the Lord sees the intentions in our hearts. If we harbor evil in our hearts while pretending to be a good person, our actions mask our true character.

PROJECT: Create in Me a Clean Heart (*ages 5-8*)

This project can help us think about whether our thoughts and actions are creating a clean heart within us or not.

READ: “Simplicity” by the Rev. Walter Orthwein

In order for us to receive the Lord’s words, we must be simple—simple in the sense of being single-minded, looking to one source of truth, and in having our internal and external thoughts agree.

PROJECT: Ten Commandments in Our Hearts (*ages 6-10*)

Make a heart with the Ten Commandments inside to picture having truths in your heart.

PROJECT: Kindly Heart or Selfish Heart (*ages 9-12*)

Color, cut out and assemble pieces for intricate puzzles of a kindly heart and a selfish heart.

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

[P]eople are in the tranquility of peace...
when they act in accordance with conscience....
(*New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* 133)

The Lord is not talking about peace in this world, but the kind of spiritual peace we can have when our thoughts and actions are synchronized for good. As we succeed in facing temptations, the Lord and angels will help us win the battle against evil and eventually bring us to a state of eternal peace.

READ: “Peace Like a River” by the Rev. Walter Orthwein

Only the Lord can command peace, and He is present in human society insofar as He is present in the hearts and minds of individuals. So any consideration of how to promote world peace must begin with how peace can be established in our own lives. How can we make peace with ourselves?

PROJECT: Peace Is Like.... (*ages 12 and up*)

Make an accordion book or a mural that illustrates different stages of a dangerous or stressful situation. In the final panel, show the happiness that comes when the danger is passed.

PROJECT: Peace Has Within Itself

Make a beautiful border for a quote from the Word about true peace.

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE PERSECUTED...

Temptations are symbolized by reproaching, persecuting, and saying an evil word falsely... (*Apocalypse Explained* 695:19).

Temptations are assaults upon anything that is good and true in us. Evil spirits delight in attacking goodness because they hate the Lord and all of His qualities. So it should not surprise us when evil spirits challenge us and try to discourage us in our efforts to become a better person.

READ: "Ten Blessings Part III: The Blessings of Adversity" by the Rev. Michael Gladish
The Ten Blessings are about eternal values, unchanging principles, and the delights of real love, wisdom, and usefulness. This is the experience of heaven, and the blessing of it is great indeed.

PROJECT: Angels with You (*ages 3-7*)

Use clothespins and special fabrics or papers to make 2 angels that you can carry with you to remind you that the Lord has angels helping you fight against what is wrong.

COLORING PAGE: Guardian Angels by Marguerite L. Acton

SING: Come Unto Me, All Ye That Labor and Are Burdened

GREAT IS YOUR REWARD IN HEAVEN

The Lord from infinite love wants to draw us to Him and bless us with happiness.
(*Arcana Coelestia* 6645)

In the Ten Blessings, the Lord tells us about the many rewards that people will have if they are truly charitable. They will be comforted, inherit the earth, be filled, see God, *etc.* In these blessings, the Lord is describing the inner, spiritual rewards, earned not from good deeds but from good loves.

READ: "Pursuing Happiness in Life" by the Rev. Donald Rose

I advise against chasing after happiness. And yet I would emphasize the importance of happiness and the legitimacy of our craving it. Happiness has a great deal to do with what religion is all about.

PROJECT: His Everlasting Arms (*ages 4-9*)

Here is a drawing of the Lord, His arms ready to hold whatever you draw in the space provided. We suggest drawing yourself, your family, or perhaps a small picture of heaven.

COLORING PAGE: Heaven as Our Highest Goal by Bernice Sandstrom

PROJECT: Blessings Bookmark (*ages 10 and up*)

Print and cut out two bookmarks about the blessings the Lord gives us.