# What Is Charity?

**Lesson Overview**

1. **Watch & Discuss a Video**
   - Watch *Happiness is Helping Others* online at bit.ly/GCEDHelpOthers (3min 05sec)

2. **Read**
   - What does the New Church teach about charity?

3. **Discuss**
   - How do New Church teachings modify “charity?”

**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

**Watch a Video**

Watch *Happiness is Helping Others* (3min 05sec) at bit.ly/GCEDHelpOthers. (Enter link in the web browser search bar at the top of your screen.)

**Discuss**

1. Which definition of “charity” did the video-makers have in mind?
   - a. Generous actions to help the poor or helpless
   - b. Something given to a person in need
   - c. A benevolent feeling towards those in need

2. Can we exercise charity towards animals and plants, as well as people?

3. What (if anything) do we get in return for acting charitably?

4. What were the consequences of the man’s charitable actions?

5. Do the Writings use “charity” the way it is used in this video?

**Read**

The Old and New Testaments are clear about how we are to treat others.

- 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

On a fundamental level the Word defines 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.
The Writings 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?

9. If you made a video on the topic of charity, what would it be like? How might you incorporate New Church ideas into the plot?