



# Meeting Loved Ones

FaithBuilder 2 | Lesson 7 | Eternal Life

## Lesson Overview

### 1. Think

How do you react to different people?

### 2. Watch a Video

Watch *Distance in the Afterlife* online at [bitly.com/DistanceAfterlife](http://bitly.com/DistanceAfterlife) (1min 19sec)

### 3. Read

Meeting loved ones

### 4. Activity

What Kind of Town Is This? p.3

## New Church Concept Distance in Heaven

The distances between angelic communities in the heavens also vary as their activities vary, in general and in detail. This is because the only cause of distance in the spiritual world is the difference of the state of our more inward natures—in the heavens, then, differences in the state of love. When communities are very different, the distance between them is great; when the difference is slight, the distance is slight. *Heaven and Hell* 42

## Think for a Minute

1. How does it feel to be in a room with a person you do not feel comfortable with? How might you react if the person sat down next to you?
2. How does it feel to be with someone you like—a family member, or a good friend? What would you do if this person sat next to you?

## Watch a Video

Watch *Distance in the Afterlife* (1min 19sec) at [bitly.com/DistanceAfterlife](http://bitly.com/DistanceAfterlife). (Enter bitly link in web browser bar at the top of your screen.)

## Discuss

1. What happens to people who are at odds with each other in the afterlife?
2. How do you meet people you like?
3. In what ways are communities in the afterlife similar to communities on earth?
4. How are communities on earth different from communities in the afterlife?

## Read

We can look forward to seeing people we have known in the natural world—especially if have a strong connection with them.

Immediately after life in the world, our friends and people we have known in the world recognize us. Spirits perceive who we are not only from our faces and voices but also from the aura of our life when they come near. In the other life, whenever we think about someone, we call up that individual's face in our thought along with many details about her or his life; and when we do this, the other is called to us. Things like this happen in the spiritual world because thoughts are shared there and because space is not what it is in the natural world. This is why as soon as we arrive in the other life, we are all recognized by our friends and relatives and by people we have known in one way or another. Further, we talk with each other and continue to see each other in keeping with our friendship in the world. I have heard many people who had just come from the world overjoyed to see their friends again, and their friends overjoyed that they had arrived. *Heaven and Hell* 494

After we have been in the spiritual world for awhile, we find ourselves making new friends who care about the very things we love most deeply. And we may see less of old friends who at heart value different things than we do.

## New Church Concept Heaven

Newcomers are invited to explore the spiritual world. Angel guides help people find answers to their questions about the life after death and sometimes take them to heaven to experience what life is like there. One angel explained,

"In heaven as on earth there is food and drink, and there are dinners and parties, and the tables of leading figures are laden with glorious spreads including special delicacies you don't find elsewhere; these things rejuvenate and refresh the mind. There are also sports and shows and concerts of vocal and instrumental music, all at the height of perfection. All these things are a joy to the angels, but they don't constitute their true happiness. Their happiness...is doing something useful through his or her work." *True Christianity* 735

People may also experience what they *think* heaven is like, for example feasting with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, going to parties all the time, sitting in gardens, or worshipping in a church all the time. Through these experiences they discover that heaven is not really like this at all. The happiness of heaven comes from being useful.

Swedenborg saw people he had known who had passed into the spiritual world. At first, they looked and sounded just as they had done in the world. After a while, their faces and voices reflected their inner character and he could not recognize them any more.

When the first state after death ends—which can be months or even a year after death, people begin to see what their friends are really like. People stop being able to hide their true thoughts, and everyone sees what they really think. People then come into a second state after death, during which they are prepared for eternal life in heaven or hell.

### The Three States After Death

There are three states that we pass through after death before we arrive in either heaven or hell. The first state is one of more outward concerns, the second is one of more inward concerns, and the third is one of preparation. We go through these states in the world of spirits.

Some people do not go through these states but are either raised into heaven or cast into hell immediately after their death. The people immediately raised into heaven are ones who have been prepared for heaven in this world. People who have been prepared need only to slough off their natural uncleanness along with their bodies and are immediately taken into heaven by angels. I have seen people taken up an hour after their death.

On the other hand, people who have been profoundly malicious but have outwardly worn a guise of goodness...and used goodness as a means of deception are cast directly into hell.

There are few such people, though, compared to the number of people who are kept in the world of spirits and prepared there for either heaven or hell according to the divine plan. See *Heaven and Hell* 491

Once on looking out into the world of spirits I saw in a meadow some men dressed in clothing like that worn by people in the world. This told me that they were newly arrived from the world. I approached them and stood beside them, so that I could listen to their conversation. They were talking about heaven, and one among them, who knew something about heaven, said that it contains wonderful sights, which no one could believe in without seeing them. He said that there are gardens like paradise, magnificent palaces constructed with superb architecture, because they are triumphs of that art, gleaming as if with gold, and fronted by columns of silver decorated with heavenly designs in precious stones. Moreover, there are houses of jasper and sapphire, with imposing porticoes in front by which the angels go in. Inside the houses there are decorations which neither art nor words can describe.

'As for the angels themselves,' he said, 'they are of both sexes, young men and husbands, young women and wives. The young women are so beautiful there is no match for such beauty in the world. But the wives are even more beautiful, looking like real models of heavenly love. Their husbands look like models of heavenly wisdom, and all of them are young men in the prime of life. *Conjugal Love* 355

## What Kind of Town Is This?

Adapted from *From the Top of the Yardstick*, by Donnette Alfelt

There is a story attributed to a famous American named Benjamin Franklin that goes like this:

Ben was standing outside of the city of Philadelphia when a stranger approached him and said, "I'm thinking of moving to Philadelphia. What kind of a town is it?" Ben answered with a question. "It depends. What kind of town do you come from?" The stranger said that where he came from people were friendly, kind and helpful. Ben then said "Welcome to Philadelphia. You are going to be very happy here."

Another stranger came along and asked the same question: "What kind of town is Philadelphia?" Ben again asked "What was the town like that you came from?" The stranger answered that where he came from, people were rude, inconsiderate and unpleasant. Ben gave him this reply "You won't be happy here. You will find that people in Philadelphia will be pretty much the same as where you came from."

- What kind of place is your town or community?
- How do you judge other people?
  - ◇ On a few negative experiences
  - ◇ By seeing what is good in them
  - ◇ On your hurt feelings
  - ◇ By whether you like them or not
  - ◇ On whether or not you have a good time with them
  - ◇ On whether they reach out to you
  - ◇ On whether they're generous to you or others
- Which of these criteria are useful ways to judge people? Which are not? Why?
- What are some ways of thinking about others that support the good part of each person.
  - ◇
  - ◇
  - ◇
- Now imagine that you have just arrived in the world of spirits and are asking Ben Franklin what the spiritual world is like. How might you respond when asked about the community you came from?
- Does this describe the kind of heavenly community you want to live in?