



# Loving Others

FaithBuilder 4 | Lesson 4 | Lord

## Lesson Overview

### 1. Read

*True Christianity* 407

*Forgiveness* based on a talk by Rev. David Holm

### 2. Discuss

What does loving others look like?

### 3. Watch a Video

Watch the start of *How to Love Your Enemies*, (35min) online at [bit.ly.com/LoveEnemies](http://bit.ly.com/LoveEnemies)

## New Church Concept Charity

The "first" of charity is not to do evil to the neighbor; for not doing evil to the neighbor is fighting against the evils in oneself, and repenting of them; and that the "second" of charity is to do good to the neighbor. *Charity* 210

It is easy to love friends. Friends love what we love and stick up for us when we are having a hard time. It is much harder to love people who are different from us, especially when they treat us badly and we feel hurt by them. The Writings for the New Church spell out specific ways in which we are to treat *all* people.

### Read\*

Loving our neighbor is intending and doing good not only to neighbors, friends, and good people but also to strangers, enemies, and evil people. But we exercise goodwill in our dealings with the latter in different ways than we do in our dealings with the former. We exercise goodwill in our dealings with our neighbors and friends by benefiting them directly. We exercise goodwill in our dealings with our enemies and evil people by benefiting them indirectly through our warnings, corrective action, punishments, and therefore efforts to improve them.

This could be illustrated as follows. Judges who punish wrongdoers because it is the just and legal thing to do have love for their neighbor. By so doing the judges are straightening out the wrongdoers and are caring for people in the area by preventing the wrongdoers from doing them harm. Everyone knows that parents who punish their children for doing what is wrong are showing them love; and on the other hand, parents who do not punish their children for doing what is wrong are showing love for evil traits in their children, which has nothing to do with goodwill.

For another example, suppose someone under the attack of an enemy repels the attacker and either strikes in self-defense or turns the attacker over to a judge to avoid being harmed. Say the victor maintains an intention nonetheless of becoming the attacker's friend. Then the victor is acting on the strength of goodwill. Even wars for the purpose of keeping the country and the church safe are not against goodwill. The ultimate purpose shows whether a given act is an expression of goodwill or not. *True Christianity* 407

Jesus once spoke on this subject. Peter, a disciple, asked, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Peter thought that to forgive someone who had done wrong against you seven times was enough. But the Lord gave an answer to Peter that may seem strange. He said, "I say not unto you, Until seven times, but until seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21, 22). The Lord did not mean that we should forgive another person a specific number of times, but that we should be willing to completely forgive.

\*Adapted from *Forgiveness* by Rev. David Holm

This may seem hard to do. But the Lord wants us to be forgiving—to be kind-hearted and not hard-hearted. This is because cannot *receive* the Lord's forgiveness for the wrong we do unless we are willing to forgive others who wrong us. Holding grudges closes our minds off from the Lord. In fact, when we hold hatred in our hearts against others we turn our minds upside down.

Our minds are like cups. When they are right side up they are open to the Lord. When we do wrong the Lord immediately forgives us and we receive His forgiveness. But if we hold hatred, grudges, and lack forgiveness, we turn the cup of our mind upside down. The Lord forgives, but we don't receive His forgiveness.

It is not easy to forgive. This does not mean we aren't supposed to defend ourselves against wrongdoing. Not defending ourselves would mean giving in to evil. However while we defend ourselves we are not to *hate* or try to *get even* with the person who wronged us. We need to be forgiving and try to love them even when might they be punished for the wrong they have done. It would be wrong to be happy about their punishment. We should only want them to learn not do that wrong thing again. The Lord asks us to want good for them—not evil—and be willing to be friends with them again when they have learned to do what is right.

Doing this is not easy. Jesus said, "If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23, 24). This means that if we have wronged someone—even in our hearts—we cannot really worship the Lord. Only a forgiving heart can worship the Lord.

This is what is meant by asking the Lord to, "Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors." In saying this we acknowledge that the Lord can only forgive *us* the wrong we do if we are willing to forgive *others* the wrong they do to us.

## Discuss

*Choose questions for discussion.*

1. How is a judge who sentences a criminal loving the neighbor?
2. Is it ok tell someone about a person who has done something to hurt you?
3. What is one way you can defend yourself from someone who has hurt you?
4. How can holding a grudge against another person hurt us spiritually?
5. Can the Lord forgive us if we are not willing to forgive others? Even when we feel justified in not forgiving the person?
6. What steps might you take to be reconciled to someone who has tried to make amends for their mistakes?

## Watch a Video

Watch the start of *How to Love Your Enemies* at [bitly.com/Love Enemies](https://bitly.com/Love_Enemies) (35min). (Enter bitly link in the browser bar at the top of your screen.)

## New Church Concept How We Are Forgiven

The Divine actions and powerful effects meant by the Holy Spirit are the acts of reforming and regenerating us. Depending on the outcome of this reformation and regeneration, the divine actions and powerful effects also include the acts of renewing us, bringing us to life, sanctifying us, and making us just; and...also the acts of purifying us from evils, forgiving our sins, and ultimately saving us.

These are the powerful effects, one after the other, that the Lord has on people who believe in him and who adapt and modify themselves in order to welcome him and invite him to stay. Divine truth has these effects. Among Christians the Word has these effects because the Word is the only means by which Christians can go to the Lord and the Lord can come to them....

The divine truth in connection with goodness, that is, faith in connection with goodwill, is the force that reforms and regenerates us; then renews us, brings us to life, sanctifies us, and justifies us; and, depending on our level of growth...purifies us from evils. (Being purified from our evils is the same as having our sins forgiven.) *True Christianity* 153