



# HELPING EACH OTHER

———— *How to serve spiritual needs* ————

**Resource Book and Small Group Guide**

**Based on work by John Odhner**



## Appendix 4: Additional Resources

### More Resources for *Helping Each Other*

You can find additional resources to use with this program at [newchurch teachings.org/how-to-help-each-other](http://newchurch teachings.org/how-to-help-each-other)

### *What Would Love Do?* Program

This is another program that also focusses on serving these six needs, on a natural and spiritual level. Visit [journey.newchurch.org/programs/what-would-love-do](http://journey.newchurch.org/programs/what-would-love-do).

### *Altruism: Many Kinds of Kindness*

This is a book by Soni S. Werner, Ph.D., a Swedenborgian Developmental Psychologist and professor of psychology and interpersonal communication skills at Bryn Athyn College. In this book, Dr. Werner takes the parable of the sheep and goats from Matthew and uses it to explore the concept of altruism. Looking at examples from her own life, from worldwide efforts, from literature, and from psychological studies, Werner conveys ideas about applying these ways that Jesus asks us to serve our fellow human beings. Then, using theological insights from Emanuel Swedenborg, she digs even deeper to help us understand ways that we can relieve spiritual hunger, thirst, estrangement, nakedness, sickness and imprisonment as well as the physical forms of these afflictions. Werner guides us to see the “many kinds of kindness” that we have to choose from to make the most of this life we’ve been given. In reaching out to the people around us, we can grow closer to them and closer to God at the same time.

Find the book on Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Altruism-Kindness-Soni-Werner-Ph-D/dp/1936665166>

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# Introduction

When Jesus was giving final instructions to His disciples just before His crucifixion, He told the parable of the Sheep and the Goats. He said in the judgment He will say to the “sheep” (those who are good), “I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me’. When the righteous say that they never saw the Lord in need, He will answer, ‘Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brothers, you did it to Me’ (Matthew 5:35-40).

The different kinds of good deeds that the Lord listed point to our basic physical needs: food, drink, shelter, clothing, health and liberty. It is good to help provide others with these needs when we are able to do so. Yet Jesus was speaking in the language of parable here. The “sheep and goats” are not really sheep and goats. They are people like you and me, some compassionate and some uncaring. Likewise, when He spoke of people who are hungry, thirsty or sick, He was referring not only to people’s physical needs, but also to their spiritual needs.

The teaching about love for the neighbour, that is, about good will, is far-reaching. This may appear from the fact that it reaches to each and every thing that we think and will, and, therefore to everything we speak and do. Moreover, good will with one person is not the same as it is with another person, and also one person is not a neighbour in the same way as another person. The teaching about good will was so far-reaching, and for the ancient people that teaching made up the essential teaching of the Church, so they distinguished good will towards the neighbour into several classes, which they again subdivided. They gave names to each class, and taught how good will was to be practiced towards those who were in one class, and towards those who were in another. In this way they ordered the teaching about good will and the acts of good will, to present them distinctly to the understanding. They gave various names to people for whom they were to do acts of good will: some they called blind, some lame, some maimed, some poor, and again some miserable and afflicted, while some they called fatherless, and some widows. In general, however, they called them hungry, whom they should give food; thirsty, whom they should give drink; strangers, whom they should take in; naked, whom they should clothe; sick, whom they should visit; and bound in prison, to whom they should come.

*New Jerusalem §107*

## Situation 4

Michael is a sharp thinker, and proud of it. He takes pleasure in being right and letting other people know it. This habit has gotten him into a few confrontations and that has left him feeling distant from the congregation. It seems that everyone is against him. He can see this, and is saddened by it, yet cannot give up his thirst for being right. That’s such a part of who he is.

## Situation 5

Anne is often worried. She feels like what is being asked of her both as a mother and as an employee is far beyond her abilities. It won’t be long before people start finding out and realising that she is a fraud.

## Situation 6

Andrew has been betrayed in the past. A business partner cheated him out of millions. Once he was fired from a job that he thought he was doing well in. He has become suspicious of other people’s loyalty, and inflicts that suspicion on his wife and children. He is quick to accuse them of mocking him or not living up to their promises.

## Situation 7

Kate has been married for over 10 years and loves her husband. However her husband is very controlling and insecure. He needs to know where she is all the time and is suspicious of her time away from him or the family. She has reassured him that she loves him and would never do anything to jeopardise their relationship but he continues to doubt and question her movements and loyalty. They have been for counselling and things improved slightly but lately he has gone back to his questioning and suspicion.

## Situation 8

Richard is a complainer. He complains about the state of the country. About how busy he is. About people these days. Any solution that is thrown his way is deflected with a complaint: it’s always someone else’s fault, so what can he be expected to do about it? Although he seems tough, inside he feels a fear nothing is going to change and the world is only getting worse and he can’t do anything about it.

## Appendix 3: Situations to Consider

For each of the following situations discuss these three questions. Bear in mind that there will be various answers and that there is not necessarily one “correct” response. Use it as an opportunity to discuss the various needs and how to offer help.

1. What spiritual need or needs does the person have?
2. What is it like when you find yourself in a similar situation?
3. What would be the best thing to do to help that person?

### Situation 1

John works at an IT company. When he joined many years ago it fit both his interests and his skills. But lately it has become a chore with no end in sight. He struggles to get up the motivation to do his best and feels like he is going nowhere.

### Situation 2

Sarah has been married for three years. Although she and her husband love each other, they often fail to communicate well, which leads to frustration and distance. Sarah would love to make things better but she has tried many things that have not made much difference. She is struggling to figure out what to try next.

### Situation 3

Jess is a single mother. She recently got divorced and is struggling with financial issues and abandonment issues. Her children, in their early 20's, are coping well with the divorce and are making lives for themselves which makes her feel worse. She needs to know where they are all the time and worries if she doesn't know where they are that something bad has happened to them. She prays for courage but still has a sense of foreboding which she cannot shake off.

The deeper needs people have that correspond to their physical needs are summarised in this passage:

To hunger is to eagerly desire what is good.

To thirst is to eagerly desire what is true.

A stranger is someone who wants to learn.

The naked are the ones who realise that they have nothing good and true.

Someone who is sick is in evil.

Someone bound or in prison is in falsity.

*From Secrets of Heaven §4958*

It can be hard to acknowledge that we have needs. We'd rather be seen as independent and on top of things. We can have a lot of shame around some of these needs—particularly around nakedness and sickness. Who wants to acknowledge that they have nothing good or true or are in evil? And yet, the Lord said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (Mark 2:17). It's important to remember that—as a person trying to help others and as a person being helped.

In the following pages we will look at what these different needs mean and some of the ways to help the people who have them. To begin with, though, keep in mind that to love is to feel the joy of another as joy in oneself (*Divine Love and Wisdom* §47), and it is also to have compassion, which is feeling another person's suffering as one's own. This means listening with our hearts and showing our compassion by identifying the thoughts and feelings of the other person. All the suggestions in the following pages will work better if there is a lot of listening first.

## How to Use this Book

### With a Group

You will get the most out of this program if you can do it with other people. Appendix 2 is an outline for how to use this book in a group setting.

### On Your Own

You may be trying to figure out how to serve your own needs or how to serve another person's needs. Either way, begin with the “What Do I Need?” exercise on the next 2 pages and fill it out for yourself or fill it out based on your understanding of your neighbour's needs. Once you have determined your own or another person's foremost spiritual need, then turn to the relevant section in this book about how to serve that need—e.g. The Hungry.

# What Do I Need?

Mark the sentences on these two pages that describe you the best. Or write your own sentences in the boxes that come closest.

## Hungry—Service

*Spiritually hungry people want to do good and are dissatisfied with what they do now.*



- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I want to make a difference.              | <input type="checkbox"/> I feel passionate about what I'm doing.             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I want to help people in need.            | <input type="checkbox"/> I need opportunities to be useful.                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I want to make life better for people.    | <input type="checkbox"/> I am limited in my ability to do what I want to do. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am ready to work. I'm willing to serve. | <input type="checkbox"/> I feel called to serve God.                         |

## Thirsty—Learning

*Spiritually thirsty people are eager to learn and grow, or have doubts and questions.*



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have questions. I want to learn.               | <input type="checkbox"/> I feel challenged by other philosophies and ideas. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I want to help, but I don't know how.            | <input type="checkbox"/> I want to understand God, heaven, life and love.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I love discovering new ideas.                    | <input type="checkbox"/> I love digging deep in the Lord's Word.            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm confused. I don't understand. I have doubts. |   |

## Stranger—Community

*Spiritual strangers need community and connection, or are lonely or isolated.*



- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I want to connect with other people.          | <input type="checkbox"/> Nobody knows what I'm going through.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I want to feel that I belong.                 | <input type="checkbox"/> I feel lost. I need directions.       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm lonely. I need friendship.                | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't feel at home in this culture. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I want someone to listen to me.               | <input type="checkbox"/> God has abandoned me.                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I want to be with people who share my values. |  |

- It is of value to everyone in the group to have people be willing to be focussed on.

2) Look at the section of this book for the need you are focussing on—e.g. The Hungry.

- Give the person or people being focussed on a chance to look through the options below and then the leader asks them, “Which of the following options would be most useful to you right now?”
- Follow the person or people's lead on how to spend this time and how long to continue with it.

## B. Indirect Approach

*Use either of the following approaches to have a discussion about how people can help each other.*

### Discuss a Specific Situation

- Ask people in the group to describe a situation to discuss, from their life or fictional. It may be a situation designed to explore a specific spiritual need or a situation where part of the point is to discuss what need it falls under.
- Or have the group pick a situation from Appendix 3 in this book to discuss.
- In both cases try to get as specific as possible about how people might help someone in that situation.

### Discuss a Specific Need

- Pick a need (e.g. hunger) to discuss how people could help someone with that need. Look at the section of this book for the need you have picked.
- Read and discuss the passages at the beginning of the section.

## 4. Closing

1) Go around the circle with each person saying any closing thought.

2) Say a closing prayer.

- Some groups close with the Lord's Prayer.
- If you have not already prayed for needs identified earlier, you could do that now, or give thanks for the wisdom, effort and support that people showed in the meeting.

attend to the voice of my supplications. In the day of my trouble I will call upon You, for You will answer me.” (Psalm 86:5-7)

- There can be more prayer later.

### 3) Check In

- Try not to skip the Check In, Be Grateful, and Closing steps. Each of these is a way for each person to feel included, especially when the focus is on someone else during a certain session.
- If time is limited, each person can say just a few words about how you are feeling now.
- Some groups take a lot of time to share how their day or week has been.

### 4) Be Grateful

- Each person say one or two things you are grateful for.
- We are better able to listen to others and help them if we are feeling grateful for what the Lord has done for us.

## 2. Identify Needs

- 1) Do the “What Do I Need?” exercise on pages 3-4.
- 2) Each person explain a bit about what their foremost spiritual need is at the moment.

## 3. Help Each Other

### A. Direct Approach

*This is the recommended approach for people to get the most out of a Helping Each Other group. If your group is not comfortable with sharing about their needs directly then use the Indirect Approach outlined below.*

- 1) As a group, invite someone or some people with the same need to take a turn to have the attention of the group.
  - You might invite someone based on the group’s sense of the urgency of the expressed need or the number of people expressing it. Sometimes the leader may need to directly ask people. And people can pass if they want to.
  - The intention is for everyone to get a turn to get some help, over the course of a couple of sessions of the group.

### Naked—Hope

*Spiritually naked people struggle with shame or grief, and lack confidence, trust and hope.*



- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I feel low.                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> I want to crawl in a hole and hide.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I’m worried.                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> I want to make peace with my past.    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I feel vulnerable.                              | <input type="checkbox"/> I want something to look forward to.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I’m struggling with grief.                      | <input type="checkbox"/> I’m no good. I have nothing to offer. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I’m struggling with shame.                      | <input type="checkbox"/> I just don’t want anyone to be hurt.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don’t want anyone to know what my issues are. |  |

### Sick—Healing

*Spiritually sick people struggle with lust, anger, resentment, control and addiction.*



- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I feel resentful or angry.          | <input type="checkbox"/> People have hurt me.                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I keep indulging unhealthy desires. | <input type="checkbox"/> I’m sick of feeling pain.               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I’m struggling with addiction.      | <input type="checkbox"/> I’m struggling with fear. I’m not safe. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My life is falling apart.           |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have hurt people.                 |  |

### Prisoners—Freedom

*Spiritual prisoners are trapped by false assumptions, and often need clear boundaries.*



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I feel stuck.                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> All my problems come from other people. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I can’t decide what direction my life should go. | <input type="checkbox"/> Nothing I do makes any difference.      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have no control over my life.                  | <input type="checkbox"/> I don’t have any good options.          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I can’t make any progress.                       | <input type="checkbox"/> I have made bad choices.                |



## The Hungry

### Who Is Hungry?

**To hunger is to eagerly desire what is good.**

*Secrets of Heaven §4958*

When you eat the labor of your hands, You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you.

*Psalm 128:2*

One shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

*Matthew 4:3, 4; Luke 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3*

Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give you.

*John 6:27*

Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.”

*John 4:34*

“Food” means heavenly goodness, because the angels’ food is nothing but the good intentions of love and of kindness, which not only make them live, but also refresh them. It is especially these good intentions in act, or the practice of them.... These things nourish a person’s spirit, while material food nourishes his body.

*Secrets of Heaven §5147:3*

Spiritual food is everything that is useful, and everything that leads to usefulness.

*Secrets of Heaven §5293*

“Latent in the affection of every angel’s will is a certain inner tendency which draws the mind to accomplish something. By accomplishment the mind finds peace and satisfaction. This satisfaction and peace produce a state of mind open to of a love of useful service from the Lord. Receiving this love brings heavenly happiness.... Heavenly food in its essence is nothing else than love, wisdom and useful service combined, that is, useful service accomplished through wisdom out of love. Consequently in heaven everyone is given food for the body in accordance with the useful service he performs - magnificent food in the case of those engaged in outstanding service, modest food but of excellent flavour and taste in the case of those in an intermediate degree of useful service, and humble food in the case of those in humble service, while the lazy receive none.”

*Married Love §6.6*

## Appendix 2:

### Helping Each Other Group Meeting Outline

Helping Each Other works for individuals, and even better in groups. It can work with a small group, even 2 or 3 people, as well as a larger group of 10 or 12. If more people than that are involved, the group can be subdivided.

We have a process for running a group, intended to make it very simple to lead.

#### I. Opening

1) Explain the purpose of the group if people need reminding or if there are newcomers.

- Read the Introduction to this book or use some of the following quotes:
  - “The goal of this group is to understand our most pressing and important needs, and to help each other with them.”
  - “Inasmuch as you have helped one of the least of these My brothers and sisters, you have done it to Me.” (Matthew 25:31-46)
  - “God loves each and every human being; and because He cannot do good to them directly, but only indirectly by means of other people, He therefore breathes into people His love.” (*True Christianity* §457:3)
  - “We are not born for our own sake; we are born for the sake of others. That is, we are not born to live for ourselves alone; we are born to live for others.” (*True Christianity* §406)
- Read through the *Helping Each Other* Group Guidelines in Appendix 1.

#### 2) Pray

- This can be a short prayer by one person, simply asking the Lord to be present and guide our thoughts. You may use your own words, or use a prayer such as one of these:
  - “Lord, thank You for bringing this group together. Teach us how we can love one another and help each other.”
  - “Lord, be with us continually. Lift us up and turn Your face to us. Teach us, enlighten us, and lead us, since on our own we can’t do anything that is truly good.” (*Apocalypse Explained* §1148)
  - “Lord, You are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You. Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer; and



# Appendix I:

## Helping Each Other Group Guidelines

*The following guidelines help create a safe, supportive environment:*

1. We are not required to share everything. We share what we are comfortable sharing and what we think would be useful for us to talk about or for the group to hear.
2. We do not give unsolicited advice.
3. We check if it is OK before talking about what someone shared.
4. We have the option to pass.
5. We support each other, both inside and outside of the group.
6. We speak only for ourselves.
7. We do not interrupt.
8. We do not use names when sharing.
9. We keep confidentiality.
10. We seek to stay within time limits so everyone has a chance to speak.
11. We agree to give the leader permission to interrupt if they feel like these guidelines are not being followed.

### A Note About Giving Advice

If you have participated in other small groups, you may be familiar with the idea that no unsolicited advice is given: it is more about listening respectfully and letting someone's voice be heard. Of course, if someone asked for advice then it would be appropriate to offer it. This group is a little different in that we want people to practice supporting each other in many ways, some of which might involve giving advice or at least sharing what perspectives come to our minds when we listen to someone else's needs. We still don't offer unsolicited advice, but we encourage everyone to ask for and to offer whatever support he or she can.

### A Note About What This Group Is and Is Not

This group or experience is not a replacement for professional therapy. Even if you happen to have a professional counsellor or a pastor in your group, we are just a bunch of people in a casual setting helping to build community with each other in a safe place.

## How do we help people who are spiritually hungry?

True satisfaction in life comes from useful service—caring for people, knowing that our life has value. On a physical level we may find people who are looking for work in order to eat: “Will work for food.” On a spiritual level, we can recognise people who are eager to work for love, just to make a difference. We can help people like this by helping them find some way of serving, ministering, leading or teaching.

*The leader will give the person or people being focussed on a chance to look through the options below and then will ask them, “Which of the following options would be most useful to you right now?”*

- **Take some time to talk to the group about one of these questions:**
  - How is your work going?
  - What is something you find fulfilling in your life right now?
  - Is there something you feel passionate about?
  - What needs of other people do you notice most these days?
  - Do you have any gifts or abilities that you think are underused?
  - What do you think the Lord wants to accomplish through you?
- **Have each person in the group talk about their ministry.** Discover what they do passionately and well. Identify challenges, offer support, and celebrate success.
- **Get help identifying what you feel called to.**
- **Have the group make a plan to help someone in your life.** Identify someone and figure out how they could be helped by the group.
- **Get help in finding a mentor or someone to mentor.** It's the best way to grow in excellence.
- **Have the group discuss possible barriers to your usefulness and ways to overcome them.**
- **Get help in defining some next steps.** Know what to do to move forward in helping others.
- **Have the group ask the Lord to lead you to greater usefulness.**
- **Have the group discuss the mission of this group.** Remind each other why you are here, and clarify it. Try taking a turn to lead the group.



## The Thirsty

### Who Is Thirsty?

**To thirst is to eagerly desire what is true.**

*Secrets of Heaven §4958.*

Jesus said, “Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never thirst. But the water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up to eternal life.”

*John 4:13, 14*

Jesus said, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”

*John 7:37-38*

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price.

*Isaiah 55:1*

Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew. *Deuteronomy 32:2*

For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth,... so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please.

*Isaiah 55:10, 11*

As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

*Psalms 42:1-2*

“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord God, “That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, but shall not find it.

“In that day the fair virgins and strong young men shall faint from thirst.

*Amos 8:11-13*

O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water.

*Psalms 63:1*

### How do we help people who are spiritually in prison?

People who are spiritually in prison are stuck by their false assumptions. They may have false assumptions about other people, such as prejudices and superficial judgments, that people are a certain way because of their race or religion, or they may be assumptions about themselves, that they are better than other people or that they are broken and unfixable, or about God that He is distant uncaring, or non-existent.

*The leader will give the person or people being focussed on a chance to look through the options below and then will ask them, “Which of the following options would be most useful to you right now?”*

- **Take some time to talk to the group about one of these questions:**
  - Where do you feel stuck?
  - What is stopping you from moving forward?
  - What decisions do you have trouble making?
  - What do you want?
  - What would you do if nothing was stopping you?
  - Do you have a sense of what choice the Lord is asking you to make?
  - What do you stand to lose if you let go of your current assumptions?
- **As a group, discuss one of these topics:**
  - The options that you might have in front of you.
  - The freedom to change your attitude, even when you can't change anything else.
  - How the equilibrium between heaven and hell shows up in your life and the lives of the members of the group.
  - How to set and maintain clear boundaries.
  - How to hear new or conflicting ideas without getting defensive or more entrenched in our attitudes.
- **Have members of the group share their experience of speaking the truth** of their experience with love, humility and respect, and no condemnation or criticism.
- **Have the group say a prayer or read some Scripture.**



## The Imprisoned

**Someone bound or in prison is in falsity.**

*Secrets of Heaven §4958*

For the Lord hears the poor, And does not despise His prisoners. *Psalm 69:33*

Let the groaning of the prisoner come before You; according to the greatness of Your power preserve those who are appointed to die; *Psalm 79:11*

Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Your name; *Psalm 142:7*

“I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house. *Isaiah 42:6-7*

For the Lord hears the poor, and does not despise His prisoners. *Psalm 69:33f*

I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house. *Isaiah 42:6-7*

If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. *John 8:31-32*

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, Because the Lord has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound. *Isaiah 61:1*

Those going through devastating experiences there are people who, in spite of their false assumptions and in spite of their bad ways of living life based on false thinking, have nevertheless had good intentions. Such people cannot be welcomed into heaven until they have given up their false assumptions and also the pleasures they get in their lives from thinking that way. People in that place have to go through trials, for the false assumptions and the pleasures they bring into their lives cannot be rejected except through trials. The place where those people are, or rather the state they are going through, is meant in general by “the prison,” and the places specifically are “the pits.

*Secrets of Heaven §5307*

## How do we help people who are spiritually thirsty?

People who are thirsty spiritually are those who are eager for truth. Just as food and drink go together, so do usefulness and learning. Since your group will be seeking to love the Lord and the neighbour, you will need to devote some of your time to learning how to love the Lord and the neighbour. When Rachel came as a shepherdess to give her sheep a drink, her beauty and care for her sheep symbolised the desire for truth that is what teaches each of us.

*The leader will give the person or people being focussed on a chance to look through the options below and then will ask them, “Which of the following options would be most useful to you right now?”*

- **Take some time to talk to the group about one of these questions:**
  - Do you have any big, burning questions?
  - What are you really interested in or passionate about at the moment?
  - Are there things you are confused or doubtful about?
  - What subject or skill are you eager to learn?
  - What have you been really glad to learn?
  - What is an idea you really want to share with others?
  - Are you able to find answers you need in the Lord’s Word?
- **Get input from the group about resources that might help you with your mission or how you want to serve.** Share articles, studies, books, people to talk to, websites, videos, *etc.*
- **Study a topic, as a group.** Find a book to discuss, a Bible study, or a training program that help you be more effective, compassionate and skilful.
- **Have the group share relevant quotes with you.** Look for passages from the Bible, from New Church teachings, or other sources that you can learn, discuss and share with others.
- **Take a turn teaching.** Share what you learn with others so that you grow in your ability to share with people outside the group. We learn best by sharing.
- **As a group, pray for enlightenment.**



## The Stranger

### Who Is a Stranger?

**A stranger is someone who wants to learn.**

*Secrets of Heaven §4958*

The Lord watches over the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow.

*Psalm 146:9*

Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.

*Hebrews 13:2*

You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of a stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

*Exodus 23:9*

And if a stranger dwells with you, or whoever is among you throughout your generations, and would present an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord, just as you do, so shall he do. One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger who dwells with you, an ordinance forever throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord. One law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger who dwells with you.

*Numbers 15:14-16*

So Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, and said, "My Lord, if I have now found favour in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts.

*Genesis 18:2-5*

He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."

*Luke 7:44-47*

'Sojourning' means receiving instruction...because sojourning and passing on, or moving from one place to another, is in heaven nothing else than a change of state.... *Secrets of Heaven §1463*

### How do we help people who are spiritually sick?

Jesus said, "I was sick, and you *visited* me; I was in prison, and you came to me." He didn't say, "You healed me; you set me free." With the first four conditions the Lord honours those who actively give food, drink, shelter and clothing to those in need, but with the last two it appears that we can't always solve people's problems or change their condition, though we can be present with them in difficult times. We can *visit*, we can *come*.

We can become sick not only on a physical level but also in our relationships with one another and with God. Spiritually sick people have done and said things that are hurtful. They may have hurt *you*, and it may be an entrenched habit. True healing can come only with repentance and forgiveness.

**The leader will give the person or people being focussed on a chance to look through the options below and then will ask them, "Which of the following options would be most useful to you right now?"**

- **Take some time to talk to the group about one of these questions:**
  - What urges or addictions would you like to let go of?
  - How have you experienced suffering?
  - What's painful? What's not working? Where is forgiveness needed?
  - Are you struggling with unhealthy urges?
  - Which of the 10 Commandments do you have the most trouble with?
  - Who do you turn to for help when you are struggling?
  - What are you afraid of?
  - Can you turn your life over to the Lord?
  - How would you describe a time when you felt well?
- **If people in the group are willing, have them share about their faults.**
- **As a group, discuss willingness to apologise and forgive.** Also discuss the Lord's constant forgiveness.
- **As a group, ask the Lord for healing and forgiveness.**
- **As a group, support each other in doing the work of repentance:** 1) Examine your thoughts and intentions. 2) Find something bad you must change. 3) Ask the Lord for help and strength. 4) Resist the evil and make a new start. (Do the *Begin a New Life* program.)
- **As a group, discuss how to avoid self-righteousness and superiority.** We all need to repent of sins.



## The Sick

### Who Is Sick?

**Someone who is sick is in evil.**

*Secrets of Heaven §4958*

Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers children who are corrupters! ...The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints.

From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment. ...Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes.

*Isaiah 4-6, 16-17*

The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

*Revelation 22:2*

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them.

*Matthew 4:23-24*

They brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."

*Matthew 9:2*

The Lord will strengthen him on his bed of illness; You will sustain him on his sickbed.

*Psalms 41:3*

Jesus said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

*Mark 2:17*

If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.

And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him."

*Luke 17:3-4*

Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

*Matthew 18:15*

So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine.

*Luke 10:34*

### How do we help spiritual strangers?

Strangers are especially people from some other place or culture who may not have a home, friends or family, and may not understand your culture and customs. Chances are that they are especially in need of fellowship and new friends.

*The leader will give the person or people being focussed on a chance to look through the options below and then will ask them, "Which of the following options would be most useful to you right now?"*

- **Take some time to talk to the group about one of these questions:**
  - Do you feel lonely?
  - What is your social life like?
  - Do wish to spend more time with people you love?
  - Who are your closest friends?
  - What qualities do you most value in friends?
  - Do you recognise the Lord's presence where two or three are gathered in His name?
- **Have each person in the group tell their story or describe their spiritual journey.**
- **Have each person talk about ways the Lord has been with them at different times in their life.** When has the Lord felt like a stranger to you? When has He felt very close?
- **Tell people in the group something that others don't know about you.** Or have people in the group share things that others don't know about them.
- **Make a plan for some people in the group to meet one of your friends or family members.**
- **Make a plan to be introduced to a possible new friends by people in the group.**
- **Plan a social event or a communal meal with your group.**
- **Discuss how you could be a more integral part of this group.**
- **Discuss ways that people could follow up with you outside of group time that would help you to feel connected.**



## The Naked

### Who Is Naked?

**The naked are those who realize that they have nothing good and true.**

*Secrets of Heaven §4958*

### Beautiful Clothes Mean Beautiful Thoughts

You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness. *Psalm 30:11*

He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness. *Isaiah 61:10*

Awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Zion! Put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city. *Isaiah 52:1*

I put on justice, and it clothed me. My judgment was as a robe and a crown. *Job 29:14*

O LORD my God, You are very great; You are clothed with honour and majesty, who cover Yourself with light as with a garment. *Psalm 104:1*

To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. *Isaiah 61:3*

### Nakedness and Rags Mean Shame, Fear and Vulnerability

I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself. *Genesis 3:10*

The king shall mourn, and the prince shall be clothed with desolation. *Ezekiel 7:27*

Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame. *Revelation 16:15*

Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion who rejoice at my hurt; let them be clothed with shame and dishonour who exalt themselves against me. *Psalm 35:26*

He clothed himself with cursing as with his garment. *Psalm 109:18*

Let my adversaries be clothed with shame, and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle. *Psalm 109:29*

### How do we help people who are spiritually naked?

Like the poor and hungry, the naked not only have no food or money, but also don't even have a pocket to put them in. People who are spiritually naked are people who see themselves as helpless, hopeless or worthless. When Ham found his father Noah drunk and naked in his tent, he went out and told his brothers Shem and Japheth. Shem and Japheth took a blanket between them and went backward into the tent and covered their father. When someone is struggling with shame, hopelessness, loss or low self-esteem, it is hurtful make a point of their weakness or failings.

*The leader will give the person or people being focussed on a chance to look through the options below and then will ask them, "Which of the following options would be most useful to you right now?"*

- **Take some time to talk to the group about one of these questions:**
  - What is your hope for the future?
  - What do you feel grateful about?
  - What are you fearful or worried about?
  - What are you sad about?
  - How do regret, shame and low self-esteem show up in your life?
  - Do you feel that the Lord is taking care of you and leading to a good future?
- **Have the group listen to what you're going through and reflect back the feelings that you express.**
- **Have the group offer prayers asking for comfort, strength, wisdom and peace.** The Lord is the hope of the helpless (see Psalm 10:14).
- **Go around the group and have each person share** any of the following:
  - Something they hope for you.
  - Something they appreciate about you or are grateful for.
  - Something in themselves that is from heaven and something that is from hell.
  - Something that has helped them to get through a hard time.
  - Comforting thoughts and passages that don't gloss over or dismiss grief, shame or despair.
- **As a group, discuss humility.** Everything good and true is from the Lord.
- **As a group, discuss confidentiality** to help you feel safe and private.