

## **A Study Guide: Christian Charity**

**December 14, 2025**

This guide reviews the core concepts of Christian charity as presented through the perspectives of C.S. Lewis and John MacArthur. It is designed to test and deepen understanding of their theological and practical teachings on the subject.

### **Quiz: Short Answer Questions**

*Instructions: Answer the following questions in two to three sentences, drawing exclusively from the information provided in the source material.*

1. How does C.S. Lewis distinguish between the original meaning of "charity" and its meaning in a Christian sense?
2. According to C.S. Lewis, what is the relationship between naturally "liking" a person and being charitable towards them?
3. What is C.S. Lewis's "simple rule" for how to act charitably toward a neighbor one does not like?
4. Explain C.S. Lewis's concept of "compound interest" as it applies to daily moral and immoral actions.
5. What is the necessary prerequisite for loving your neighbor, according to the teachings of Jesus Christ as cited by John MacArthur?
6. John MacArthur teaches that charity should be purposeful and wise. What scriptural principle from 2 Thessalonians 3:10 does he use to warn against enabling destructive lifestyles?
7. What is the primary mission of the church regarding charity, and what warning does John MacArthur give against becoming a "social service agency"?
8. How does John MacArthur differentiate between worldly philanthropy and true Christian charity?
9. The discussion touches on the dilemma of being asked for donations at a store checkout. What guiding principle is suggested to navigate these situations?
10. The command to "love your neighbor as yourself" is foundational. Cite the Old Testament and New Testament books mentioned in the source that contain this command.

---

## Answer Key

1. C.S. Lewis explains that "charity" originally meant "alms," which is simply giving to the poor. However, in a Christian sense, charity means love, which is not an emotion or a feeling but a state of the will—the same state of will we naturally have for ourselves that we must learn to have for others.
2. Lewis clarifies that a natural liking for someone is neither a sin nor a virtue; it is simply a fact. While liking someone makes it easier to be charitable and should be encouraged, it is not the virtue of charity itself but rather a help to it.
3. C.S. Lewis's simple rule is: "don't waste your time bothering whether you love your neighbor; act as if you do." He teaches that when you behave as if you love someone, you will eventually come to love them more, or at least dislike them less.
4. C.S. Lewis posits that both good and evil increase at a compound interest. A small good act today can become a strategic point for future victories, while a seemingly trivial indulgence can become a foothold from which the enemy can launch a devastating attack.
5. Citing Jesus Christ, John MacArthur states that you cannot love your neighbor without first loving God. The first and greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, and the second, to love your neighbor as yourself, follows from the first.
6. To stress that charity should not encourage laziness or irresponsibility, MacArthur frequently uses 2 Thessalonians 3:10: "if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat." This principle underscores that giving should be directed toward those with genuine needs.
7. According to MacArthur, the church's primary mission is preaching the Gospel, teaching the scripture, and making disciples. He warns that while a church must show compassion, it should not become a social service agency that loses its focus on the Gospel by simply providing material aid without God's Word.
8. John MacArthur teaches that while unbelievers are capable of philanthropy, Christian charity is unique because it flows from a regenerated heart, a new nature given by the indwelling Holy Spirit, and a desire to glorify Christ. It is not merely a moral duty but a sign that righteousness has been given through Christ.
9. The suggested principle is to have the structure of the scriptures already present in one's life to guide giving decisions. This involves avoiding emotional or guilt-driven giving and instead being biblically principled, thoughtful, and discerning about where charitable funds are directed.
10. The source cites the command "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" from the Old Testament book of **Leviticus** (19:18). In the New Testament, this command is referenced in **Matthew** (22:39), **Mark** (12:31), **Luke** (10:27), **Romans** (13:9), and **Galatians** (5:14).

---

## Essay Questions

*Instructions: The following questions are designed for deeper reflection and analysis. Formulate a comprehensive response for each, synthesizing concepts from the source material.*

1. Compare and contrast the perspectives of C.S. Lewis and John MacArthur on the practice of Christian charity, considering the historical contexts (World War I & II for Lewis, modern era for MacArthur) that shaped their views.
2. Analyze the principle "act as if you do" as proposed by C.S. Lewis. Discuss its psychological and spiritual implications for developing genuine love for God and for one's neighbor.
3. Using the principles outlined by John MacArthur, develop a framework for how a church should approach its mercy ministry. Address the balance between compassion and accountability, and the primary mission of the church.
4. The speaker notes that both C.S. Lewis and John MacArthur emphasize that charity should not be done for public recognition. Discuss the scriptural basis for this view (e.g., Matthew 6:1-4) and its importance for the spiritual health of the giver.
5. Explore the concept of "uninformed charity" as described by John MacArthur. What are the potential negative consequences he identifies, and how does he suggest believers practice discernment in their giving?

---

#### Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition from Source Context
<b>Alms</b>	Giving to the poor. Identified by C.S. Lewis as the original meaning of the word "charity."
<b>Charity (C.S. Lewis)</b>	In the Christian sense, this is defined as love that is a state of the will, not an emotion or feeling. It is the state of will we naturally have about ourselves that we must learn to have about other people.
<b>Charity (John MacArthur)</b>	A heart-driven, biblical, and disciplined act of worship. True charity flows from a regenerated heart, is directed toward real needs, is sacrificial but wise, and is done quietly for God's glory.
<b>Compound Interest (Spiritual)</b>	A principle from C.S. Lewis stating that good and evil actions increase exponentially over time. Small, daily decisions are of infinite importance as they set the stage for future spiritual victories or defeats.
<b>Philanthropy</b>	Charitable acts or donations. John MacArthur distinguishes this from Christian charity, noting that unbelievers are capable of philanthropy, but Christian charity is unique because it flows from a regenerated heart and a desire to glorify Christ.

<b>Regeneration</b>	The spiritual transformation of a person's heart through Christ. John MacArthur teaches that true Christian charity is rooted in regeneration, not in religious duty or an attempt to earn righteousness.
<b>Social Gospel</b>	An interpretation of Christianity that prioritizes social welfare and reform. John MacArthur warns against the church becoming a "social service agency," thereby losing its primary focus on preaching the Gospel.
<b>Uninformed Charity</b>	Giving that is driven by emotion, guilt, or social pressure rather than biblical knowledge and discernment. John MacArthur warns that this type of charity can enable harmful behavior, reward laziness, subsidize sin, and confuse mercy with permissiveness.

---

#### Greek Terminology

No Greek words were identified for definition in the source material.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The source transcript mentions the word "ultrons" in reference to the widow's mites in Mark 12, but this appears to be a transcription error and not a defined Greek term within the context of the teaching.