

Learn by Doing

Choice

Seven Steps to Heaven

The seventh day represents the last step in the journey of becoming a heavenly or celestial person. The self-discipline of trying to obey the Lord is replaced by a willing attitude of doing what the Lord asks simply because a person loves and wants to do it.

In this activity, students will review the days of creation and the steps it takes to reach the goal of becoming a heavenly person. They will be asked to summarize each step in a few words to help them remember it.

1. The seventh day or creation pictures the final heavenly state people reach after faithfully learning what is true and practicing it daily. Resting on the seventh day is not rest from work, but rest from the worry and struggle that come from trying to do what is right when part of us does not want to do it.
2. We will be taking a look at all the steps that must happen in a person's life to reach this final stage of blessing and peace.
3. Divide the class into small groups or have students work individually.
4. Distribute one *Seven Steps to Heaven* question (from p. 2) to each group or individual, along with the information for that step (from pp. 3-6). If students work fast, or you would like to do this activity as a group, give students more than one question or simply do the activity together.
5. Allow time to read the questions and information and discuss.
6. Gather students together to share their answers. Share in order of the days of creation.
7. Once groups have shared, try to identify one or two words for each step that sum up what a person needs to do to prepare for heaven.
8. What do you think is the most important quality a person should develop to prepare for heaven?

Materials for Each Student

copies of the *Seven Steps to Heaven Questions* (p. 2) and *Seven Steps to Heaven Information* (pp. 3-6)

Prepare in Advance

Print pages.

New Church Concept Stages of Rebirth

Regeneration takes place in a manner analogous to that in which a person is conceived, carried in the womb, born and educated.... Having a concept of sin and then looking for sin in ourselves is the beginning of repentance.... We are to repent actively. That is, we are to examine ourselves, recognize and admit our sins, pray to the Lord, and begin a new life. The Lord is constantly active in regenerating and saving us. When we have been regenerated we have a new will and a new intellect and will be in fellowship with the angels of heaven (see *True Christianity* 586, 511, 530, 577, 601, 607).

1 Before being born into heavenly life a person's mind is "without form" and "void." What does this mean? What is the first thing that comes into a person's mind to change this? What does light correspond to?	2 "Water" is the second thing that enters a developing mind, and the waters "above" are separated from the waters "below". Why do we need water? What are the waters above and below? Compare what water does for our bodies with what true ideas do for our minds.
3 The creation of land provides the right conditions for the first living things. What "ground" do we need to find the path to heaven? What living things did the land first produce? Like plants, our lives can produce fruit. What are our fruits?	4 The sun, moon and stars picture heavenly light that shines into our minds. How do the sun, moon and stars help us? Which of the Lord's qualities do angels receive from the sun in heaven? In what way is faith like light from the moon?
5 Fish and birds correspond to facts and ideas. Compare fish and birds. How are they alike. How are they different? How do "facts" from water feed our minds? Why are spiritual thoughts that soar up high especially important on the path to heaven?	6 Animals correspond to our affections—what we want to say or do. How are people and animals alike? How are they different? In what ways does being created in the "image" and "likeness" of the Lord make people different from other forms of creation?
7 The Lord set aside the seventh day of creation as a day of rest. Why is rest important? What can happen if we do not rest regularly? How is Sunday different from other days? What activities does the Lord want us to do on the Sabbath?	Seven Steps to Heaven Questions

Seven Steps to Heaven Information

1

The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night (Genesis 1:2-5).

We are born into darkness—"without form and void". We do not know anything. On the "first day" we begin to take in the world around us. Our minds begin to form ideas. Light dawns.

To enter heaven we must be born again. This spiritual birth (or re-birth) takes place when a person is an adult. It starts when a person allows true ideas from the Word to shine into his or her mind and light up the way to heaven.

Just as natural light helps us see our way in the world, heavenly light from the Word leads us to heaven.

2

Then God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters." Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. And God called the firmament heaven (Genesis 1:6-8).

Our bodies contain more water than anything else—we cannot exist without it! Our need for water corresponds to our spiritual need for true ideas from the Word.

True ideas are as important for our minds as water is for our bodies. Without them we would not know right and wrong—and without this we cannot know the path to heaven.

Different kinds of water picture different ways true ideas come to us. Ideas about the world—e.g. gravity—come from personal experience and scientific discovery. True ideas about the natural world correspond to the waters below. Heavenly ideas from the Word correspond to the waters above.

We can connect our lives with heaven when we know what the Word teaches and use our practical knowledge and skills to serve the Lord and the neighbor.

Seven Steps to Heaven Information

3

Then God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas.... Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed...and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is...according to its kind (Genesis 1:9-12).

The waters (true ideas) were "gathered" into seas, so land (love for heavenly things) could appear.

The first living things created were plants. They are a source of food for all living things.

Land provides resources like stone, metal, wood, fuel, and gemstones. It gives us a place to build homes and grow food.

A person's mind is sometimes compared with a garden. True ideas from the Word correspond to seeds. These "seeds" of truth receive light, warmth and water from the Word when we read the Word and want to change our lives by doing what it teaches.

Jesus said that if we do what He teaches we will "bear much fruit" (John 15:5). Our fruits are the useful services we do for others—comforting a friend who is sad, helping out with chores, etc.

4

Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night...and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also. God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness (Genesis 1:14-17).

Without the sun's light and heat, earth would be so cold that no living things could exist. The Lord's great love for us is like the warmth of the sun. His wisdom is the light by which we see the path to heaven. He communicates both of these to us in His Word. In heaven the Lord's love and wisdom form the heavenly sun, which gives the angels warmth and light.

We receive the Lord's love in greater measure when we turn to Him—just as the earth warms as it turns toward the sun. We especially receive and experience the Lord's love when we do what He teaches.

We see the moon when it is dark. It is light because sunlight reflects from its surface. The moon symbolizes how the Lord is with us during dark times through our faith. We see Him reflected in true ideas we know, even when the warmth of His love feels far away. This lesser light guides us until we feel the warmth of the Lord's love again.

Seven Steps to Heaven Information

5

Then God said, "Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens." So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind.... And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth" (Genesis 1:20-22).

Fish correspond to basic facts living in "water"—practical knowledge of right and wrong, and scientific ideas.

Many disciples were fishermen. They caught fish in deep water and brought them out into the air. Jesus called His disciples "fishers of men" because they taught people true ideas from the Word that could lead them upwards, to heaven.

Birds correspond to thoughts. Some thoughts are higher than others. Eagles nest high up in trees and can soar high in the sky, seeing far and wide. Other birds nest and spend most of the day on the ground.

The variety of fish and birds reflects the way each human being and each thought is unique. The variety also shows us how infinite (limitless) the Lord is.

6

And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind.... So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him: male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food" (Genesis 1:25-29).

Animals are concerned with physical and worldly desires—food, safety, etc. They spend their time eating, protecting their babies, and interacting with other animals.

Humans are the only created beings that can know respond to the Lord. Nothing else in creation does—which is why only human beings live to eternity. People become more like animals if they do not make the Lord and spiritual things most important in their lives.

The Lord wants every person to go to heaven, but He never forces us to do what will make us truly and eternally happy. He creates us so we can freely choose to return His love. In returning His love we become fully human, in His image and likeness.

Seven Steps to Heaven Information

7

Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made (Genesis 2:1-3).

When God finished His work of creation He rested. The Ten Commandments also mention rest. They say, “remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.” “Sabbath” means rest or peace. God blessed the seventh day and “sanctified” it. “Sanctified” means made holy, or set apart.

Before the Lord came on earth people thought that resting on the Sabbath meant that a person shouldn’t do any work on that day. But when the Lord was in the world He taught, healed, and fed people on the Sabbath. He showed that the Sabbath is a day for serving others as well as remembering the Lord.

The Lord blessed the seventh day. Blessing means to make happy. The Lord gives us true and loving ideas that show us how to live lives that lead to the happiness of heaven. Doing what the Word teaches opens our hearts to the Lord and leads to heavenly rest, free from the selfish struggles of earthly life.