Learn by Doing

Choice Spiritual Balance

The Lord is always working to bring balance in our minds between the forces of heaven and hell. Conflict arises when we know what is right but do not want to do it. This conflict is temptation. In this activity students explore the spiritual forces at play during temptation. They read passages from the Writings and note what the angels and evil spirits are doing when a person is tempted. Then they put together a diagram showing how the evil spirits and angels affect the person's thinking.

1. All people who want to go to heaven experiences tests of their love and faith at some point. These temptations prepare people for heaven.
2. There are two angels and two evil spirits with each of us all the time. They are the source of our thoughts and feelings. The angels inspire true thoughts and good feelings, and the evil spirits inspire false thoughts and bad feelings. We experience mental conflicts when we know what is right but want to do something that is wrong.
3. The Writings tell us what is happening in our minds while we experience this kind of conflict. Hand out *Spiritual Balance* (pp. 2-3). Choose a few passages to read aloud with your group.
4. Divide students into three groups. Give each group one color of sticky notes. Groups will copy sets of words onto colored sticky notes and display them on the *Spiritual Balance Human Being* (p. 4).

   Group 1: Copy <u>underlined</u> words and stick them ***on*** the human figure. These words are what the human is thinking.
   Group 2: Copy **bold** words and stick them ***below*** the figure. These words show what the evil spirits are doing.
   Group 3: Copy words in CAPITALS and stick them ***above*** the figure. These words show what the angels are doing.
5. What tactics do evil spirits use to persuade people of their point of view? (e.g. they bring up memories of things done wrong in the past and use them to condemn, they bring up false ideas, etc.)
6. In what ways do the angels defend people against these attacks? (e.g. they bring up good and true ideas)
7. Why is it hard to detect the hells at work? (they act secretly and make people feel as if they are acting from their own free will)
8. Can people experience spiritual temptations if they do not care about the Lord and heaven? (no)

Materials Needed

a copy of *Spiritual Balance* pp. 2-3 for each student; one copy of *Spiritual Balance Human Being* and *Spiritual Balance Angels Evil Spirits* pp. 4 & 5; large piece of paper or poster board; sticky notes in three colors; three colors of pens, e.g. red, black, blue

Prepare in Advance

Cut apart *Spiritual Balance Angels Evil Spirits* p. 8 on the center line. Mount the *Spiritual Balance Human Being* and *Angels and Evil Spirits* on a wall or poster as shown in the picture below.



The Writings for the New Church make the following statement about spirit possession today:

There are natural spirits who come to a person but do not join themselves with a person's thoughts, but enter his body and take over its senses, talking through his mouth and acting through his limbs, believing that everything of the person's is their own. These are the spirits who possess people; but they have been cast into hell by the Lord and moved completely away; so possession like this is no longer possible. See *Heaven and Hell* 257

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Spiritual Balance

Temptation happens when **a true idea or a good motivation that is important to a person is attacked** by the evil spirits and **DEFENDED BY THE ANGELS** who are with him. There can be no temptation unless a person loves the truth that he or she knows. Anyone who does not love the true ideas he knows, or is not affected by it, is not troubled about it at all, but anyone who loves the truth worries that the truth might be harmed and lose its power to guide that person (see *Arcana Coelestia* 4274).

People who are going through temptation experience doubts about the goal they are working toward. That goal is the love against which **evil spirits fight** and in doing that they place the goal in doubt. The more a person loves something, the more it is placed in doubt. Unless a person's love or goal is placed in doubt, and even to despair, there would be no temptation (*Arcana Coelestia* 1820).

During temptation evil spirits **set off a person's false ideas and evil loves**. They **bring out memories** of whatever he or she has thought and done since early childhood. Evil spirits do this so **cleverly** and **wickedly** that it is impossible to describe it. But the angels who are with the person DRAW OUT GOOD AND TRUE IDEAS that he has AND in this way DEFEND HIM. A person experiences this as his conscience tormenting him (see *Arcana Coelestia* 751).

There are two kinds of temptation, the first involves the understanding, the second involves the will. When a person's temptation involves his understanding, evil spirits **bring up evil deeds** he has done, and use these to **accuse and condemn him**. They **activate his good deeds** too, **but corrupt them** in a thousand ways. At the same time they **trigger his thoughts**. Temptations like this are relatively mild (see *Arcana Coelestia* 751).

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Spiritual Balance *continued*

When a temptation involves what a person loves, it is not so much what he does and thinks that are stirred up. Instead evil spirits **inflame his evil desires** and **attack through what he actually wants**. They do it so **secretly** that nobody can believe it is them doing it. They **worm their way into everything** a person wants and almost instantly **twist** and **convert** the **love for what is good and true into a love for what is evil and false**. They act in such a way that people think that these things come from themselves and from their own free will. Temptations like this are very severe and are felt as inward pain and burning torment (see *Arcana Coelestia* 751).

THE LORD GIVES each person TRUE IDEAS and GOOD LOVES. These truths and goods are REMNANTS…. When a person experiences temptations, the angels with him DRAW OUT TRUE IDEAS with which they PROTECT HIM AGAINST THE EVIL SPIRITS who **activate false ideas** with him (see *Arcana Coelestia* 737).

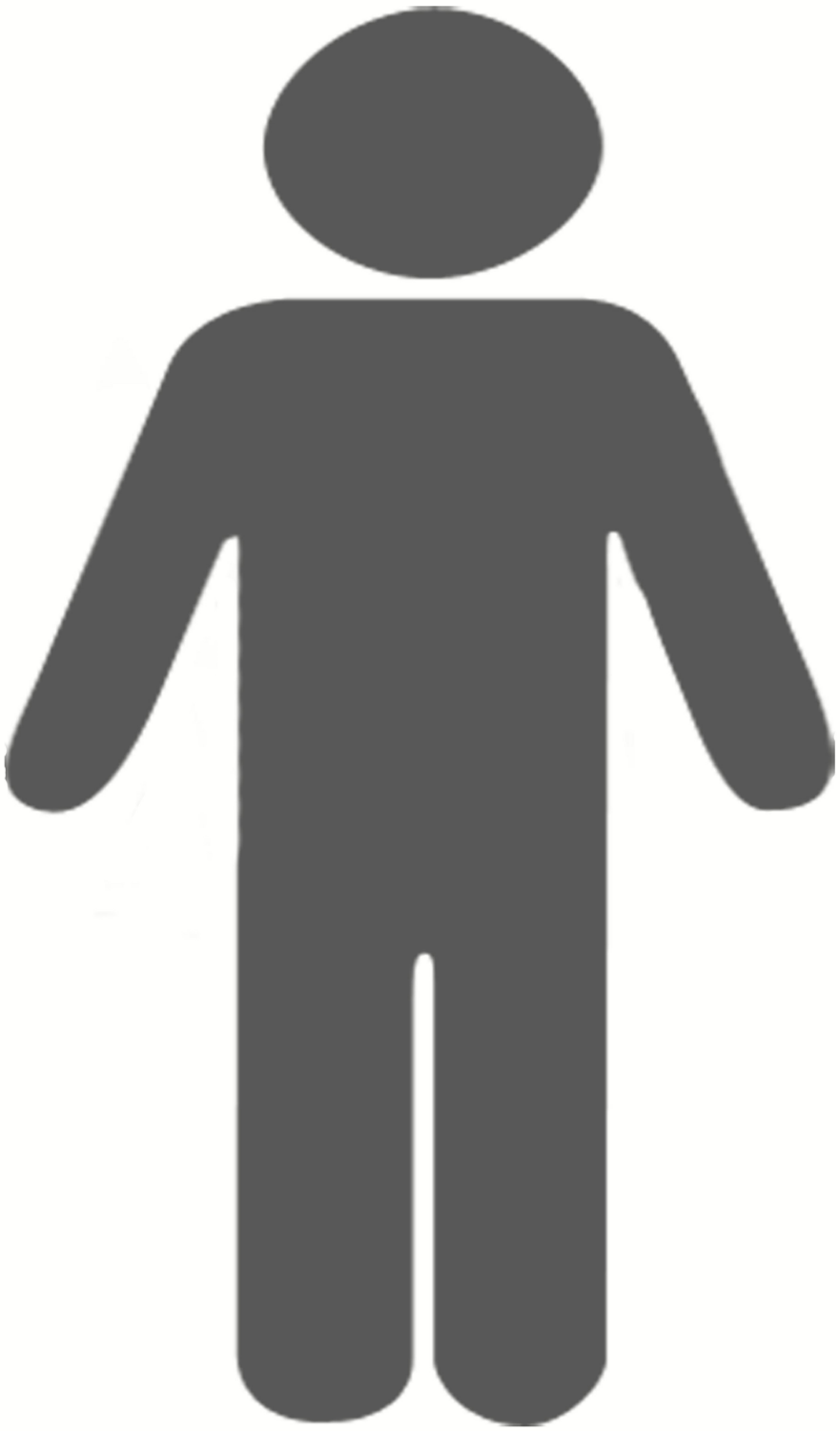
Temptations are the means by which the EVIL LOVES AND FALSE IDEAS with a person ARE EXPOSED and REMOVED (*Arcana Coelestia* 5246).

So long as temptation continues, a person thinks that the Lord is absent because he is troubled by evil spirits so severely that he can hardly believe that God exists. Yet THE LORD IS more CLOSELY PRESENT than a person can ever believe. When temptation stops, the person receives consolation and then believes that the Lord is present (see *Arcana Coelestia* 840).

After temptation NEW LIGHT shines forth (see *Arcana Coelestia* 5246).



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Spiritual Balance Human Being

Angels

Evil Spirits

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