Look Closer:
The House of God

At a Glance:
Jacob's dream of angels going up and down a ladder depicts how the Lord connects people with Himself and with heaven. Through His Word, the Lord leads people to understand and love Him. In this activity, students will read about how the Lord accommodates His good and truth in the Word. They will then think about how they could break down a skill or concept they know well in order to teach it to someone who doesn't know anything about it.



Supplies Needed for Each Student:
- copy of *The House of God*
- copy of *Climbing the Ladder*
- pen or pencil

Teacher Preparation:
- It may be helpful to the students to create one or two additional examples of accommodation.

Directions:

1. Hand out "The House of God" and read it aloud with the students, pausing for questions or comments.
2. Introduce the activity: In the Word, the Lord accommodates the truth and good that is in His mind to our human minds. We can understand this better if we think about how we might accommodate a skill or concept that we know well to someone who doesn't know anything about it.
3. Hand out pens or pencils and Climbing the Ladder pages.
4. Read the instructions and examples as a group.
5. Have each student fill out a blank ladder. Offer suggestions as needed. Some possible skills or activities: making a cake; handling money; learning a new language; playing a sport; playing a musical instrument; knitting; telling time; writing a paper for school; painting
6. If they wish, students may share their "ladders" in pairs or with the whole group. Remind students that there is no one right order. Everyone will accommodate or break down a task a little bit differently.

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The House of God

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it…. This is none other than the house of God… (Genesis 28: 16-17).

The Word is God’s truth itself coming from the Lord. On its way down into the world it is accommodated. Therefore when a person possessing a heavenly love reads it the Word connects him to heaven and through heaven to the Lord, as a result of which he receives enlightenment and instruction (see *Arcana Coelestia* 9382:3).

The Heavenly Doctrine tells us that a house corresponds to the human mind (see *Apocalypse Explained* 208). So, the house of God must correspond to the Lord’s mind. Sometimes we call a church a house of God. In this activity we will explore what Jacob meant by referring to the place where he had his dream as “the house of God” and see how the Lord brings things down to our level or accommodates things to us.

Think about the process you go through when you write something. Before you begin writing, you have to think of something to write or choose a topic. What you write first exists in your mind. People write books to communicate what is in their minds—what they know or think or feel. This is also true of the Word. It existed in the Lord’s mind before it was written down. This is why the very beginning of the gospel of John tells us, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Books are written for particular audiences or for particular people. For example, some books are written for small children with simple words and many pictures. Books for older children are longer, have chapters and fewer pictures. Most books for adults are longer still, with few or no pictures and use a larger vocabulary. Some books are written for very specific audiences, like professional textbooks for doctors or engineers.

Writing things in different ways is often called “accommodating” to the audience. Accommodating means to adapt the way you say something to help the person you are talking to understand it. It means changing the form of something without changing its essence. For example, you would probably be bored reading a book about skyscrapers intended for small children. On the other hand, you would probably be confused or feel lost reading a book for professional engineers or architects.

The Word is written in a way to accommodate important spiritual ideas to people of all ages. It is accommodated more than any book written by a person, because it reveals what is in the Lord’s mind to human beings instead of communicating what is in one human mind to another.

Each level of accommodation is like a step on a ladder. The Lord’s ideas come all the way down from heaven to “earth”—that is, to the level of human thought. But the angels on the ladder do not move in only one direction. They go up—ascend—as well as come down—descend. And so for us it is not enough to simply read the Word or memorize parts of it. We need to think about what it teaches and keep trying to understand it more deeply. Most importantly, we need to try to live by what it teaches, to bring the truths to life, for this is what will make us truly happy.

Ideas adapted from “The Wonder of the Lord’s Word” by Rt. Rev. George de Charms.

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Climbing the Ladder

Choose an activity and write the name at the top of the ladder on the right. Think about it as if you were up high somewhere—perhaps in a tree house—and you are letting down a ladder to enable another person to climb up to join you. You can't tell them everything at once. They need to understand the basics before you can tell them some of the fine details. You have to teach them how to do the activity step by step. Write the steps of the activity on the rungs of the ladder at the right, starting with the simplest ones at the bottom. You may want to figure the steps out on the back of the page first. An example is given below.



Math
Learn fractions
Learn to divide
Learn to multiply
Learn to add and subtract larger numbers
Learn to add and subtract single digit numbers
Learn to read numbers
Learn to count in sequence

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