Look Closer:
The Ladder of Life

At a Glance:
Jacob's dream of angels going up and down a ladder (Genesis 28:11-22) depicts how the Lord connects us with Himself and with heaven through His Word. In this activity, students learn about the meaning of the ladder and arrange some truths about the life after death in a simple ladder format.



Supplies Needed for Each Student:
- copy of *The Ladder of Life Readings*
- copy of *Ladder of Life: What Happens to People when They Die?* pages (2 pages)
- scissors
- glue or tape

Directions:

1. Hand out The Ladder of Life pages and read them through together.
2. Tell the students that they are going to read some teachings about what happens after someone dies and then put them on a ladder, ranking them from easy to understand (for young children) to harder to understand (for adults).
3. Hand out the ladder outline pages and have students follow the directions on them. Students may work individually or in pairs.
4. Note: The order of the items within each rung doesn't matter. The goal is to successfully divide the 9 teachings into the 3 categories: young children, teenagers, adults.
5. To help students identify the simplest teachings, ask them what someone might say to young children if someone they know dies.
6. It is OK if students don't understand the more complex teachings. These are things they may learn more about later. (A hint for finding the most complex ideas is that they are the longest!)
7. Let students check their answers. Remind them that the order of the teachings inside each rung don't matter. Have them complete the activity by gluing or taping the teachings in place.
8. Finish by telling the students that this is just an example of how the Lord accommodates truth to us. The Word is filled with teachings on many topics at many different levels. We will understand different teachings at different times in our lives.

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The Ladder of Life Readings

Through the Word…the Lord is present with a person and conjoined with him, for the Lord is the Word, and as it were speaks with the person in it (*Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture* 78).

Jacob's dream of angels going up and down a ladder (Genesis 28:11-22) is a symbol of how the Lord connects us with Himself and with heaven through His Word. The truths of the Word are accommodated or adapted to bring the Lord's love and truth into the world in a way that human beings can understand.

To understand more clearly how the Lord's love and truth are adapted, let's compare this with the way the Lord protects us from the sun's heat and light.

The Sun

1. Heat and light radiate out of the sun. They are so strong and bright that anything close to the sun is burned up instantly.

2. The earth is surrounded by many layers of different gases called the atmosphere. The sun's heat and light travel through space a long distance and then pass through the layers of the atmosphere to reach earth.

3. Despite all that distance and layers, the sun's light and heat are still strong when they reach earth. Looking directly at the sun can blind us. If we spend too long in the sun without protection, our skin burns. But we need the light and warmth to give life to everything on earth, for example, to enable plant growth so animals and people can have food.

The Lord's Love and Truth

1. In the same way, love and truth come from the Lord Himself, radiating from Him like the light from the sun. They are so warm and bright as they first come from Him that no one could live if the light and heat touched them directly, not even the angels.

2. The Lord's love and wisdom are accommodated, first for the angels in heaven and then for people on earth. The heavens filter the love and wisdom in the same way that the earth's atmosphere filters the light and heat of the sun.

3. Love and truth are finally adapted for us through the written Word that the Lord has given us. As we read and study the Word, we come to understand it and to see the Lord reflected in it more and more. The more we understand and follow the Word, the more we become connected with heaven and the Lord. The Word provides us with what we need for our spiritual life.

In this way, the Word is like the ladder in Jacob's dream that connects earth to heaven.

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Ladder of Life: What Happens to People When They Die?

1. Below are 9 true statements about what happens when people die and what the life after death is like. Cut the statements apart.
2. Arrange the statements in front of you and read them. These are all true statements about what happens after people die. Some are simple statements that small children can understand. Others give more details about heaven that would be hard for young children to understand.
3. Pick out the three simplest statements and put them in the space between the bottom and second rung of the ladder.
4. Pick out the three most complicated statements and put them in the space just under the top rung of the ladder.
5. The three statements left go in the middle of the ladder.
6. Check over your ladder to see if you think the statements are on the correct step or rung and rearrange if needed.
7. When you feel fairly confident, check your answers against the teacher's answer sheet.
8. Glue the statements in place.

People choose heaven or hell based on the union of good and truth or of evil and falsity that is within them.

People who choose to live in hell are as happy as they will let themselves be.

We are already spirits, existing in a spiritual world simultaneously with our natural world. We create heaven or hell within ourselves.

The Lord looks after everyone who dies.

People go to heaven or hell depending on how they lived on earth.

A person's spirit lives forever.

People choose whether to go to heaven or to hell.

All good people go to heaven.

People wake up in a place between heaven and hell called the world of spirits. Gradually their outer characteristics fall away to reveal the inner person.

The Lord's
Love and Truth

Adults

Teenagers

Young Children

What Happens to People when They Die?

ANSWER SHEET

What Happens to People when They Die?

The Lord's Love and Truth

Adults

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Teenagers

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Young Children

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